

Snacks, Scripture, and Searching for Happiness

Co-sponsored by Roberts Park Book Club

Tuesday, January 9

Roberts Park Fellowship Hall

6:30 – 8 p.m.

Recently, the Roberts Park book club read *Hector and the Search for Happiness*, a book about a man who travels the world seeking to learn what makes people happy. At this gathering, we will talk together about Hector's question and some related ones to include our faith-based perspectives: **What makes us happy? Does God mean for us to be happy? What is happiness, anyway?**

One of Hector's first stops is the Tsu monastery, where he speaks with an old monk, an obviously contented man, about his journey. He tries to persuade the monk to reveal the secret of his contentment, but the monk tells Hector instead that his journey is a really good idea and to come back at the end of it.

As Hector interacts with people of varied societies, cultures and backgrounds, he keeps a notebook of the lessons he is learning, which amount to 23 in all, listed below. He returns to monk, who approves of his list, but then the monk says that 3 of them are the most important of all.

Listed below are the lessons Hector wrote in his notebook. If you had to choose from just this list, which 3 would you choose? Mark them in some way so you can refer to them later.

Lesson 1: Making comparisons can spoil your happiness.

Lesson 2: Happiness often comes when least expected.

Lesson 3: Many people see happiness only in their future.

Lesson 4: Many people think that happiness comes from having more power or more money.

Lesson 5: Sometimes happiness is not knowing the whole story.

Lesson 6: Happiness is a long walk in the mountains.

Lesson 7: It's a mistake to think that happiness is the goal.

Lesson 8: Happiness is being with the people you love.

Lesson 8b: Unhappiness is being separated from the people you love.

Lesson 9: Happiness is knowing your family lacks for nothing.

Lesson 10: Happiness is doing a job you love.

Lesson 11: Happiness is having a home and a garden of your own.

Lesson 12: It's harder to be happy in a country run by bad people.

Lesson 13: Happiness is feeling useful to others.

Lesson 14: Happiness is to be loved for exactly who you are.

Lesson 15: Happiness comes when you feel truly alive.

Lesson 16: Happiness is knowing how to celebrate.

Lesson 17: Happiness is caring about the happiness of those you love.

Lesson 18: Happiness could be the freedom to love more than one woman at the same time.

Lesson 19: The sun and the sea make everybody happy.

Lesson 20: Happiness is a certain way of seeing things.

Lesson 21: Rivalry poisons happiness.

Lesson 22: Women care more than men about making others happy.

Lesson 23: Happiness means making sure that those around you are happy?

Bible Verses Related to Happiness

Here are some selected verses from the Old and New Testaments. Read the surrounding verses/chapter for more context.

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. (NIV)

Psalm 37:3 Trust in the Lord and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart. (NRSV)

Psalm 16: 11 You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (NRSV)

Mark 8: 34-35 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.” (NRSV)

I Timothy 6:17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. (NIV)

Luke 6: 22-23 Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets. (NIV)

Luke 6: 25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. (NIV)

Luke 1: 14 You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at this birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. (NRSV)

Philippians 4:8-9 Finally, beloved,^[a] whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about^[b] these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. (NRSV)

Galatians 5: 22-23 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. There is no law against such things. (NRSV)

Romans 8: 18 Consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. (NRSV)

A Very, Very Small Sample of Quotes about Happiness by Christian Writers

Happiness is based upon what happens today but the peace of God, which supersedes human understanding, is as eternal as the life to come... The Bible nowhere promises us happiness in this life. Jack Wellman, *What Christians Want to Know*, April 2013, at <https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/does-the-bible-promise-happiness/#ixzz51MAHUDW0>

He doesn't promise us happiness, but there are more important things in life than feeling good, things God can offer us that no one else can. There will always be suffering here, and though God doesn't take it away in this life, He can help me find peace through it and learn from it; and sometimes He's just there for me to yell at when it hurts. His promise to us is more substantial than happiness. --Allison Barron, *Debunking the Myth of Happiness* (March 14, 2017) at <http://www.boundless.org/blog/debunking-the-myth-of-happiness/>

More than anything else- United Methodists believe in God's amazing and unquestioning love over humanity. All of our beliefs, doctrines, practices and theology begins with a firm grounding in the belief that God wants each and every one of us to be happy, healthy and holy. – Loudenville UMC at <http://www.loudonvilleumc.com/what-do-united-methodist-believe.html>

I cannot think that when God sent us into the world, he had irreversibly decreed that we should be perpetually miserable in it. If our taking up the Cross imply our bidding adieu to all joy and satisfaction, how is it reconcilable with what Solomon expressly affirms of religion, that 'her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace?' --John Wesley as quoted in *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A. M., Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, Vol. 2 of 2: In Which Are Included, the Life of His Brother, the Rev. ...* by Henry Moore

Let us leave sadness to the devil and his angels. As for us, what can we be but rejoicing and glad? —St. Francis of Assisi as quoted in *Happiness*, Randy Alcorn

I've Got the Joy In My Heart

I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart
Where?
Down in my heart!
Where?
Down in my heart!
I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart
Down in my heart to stay