

How to Be Happy

Today's Scripture: Proverbs 3:13-20.

Today's Verse: *Happy is the man that findeth wisdom . . . it is better than silver.* —Proverbs 3:13a-14a (KJV)

I remember the first time I was handed a 50-dollar bill and told, "Spend it however you like." I thought I had died and gone to heaven! While 50 dollars might not seem like much to an adult today, it was a small fortune to a twelve year old in the days before personal computers and cable TV. Spending money, I thought, was the key to happiness. But, like that 50 dollars (and the stuff I bought with it), this happiness was short-lived.

Other happiness searches were just as short-lived for me. Relationships, social activities (which translated to serious college partying), work accomplishments—I pursued them all, most times to my disappointment.

But God had something longer lasting in store for me, something I couldn't have fathomed: wisdom. That's why Solomon, another seeker of happiness, declared that the results of wisdom are better (and more long lasting) than anything we can buy.

—Linda Washington

***No man should desire to be happy
who is not at the same time holy. He
should spend his efforts in seeking to
know and do the will of God.***

—A. W. Tozer

Advance from Babyhood

Today's Scripture: 1 Kings 2:1-6.

Today's Verse: *Keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper.* —1 Kings 2:3 (KJV)

Is there any graduation that doesn't feature a speech exhorting the graduates to greatness? All such speeches I've heard over the years have done it. But honestly, I can't *remember* a single word of exhortation from any of the graduations I've attended. Instead, the advice that sticks with me came from my mother.

When I was growing up, and even after I became an adult, Mom would always say: "Know who your real friends are" and "Make the Lord first in your life." She never grew tired of proclaiming either admonition, no matter how much I tried to tune her out. Yet these nuggets of wisdom were life giving for me.

Before he died, David gave similar advice to his son Solomon, the future king of Israel. David knew that obedience to God would ensure his son's success. You might not hear this kind of advice in the next graduation ceremony you attend. Yet it can help you graduate from spiritual babyhood to spiritual maturity.

—Linda Washington

***Lord, grant me the will to seek You
all the days of my life.***

The Kindness Code

Today's Scripture: 1 Kings 2:7-12.

Today's Verse: *Shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother.*

—1 Kings 2:7 (KJV)

I'll never forget the kindness one of my mother's closest friends showed her during Mom's bout with cancer. When at her most helpless in post-surgery, Mom received Norma's invaluable help: cooking, washing, vacuuming, helping Mom in and out of the tub.

So when Mom's friend needed some books that I could easily supply, do you think I hesitated? No way! How could I neglect the woman who took care of my mother?

David reminded his son Solomon to show kindness to the sons of the man (Barzillai) who had provided for him during a low point in his life (see 2 Sam. 17:27-29). With this command, David continued to pass on a legacy of kindness to his son. This was a code David lived by (see also 2 Sam. 9). But is this the kindness code you live by too?

—Linda Washington

I will be kind to the poor, for they are alone. Kind to the rich, for they are afraid. And kind to the unkind, for such is how God has treated me.

—Max Lucado

Carte Blanche

Today's Scripture: 1 Kings 3:1-6.

Today's Verse: *In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee.*

—1 Kings 3:5 (KJV)

You're familiar with the phrase *carte blanche*, right? It means "unrestricted power or authority." When we say that someone has *carte blanche*, we usually mean that she can do or ask whatever she wants. The sky's the limit. Every kid wants *carte blanche* with his or her parents, especially at Christmastime.

In a sense, Solomon had *carte blanche* with God. The King of the Universe offered the king of Israel anything he wanted. Can you imagine that? But this offer came to an irresponsible man who planned to go his own way immediately afterward. Solomon needed to seek God first—and stick with Him. The fulfillment of his request would be at the discretion of an always wise Lord.

Hundreds of years later, Jesus made a similar offer to His disciples: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7). In other words, believers have *carte blanche* with God, because of Jesus. Count on it!

—Linda Washington

***God's providence is on the side
of clear heads.***

—Henry Ward Beecher

Lifetime Project

Today's Scripture: 1 Kings 3:7-15.

Today's Verses: Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad. . . . And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. —1 Kings 3:9-10 (KJV)

As a kid, I asked God for wisdom. I didn't consider the main factor: the ability to make good decisions. For me, wisdom was having a huge IQ, like Marilyn vos Savant—the answer lady in *Parade* magazine.

I wanted it right away, too. You see, I've never been a patient person, and the idea of being instantly wise held great appeal. But I wouldn't gain wisdom overnight, nor would I ever truly *feel* wise. I came to see that wisdom is a process, sometimes learned “the hard way.”

Solomon wanted a discerning heart to rule well. A wise request! He knew he'd need God's wisdom to make good decisions, and this unselfish desire pleased God.

Want to honor God? Ask for wisdom. He's always glad to give it (see Jas. 1:5.) But don't worry if wisdom doesn't seem to come in an instant. It's a lifetime project.

—Linda Washington

Wisdom is the power to see and the inclination to choose the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it.

—J. I. Packer

All for Jesus?

Today's Scripture: Mark 10:17-25.

Today's Verse: *Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.*

—Mark 10:21 (KJV)

When I was in college, I had a friend who gave up an opportunity to do post-graduate work at a music conservatory in Italy (as a flautist) in favor of going into the ministry. At first, I couldn't understand how he could give up so much, having pursued music for so long. But another passion took the place of music.

At that point, I didn't value that passion, the pursuit of God. Oh, I knew Jesus had died for my sins. But I wasn't yet willing to give up my plans in favor of His. Like the rich young ruler, I was still the ruler of my own life. But many years and heartaches later, I discovered the value of following another master.

What, if anything, do you find yourself most unwilling to part with, if Jesus asked you to let go? How do you show your willingness to "take up the cross, and follow"?

—Linda Washington

Self-sacrifice is the real miracle out of which all the other miracles grow.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Solid Rock

Today's Scripture: Luke 6:46-49.

Today's Verse: *He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.*

—Luke 6:48 (KJV)

The Cathedral Metropolitana in Mexico City used to be on the 100 Most Endangered Sites list. Why? Because it was slowly sinking into the lake bottom upon which it was built. One hundred twenty-seven thousand tons will do that in soft earth, especially if a foundation isn't totally level! But a project to shore up the foundation and straighten the building stopped it from sinking.

Jesus talked about a different kind of foundation in His Sermon on the Mount. Believing in Him, and obeying His commands, was the way to build a solid foundation for daily living. Anyone who trusted in anything else would sink like a cathedral built on sand.

On the days when doubts or fears come calling, you might feel as if you're sinking. But Jesus is not only skilled at laying foundations, He also repairs them. Have you consulted the Master Carpenter lately?

—Linda Washington

***Lord, You are my strong foundation.
Today I'll rest all my hope upon You.***