

“Who Are the Happiest Among Us?”

Psalm 1

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The Republicans won, so did married people and those making over \$30,000 a year. In a poll taken last December, 62% of the Republicans said they were very happy while only 50% of the Democrats and 49% of Independents said they were. Married respondents were considerably happier than singles, with 62% saying they were happy compared to 45%. Sixty percent of those making over \$30,000 a year said they were happy compared to only 44% making less than that amount.

When asked what made them happy, people listed a variety of things: good relationships, feeling competent, a good job, a good attitude, a clear purpose for living, financial security, goals, freedom, security, a relationship with God, good health, and one man admitted, “my wife making more money than I do.”

If the Psalmist were polled, he would add two more to the list: **not following the crowd when they are headed in the wrong direction and discovering what God says about how to live and following Him.** Listen to his words in Psalm 1, which begin with blessed, a word we translate “happy.”

“Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose life does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that blows away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment or sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous but the way of the wicked will perish.”

Evidently there was no shortage of people in the Psalmist’s world headed in the wrong direction. David referred to them as wicked, sinful and ungodly. Those were harsh words that described people that made decisions based upon greed, selfishness, jealousy, revenge and the lust for power. The will of God was never considered in their decisions because His thoughts were irrelevant or interfered with their plans.

David knew something else about these people. They didn’t travel alone. They wanted a following and spent a lot of time and energy acquiring one. They readily offered ill-advised counsel and applied heavy pressure to get others to accept it.

Things haven’t changed much, have they? Our world is also filled with evil people trying to persuade others to follow them. Don’t be misled into thinking that they are easy to spot because they look like terrorists. They blend in quite well with mainstream society and hide their true motives behind insincere words.

I learned this at an early age. As a child, I recall being with a group of guys that got into trouble. When my dad found out, he asked with a voice of disgust, “What were you thinking?” Of course, I gave the standard answer, “I don’t know.” I knew at the time, however, that the honest answer was, “I wasn’t thinking. I let someone else think for me and lead me astray.”

Why is it in our best interest not to follow those that are headed in the wrong direction? Look at what David told his readers. Following people with sinister motives

would lead to pain, strife, dissension and death. Evil sows its own seeds of destruction because sin weakens and kills everything it touches. This is as true today as it was in David's time.

On a positive note, though, David said that happiness is discovering what God says about how to live and following where He leads. This was why he encouraged his people to meditate on the law. He wanted them to know what God said about arranging values and priorities, handling problems and treating others. He also wanted them to trust the Lord and follow where He led them. Therefore, David challenged them to meditate or think for themselves, grappling with issues and looking at the consequences of decisions. He had confidence in them to believe that if they did so, they would follow a wise and loving God, even though it may have been the road less traveled.

How would this lead to happiness, though? Why was it in their best interest to think for themselves and follow God? Doing so would lead to life, abundant and eternal because God would be with them each step of the way, leading, guiding, providing and protecting.

I like the image of the tree planted by streams of water that David poetically employed to describe someone following God. What do you think of when you see a stately tree? Strength, stability, purpose, productivity, longevity. These are gifts from God to everyone that studies His word and follows where He leads.

Are you studying His word and seeking His will? Are you wrestling with tough issues and decisions rather than letting someone else think for you? Are you following Him? If so, I have to believe that you are in that group of people that said they are happy and their lives are filled with meaning and purpose, even if you are a Democrat, single and make less than \$30,000 a year.