

1 The Pursuit of Happiness

- Finding it in a place where most people wouldn't even look . . .

2 Honoring Heros

- Doug Sterner is considered the most knowledgeable historian of America's highest award for valor, the Medal of Honor.
- He has made numerous television appearances on FOX News, as well as ABC's "Good Morning America" and other national network broadcasts.
- He is currently compiling a database of recipients of the military's top decorations.
- However, he discovered that many falsify their military records and claim medals they didn't earn.

3 Phonies

- In one particular case, Doug came across an individual who claimed he had earned a Navy Cross citation.
- Even though the metal looked real, it was a fake and when confronted the man confessed to his forgery.
- He was stupid enough to have given it to a veteran's museum for display.

4 Phonies

- This guy admitted . . .
 - he never served in Vietnam,
 - never earned the Navy Cross,
 - never saw combat and,
 - he was never a Marine.
- The man admits,
 - "This was just a stupid, immature thing that took on a life of its own. Then it becomes a question of ego, and you don't want to admit you lied everyone, so you keep the lie going."

5 Does Pretending Make Us Happy?

- The pretender blamed it on immaturity and ego.
- But why would someone lie about who they really are?
- According to the experts, people lie about themselves because they're unhappy about themselves.
 - When you're unhappy with the cards you're dealt with, you will often fantasize about a different life instead of the real life you are living.
 - This unhappiness can cause us to do bad things—like faking to be someone we're not.
- So then does faking it make us happy?

6 True Happiness

- Many people seek happiness, but few find it.
- If they do find it, it is usually temporal and brief and can come at a high cost to themselves or others.
- However, according to Psalm 112, “Happy are those who fear the Lord, who take great delight in his commandments.”
- Notice anything peculiar here?

7 True Happiness

- Most people believe that “thou shalt nots,” and “thus shalt do’s,” are restrictive and thus barriers to our happiness.
- However, the Bible connects happiness with holiness.
- Want to be happy? Start by doing the right thing.

8 Who’s Happy?

- The General Social Survey of 2004 asked people to identify themselves as religious or secular and then asked if they would say they were “very happy, pretty happy or not too happy.”
- Religious people were twice as likely as secular people to say they were “very happy” while secular people were nearly three times as likely as religious folks to say they were “not too happy.”

9 John Wesley

- Sarah Heaner Lancaster, a professor of systematic theology at the Methodist Theological School in Ohio, examined a number of Wesley’s sermons and found that he “explicitly spoke of happiness as the goal of Christian life.”
- She found that more than 70 of his sermons included some reference to happiness, and some of them were devoted solely to that subject.

10 John Wesley

- Like the psalmist, Wesley linked happiness and holiness.
- Lancaster found that one of Wesley’s recurring themes is what constitutes “true religion.”
- As we might put it, religion isn’t real when it’s just an outward show, such as wearing an unearned military decoration.

11 John Wesley

- In short, Wesley said real religion includes “gratitude and benevolence.”
- That was his shorthand for the two great commandments: Love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.
- Wesley then linked this true religion with happiness. He said righteousness, peace and joy are present in those who live true religion.

12 Don’t Fake It!

- In one of his sermons, Wesley maintained that God made us to be happy just as Adam and Eve were happy before they disobeyed God.
- When they turned away from him and sinned, they lost that happy state.
- As Lancaster summarized Wesley: “If we are unable to live the holy lives for which we were made, we will also not be able to enjoy the happiness of relationship with God for which we were made.”
- In other words, happiness is a byproduct of a life of right living, and faking holiness won’t bring real happiness any more than faking military decorations brings real honor.

13 The Pharisees

- “Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees . . .” (Mark 8:15 NIV)
- “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. (Luke 12:1 NIV)
- Everything they do is done for men to see: . . . they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi.’ (Matt 23:5–7 NIV)

14 The Pharisees

- . . . they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. (Matt 6:5 NIV)
- . . . they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. (Matt 6:16 NIV)
- . . . [neglect] the more important matters of the law — justice, mercy and faithfulness. (Matt 23:23 NIV)
- . . . clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. (Matt 23:25 NIV)
- . . . appear to people as righteous (or religious) but on the inside [they] are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. (Matt 23:28 NIV)

15 More on Wesley

- The early Methodists were persecuted and were accused of being enthusiasts.
- In those days an enthusiast was a derogative description for someone who was an emotional religious fanatic.
- While emotional expression was honored among the Methodists, it wasn’t necessarily the goal.
- Their goal, however, was the practice of “true religion” where their piety had substance and content. They understood that man’s true purpose was to discover ultimate fulfillment (happiness) through obedience to Him in all things.

- In other words, they didn't want to be "religious fakes" and miss out on what God had for them, real joy, happiness, and peace.

16 ☐ Unhappiness

- According to John Wesley, even faithful Christians at times experience what is called "heaviness"—the weight of difficult circumstances, sorrow, ill health and similar matters.
- Wesley's response is that trust in God sustains us through such times and that we may even "rejoice in sorrow."
- We're able to do this because our faith tells us that God is with us and that His goodness, love and mercy is sufficient.
- Wesley argued that real happiness (joy) — which is growing in holiness — isn't threatened by life's circumstances. Instead it transcends them.

17 ☐ Joy will be Full

18 ☐ Summary

- Last week, Jim Latimer taught on Stewardship—delegated responsibility.
- He implied that the road to "abundant living" is to be faithful in those areas of our lives that are suppose to be devoted to the Lord.
- Meaning that if we are faithful in the use of our time, talents, gifts, and finances we will be blessed.
- And if we are blessed will we not have joy and happiness even during hard times?

19 ☐ Conclusion

- We should never take those things which are holy and use them on our wants. No matter how much we're able to rationalize it.
- Those parts of our finances, time, and talents (gifts) that are holy unto the Lord should never be used for profane, fleshly, or for personal ambition or glory.
- To do so, frustrates God's work and activity in our life.
- Yes, we could fake it, but why would we do that?
- Wouldn't it be a lot easier just to be faithful?

20 ☐ The Blessing of Faithfulness

- Happy are those who deal justly with others and always do what is right. (Psa 106:3 NLT)
- Happy are people of integrity (Psa 119:1 NLT)
- This is my happy way of life: obeying your commandments. (Psa 119:56 NLT)
- How happy are those who fear the LORD all who follow his ways! (Psa 128:1 NLT)
- Blessed (happy) are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (Matt 5:6 NIV)

21 Dismissal

- Let us now go so that our joy may be full!