

Righteousness, A Life of Satisfaction

Why is it important for people to understand that righteousness (living right) gives us a more satisfied life? People often assume that their job, money, home, car, family, hobby, fun activities, etcetera are going to make them happy, but happiness can be fleeting. We may make something the center of our lives only to end up disillusioned or dissatisfied at some point. What can really bring us satisfaction and happiness over a lifetime?

Years ago, I began to talk to one of my cousins about Yeshua (Jesus). I began sharing with him some scriptures and we began short spontaneous talks about the Bible. After a couple months, he was loving his relationship with God and loving his life. It was then that he confessed to me that he had been deeply depressed and despondent and had even thought of killing himself. I was shocked. This is a guy that had a great job, a beautiful home and family, and had everything he could possibly want. His life turned right side up when God and the Messiah entered his life. Who says that the Messiah Yeshua doesn't bring peace!¹ It wasn't long after he believed that he told me one day that he wanted to be a holy person, to do what is right, to be righteous. All of us that aspire to follow God should eventually get to that point as we grow up spiritually. He went from depression to joy through the Messiah Yeshua. He went from being disillusioned about life to being happy and satisfied.

The Pew Foundation did a survey on people in the United States and they found that only 34% of the people in the United States considered themselves very happy. That is only one out of every three people. We'd think that most of the wealthy would be very happy, but only 49% of the wealthy considered themselves to be very happy. Of those who go to a place of worship, 43% considered themselves very happy; so that percentage is just a little lower than those who were wealthy.² Yet, we'd expect more people in the United States to be in the category of very happy. What has gone wrong with our society, a society that considers itself to be the model for freedom and happiness for the individual?

To understand how our modern society thinks we have to go back to the Renaissance where science became the language of society. This type of thought continues to this day. In modern society we substitute rationale and scientific thinking for godly values. So, we end up with our brains set to this pattern of thinking. Anytime we make a decision our minds switch into a progression of information and feelings based on our society and scientific thinking rather than thinking about the Bible and God's commands.

Just recently, I was watching a TV show that featured these two sisters from another country. I noticed how much their ideals and behavior matched the people group of where they came from. It was actually stunning. Then there was the logical process that they went through that was based on what was right for them. This was all based on a few preferences and their societies norm – how their society views things. It was a rationale that really didn't seem so bad. All that they talked about though had nothing to do with the fact that there is a God and the real basis they needed for happiness. The Bible describes people who formulate their own values as 'doing what is right in their own eyes.' "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise;" Proverbs 12:15 NKVJ. What better advice can we have than to get the Bible's advice. It has been a source of wisdom for thousands of years.

We all need a better way with which to begin our process of decision making and how we live, and not just something that we make up ourselves. It is probably hard to imagine anything wrong with our process of thinking, but it is often based on years of decision making that has been processed systematically with

¹ "What I am leaving with you is shalom - I am giving you my shalom. I don't give the way the world gives. Don't let yourselves be upset or frightened;" John 14:27 CJB. God gives shalom, peace, to all those who believe in the Messiah.

² <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2006/02/13/are-we-happy-yet/>

God often set on the sideline. This process for some of us has been, for some extent, without God at the center of our thinking. The problem with that is, the creator God knows what is best for us and our thinking then is devoid of the first process in thinking that should take place. This faulty process which often contains just someone's ideas removes God from the equation of our values and decisions.

Think of this process as turning on a light in our mind. When we make a decision a switch flips in our heads that automatically leads to an outcome based on what we believe deeply inside us, in our hearts. Our minds are much more complex than a computer, but let's also use a computer as an example. We click to open a program that is a decision-making program and the process there is already set up with the data. It is a sum of what we've learned from school, society, our parents, our friends, our congregation, from our need for acceptance, etcetera. Even if we have put our hearts into making God a priority, we still have lots of secular stuff there.

Rabbi Yochanan (John) said, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world —the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world;" 1 John 2:15-16 NKJV. Perhaps we look at this scripture and think, "I love God, I don't want to do wrong, and I am not going to let worldly things control me." That's pretty good, but also think about what Yochanan is saying based on what we are talking about. The world can have a negative effect on us. Wow, he's a very smart guy! Some people call the pull of the world from our past "baggage," namely things from our past that influence us negatively. Also, we have the present pull of society that is always there to distract us spiritually.

If we keep God's handbook for life (the Bible) out of the equation of decision making, that weakens our relationship with God, can cause us to have an endless devotion to the worldly (just like Yochanan warned us), and can eventually break down our faith. People are often engaged in an endless cycle in their lives to find satisfaction, but can not find lasting satisfaction because their lives have little or no actual basis in truth. They may get locked into something that gives them satisfaction for awhile, but it usually doesn't last.

Even a dedicated believer can lose spiritual focus and energy and join in on this endless cycle to find satisfaction in life. Anyone of us can get impatient and begin looking for fleeting satisfaction from worldly things. We mostly see this in the secular world where people leave jobs or spouses, become workaholics, become overly absorbed in a hobby, live their lives through TV shows, overindulge themselves with something or things, endlessly try to appear successful or beautiful; people will do almost anything to find satisfaction, even some defy death by doing some strange extraordinary feat.³

People often become disillusioned and dissatisfied at least at some point in their life. One very well to do lady I once knew told me, 'What have I spent my whole life doing? I have all these things, but now it seems meaningless to me.' She had been filling her life with things that many people would only dream of. I was standing in the amazing foyer of their mansion with a six-foot-wide staircase on the one side, large beautiful portraits on the side of the staircase, and huge beautiful banisters. The answer to her question is she needed to do things God's way and find God her creator and the Messiah Yeshua. She needed to stop the cycle of errant thinking and put her central values in God and the Bible and find

³ Working, hobbies, having fun etcetera are things we can enjoy and where we can also be productive, but sometimes we overindulge in things. We need to have balance in our lives and be less selfish with our time. Our family, friends, people in the congregation, need a place in our lives. Also, since we believe in the Messiah, we need to exercise our spiritual gifts and find at least something that we enjoy doing spiritually. We could join a home group Bible study, serve the poor, do a faith based activity, and so on. Sometimes people don't want anyone to intrude in their lives and they end up being reclusive in society. Why not be part of life and society instead of just living out your own activities, plans, or dreams.

satisfaction in the truths from the Bible and God. I'm not just talking about mere mental ascent, but fully anchored peace and trust in God.

Often a godless centered lifestyle can lead to endless frustration. It's like trying to reinvent the wheel for a lifetime. I used to know an architect and he designed a building for a company. The company used his design for their other buildings. Doing this saved them a tremendous amount of time, money, decision making, and anguish. That's what God does for us. Basing our lives on God and the truths of the Bible can save us a lot of anguish, disillusionment, and dissatisfaction. Basing our lives on God diminishes anxiousness, can give us a good sense of direction, and give us a more satisfied life. God gives us the blueprints of how we are to behave – we just have to follow the blueprints.

You name it; there no end to what people can come up with as a basis for life. Ecclesiastes 1:8-9 NKJV says, "All things are full of labor; man cannot express it. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun." What can be a better basis for life than the Bible? Can you even believe how appropriate that scripture applies to what we are talking about? This scripture is attributed to Solomon who lived about 2,900 years ago! Some say the Bible is old and out of date, but that's not what we see here. The Bible is relevant and can be a powerful source for living. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart;" Hebrew 4:12 CJB. That's an amazing scripture. The Bible is not a dead useless book, but gives us deeply valuable insight.

We need the truths of the Bible to get us moving in the right direction and to help us make better more informed decisions. We need to be constantly learning and relearning biblical principles and applying them. "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called " Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;" Hebrews 3:12-13 NKJV. We need to keep "straining forward" to be holy, to do what is right and be righteous. That is the way to true satisfaction and happiness in life.

Rabbi Shaul says in Philippians 3:13-15 NKJV:

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call ... Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

We need to make God, the Bible, and the Messiah the center of our lives and the root of our decision-making process. We need to apply what we learn and make it part of our family, work, congregational life, fun activities, and every part of life. I would say to the person who keeps trying to find satisfaction in life, "Have you tried God yet? It's worth a try." I've seen many people become happier and more satisfied with life when they believe in God and the Messiah Yeshua. We need to aspire to living a holy and righteous life; in Hebraic thought that is what it means to be a tzadiq, someone who does what is right. The Bible tells us over and over to live right, be righteous.

Although the following scripture was intended for Israel, it can apply to anyone who sincerely seeks God. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart;" Jeremiah 29:11-13 CJB. If you want to live right, if you really want lasting satisfaction, you need to make God the basis for your life and how you live. We need to trust God; He has plans for us and we can have a hope and a future, a life of satisfaction through Him.