

The Secret to Happiness and Joy

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | May 5, 2020



“The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart” (Psalm 19:8 NIV84).

Have you ever struggled to find happiness and joy? Often my patients tell me how desperate they are to find happiness, but many seem to find only more pain and misery. What I have discovered is that most people don’t know the secret to happiness and joy.

And what is that secret?

Both happiness and joy are byproducts. This means that you cannot get happiness and joy directly; they are the result of some other action - much like sawdust is a byproduct of woodworking.

Experiencing Happiness

Happiness is the byproduct of healthiness in all domains - physical, mental, emotional, relational, and spiritual. When we are physically ill, we are not happy; mental or emotional illness - not happy; relationship conflict - not happy; spiritual sickness (guilt, shame, condemnation) - not happy.

Happiness is the byproduct of healthiness in all domains, and healthiness is experienced only when we are in harmony with God’s [design laws](#) for life - the protocols upon which the Creator God has built

reality to operate. When we break the laws of health, sickness, disease, and suffering occur – thus undermining our happiness. This is why the Bible repeatedly tells us, “Happy are those who keep God’s law!” (Proverbs 29:18 GNT).

While we cannot choose to “be happy” or seek to directly obtain happiness, we can choose to be healthy, choosing to live in harmony with all aspects of God’s design laws for life. And as we choose healthiness, the byproduct is ever increasing happiness.

However, many people fail to understand this and, instead of pursuing healthiness, they substitute pleasure-seeking, something which in the immediate moment will make them feel good. But this all-too often violates the laws of health (e.g., drugs, alcohol, casual sex, gambling, etc.) and causes only greater unhappiness. This often leads to addictions, as people, rather than seeking healthiness, double down on more pleasure-seeking.

Experiencing Joy

While happiness is the byproduct of healthiness, joy is the byproduct of using one’s energies in harmony with God’s purposes. God created humankind in His image and purposed that we should love others; should use our abilities to create, develop, advance, and discover; and should invest our physical and mental energies in godly achievement.

Parents, for example, experience joy in procreation. Artists and musicians experience joy in pouring out their passion in beautiful works. Farmers experience joy in a bountiful harvest. Scientists and mathematicians experience joy in new discoveries. And we all experience the greatest joy when we love others – when we give of ourselves for the good of others. This is why true life, health, happiness, and joy are found in living like Jesus, “who for the joy set before him endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2 NIV84).

Jesus intimately knew the joy of acting to save others, to love others more than self, to fulfill the purpose of His Father in heaven. And God, through Jesus, offers us the privilege of partaking of His divine nature, of having His design law of love restored in our hearts and minds (2 Peter 1:4; Hebrews 8:10).

This is the secret to experiencing happiness and joy:

- Happiness is a byproduct of healthiness, which is experienced only when live in harmony with God’s design laws, having them written in our hearts and minds.
- Joy is the byproduct of living out God’s purposes in our lives, ultimately loving others as God has loved us.

I invite you to be happy and joyful by pursuing a healthy life – in harmony with God’s design laws for life – and to live joyfully by choosing to fulfill God’s purposes for your life.
