

Which Do You Desire: Happiness Or Joy?

When we meditate on what we can observe in society we see that happiness is linked with possessions or physical experiences.

The problem is that such happiness can fade as time passes, and constantly needs to be boosted or renewed with ever more things or more stimulating experiences.

Why is this?

Such happiness is linked to our physical finite senses, that of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing.

Listen to the thoughts of one great ruler who had everything and did everything, King Solomon.

Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 [Living Bible] *“I SAID TO myself, “Come now, be merry; enjoy yourself to the full.” But I found that this, too, was futile. For it is silly to be laughing all the time; what good does it do? So, after a lot of thinking, I decided to try the road of drink, while still holding steadily to my course of seeking wisdom. Next I changed my course again and followed the path of folly, so that I could experience the only happiness most men have throughout their lives. Then I tried to find fulfillment by inaugurating a great public works program: homes, vineyards, gardens, parks and orchards for myself, and reservoirs to hold the water to irrigate my plantations. Next I bought slaves, both men and women, and others were born within my household. I also bred great herds and flocks, more than any of the kings before me. I collected silver and gold as taxes from many kings and provinces. In the cultural arts, I organized men’s and women’s choirs and orchestras. And then there were my many beautiful concubines. I became greater than any of the kings in Jerusalem before me, and with it all I remained clear-eyed, so that I could evaluate all these things. “Anything I wanted, I took, and did not restrain myself from any joy. I even found great pleasure in hard work. This pleasure was, indeed, my only reward for all my labors. **“But as I looked at everything I had tried, it was all so useless, a chasing of the wind, and there was nothing really worthwhile anywhere.”**”*

For all this great seeking for happiness and the contentment it brings, Solomon ended up totally frustrated.

What final conclusion did this great wise king come to?

Ecclesiastes 12:12-14 [Living Bible] *“But, my son, be warned: there is no end of options ready to be expressed. Studying them can go on forever, and become very exhausting! Here is my final conclusion: **fear God and obey his commandments**, for this is the entire duty of man. For God will judge us for everything we do, including every hidden thing, good or bad.”*

What difference will following this advice make?

Let us read the words of a person who has taken this advice.

Psalms 16:8-11 [Living Bible] *“I am always thinking of the Lord; and because he is so near, I never need to stumble or to fall. **Heart, body, and soul are filled with joy.** For you will not leave me among the dead; you will not allow your beloved one to rot in the grave. **You have let me experience the joys of life and the exquisite pleasures of your own eternal presence.**”*

When we seek the presence of our Eternal Creator God we are crossing into the spirit world.

In that world we find joy which is of the spirit in us and cannot be taken away from us whatever our physical experiences may be.

We have the personal experience of Christ's disciple Paul who had dramatically made this change in his life to become a follower of Christ, God's Son.

Philippians 4:11-13 [Message Bible] *“Actually, I don't have a sense of needing anything personally. I've learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances. I'm just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little. I've found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty. Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am.”*

Paul found his joy in life by being the disciple of Jesus Christ.

How can this happen to us?

John 14:23, 26-27 [NIV] *“Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” ... “But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

Here is how we find this inner joy of contentment and peace, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit [God's presence] in us.

Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”* One of the fruits [end products] of our relationship with the Holy Spirit is joy.

Only when we seek the presence of our Creator God will we ever experience the lasting inner joy in our lives.