

FOURTEEN MORE HAPPINESS WORDS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.
JESUS (JOHN 16:33, ASV)

Plunge ye all into this sea of sweetness, dive deep into this abyss of happiness—Christ Jesus is yours for ever and for ever. . . . He is the most joyful man who is the most Christly man.
CHARLES SPURGEON

Let's look at New Testament passages using other words in the happiness family— all rich with meaning.

KAUCHAOMAI

Definition: “to express an unusually high degree of confidence in someone or something . . . ‘to boast’”¹ (37 occurrences)

This boasting, in some contexts, involves finding happiness in what's being boasted about. (Most of the occurrences don't appear to relate to happiness, but some clearly do.) People can boast about their education, accomplishments, parents, spouse, children, or grandchildren. Or they can boast about something evil. In any case, their boasting is in what they suppose makes them happy.

- Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we *rejoice* in hope of the glory of God. (Romans 5:2)
- More than that, we also *rejoice* in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:11)
- Let the one who *boasts*, *boast* in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 1:31)

The Geneva Bible (1599) translates the verse, “He that *rejoiceth*, let him *rejoice* in the Lord.”

EUDOKEO

Definition: “to be pleased with, to take pleasure in”² (21 occurrences)

Here are a few uses of *eudokeo* in the New Testament, each of them applying to God and reminding us of his happiness:

- Behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am *well-pleased*.” (Matthew 3:17, NASB)
- Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen *gladly* to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32, NASB)
- It is your Father's *good pleasure* to give you the kingdom. (ESV)
- It gives your Father *great happiness* to give you the Kingdom. (NLT)

This remarkable verse, Luke 12:32, speaks volumes. We aren't just told not to fear; we're told *why* we need not fear. We're a flock of seemingly insignificant sheep, but the almighty and infinitely significant God is our Shepherd, our Father, and our King. By his grace, he has *happily* chosen to give us the Kingdom, that we might be ruled by him and (as other passages show us) rule forever with him (see 2 Timothy 2:12).

It amazes me that God has gladly chosen to do this. He doesn't begrudgingly yield certain benefits to his subjects to buy their loyalty. He's a gracious, benevolent Father, and his gifts are his “good pleasure” and “great happiness”!

These aren't ideas I bring to the text—the concepts are already there. Jesus spoke the inspired term *eudokeo*, translated “gladly,” “good pleasure,” and “great happiness.” Human fathers delight in giving their children good gifts precisely because the heavenly Father takes such pleasure in giving *his* children great gifts.

God's love for us is not detached and impersonal. It's emotional and filled with affection and delight.

AGALLIAO AND AGALLIASIS

Definition: “a state of great joy . . . often involving verbal expression and appropriate body movement”³ (16 occurrences)

The noun *agalliasis* is used by Luke three times: twice in his Gospel and once in Acts. Mary bursts into song about the son who would be her own Redeemer:

- I am *very happy* because God is my Savior. (ERV)

Surely Mary anticipated some of the shame that would fall upon her and Joseph when others discovered she was

pregnant outside marriage. Her life wouldn't be easy, but she trusted and rejoiced in her God.

When Jesus' disciples returned from sharing the Good News, here was Jesus' reaction:

- In that same hour he *rejoiced* in the Holy Spirit. (Luke 10:21)
- The Holy Spirit made Jesus feel *very happy*. (ERV)

This same word, *agalliao*, is used to describe Jesus' joy that is used in telling of Mary's joy. If we are to imitate Jesus, God's Son, we must cultivate our capacity to experience profound happiness in God's Spirit, who indwells us.

Jesus spoke of the gladness of Abraham to see his Savior bringing to pass what would become the Good News:

- Your father Abraham *rejoiced* that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad [*chairō*]. (John 8:56)
- Your father Abraham was very happy. . . . He saw that day and was glad. (NCV)

This significant statement speaks of an Old Testament saint living in Heaven who was apparently able to see and take pleasure in Jesus' incarnation and earthly life. Heaven may well be filled with multitudes of God's people happily beholding his unfolding drama of redemption on Earth.

- Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with *glad* and generous hearts. (Acts 2:46)
- They . . . shared their food *happily* and freely. (CEV)
- Of the Son he says, "Your throne . . . your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions." (Hebrews 1:8-9)
- I appointed you and made you *happier* than any of your friends. (CEV)

The following summary statements and passages all center on the words *agalliasis* or *agalliao*.

The light of Christ, shining through others, can bring us great joy and gladness.

Jesus said that John the Baptist was "a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to *rejoice* for a while in his light" (John 5:35). The New Century Version says, "You were *happy* to enjoy his light for a while."

My friend Greg Coffey, who came to Christ at seventeen, shone with a great light and then died two years later. The five young missionary martyrs who were murdered in Ecuador in 1956 were bright lights for Christ, along with their wives, who survived them. God used these Christ-followers to draw thousands of young people into missions.

I also think of Garland Gabbert, Cal Hess, Jim Spinks, and Tom Lyman—older men in our church who drew me and many others closer to Christ through their light. Rather than having hearts that shriveled as they grew older, they became more loving and ministry minded. May we all draw our light and joy from Jesus so that it's never extinguished, any more than he can be.

Our faith in Christ and our salvation are sources of great joy and gladness.

The Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). They responded, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household" (verse 31).

The jailer's family turned to Christ and washed Paul's and Silas's wounds, and then they were baptized (see Acts 16:32-33).

- He brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he *rejoiced* along with his entire household that he had believed in God. (Acts 16:34)
- He and his family were *very happy* because they now believed in God. (NCV)

Anticipating our eventual deliverance from all suffering can bring us great joy and gladness even in the midst of trials.

- In this you *rejoice*, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials. (1 Peter 1:6)
- This makes you *very happy*, even though now for a short time different kinds of troubles may make you sad. (NCV)

Commenting on this verse, Spurgeon said,

Unfelt trial is no trial. . . . There is a vast difference between a gracious submission to God's divine will and a callous steeling of your heart to endure anything that happens to you without any feeling whatever. . . . It is through the weeping and the lamenting, oftentimes, that the very essence of the blessing comes to us.⁴

Our relationship with Christ causes us to rejoice with great joy and gladness.

- Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and *rejoice* with joy [*chara*] that is inexpressible and filled with glory. (1 Peter 1:8)
- You *rejoice* with a glorious, inexpressible joy. (NLT)

If in this life we gladly share in Christ's sufferings, we'll one day experience great joy and gladness in his presence.

- Rejoice [*chara*] and be *glad*, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:12)
- Be glad and *rejoice*. (HCSB)
- Be happy and *excited!* (CEV)
- Rejoice [*chairo*] insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice [*chairo*] and be *glad* when his glory is revealed. (1 Peter 4:13)
- Be glad for the chance to suffer as Christ suffered. It will prepare you for even *greater happiness* when he makes his glorious return. (CEV)

All God's people will one day celebrate the marriage of the Lamb.

- Let us rejoice [*chairo*] and *exult* [*agalliao*] and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready. (Revelation 19:7)
- Let us be glad and *rejoice*. (NLT)
- Let us rejoice and *celebrate*. (CEB)
- We will be glad and *happy*. (CEV)
- Let us rejoice, let us be *glad with all our hearts*. (PHILLIPS)
- Joy we, and *make we mirth*. (WYC)

We will rejoice, as will all of Heaven, at the glorious marriage of Christ to his bride—us!

Chairo and *agalliao* aren't used to contrast each other but to reinforce the overall sense of profound happiness over Christ, the bridegroom, and the church, his bride.

The word agalliasis has a key place in one of the greatest benedictions in all Scripture.

- To him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with *great joy*, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)
- You will be *very happy*. (WE)
- . . . without fault and with unspeakable *joy*. (PHILLIPS)
- . . . in full out *joy*. (WYC)

EUPHRAINO

Definition: “to make glad, to cheer up, to cause to be happy”⁵ (14 occurrences)

- Be *happy* because of this, heaven! Be *happy*, God's holy people and apostles and prophets! God has punished her because of what she did to you. (Revelation 18:20, NCV)

Euphrosune, the related noun, is defined by Louw and Nida's lexicon as “a state of joyful happiness—‘joyfulness, rejoicing.’”⁶

- He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and *gladness*. (Acts 14:17, NASB)
- He did what is good by . . . satisfying your hearts with food and *happiness*. (HCSB)

Paul brought the gospel to unbelievers with the claim that the same God who had always provided common grace now offered them the special grace of eternal happiness in his Son. This example clearly affirms that God offers happiness (not just religious joy) through the gospel. Paul used happiness as a bridge to the desires of the human heart, bringing the gospel with him.

The definition of *euphrainomai* is “to rejoice as an expression of happiness.” Louw and Nida's lexicon gives instructions to Bible translators regarding Acts 2:26: “My *heart was glad*, and my tongue *rejoiced*; my flesh also will dwell in hope.” The lexicon says, “In some languages it may be necessary to translate *euphrainomai* in Ac 2:26 in an idiomatic manner, for example, ‘my heart sings’ or ‘my heart shouts because it is happy.’”⁷

The Worldwide English New Testament version translates this verse, “That made my *heart very happy*. It made my tongue *sing for joy*.”

Peter quoted from Psalm 16:11 in Acts 2:28, using *euphrosune* to render the Hebrew *simchah*:

- You will make me *full of gladness* with your presence.
- Your presence will *fill me with happiness*. (CEB)

The Bible translators' handbook says of Acts 2:28, “‘To be full’ only specifies the completeness of the event of joy, and this in turn is only an expression of a state, that is, ‘being happy.’ The final clause may, therefore, be rendered as ‘because you are with me I am completely happy’ (or ‘very very happy,’ with an expression of intensive degree).”⁸

Euphraino *is also used to describe both the celebration of the rich fool and the father who forgave his prodigal son.*

The rich fool, who builds storehouses for earthly treasure and doesn't trust in God, advises himself to *euphraino*: "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, *be merry*" (Luke 12:19). The New English Translation says, "Relax, eat, drink, *celebrate!*"

God interrupts the man's brief celebration: "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" (Luke 12:20, NIV).

The narrative about the gracious father who forgave his prodigal son likewise uses *euphraino* multiple times:

"Bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and *celebrate*. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to *celebrate*. . . . "It was fitting to *celebrate* and *be glad*, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found." Luke 15:23-24, 32

The rich fool and the gracious father are separated in Luke's narrative by only three chapters, and the identical word is used to depict their experience of joyful celebration. Both throw parties, enjoying food, drink, and laughter. The difference isn't in the food they eat and the wine they drink but in their hearts before God. A few verses earlier we see these words from Jesus: "I tell you, there is *joy* before the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). By putting on his own joyful party, this earthly father is mirroring the heavenly Father's joyful party in Heaven over a beloved image bearer entering his family. When God celebrates in Heaven, surely his people should celebrate on Earth!

As self-obsessed as the rich fool, the Prodigal Son's older brother uses the same word *euphraino* in his complaint to his father: "I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might *celebrate* with my friends" (Luke 15:29). The father points out that the older son could have chosen to celebrate any time. That he didn't was his own fault.

While living in the Father's house (perhaps in Christian families and churches), we can dutifully go through the motions of exterior righteousness while resenting God's extravagant grace in others' lives and refusing to enter into his happiness over them.

Instead, like the joy-filled, forgiving father who throws the party for his repentant son, we should celebrate God's grace in the lives of our fellow prodigals.

ASPASOMAI

Definition: "to be happy about, to anticipate with pleasure" (59 occurrences, most often meaning "to welcome")

- They did not get the things that God promised his people, but they saw them coming far in the future and were *glad*. (Hebrews 11:13, NCV)
- They were *glad* just to see these things from far away. (CEV)

At least seven versions translate it similarly, though most say "welcomed" (NASB) or "greeted" (ESV).

THARSEO/THARREO

Definition: "to have confidence and firmness of purpose in the face of danger or testing—"to be courageous . . . to be bold""⁹ (13 occurrences)

Tharseo occurs in the Gospels and Acts, *tharreo* in the letters. The courage depicted in these verses also implies a sense of good cheer:

- Behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "*Take heart*, my son; your sins are forgiven." (Matthew 9:2)
- Son, be of *good cheer*; thy sins be forgiven thee. (KJV)
- *Cheer up*, my son! Your sins are forgiven. (PHILLIPS)

When Jesus came walking on the water toward the disciples' boat, "they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, '*Take heart*; it is I. Do not be afraid'" (Mark 6:50). The King James Version says, "Be of *good cheer*."

- "*Cheer up*, my daughter," [Jesus] said, "your faith has made you well!" (Matthew 9:22, PHILLIPS)
- The following night the Lord stood by him and said, "*Be of good cheer*, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome." (Acts 23:11, NKJV)
- That's why we live with such *good cheer*. You won't see us drooping our heads or dragging our feet!" (2 Corinthians 5:6, MSG)
- So always *be cheerful!* (CEV)

SUNCHAIREIN

Definition: "to enjoy a state of happiness or well-being together"¹⁰ (7 occurrences)

Sunchairein is used of those celebrating with Elizabeth concerning her pregnancy: “Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown great mercy to her, and they *rejoiced with her*” (Luke 1:58). The New Life Version says, “They were *happy for her*.”

The man who finds his beloved animal “calls to his friends and neighbors and says, ‘*Be happy with me* because I found my lost sheep” (Luke 15:6, NCV).

This idea is reinforced a few verses later: “‘*Be happy with me* because I have found the coin that I lost.’ In the same way, there is *joy* in the presence of the angels of God when one sinner changes his heart and life” (Luke 15:9-10, NCV).

If anything should bring believers together in shared joy, it’s witnessing God’s grace in people’s lives! When we hear reports of people coming to faith in Christ, are we quick to thank God and celebrate his grace?

“If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all *rejoice together*” (1 Corinthians 12:26). The Complete Jewish Bible says, “If one part is honored, all the parts *share its happiness*.”

HEDEOS

Definition: “experiencing happiness, based primarily upon the pleasure derived”¹¹ (5 occurrences)

William Morrice notes that this word “occurs very frequently in classical Greek in the sense of ‘delight,’ ‘enjoyment,’ or ‘pleasure.’”¹²

It’s used negatively in Titus 3:3 and James 4:1 of sensual desires. But it’s used positively of people listening to Jesus: “The great throng heard him *gladly*” (Mark 12:37). The New International Version says “with *delight*”; the NCV says “with *pleasure*.”

Paul used *hedeos* twice in this verse:

- I will boast all the more *gladly* of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. . . . I will most *gladly* spend and be spent for your souls. (2 Corinthians 12:9, 15)
- I am very *happy* to brag about my weaknesses. (NCV)

SKIRTAO

Definition: “to be extremely happy . . . leaping or dancing for joy”¹³ (3 occurrences)

After the newly pregnant Mary came to visit her cousin, who was also pregnant, with John the Baptist, Elizabeth said, “Behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb *leaped* for joy” (Luke 1:44). The Contemporary English Version says, “My baby became happy and *moved* within me.” This is an astounding account of the preborn John responding joyfully to the presence of the preborn Jesus!

“Rejoice in that day, and *leap for joy*, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets” (Luke 6:23). The Good News Translation says, “Be glad when that happens and *dance for joy*”; the CEV is translated, “Be happy and *jump for joy!*”

EUTHUMEO

Definition: “to become encouraged and hence cheerful”¹⁴ (3 occurrences)

- Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone *cheerful*? He is to sing praises. (James 5:13, NASB)
- Is any *merry*? let him sing psalms. (KJV)
- Is anyone *happy*? Let them sing songs of praise. (NIV)

HILAROS AND HILAROTES

Definition: “cheerfully happy”¹⁵ (2 occurrences)

In the longest passage on giving in the New Testament (see 2 Corinthians 9), Paul wrote, “Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a *cheerful* giver” (verse 7). The NCV renders it, “God loves the person who gives *happily*.” Paul also used *hilaros* to describe exercising the gift of mercy:

- Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them . . . the one who does acts of mercy, with *cheerfulness*. (Romans 12:6, 8)
- If someone has the gift of showing kindness to others, he should be *happy* as he does it. (12:8, NCV)

We should serve happily as we use our gifts, but the bonus is that serving others will itself enhance our happiness.

SUNEDOMAI

Definition: “pleasure derived from some experience . . . to rejoice in, to delight in”¹⁶ (1 occurrence)

Romans 7:22 says, “I *delight* in the law of God, in my inner being.” The NCV says, “In my mind, I am *happy* with God’s law.”

Paul affirmed God’s Word as a source of happiness.

ASMENOS

Definition: “experiencing happiness, implying ready and willing acceptance—‘happily, gladly’”¹⁷ (1 occurrence)

Acts 21:17 says, “When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us *gladly*.” The Common English Bible says, “welcomed us *warmly*.”

EUPSYCHO

Definition: “to become encouraged . . . cheerful”¹⁸ (1 occurrence)

- I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be *cheered* by news of you. (Philippians 2:19)
- I will be *happy* to learn how you are. (NCV)

Here we see Paul as an ordinary person. Like all of us, he loves to hear from old friends and catch up on the latest good news about them. If he were with us today, I’m confident he’d be happy to get an e-mail or a phone call letting him know how old friends are doing— especially if they spoke of God, his grace, and the gospel of Jesus

¹ James Swanson, *A Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), s.v. “*kauchaomai*.”

² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 25.87.

³ *Ibid.*, 25.133.

⁴ Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Fullness of Joy* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1997), 106.

⁵ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 13.127.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.121.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.122.

⁸ Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, *A Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1972), 52.

⁹ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 25.156.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.125.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.17.25.

¹² William Morrice, *Joy in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 33.

¹³ Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 15.243.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.146.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.117.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.127.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.128.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.146.



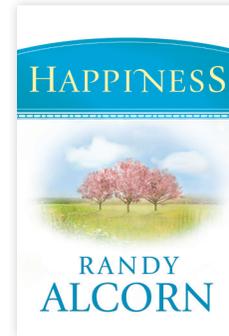
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with author Randy Alcorn

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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*.



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