Happiness

DISCOVER GOD'S PROMISE OF RELENTLESS JOY

RANDY ALCORN

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF HEAVEN

Happine 38

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60 Days of Happiness: Discover God's Promise of Relentless Joy

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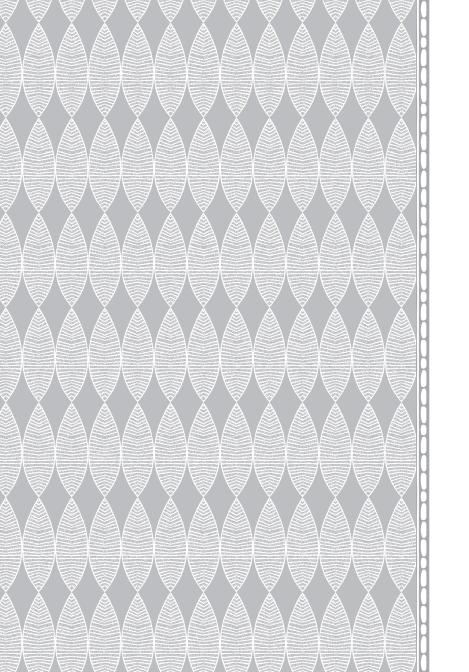
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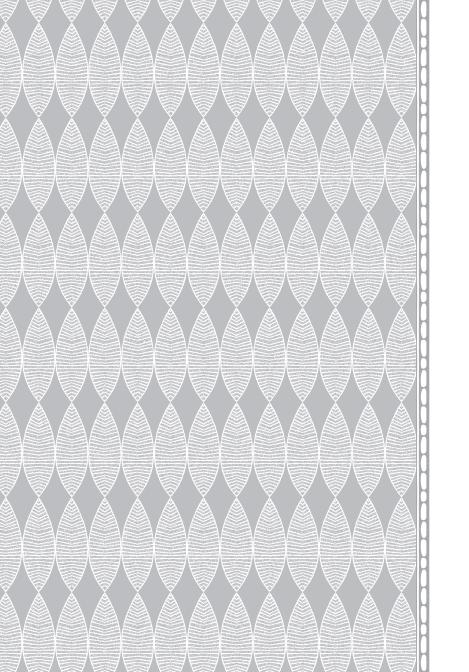
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TO CHRIS & JENNY IVESTER,

lovers of Jegus

who show his happiness to the world.







WHEN IT COMES TO HAPPINESS, most of us have a lot of questions.

- Is it possible to be happy when life is much harder than I expected?
- Is happiness something people of faith should long for?
- Does God even want me to be happy?
- And perhaps the most burning questions of all: Why am I not happy, and how in the world can I become happier?

Over the years, some Christians have made the claim that happiness is unspiritual—that if you want to be holy, then you can't be happy. But that's not true to the Bible or Christian tradition.

Our problem isn't that we want to be happy; our problem is that we keep looking for happiness in all the wrong places. This book will take you to the primary source of happiness in the universe—God. It will then connect the secondary sources

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of happiness back to the God who created them and graciously gives them to us.

In the process, I think you may experience some paradigm shifts that will bring a smile to your face and forever change your view of happiness and what God thinks of it. It may also change your perspective on God's nature, causing you to see him in a way that floods you with gladness and increases your fondness toward your Creator. I believe you will end up not only loving him more but liking him better. At least, that's what happened to me as I studied Scripture and meditated on this subject for more than three years.

How This Book Came to Be

This book is drawn from carefully selected portions of my larger book *Happiness*. However, I've reworked the material to present it in a fresh and different way. I hope it not only informs you about one of the most appealing subjects in the world but also encourages you, motivates you, and moves your affections toward God.

I've received many encouraging responses to *Happiness*, partly because the subject matter is close to our hearts, whether or not we realize it. But it's not just the subject of happiness that draws people; it's seeing for the first time that God is happy, that he has made us to be happy, and that he has gone to incredible lengths to procure our eternal happiness.

introduction

While I've written the big book *Happiness* and also a very small one, *God's Promise of Happiness*, I felt the need for a medium-sized book for those who want more than the one and less than the other.

With the help of an editor and friend, Doreen Button, I selected the subjects I'd researched that most lent themselves to personal growth and worshipful meditation on God and his Word. The Scripture passages, inspirational quotations, and prayers that are part of each meditation help it touch the heart. But the biblical substance and theological implications of these topics will also deepen your mind and broaden your perspective. I hope these truths will delight you and bring insight that will infuse your life with happiness.

The Bible is my go-to source. But I also draw from a number of people who have gone before us in church history—people who faced life and learned lessons we can benefit from.

If you already know Jesus and believe the Bible, you will understand why it's at the center of this book. But if you're not sure, I hope you will continue reading nonetheless and discover God's Word speaking to you in profound and even supernatural ways. (By supernatural, I'm referring to the enlightenment of God's Holy Spirit, who can speak not only to believers but also to unbelievers, by drawing their minds and hearts toward the Good News of Jesus.)

How to Use This Book

This collection of short, self-contained meditations can be used as a standard day-at-a-time devotional. Or you can read it straight through as a conventional book with lots of short chapters, moving on to the next whenever you feel like it, not obliged to wait until the next day. Either approach should work well.

Who This Book Is For

I wrote this for two kinds of readers: first, those who *haven't* read *Happiness* but long to learn what God has to say about this subject and what his people have said about happiness throughout the centuries. It's for anyone who likes to deal with subjects in bite-sized chunks that are also heart-touching and practical.

Second, it's for those who *have* read *Happiness* but would like to return to the subject and ponder it in a devotional format that will likely speak to them in different ways. Some of what they read earlier will be reinforced, but much will feel brand new.

This book is also for those who want to pass on the exciting and paradigm-shifting concepts of *Happiness* but in a smaller and more easily digestible form that may suit their friends or family better.

It wasn't easy to select only sixty snapshots of *Happiness* for these meditations. There's so much more to be said! But I

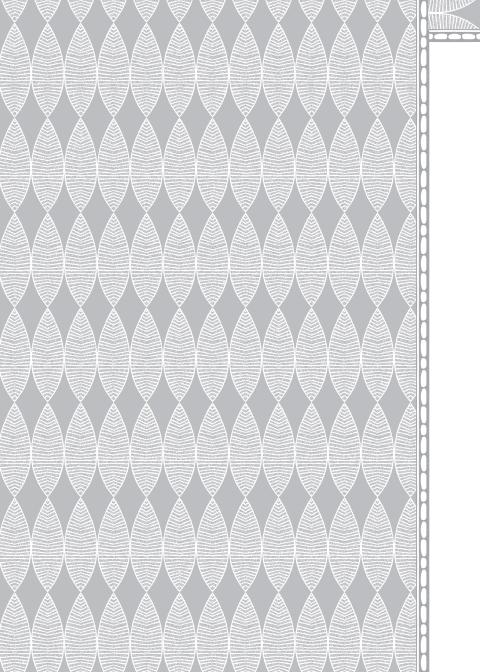
introduction

hope and pray these daily readings will help ignite your passion for the happy God and for the gospel of Jesus, which the Bible calls the "good news of happiness" (Isaiah 52:7) and the "good news that will cause great joy" (Luke 2:10, NIV).

If, when you're done, you want a more detailed exploration of this fascinating subject and the many Bible passages that speak of it, you may wish to consult the larger book, *Happiness*. If you want a small pass-along book that's a quick read and shares the happy-making Good News of Jesus, you'll want to consider *God's Promise of Happiness*.

For now, I invite you to join me in meeting the happy God on these pages and the pages of the Bible. Come listen to the Author and Source of happiness. Sit at the feet of him who wired you to want happiness. Consider the invitation of the one who wants you, even in a world full of suffering and struggles, to find in him the happiness each one of us longs for.

Randy aleon



-DAY 30-

When are good things wrong, and when are they right?

As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

1 TIMOTHY 6:17

What should be rejoiced in, if not the Lord of life himself, who is the everlasting joy and glory of the saints?

RICHARD BAXTER



WHEN WE WORSHIP God as God, everything else falls into place—good food and drink are delightful; friendship is fulfilling; marital sex can be deeply satisfying; and work, hobbies, sports, music, and entertainment can all enrich our lives as intended.

If I'm not happy in God when I see a waterfall or hear a great symphony or see a child playing in a mud puddle or watch a dog chasing his tail, then I'll not be happy in God when I attend church, read the Bible, or pray. I may congratulate myself for my spirituality when my eyes are on myself rather than him, but that's being pleased with my supposed piety, not being happy in God.

Idolatry is looking to the secondary as the source of happiness rather than as a conduit. What's good ceases to be good when we give it the prominence that should be reserved for God.

The child who loves to play basketball as one part of his life can one day look back with fond memories and look forward to what's next. The adult who makes basketball the center of his life still ruminates on his childhood successes and failures, and is devastated when his kids don't make the team or when his favorite team loses. The problem isn't basketball; the problem is turning basketball (or anything else) into the main thing. If it's the main thing, it's our god.

Is it really okay for me to enjoy my family, taco salad, books, and biking? Yes, if they're part of enjoying God and not alternatives to him. As long as they remain under him and I thank him for the happiness he brings through them, they can't compete with him.

While taking a break from writing about happiness, I experienced a series of events that illustrated the relationship between the secondary and primary.

First, I stood on our deck and looked up at the cold night sky, filled with the familiar stars I've known and loved since

When are good things wrong, and when are they right?

childhood. Then I returned to the warm house and pondered the immensity and beauty of the universe.

Once inside, I looked at a chair with Nanci's Bible beside it. She's part of a team that writes and edits lessons for our church's weekly women's Bible study, and that day she'd led the study. I thanked God for her, my best friend and a woman of the Word. I pondered how Nanci and I have known each other for forty-seven years and that I love her more than ever. I marveled at God's grace in bringing us together and thanked him for our two wonderful daughters and our grandchildren. At that moment Maggie, our golden retriever, sidled up and put her paw on my knee.

I stroked Maggie's head, and she gazed into my eyes and sighed deeply. I thanked God for dogs and for Maggie in particular, and I contemplated how God reveals glimpses of himself through his creation. Maggie is loyal to me; God is loyal. She's beautiful; God is the maker of all beauty. Maggie makes me happy many times a day. But because I understand Maggie's true nature and role, I realize it is God, in his kindness, who makes me happy through her. So I poured out my heart in gratitude to him.

All these secondary things are important because they point me to God, the primary. During that break from writing about happiness, I realized I am profoundly happy—and that all this happiness comes from the hand of God!

I love snorkeling and taking underwater photos of God's

sea creatures. I look at photos years later, some of them hanging in our home and my office, and they take me back to those magical moments of discovery. Through the photos, raccoon butterfly fish and Christmas wrasses reach out to me from their homes in the reef. The pictures rekindle my original delight when, peering into the dark shadows, I saw a puffer fish peeking back with huge eyes and a frogfish masterfully disguising itself as part of the reef. I remember the sudden discovery of a moray eel lurking behind two giant sea turtles and the thrill of seeing one whitetip reef shark, then five, emerging from a cave below me. I recall swimming in the open ocean and suddenly becoming part of a pod of dolphins as they wove their way next to and around me, seemingly adopting me as part of their pod. What wonder and worship!

The simple, daily cultivation of God-consciousness has had a central role in the increasing happiness I've experienced over the years. I often have coffee with God, and sometimes I have a meal alone with him. Occasionally when I'm praying, and those who've read my novel *Safely Home* may relate to this, I pull out a chair for Jesus and envision him occupying it (not only did he sit in chairs, he also built them!). I talk to him. I'm not pretending Jesus is with me at lunch or when I pray; I simply believe his promise that he really is with me and I act in keeping with it. If you want to be happy, put meaning to the sometimes empty phrase "spending time with God."

When we invite God into our happiness, we become aware

When are good things wrong, and when are they right?

of how he invites us into his. The happiest times of my life are when I've entered into the happiness of God—not only through Bible study, prayer, and church, but also when reading a good book, laughing with a friend, running, biking, and enjoying the wonders of his creation. It's a glorious thing to know God and love him through loving the world he has made—and anticipating the day when that world will be all he intends it to be.

fod, thank you for your incredible creativity in making the beautiful, sprawling, detailed, and fascinating universe you've placed us in. The small portion we've discovered is enough to surprise and delight us for ages to come. How we long for the day when the adventures begin anew and without hindrance—an eternity of discovering still more about you through the wonders of the New Heaven and New Earth!



Learn more about 60 Days of Happiness

When it comes to happiness, most of us have the same questions. Why can't I be consistently happy? Is it wrong to be happy when there's so much pain and suffering in the world? And perhaps the biggest one: How can I be happier?



Randy Alcorn shares sixty timeless devotions demonstrating that God not only wants us to be happy in him and enjoy his gifts, he commands and empowers us to do so.

Purchase this book

About Randy Alcorn

Randy is the founder and director of Eternal Perspective Ministries and the best-selling author of over 50 books (over nine million in print) including *Heaven*, *The Treasure Principle*, and the Gold Medallion winner *Safely Home*.



About Eternal Perspective Ministries

Eternal Perspective Ministries (EPM) is a nonprofit ministry dedicated to teaching principles of God's Word and assisting the church in ministering to the unreached, unfed, unborn, uneducated, and unsupported people around the world. You can order all of Randy's books and products through EPM's online store at www.epm.org.