

Ten Habits of Happiness

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1. Clean Up the Connections

And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body, you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. Colossians 3:15

When I am feeling out of sorts, I survey the health of my relationships. If something feels a little “off” with someone, it is a prompt to dig deeper into the history of the relationship, pray for wisdom, and take action.

Recently, someone came to me after 50 years for an uncomfortable decision she made on my behalf. I had never seen the person for that period of time, but it bothered her a great deal. Upon seeing me, she immediately grabbed my hand, and said, “Come, we have to talk!” Her decision had never bothered me very much, but had made her bear regret for 50 years! We both laughed after our discussion and had a great time visiting after that burden was cleared.

I know when I have a breakdown in a relationship with a friend, relative, co-worker, friend or colleague, it is time to reach out and “mend a fence or two”. Sometimes it means saying “I’m sorry. Will you forgive me?” As humbling as that is, it is what will bring you to peace, and you will feel the burden lifted. When relationships are righted, the stress leaves and everyone breathes easier.



Be courageous and be comforted.

2. Meet the Joy-Giver

“My lips will shout for joy when I sing praise to you— I whom you have delivered.” Psalm 71:23

People try terribly hard to be happy. I find when I focus on doing all kinds of earthly things to be happy, at the end of it all, I’m not happy. True joy is an “out of the world” experience because joy’s home is heaven. Joy is a gift of God which comes from knowing and experiencing Him personally.

The pathway to supernatural joy is through Jesus Christ, God’s son. Begin by believing in his death on the cross to pay the ransom for your sins (death), receive his forgiveness for all your sins, and place your personal faith in Him as your Savior and Guide. Believe in his resurrection and allow him to give you new life. Rise up redeemed!



3. It's Not About You

*And if you offer yourself to the hungry
And satisfy the need of the afflicted,
Then your light will rise in darkness,
And your gloom will become like midday.* Isaiah 58:10

Serve someone with a need of any size. Repeat. The self-focus of our society is a joy stealer. You (people) were put on this earth to serve and love one another. The more we self-focus, the more we self-pity. It's true. (Note: This does mean eliminate self-care.)

The enemy of God, Satan, does his best to have you count your woes, number your sorrows, and rethink your disappointments daily. It doesn't take long for depression to take over and have you thinking your world is terrible.

Instead, look around you and see who could use a helping hand, a phone call, an encouraging word, a visit to the park, etc. Then do it. It's that simple. Helping at a food shelf, joining a charitable organization, or volunteering for a special event are things that have changed people's lives.

Serving others will give you a natural lift in your day, and you will know that your presence and work has made someone's day better. Your view of self-worth goes up a notch every time you help someone. Go for it.



4. Stepping and Sipping.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27

When I find myself feeling unmotivated, dull, and perhaps a little blue, exercise is the quickest way to get to feeling alive once more. You may begin simply by stretching. It's amazing how a little more blood flow will energize the spirit. Imagine how a good brisk walk will make you feel! The lethargic spirit is replaced, without cost or medication, with a quickened spirit ready for the next task. Shake off the joy-killing fatigue with some peppy physical activity and take note of how your day can change.

Next, there is something especially important that our society virtually ignores. It's called nutrition. Because our most basic food chemistries have been altered by soil and growers, our bodies are not getting the nutrition it needs for optimum performance. I have found that when I take a quality liquid natural supplement daily, my sense of well-being increases.



5. Charge Your Batteries

*Even youths shall faint and be weary,
and young men shall fall exhausted;
but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles;
they shall run and not be weary;
they shall walk and not faint.* Isaiah 40:30-31

“And He said to them, ‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat. So they departed to a deserted place in the boat by themselves.” Mark 6:31-32

“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.” Proverbs 4:23

This is where self-care and self-awareness plays a part in your sense of happiness and well-being. Jesus set this example for his disciples and for us, as well. He drew away from the multitudes to rest and pray to his father. We must do the same. The demands of life can be overwhelming at times, and we must set aside time for communication with our God. In those times, He can refresh our souls according to His Word and His lovingkindness for his own.

Secondly, we must inventory ourselves and ask ourselves the following questions:

1. What activities and places drains our energy and make us weary?
2. What activities steals our peace, balance, and sense of self?
3. And what activities/work make you happy, excited or thrilled, and gives us energy?

Regarding introverts and extraverts, it's simple. I'm extraverted, for sure. For me, I find it simply joyful to be around people and helping them achieve their goals. But for me to work alone, hour after hour, doing mindless routine things, will bring me to a low level of exhaustion both mentally and

physically. However, give me a task/job that consists of some of things I love (like music, and words, people, and faith), well then, just watch out for some productivity!

Introverted people recharge their batteries by being alone and having time to reflect, do their “own thing”, etc. A life with little of this personal “building” time will frustrate them and leave them feeling empty.

Going to a job every day that one absolutely detests is a recipe for disaster. Evaluate your life’s work and see if it is something that brings life, as well as a paycheck. Of course, there are parts of all jobs that aren’t right up there with chocolate, but overall, one’s work/career needs be invigorating and challenging. Life will be much easier if one is engaged in the things that bring energy and hope.

4. Enlist yourself in activities weekly that you absolutely enjoy. It’s a must.

There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

Ecclesiastes 2:24-25

There are ways to de-stress which are healthy. Hobbies are meant to do exactly that. Whether it’s by oneself or with others, learn something new and engage in it for growth. You’ll be amazed at the healing it provides. Join a book club, or a kite-flying club, or a choir, or a bowling team, or learn how to paint, etc. Something to take your mind off the rigors and worries of everyday life. You may even laugh.

Bottom line, have some good, clean fun! That may mean something different for each person, but whatever it is, physiologically it brings the chemicals into people’s blood stream which make for happiness. It’s simply a must-do.



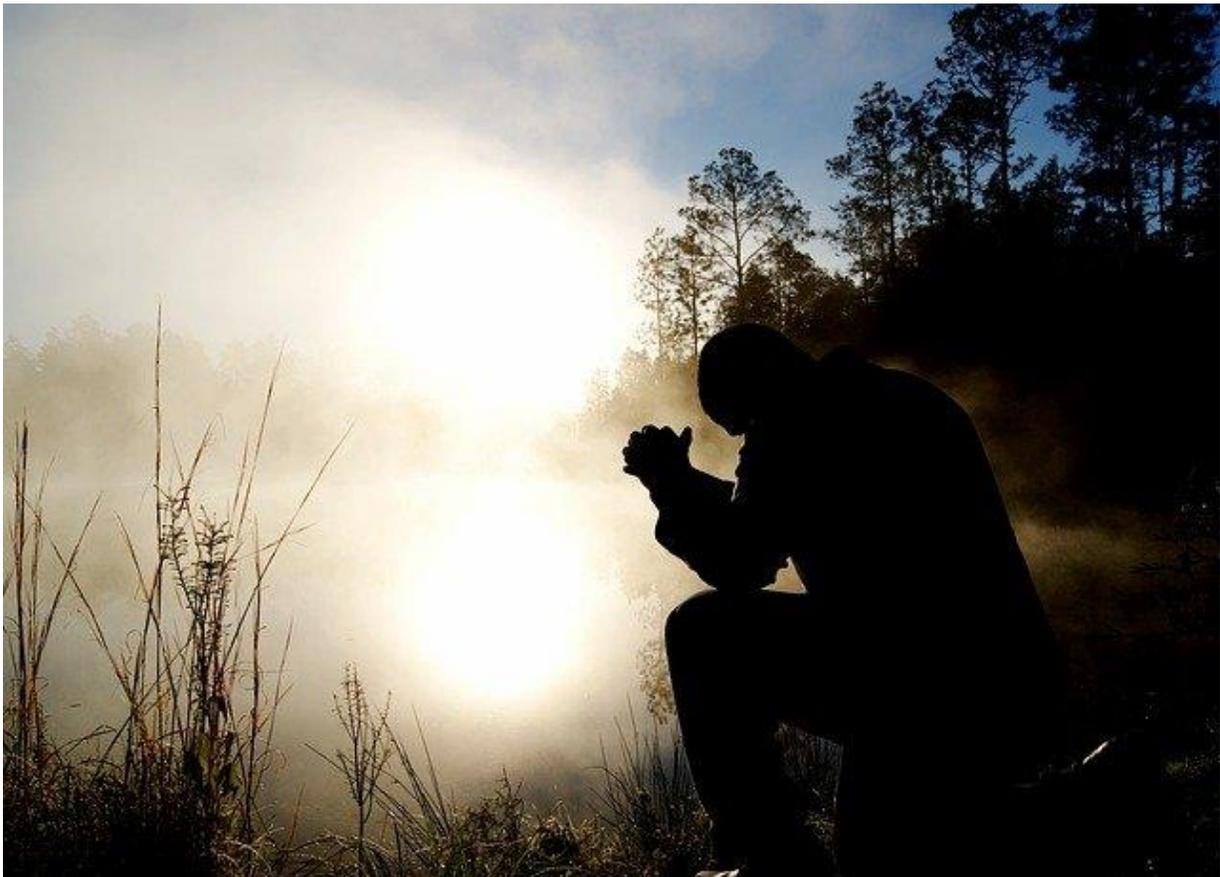
6. Surrender Your Pain.

*He heals the brokenhearted
And binds up their wounds.* Psalm 147:3

*The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
And saves those who are crushed in spirit.* Psalm 34:18

Emotional hurt can be like a toothache. Until something is done about it, it's going to bring increasing agony. Yes, some things take time and will naturally heal. However, some people choose to carry around the past with open wounds festering that infect the soul. Bitterness, jealousy, anger, fatigue, and self-loathing will result from suppressed pain and can destroy a life.

Find yourself bathed in prayer, immersed in Scripture, and getting the help you need from Christian counselors, doctors, and healers of many kinds. Give God the things that hurt you and allow Him to heal those wounds in all the ways he has made available to you.



7. Replace the Gadgets with Goodness.

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Galatians 5:1

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:1-2

It is no secret that all kinds of media are swallowing our lives. Our younger cultures are being driven by internet and telephone avenues and the fallout of that usage is negative. Communication skills are lacking, families do not speak to one another as in previous decades, and the accessibility to harm people is at warp speed. Even though the instruments are themselves neutral, electronic addictions have multiplied among young people, and the easy access to evil is tempting and warping the minds and hearts of all who participate.

Social media can be a blessing and a curse. Keep it a blessing, a useful tool and not a time stealer and mind manipulator.



8. Find Good Company.

And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught. Stay away from them."

Romans 16:17

"Let's feast and drink, for tomorrow we die!" Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company corrupts good character". **1 Corinthians 15:32-33**

Hang with those who live in accordance with the Scriptures. We are not meant to be alone, and we naturally can find ourselves in a group of people. Check the status of your company. We become the company we keep. You know the adage, "Bird of a feather, flock together." It's true. Find good companions. Find people who seek God with their whole souls, and you will diminish the drama and stress in your life, and an abundance of good times will be added to your days, more than you ever dreamed.



9. Gratitude vs. Grumbling

In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thes. 5:18

But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart. Matthew 15:18

It's easy to slip into the trap of grumbling and complaining. The negative side of things can easily overtake one's thinking and before long, all that comes out of one's mouth is how bad everything has been, is or will be. The happiness thieves arrive carrying the baggage of verbal poison, and they proceed to dump it on everyone in its path. It's rather toxic, I must say.

Watch the words that come out of your mouth. Are you belly-aching or blessing? Cursing or comforting? Using winning words or whining words? When people speak, what is in their heart is revealed. What we speak shows the world what we carry inside our souls and will determine who chooses us as their friends.

Gratitude opens the gate for further gratitude. The person who is grateful for even the smallest things finds sets their own stage of delight and blessing. To be thankful is to be stepping into the will of God. What a great place to live!



10. Celebrate Creation

*“But ask the beasts, and they will teach you;
the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you;
or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you;
and the fish of the sea will declare to you.
Who among all these does not know
that the hand of the Lord has done this?
In his hand is the life of every living thing
and the breath of all mankind. Job 12:7-10*

At the writing of this document, the breeze is gentle as it coaxes the colored leaves to leave their limbs and tumble earthward. The sky is cloudless, and the sun is warm. Earlier I marveled in the storm whose wake left a rainbow to decorate the expanse of the heavens. Looking downward from my perch in a tree, I observed the squirrels and chipmunks scurrying to store food for the winter. And all this is just a few minutes of sitting in the woods.

You may think this to be rather goofy, but there is truth in it. Touch creation and get grounded. I believe touching creation will draw you to the Creator, and a greater understanding of his magnificent power. Appreciate nature – it will reveal to you the nature of God as you gaze at it, sit in it, lie in it, or dig your fingers into it. It is good for you.



