Rejoicing Before the Lord: The Sanctuary of Worship | July 23, 2011 | Order Info

Happiness is good for you. And there are studies that prove it. According to author Jerry Looper, there are at least six life benefits of happiness:1

**Better Health:** In one particular study, over 2,200 Mexican-Americans who were 65 and older were tested for positive emotion (a way of indicating happiness). Then they were tracked for two years. After considering variables, the researchers discovered that those who were happy were 50% more likely to live, and 50% less likely to become disabled. Happy people are also more likely to have strong immune systems and endure pain better than unhappy people.

**Longer Life:** The Mayo Clinic conducted a study, which proved that people who are optimists live longer than people who are pessimists. One famous study of 180 nuns' personal writings showed that those who wrote with positive emotions lived to age 85 and beyond. And of those, 54% lived to 94! In contrast, of those nuns whose writings were less cheerful, only 35% were still alive at age 85, and only 11% lived to age 94.

**Successful Relationships:** In a study of 222 college students, the 10% who measured the happiest differed from the others in one primary way—they had a fulfilling social life. And their friends also rated them the highest on good relationships. Mills College conducted an interesting study in the 1990s involving 141 senior photographs from their 1960 yearbook. It examined the nature of the smiles in the yearbook: genuine smiles verses forced smiles. The genuine smilers experienced more authentic wellbeing in life, and were more likely to get married and stay married.

**Success in Work:** An 18-month study of 272 workers showed that people who are happy are more satisfied with their jobs than unhappy people. And the happier people are, the higher their job productivity. Happier workers receive both better job evaluations and higher pay.

**Better Mental Health:** Studies show that happier people tend to have less depression, suicide and paranoia. They also have greater self-control and coping skills.

So we can see that happiness benefits all areas of our lives. But how can we be happier people? Health writer Tom Valeo believes that we can pursue happiness by avoiding pessimism, resentment and anger. On the popular website, *WebMD*, he lists these seven strategies for happiness:2

1. Don’t worry, choose happy. Make a conscious choice to become active in boosting your happiness.
2. Cultivate Gratitude. Exercise your brain by listing things that make you grateful.
3. Foster forgiveness. Let go of grudges. They affect your physical and mental health.
4. Counteract negative thoughts and feelings. Exert control over negative thoughts and feelings.
5. Remember, money can’t buy happiness. Realize that “stuff” will never bring about enduring happiness.
6. Foster friendship. Nurture the friendships that are natural antidotes to unhappiness.
7. Engage in meaningful activities. Get more out of life by putting more into it.

As Christians, we would add strategy number eight: Rejoice before the Lord! There is a spiritual, mental and even physical benefit to worshipping God—both privately and publicly. Israelite worship is a good example of this. Although the sanctuary was a sacred and holy place, their worship was not cold, sterile or formal. They were encouraged to rejoice and be joyful. It was their joyfulness that helped keep them going day after day in the hot desert. It kept their mind’s focused on God rather than on themselves and their problems. It gave them peace, hope and endurance.

And like them, we have the same reasons for rejoicing in our worship: we have the truths of salvation, redemption, mediation and judgment. Reasons to worship—reasons to rejoice! And a strategy for happiness.

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