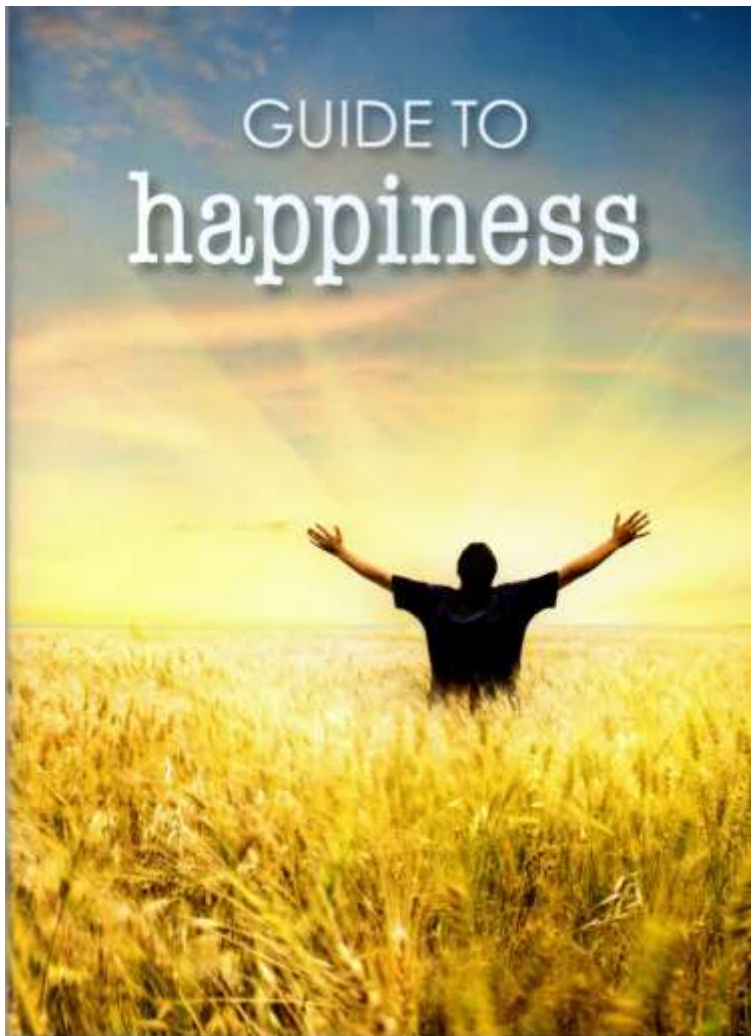


GUIDE TO happiness





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Happiness Created

Have you ever wondered who made the world and everything else? Who made the stars? Who made the trees? Who made the sun and the moon? Who made the plants and animals? Who made you and me?

The Bible tells us God made all these things. But who is God? Before anything else existed, God was there. He has always been alive. He has no beginning and no end. But everything else, including you and me, has a beginning and an end. We were born. We live. We will die.

God is the only being who can create, or make something out of nothing. No one else can. He took six days to create the entire world out of nothing



One reason people are unhappy is due to fear and anxiety. Some people think that we are here all alone in the universe. They assume that since mankind evolved from a cosmic accident millions of years ago, that man could just as easily be destroyed and the earth annihilated by unforeseen cosmic forces or even by mankind's own stupidity.

The Bible tells us that the one, true God is bigger than everything—even man's foolish mistakes. He is all-powerful, all-wise and all-loving. Because God is the one who created all things, he is also the one who maintains and protects his creation. He can also supply all of our needs.

Read the following verses from Acts 17:24-28 and reflect upon the questions that follow.

²⁴ “He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples, ²⁵ and human hands can't serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. ²⁶ From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries.

²⁷ “His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is

not far from any one of us. ²⁸ For in him we live and move and exist.

1. Have you ever given much thought about how the world and mankind came about? If so, how do your thoughts compare to what the Bible teaches?

2. Do you often worry about the world coming to an end either by cosmic forces or by war? How did this section challenge your fears?

Happiness in the Garden of Eden

On the sixth day, the last day of creation, God created the most wonderful things of all. God made all kinds of animals to live on the land. After he made all the animals he made the greatest of all things; he created humans. We are his masterpiece.

Read this passage from Genesis 1:27-28

So God created human beings in his own image.

In the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.

²⁸ Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply.

Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the

birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the

ground.”

We are in the “image and likeness” of the Creator God.

Animals, although wonderful, are not given this high position.

Not even angels are made in the image and likeness of God!

God placed Adam and Eve in a garden paradise called the Garden of Eden.

Here, Adam and Eve lived in perfect harmony with the animals, with each other, and with God. There was no disease or deformities in the Garden of Eden— all was perfect.



Being made in God's image, Adam and Eve had the ability to reason and reflect upon the beauty of what God had made with perfect minds. They, and their children, were also given the ability and desire to govern and care for the world as God's representatives—reflecting His love and values.

Most importantly, mankind had been given the ability to choose to love. True love can never be programmed or forced for then it is not love. We can choose to love and worship God and find true happiness or choose to reject him. We will never be truly happy until we choose to love him.

1. Do you think the first man and woman were happy in the world God had created for them? If so, what makes you think they were happy?

2. Has your perspective of who you are and how valuable you are changed because of this lesson?

Happiness Destroyed

God created Adam and Eve in His image. They were created to give just as God gives. God wanted Adam and Eve to give Him love. He made a special tree called the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He told Adam and Eve that they could eat of the fruit of every tree in the Garden except the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He warned them that if they disobeyed him and ate of that tree they would die.

God did this so Adam and Eve could freely choose to obey Him, and in choosing to obey him, they would love Him. Love is something that must be given freely. True love can never be forced. God did not create us as puppets to dance for Him. He said that if Adam and Eve loved him and showed that love by obeying him and not eating of the tree they would live forever. However, Adam and Eve were not alone in the garden. Read Genesis 3:1-7

¹ The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, “Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?”

² “Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,” the woman replied. ³ “It’s only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, ‘You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.’”

⁴ “You won’t die!” the serpent replied to the woman. ⁵ “God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil.”

⁶ The woman was convinced. She saw that the tree was beautiful and its fruit looked delicious, and she wanted the wisdom it would give her. So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too. ⁷ At that moment their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness. So they sewed fig leaves together to cover themselves.

Before the creation of the world God created spirit beings called angels. Under the leadership of Satan some of them rebelled against God. Satan was the greatest angel God created. All the angels who rebelled became demons and were evil. God threw them out of heaven. Satan, their leader, hates God and hates human beings because we are made in God’s image.



Disguised as a serpent, Satan lied to Eve and tricked her into disobeying God. He told her she would not die if she disobeyed but would be God and would be happier. Eve chose not to love God and got Adam to join her. At that moment their happiness disappeared. They felt guilty and tried to hide from God. They were afraid. They no longer wanted to be with God. Sadness and loneliness filled their lives.

Disobeying God and His commands always leads to sorrow and sadness. God told Adam and Eve that they would experience pain, trials, sickness and death because of their sin. Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden.

All of us want to be happy but sin takes joy away. When we disobey God we cut ourselves off from Him. He is the source of all joy and happiness. Satan, is the source of all misery, crying, sickness and death.

1. Do you believe Satan exists today? If so, what makes you think he is active in this world?

2. What did Adam and Eve do when they felt guilt for the very first time in their lives?
3. What do you do when you feel guilty about something you shouldn't have said or done?

Happiness Destroyed Forever?

The Bible says that immediately after Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the tree God had told them not to eat of, “their eyes were opened.” This means that they understood Satan had lied to them. The beautiful love relationship with God that made them so happy was gone and now they became afraid of God. They hid from Him just as we want to hide from God today because of our fear and guilt. We read about this in Genesis 3:8-12

When the cool evening breezes were blowing, the man and his wife heard the LORD God walking about in the garden. So they hid from the LORD God among the trees. ⁹ Then the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” ¹⁰ He replied, “I heard you walking in the garden, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.” ¹¹ “Who told you that you were naked?” the LORD God asked. “Have you eaten from the tree whose fruit I commanded you not to eat?” ¹² The man replied, “It was the woman you gave me who gave me the fruit, and I ate it.”

God Looks For Us

But God did not give up. Even though Adam and Eve tried to run away, God came looking for them. He still loved them. He looks for each of us and wants us to come back to Him and be His children. He wants to guide us into eternal happiness.

Adam said that the woman, Eve, made him sin when God asked him. And when God went to the woman she blamed the serpent, Satan. When we sin we often blame others rather than openly confessing our own fault. God wants us to confess our sin to Him and not blame others. He says that if we confess our sin He will forgive our sin. The only way to true happiness is to stop blaming others, confess our sin and know that God forgives everyone who is sorry.

The Consequences of Sin

Several things happened because Adam and Eve sinned. First of all God cursed the serpent who at that time had legs. God took the legs away and made the serpent crawl in the dust of the earth on its belly. God cursed the woman to suffer intense pain in bearing children. The man would have to struggle and sweat in order to make a living. Thorns and thistles, problems and heartaches would take away our happiness. But worst of all, God said that the man and woman would die and that their bodies would return to the ground and become dust.



The Wonderful Promise

God made a wonderful promise however. He promised He would send His only Son. Jesus would come from Eve's descendants and would crush Satan and destroy him and all evil forever. Jesus would die on a cross. God would *punish and*

sacrifice His own Son for our sins! Anyone who follows Jesus is covered by His punishment and will live forever.

1. What does sin do to our happiness? How have you and your family experienced the effects of sin in your own lives?

2. What promise did God give to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15? Who do think will one day smash the head of the serpent (Satan)?

Happiness Through a Promise

God did not give up—and he never will. The three Persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) had a plan to bring happiness back to humans. This plan would involve them revealing a special kind of love that they could not have shown any other

way. It would involve a sacrifice on their part beyond all imagination!

God promised Adam and Eve that he would crush evil by crushing Satan's head. He would do this by Jesus coming into this world as a human being. He would be sinless, and thus would be free to take our sin on himself. Paying for our sin would set us free to once again trust, love and work with each other and God. He would bring a new happiness built on trusting God and each other, loving God and each other and working with God and each other. Through this two-way relationship we would experience eternal happiness. It would take a long process—several thousand years. It would start with a person named Abraham.

Genesis 12:1-4

¹ The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. ² I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³ I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.” ⁴ So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

Hebrews 11:11-12

¹¹ It was by faith that even Sarah was able to have a child, though she was barren and was too old. She believed that God would keep his promise. ¹² And so a whole nation came from this one man who was as good as dead—a nation with so many people that, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore, there is no way to count them.

Abraham was seventy-five years old when God came to him. God challenged him to trust him and leave his country and family. He was to pack up his belongings and move his family to a strange land. God told him that he would be the father of a family of people who would trust and love God. This family would extend to every nation and language on earth! Through this huge worldwide network of people God would bless every group of people on earth. This nation would start with Abraham's son, Isaac, who was not yet born.

When Abraham was ninety-nine years old and his wife Sarah was ninety, he still did not have that promised son! Then, in Abraham's and Sarah's old age, God worked a miracle and Sarah got pregnant.



Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah almost 25 years after God's promise and long after they were able to have children. In doing this God demonstrated that he *would provide* a Savior who would bring a new happiness and joy. This Person whom God would provide would have two names: Jesus, which means Savior; and Immanuel, which means "God with us."

1. What great promise did God make to Abraham about all peoples on earth?
2. How old were Abraham and Sarah when God finally gave them their first child? Why did He make them wait so long?

Happiness is Trusting God

When Isaac was about 20 years old God tested Abraham's love. Remember how God tested Adam and Eve by commanding

them not to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree? This was a much harder test. After waiting until he was 100 years old to bear a son, Abraham was now commanded by God to sacrifice this son!

Abraham Obeyed

Abraham is called the “father of believers.” His faith in God was very strong. He trusted God so much that he was able, at the age of 75, to go to a strange land. He did not question God. God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many people. Yet he was 99 and still had no son. Abraham continued to believe God, even when he was past the age of bearing children. The greatest test of faith however, was the test in this story. God worked a great miracle and gave a son to two people who were 99 and 100 years old. Now, about fifteen years later, when Isaac was a handsome young man, God asked Abraham to sacrifice him.

Abraham once again did not ask questions. He believed that God knew what He was doing. He gathered wood for the sacrifice and set off on a three day journey with his son Isaac.

Abraham's Belief

As they neared Mount Moriah and started the long climb to the top, Isaac asked his father a question.

Genesis 22:7-14

, ⁷ Isaac turned to Abraham and said, "Father?"

"Yes, my son?" Abraham replied.

"We have the fire and the wood," the boy said, "but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?"

⁸ "God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son,"

Abraham answered. And they both walked on together.

⁹ When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.

¹⁰ And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice.

¹¹ At that moment the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!"

¹² "Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son."



¹³ Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means “the LORD will provide”). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.”

The answer Abraham gave to Isaac is an explanation of the entire message of the Bible. “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” God stopped Abraham from sacrificing his son and provided a ram in his place. The true God sacrifices his only Son for us. The purpose of this test was to see first if Abraham would trust God and do what God asked, even if it meant sacrificing Isaac. Abraham trusted God completely and passed the test!

Abraham’s willingness to offer his own son is a picture of God offering His own son, Jesus, as a sacrifice for our sins. The Bible calls Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Trusting in God and in His many promises is not always easy. But God is faithful and His promises ultimately lead to a life of true happiness and rejoicing as we discover that God is able to do more than what we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

Happiness is a Person

When God's Son Jesus was born, he did not have a human father. Mary was still a virgin. God placed Jesus in His mother's womb by a miracle. Mary suddenly was pregnant. An angel came to Mary to tell her what had happened. God placed a baby in her.

Salvation from sin can come only from God. We cannot save ourselves. We cannot, by ourselves, become good enough to live with God again. We cannot, by our own effort, cleanse ourselves from past sin and get rid of sinning in the future. Our only hope is that God will provide some way to get back to Him and find his eternal joy and happiness. We cannot produce our own Savior. God, our Father, produced our Savior in a miraculous way.



The Names of Our Savior

Joseph, the man Mary was engaged to, was humiliated when he learned Mary was pregnant. He, of course, thought that she had been unfaithful to him. Normally, a husband in those days would have his wife killed for such an offense, but an angel came to Joseph to tell him what was happening. Since Joseph was a good man he did not plan to hurt Mary but simple to hide her somewhere so she would not be disgraced.

Jesus was born in a place where they kept animals. It was a very poor place. He was first worshipped by shepherds who were “outcastes” of their day. They were looked down on as dirty people. This humble birth shows us that Jesus was born for everyone, even the poorest of the poor. It is impossible to imagine that the God who created everything, Jesus, the Creator of all things, was even born as a human being, much less born in poverty. Anyone, rich or poor, may follow Jesus and love him.

Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸ This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Joseph, her fiancé, was a

good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly.

²⁰ As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. ²¹ And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”

²² All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet: ²³ “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’”

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife ²⁵ But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.

1. Where was Jesus born? Why is his humble birth significant?

2. What two names did the angel give to the baby and what do they mean?

Happiness is Giving to Others

Jesus was an amazing teacher. Crowds of thousands of people followed him to learn from him. At one time a crowd numbering 5,000 men, over 20,000 people including entire families listened to him for a whole day. They did not take any food with them and grew very hungry. Jesus took the lunch of a little boy, five little rolls and two fish, and multiplied them so that everyone had enough to eat and there were twelve baskets of food left over!



One of Jesus' most familiar stories is the story of a farmer who went out to plant seed in his field. In those days they did not have machinery. Everything was done by hand. Farmers would plant seed by throwing out handfuls of seed. The seed was scattered everywhere. Only some of it fell on good ground and

grew to produce a harvest and multiplied thirty, sixty and even one hundred times.

All life comes from seed of some kind. Even spiritual life comes from seed and this was Jesus' point in this story.

The Bible is the seed of spiritual life. As you study it (you are doing this by studying this little course) spiritual life is being planted in you. Your mind and heart are the soil. As you study the Bible and memorize the verses the seed of eternal life is being planted inside of you.

Eternal life starts when you believe the teachings of the Bible, especially that Jesus Christ came to save us and give us a new life. That new life expresses itself in bearing "fruit". This is the fruit of giving to others. Eternal life is a transformation from selfishness to selflessness. It is a change from living to get things to living to give to others. The Bible tells us that there are seven kinds of spiritual giving to others which it calls spiritual fruit. They are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control.

Matthew 13:3-9

³ He told many stories in the form of parables, such as this one: "Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. ⁴ As he scattered them across his field, some

seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. ⁵ Other seeds fell on shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. ⁷ Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. ⁸ Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! ⁹ Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."

Matthew 13:18-23

¹⁸ "Now listen to the explanation of the parable about the farmer planting seeds: ¹⁹ The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts. ²⁰ The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. ²¹ But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. ²² The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. ²³ The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and

produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!”

1. Describe the four places where the seed fell and what happened in each place?
2. Jesus talks about the harvest of thirty, sixty or a hundred times more. Do you think he is talking about how much happier you will be working for him?

Happiness is Being Accepted by God

In the first part of the Bible, called the Old Testament, Isaiah, a prophet who predicts future events, predicted hundreds of years before Jesus was born that Jesus would be the Person who would bring eternal happiness. He wrote: **“All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own (ways). Yet the LORD laid on him (Jesus) the sins of us all”** Isaiah 53:6. God told Adam and Eve that failure to trust and love him would end their relationship with him. They could not be friends of God. They and all their

children (all humans who ever lived) would be afraid of him and hide from him. The death of friendship with God is the punishment of eternal, unending loneliness. It is also called hell.

Jesus came to bear that punishment for us. How did Jesus do this? God the Father made Jesus, who was perfect, to be sin by putting all our sin on him. Jesus bore our eternal separation (hell). While dying on the cross, he cried, “My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?” (Mark 15:34) Just before he died he gave himself to the Father crying, “Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!” (Luke 23:46). Jesus then went into eternal happiness (paradise). He took one of the thieves who died next to him, with him, as he promised. The thief asked Jesus to remember him and Jesus had replied, “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise (eternal happiness)” (Luke 23:43). He now takes all who trust him and love him into eternal happiness as he did that thief. This is God’s gift to all who ask for it. And it starts now, not after we die!

1 Peter 2:24-25

²⁴ He (Jesus) personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.

²⁵ Once you were like sheep who wandered away. But now you have turned to your Shepherd, the Guardian of your souls.

Mark 15:16-20, 24-26, 29-34, 37-39

¹⁶ The soldiers took Jesus into the courtyard of the governor's headquarters (called the Praetorium) and called out the entire regiment. ¹⁷ They dressed him in a purple robe, and they wove thorn branches into a crown and put it on his head. ¹⁸ Then they saluted him and taunted, "Hail! King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ And they struck him on the head with a reed stick, spit on him, and dropped to their knees in mock worship. ²⁰ When they were finally tired of mocking him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him again. Then they led him away to be crucified.

²⁴ Then the soldiers nailed him to the cross. They divided his clothes and threw dice to decide who would get each piece. ²⁵ It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ A sign was fastened to the cross, announcing the charge against him. It read, "The King of the Jews."

²⁹ The people passing by shouted abuse, shaking their heads in mockery. "Ha! Look at you now!" they yelled at him. "You said you were going to destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days. ³⁰ Well then, save yourself and come down from the cross!"



³¹ The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save

himself! ³² Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!” Even the men who were crucified with Jesus ridiculed him.

³³ At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock. ³⁴ Then at three o’clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

³⁷ Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

³⁹ When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, “This man truly was the Son of God!”

When we fail to trust God, to love him and to allow his Holy Spirit to work good things through us for others, we push God away, and that emptiness is evil or sin. We become cynical. We hurt others. We fight. We disobey all God’s commands. We become the opposite of what God created us to be. The end result is isolation from other people and from God. We become locked in concern only for ourselves. This results in a dark loneliness. The punishment for sin which Jesus took upon himself for us is that



horrible loneliness. It is hard to imagine how horrible the rejection and separation that Jesus endured. Do you realize that Jesus' rejection by his loving Father was the rejection you should have experienced? By being rejected in our place, Jesus opens the door for us to be accepted by the Father. We accept him when we trust him, love him and work with the Holy Spirit in producing good things for others. This is the beginning of eternal happiness.

1. How long was it dark when Jesus was crucified? What do you think the darkness represents?
2. What cry did Jesus make just before he died? Why is his cry significant?
3. What happened when Jesus died?
4. What did one of the Roman officers say about Jesus after he died?

5. Do you believe that Jesus is God's Son who sacrificed His life as a payment for your sin?

Happiness is Easter

To make certain that Jesus had died the soldiers ran a sword into His side. Blood and water gushed out. They took His lifeless body from the cross. One of Jesus' friends asked for it. He took the body to a garden where there were caves. The Jews used these caves to bury their dead. He put Jesus' body into a cave.

All this happened on Friday. Guards were placed at the tomb (cave) so that no one would steal Jesus' body. A huge stone was rolled in front of the entrance to the cave to seal it. Pilate, the government official, heard that Jesus said He would rise from the dead after three days. Pilate didn't believe it. He was afraid the disciples would steal the body and then say Jesus rose from the dead. So he ordered soldiers to guard the sealed tomb day and night.

Easter Morning

On Saturday, the day the Jews worshipped, they were forbidden by their religion to go to the cemetery. So very early on Sunday morning some women who were Jesus' followers came to the cemetery. They wanted to put perfume on Jesus' body. This was the Jewish custom. This couldn't be done on Friday or on Saturday. Sunday was the first opportunity they had. When they got to the tomb they found the stone had been rolled away and an angel sat on it. The tomb was empty. Jesus body wasn't in it. Jesus had come back to life, just as He said He would.



Matthew 28:1-10

¹ Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. ² Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. ³ His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. ⁴ The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. ⁵ Then the angel spoke to the women. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He isn't here! He is risen from the dead,

just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. ⁷ And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you.” ⁸ The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel’s message. ⁹ And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.”

The Importance That Jesus Came Back to Life

The fact that Jesus came back to life and lives now and rules the world and is coming again is the most important truth of the Bible. Paul, one of the authors of the Bible says that if Jesus did not come back to life then there is no sense in following him. And C. S. Lewis, one of the greatest Christian writers who once did not believe there was any God said that it would be easier to believe Jesus was a poached egg than to deny that He is God and rose from the dead!

Jesus is the only Person who has died and risen, never to die again! He is the only Person who is both human and God. He is the only Person who has the power, as our Representative, to

forgive our sins and the cleanse us. He is the only Person who can make us pure and clean in the presence of His Father. He is the only Person who can put eternal life within us right now, and then fill us with wonderful joy and happiness in knowing how much God loves us. And, when he returns he will raise our bodies to be beautiful and eternal like his.

1. What did the angels say to the women who came to Jesus' tomb?

2. How important is the resurrection of Jesus?

3. What proof do you find in this story that Jesus rose from the dead?

Happiness is Jesus Living in my Heart

Jesus died and rose again to save us. But what does “save” mean? What did Jesus save us “from”? What did Jesus save us “to do”? Both questions must be answered in order to have a full understanding of the Bible’s meaning of salvation.

The Bible tells us that Jesus saved us from a life principle of “getting”, to live a life of “giving”. Jesus says that whoever believes in him will become like an eternal spring of living water flowing out of him.



Being born again is like being changed from a swamp which keeps water and makes everything rotten to being like the head waters (springs) of a mighty river.

The Bible puts it like this in Ephesians 2:10

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Jesus tells us that He is the vine and we are the branches (John 15:1-8). The vine brings life to the branch and the branch bears fruit. To be saved means that we bear fruit to be given away to others. When we are saved, our primary purpose in life becomes giving to God and to others.

A Fruitful Branch

Jesus is coming again. When he comes he will judge everyone who has lived based on the “fruitful faith” that they have shown. Some will believe, he told us, and say “Lord, Lord” but will not bear the fruit of love and selflessness. The fruit that comes from faith is this:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful (selfish) passions and desires” Galatians 5:22,23

1. How might you feel knowing that Jesus, the Creator of the Universe, lives in you through his Holy Spirit? What would that do for your self- image?
2. Why is it important for the branches to stay connected to the vine?

Happiness is Forever

Immediately after the Holy Spirit filled the followers of Jesus, they gathered together in small groups all over the city of Jerusalem. They met daily. Their meetings were filled with joy and laughter. They ate together. They praised God, singing new songs of thanksgiving for what had happened. They listened to the apostles' teaching about Jesus. They cared for anyone who has special needs. They shared what they had. And the little groups multiplied. Dr. Luke, the author of the third gospel and the book of Acts, tells us that in a very short time over five thousand extended families became involved in these little groups, often numbering up to thirty or forty people each(Acts 4:4).

Acts 2:42-47

⁴² All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer. ⁴³ A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. ⁴⁴ And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. ⁴⁵ They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. ⁴⁶ They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for

the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity—⁴⁷ all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.

Today, in virtually every country of the world, the Good News about Jesus is being spread through small clusters of his followers, praising Jesus and sharing with others in need.



Happiness *must* be shared, and the best way to share it and grow it is through being part of a small Bible study, prayer and care group.

Revelation 21:1-4

¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. ² And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them (and be their God). ⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.”

The Bible tells us that the joy and happiness we can have as we share with other followers of Jesus on a regular basis is only a tiny beginning! Jesus is coming to the earth again, but this time, in great power and beauty. Everyone will see him when he comes, and he will bring with him all his followers of all ages. He will remake the earth and will live with us here. All sorrow, pain and suffering will be gone for eternity. This is God's story of Happiness – created, destroyed, renewed and forever!

The final question—do you trust Jesus? Will you give your life to him and love and serve him, beginning now? Will you enter into his eternal joy and happiness?

Pray

Dear heavenly Father, please forgive me for always wanting to get things for myself. Help me to see that the way to joyful life is only through giving to You and others. Thank You for forgiving me and placing new, eternal life in me through Jesus Christ Your Son. Thank You that He gave His own life for me. Help me to be a fruitful follower and eagerly share His love and await His return. In Jesus name, Amen.

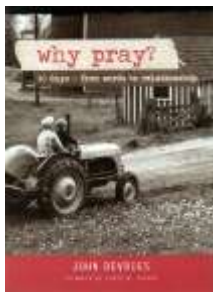
Stay Connected

We would like to stay in contact with you!

- Would you like to study and learn more about Jesus and the Christian faith with someone else? Or, in a small group?**
- Would you like us to send you another Bible study that you can do at home?**
- Is there something specific you would like to learn about Jesus or the Christian Faith?**
- Would you like us to recommend a church nearby?**

You may contact me at: info@reachingamerica.net

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