

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Happiness Is?

What is happiness? This is an intriguing question. The whole world searches for happiness; but, seemingly few find it. Perhaps the greatest detriment to happiness is not recognizing what it is or where it is to be found.

With many, happiness is confused with success. And it seems that many are as confused in recognizing success as they are in recognizing happiness. Also, we should all realize that some of the world's most successful are the most miserable.

But back to our question: What is happiness? Perhaps considerable confusion and misunderstanding could be eliminated if we consider the negative and agree as to what happiness is not!

- Happiness is not guaranteed by wealth.
- Happiness is not guaranteed by power.
- Happiness is not guaranteed by social standing.
- Happiness is not guaranteed by marriage.
- Happiness is not guaranteed by parenthood.

- Happiness is not guaranteed by unlimited self-indulgence (in sex, food, fun, drugs or idleness).

Truly happiness is that illusive quality that one cannot beg, borrow or steal. Unquestionably the greatest deterrents to happiness are sin (ours and others) and mental discontent.

As we read of the life of the Apostle Paul in the New Testament, we find that he suffered many heartaches, disappointments and hardships (2 Cor. 11:24-28). Yet, he told the Philippians that he had learned to accept the ups and downs of life and be content (Phil. 4:11-13). He explained to Timothy that he had committed his very soul to the keeping of God (2 Tim. 1:12). Therefore, Paul could be happy in life or in death (Phil. 4:4-7; 1:23-28; 2 Tim. 4:6-8).

Truly friends there are just three things essential to happiness: (1) Peace with God, (2) Peace with your fellowman and (3) Peace with yourself.

- Raymond E. Harris

Beware The Extremist

A very versatile word in the English language is "extremist." Much like "legalist," "radical," and "hobbyist," it can be called into play whenever desired. It would seem that any man could be called an extremist — it just depends on who is doing the calling and where he stands at the time. A sure way to prejudice unthinking people against a certain viewpoint or matter of doctrine is to charge, "That is an extreme view!" An effective tool for poisoning people against a preacher is to claim, "You know, he is an extremist!" Immediately the dull-witted close their ears to what he says. They make no effort to investigate the Word of God to determine whether it is the truth. All of us

need studious minds, desire for truth, willingness to study for ourselves, and fair-mindedness in considering any matter. Above all we need respect for God's Book!

Strange but Often True

Some very significant factors enter into this matter of irresponsible use of words, "He is just an extremist."

a. Somehow it is always the other fellow who is extreme – never the speaker.

b. Frequently it is used by very "pious" men as a weapon to destroy another – as a prejudicial epithet.

c. Often the speaker may not be overly-concerned with the basic question of right and wrong. Yet it is better to be extremely right by following the truth than to be extremely wrong by rejecting it.

d. It may sometimes just be a self-protective device used by a person who is mortally afraid that HE may be identified with the extremists. Perish the thought! So, in accusing the other brother of extremism he implies – for his own safety – "I certainly am not like that. I am no extremist."

Not Necessarily So

No one doubts that a man can be an extremist, but there are definitely some things that are not to be considered as marks of an extremist. If they are, the Bible is full of extremists

(including God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the apostles, the prophets, etc.). Let us observe that:

a. One is not an extremist because he insists on divine authority from Christ for teaching and practice. The Holy Spirit requires this (Col. 3:17; Heb 8:5).

b. One is not an extremist because he rejects human traditionalism in religion – even though it may be “common practice of the brethren.” Jesus denounced such (Matt.15:6-9).

c. One is not an extremist because he refuses to encourage false teaching and teachers in any way (2 John 9-11). Fellowship with God is at stake here.

d. One is not an extremist because he publicly challenges men to give authority for their practices. Jesus did (Matt. 21:24-27).

e. One is not an extremist because he is willing to meet another in public encounter (that is, before an audience) and challenge a brother for his departure from the truth. Paul did so (Gal. 2:11-14; Acts 15:1, 2).

f. One is not an extremist because he calls the names of men who teach the churches error and cause digression. Paul sets the example for this (2 Tim. 1:15; 2:15-18).

g. One is not an extremist because he presses the truth with vigorous contention for the faith. The apostles did, and we are instructed to do so (Jude 3; I Thess. 2:1, 2).

h. One is not an extremist because he refuses to back away from the thick of a fight for truth. Paul says God has not given us "the spirit of fear" [cowardice] (2 Tim. 1:7, 8). A gospel preacher should be ashamed to be a coward.

i. One is not an extremist because he teaches faithful Christians to mark and avoid brethren who teach contrary to apostolic doctrine. This is demanded (Rom 16:17,18).

j. One is not an extremist simply because his teaching causes division. Jesus' sword – the word of God – does some disturbing and dividing (Matt 10:34-36). Certainly not all division is laudable. Some of it is deplorable and sinful. It is always sinful to divide people by the preaching of error. On the other hand, division brought about by the proclamation of TRUTH – division that results when some men take their stand upon a "thus-saith-the-Lord" and others rally to their human traditions – is to be expected. It was so in New Testament days. It is true today. Men are OBLIGATED to teach the truth. And men are OBLIGATED to separate themselves from error (Rom 16:17, 18; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

The Real Concern

The real concern of every Christian should be to determine truth. If one searches the Scriptures (Acts 17:11) and learns that a thing is taught of God, this truth is extremely right, and he must believe it, regardless of what others may say or do. To refuse to believe it simply because others may consider it to be extreme is to dishonor the Author of truth. When problems arise and when questions are raised about any matter, our interest must lie in the

Word of God as an infallible, all-sufficient standard of correct faith and practice. As stated before: It is better to be extremely right by following the truth than to be extremely wrong by rejecting it.

- Barney Keith

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: Sunday morning: *"Is It Well With The Young Man?"* (text: 2 Sam. 18:28-33); Sunday evening: *"Little Foxes!"* (text: Song of Solomon 2:8-15).

SCHEDULE: Our Gospel Meeting will be July 28 – Aug. 2, Sun. regularly scheduled times, M-F at 7:00 p.m., with Tanner Campbell, of Piggott, AR.