

A Happy God

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

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?

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