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Dear friends and family,

Can you envisage a happy God? Perhaps we are more accustomed to hearing about a loving and a gracious God, or a righteous and a holy God, or a powerful and majestic God. But a happy God? The NT has basically two Greek words that are translated into the English 'blessed', one has to do with 'praise and good words' and the other with 'happiness.' The expression translated 'Blessed are...' in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5) could also be rendered 'Happy are...'. This 'happy' word is also used by the apostle Paul in 1 Tim. 1:11 to describe God, "...the glorious gospel of the blessed [happy] God."



Joy and happiness are no small themes in Scripture. We read that the Lord Jesus "for the *joy* set before him endured the cross" (Heb. 12:2), that there is "*rejoicing* in heaven over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:7). The faithful servants are rewarded with a fantastic invitation: "Come and share your *master's happiness*" (Matt. 25:21). Jesus prayed: "...that they may have the full measure of *my joy* within them" (John 17:13). The apostle described the essence of God's kingdom as "righteousness, peace and *joy* in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). What role does joy and happiness play in your Christian life and ministry? Clearly happiness is not the only ingredient, but surely it should be a basic flavour in our Christian experience, personal and collective.



Being like God: happy!

The eunuch "went on his way *rejoicing*" because he had become a Christian (Acts 8:39). Paul was happy because he evidenced repentance (2 Cor. 7:9). Titus was happy because he had a taste of genuine Christian fellowship (2 Cor. 7:13). We read of others who found joy while living difficulties: Habakkuk, in the depth of an economic crisis said, "yet I will *rejoice* in the Lord, I will be *joyful* in God my Saviour" (Hab. 3:18). David, when hiding from Saul in a cave said, "My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music" (Ps 57:7). Others "*joyfully* accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions" (Heb. 10:34). Our happiness is enhanced by agreeable circumstances, but essentially happiness seems to be a choice. Our joy depends on the way we see reality. It involves trusting God even when we don't understand His ways. How will you live today? Choose to see God's Hand acting in and around you. Choose to enjoy your partner, your children, your work. "This is the day the LORD has made; let us *rejoice* and *be glad* in it" (Ps 118:24). Why not?





Family developments

As parents we are enjoying this phase in family life. **Elsa** studies and lives in Ede, about 1 hour drive from here, and comes home most weekends. She has found a happy swing to life. It is now 2 years since **Edward** (17) had heart

surgery. We are all grateful that his strength continues to improve. Together with his youth group he is preparing for a 2 week mission trip to Macedonia this summer. **Julie** (14) is growing up rapidly and continues to take her school work very seriously. Her school group 'nearly' won a trip to New York, but another school with a better creative idea won the first prize!



What is Anneke up to?

It is now 3 years ago that she experience a 'burn-out'. It has been a frustrating long path to recovery with ups and downs along the way. As a family we have learnt the value of rest. Her day now has regular moments of rest and she sets limits to her involvement. Recently she has taken up some of the activities she enjoyed before, such as occasional pastoral visits, helping (together with Julie) in the Sunday-school and being part of the teams that organize the annual married couples weekend and two Bible Focus weekends. Slowing down the pace of life goes against a strong cultural current where being always busy is a virtue. She has noticed that a slower pace yields two great benefits: She feels more *creative* and she *enjoys* more what she does. Try it!



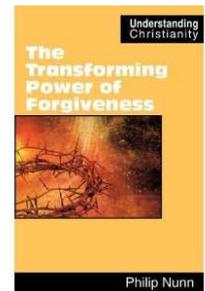
What is Philip up to?

Last January he spent 2,5 weeks in Colombia, helping with some teaching at an intensive Bible training programme and visiting a number of homes and assemblies. In April he helped at a conference in Barcelona, Spain. He has spent the rest of the time here in Holland, helping at a Heart Cry conference in Zeeland, an assembly youth camp in Alphen, at an EZA day and through a number of visits to assemblies. Being part of the leadership team of our Christian assembly here in Eindhoven has absorbed a fair amount of his time and energy, running a course for preachers together with Gerard Elbers, a pastoral course with Gert-Jan van Kleef and baptism course. Progress on the rebuilding of our meeting hall is progressing well. We hope to move in after the summer.



Publications

In January John Rice at Scripture Truth Publications (UK) published the book on forgiveness in English. It is available through [Amazon](#) and a number of other internet retailers. This month Arjan Baan at Heart Cry (NL) published the book "Homosexuality – Scriptural and pastoral considerations in the 21st Century" in Dutch. Its translation into French under the title of "[Les Partenariats Homosexuels](#)" was completed last week, and is now freely available in pdf format from my website. Our earnest hope is that these may be a help to many readers.



Again, our sincere thanks for taking the time to read this, and to those who regularly pray for us and support us. May you, in your corner, also serve the Lord with happiness.

- Philip & Anneke