

Joy or Happiness?

There is no difference between joy and happiness declared a pastor in my office, one day. A discussion ensued and I made an attempt to explain the difference.

What is happiness?

The word happy comes from an old 13th century. Webster defines happy as, “to feel pleasure, to be pleased or glad about an event or situation.” The root of the word is “hap”, which means chance, fortune or good luck. In other words there is a chance that one might *be happy*.

If one’s circumstances or *happenings* please him, then he is *happy*. If they don’t, he might wish that they would not have *happened*. He would view himself as *un-happy*. Do you know someone who has changed jobs, neighborhoods, spouses, or churches in the futile pursuit of *happiness*? Who doesn’t? This person only experiences brief moments of *happiness*. He is usually unthankful, complaining and often says he is bored. Complaint is ever present because he believes the myth that he should be happy. I do believe *happiness* is a choice, but few find it.

What is joy?

Dr. Jim Wilder writes in his book, *Joy Starts Here*, that joy is a relational experience. Yes, joy is only found in relationships. He goes on to write that “... joy is the twinkle in someone’s eyes, the smile from deep inside, the gladness that makes lovers run toward each other, the smile of a baby, the feeling of sheer delight that grows stronger as people who love each other lock eyes, what God feels when He makes His face shine over us and the leap in our hearts when we hear the voice of someone we have been missing for a long time.” Those relationships may be vertical or horizontal.

Malcolm Smith writes, “Joy is a constant, unmoved by the changing course of events, for it is rooted in the unchangeable God.”

For example, when my grandson Joel sees me, he comes and gives me a big hug with a smile on his face. He is feeling joy. I return that smile and experience joy as well. Each morning on our back porch I experience joy by being in the presence of my Lord Jesus.

What does the Bible say about joy?

Over 515 times in the Bible we read the words joy, joyful and rejoice. Let’s examine some of the passages, and you can read the rest at your leisure.

Nehemiah 8:10-17

Then [Ezra] told them, Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet drink, and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. And be not grieved *and* depressed, for the **joy of the Lord is your strength *and* stronghold.**

John 15:11

I have told you these things so that you can have the same joy I have and so that your joy will be the fullest possible joy.

John 17:13

And now I am coming to You; I say these things while I am still in the world, so that **My joy may be made full and complete and perfect in them** [that they may experience My delight fulfilled in them, that My enjoyment may be perfected in their own souls, that they may have My gladness within them, filling their hearts].

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Isaiah 35:10

And the ransomed of the LORD will return
And come with **joyful shouting** to Zion,
With **everlasting joy** upon their heads.
They will find gladness and **joy**,
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.

The first step

How can we expect to find joy in digital technology if joy is only found in personal relationships? The first step in developing joy is to begin making healthy, meaningful, and glad-to-be-with-you relationships. Turn off the digital world, the portal that enables people to live dual lives in parallel virtual worlds. If you are one who finds online life more satisfying than real life, it's time to develop some healthy face-to-face relationships. Take the risk and stop expecting more from technology and less from each other. One will not find joy in living a life alone in the digital world.