

## “God Wants You Happy”—MythBusters (1 of 4)

We’re beginning a new series this week called, “**MythBusters**” where we’re going to explode a few of the spiritual myths that people buy into when it comes to God, religion, and Christianity.

As our key verse for this series I want us to turn to 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (p. 915) where we read, “*For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear. They will reject the truth and chase after myths.*” 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (NLT) The Apostle Paul writes to the young pastor, Timothy, and warns him that some people “*can’t handle the truth,*” and search after anyone who will pacify their mind and heart with teaching that sounds like the truth, but is really far from it.

Some people want a “spiritual fix” that makes them “feel good” but in the end it doesn’t make the good. Some want to have their selfish desires fed and their behaviors approved, but not have their hearts cleansed and their lives truly changed.

By rejecting truth and chasing after myths they run to the spiritual flavor of the month.

To begin our series, I want to talk to you about a spiritual myth that I think is one of the most dangerous, and yet, one of the most common spiritual myths in the American church today.

You may not hear it said so clearly, but it’s in our Christian language. It’s on TV with TV preachers. You can read books and magazines that say it, and you will hear it over and over and over again, and it is a message that feels very good. Here is the myth. **“God Wants You Happy.”**

*“God has good things in store for you. God wants you to enjoy your life. God wants you to prosper in every single way.”* You hear it in many ways, but the bottom line is: God wants you happy.

This is called “A Theology of Happiness,” and the danger is that it elevates us to the point where God is there to serve us, rather than the truth, that is that we are here to serve Him.

It’s a very subtle belief, and yet it’s very seductive.

You can even see it in our children’s stories. Read any fairy tale, and you will always hear it close out with the same famous line. What is it? *“And they all lived. . .”* Say it with me, “. . . *happily ever after.*” When was the last time you heard a children’s story that reflected real life?

Parents, imagine reading this story to your children at night: *“And Papa bear said, ‘Who’s been eating my porridge?’ And mama bear said, ‘Who’s been sitting in my chair?’ And baby bear said, ‘Someone’s been sleeping in my bed and she’s still there. It’s a little girl.’ Well, papa bear had had a really bad day, his property taxes went up, his boss was mad at him, the forest economy was struggling, their home was still on the market, the price of fuel was through the roof, his presidential candidate didn’t make it through the primaries, and he hadn’t yet received his stimulus check. So, papa bear lost his temper and went to the little girl and grabbed her with his paws. Because mama bear was still suffering from postpartum depression, she grabbed the little girl, too. And the little girl screamed, ‘Help me. Help me. I’m only a little girl. Somebody save me!’ But papa bear and momma bear showed no mercy. The baby bear shouted out, ‘That will teach you to sleep in my bed.’ And the three bears went to bed on a full stomach and lived happily ever after. The end.”*

Now, for those of you who are wondering—no, I’m not going to read that story to my boys tonight! The truth is: ***Sometimes Life Doesn’t Have A Happy Ending.***

As a communicator, I’d love to be able to stand up here and say to you, “*God wants you to be happy. And because God wants you happy, God only has good things in store for you.*” The problem with that is when we believe that God’s job revolves around making us happy, we reduce the holy and majestic God of the universe into a cosmic vending machine.

People put their money in the slot, say a little prayer, press the right button. . . and expect God to deliver. And if what we pray for doesn’t come out right, we blame God, because there’s something wrong with our universe. After all: ***If God Wants Me Happy And I’m Not, Then Hasn’t God Failed?***

Right? If God really desires for me to be happy, but I am miserable, then God didn’t deliver. God didn’t do what I needed him to do to make me happy. *“God didn’t repair my marriage. God didn’t give me that job. God didn’t keep my child from harm. God didn’t give me a better family. God didn’t give me more talents and abilities. God didn’t. . . (you fill in the blank).”*

Today I'd like to share with you three different reasons why God might not want you happy.

### **1. God Doesn't Want You Happy...When It Causes You To Sin (REPEAT)**

Would you read aloud with me 1 Peter 1:15-16, "*But now you must be (Happy?) holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is (Happy?) holy. For the Scriptures say, 'You must be (Happy?) holy because I am (Happy?) holy.'*" 1 Peter 1:15-16 (NLT)

Here's the truth: ***God Is More Interested In Our Holiness Than Our Happiness.***

In God's spiritual economy, our happiness is never the bottom line. God never calls us to sacrifice his standards in the name of happiness.

Now, don't get me wrong, I believe that God is a good God. The Bible says so, and I can testify to that with in my own life. I know this even more now that I'm a father. The Bible says that God is a Father who loves to give good gifts to his children.

Now, get this, I want my sons happy, but not at the expense of their own growth and maturity.

I don't want my children happy—at any cost. I'd be a horrible father if I lived that way.

Let's look at a few situations where this might play out:

**Serving Others:** In our consumer culture, most people want to sit back and be served—that would make them very happy. But God didn't give us that option. We're not to have a consumer mind-set when it comes to the church, we're to have a contributor mind-set. That means that we give up our own time and comfort so that others can be served—it's simply following the example of Jesus.

**Finances:** The Bible says that all of our money belongs to God. He asks us to give back 10% to his work in the church and to honor him with the other 90%. "*But I want to be happy!*" And so we don't give and we don't save and we don't honor God with our money.

**Marriage:** Our marriage is a covenant that we made before God and others. "*But my spouse isn't making me happy—I deserve a better spouse.*" Yeah, and so does your spouse!

**Sexuality:** So you're dating someone: "*I know the Bible says I should wait until I'm married, but you don't understand, we love each other. I don't care what God says, I want to be happy.*"

Do you see how subtle and how dangerous this is? Is God's goal for your life to be happy?

Look at Romans 6: "*Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined him in his death? For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives.*" Romans 6:1-4 (NLT)

In other words: ***Our new life should result in a new lifestyle.***

As much as we want to believe it's all about our happiness, it is not. Our happiness is never the bottom line in God's spiritual economy.

### **2. God Doesn't Want You Happy...When It's Driven By Circumstances (REPEAT)**

Where does the word happy come from? Well, you are happy if the "happenings" are right, but if the "happenings" around you are not right, you are not happy. Is that how we should live?

Paul laid out a different example. (Give background) "*Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.*" Philippians 4:11-13 (NLT) If you allow yourself to write in your Bibles, circle the phrase: "*Learned how to be content.*" That's not a natural response to our circumstances—we have to let God teach us.

(ILLUS: Chuck Swindoll, "*Life is OK under the circumstances...what are you doing down there!*")

What history tells us is this: ***In the pursuit of happiness, most people become miserable.***

What do we see all around us today? "*Maybe this will make me happy. Maybe this will make me happy.*" Somehow, in our pursuit of happiness, in the most blessed country on Earth, most people are discontented and miserable!

If you're living for right now, you're going to miss what God wants to do "in" you so that he can later work "through" you.

(REPEAT)

**REVIEW: When It Causes You To Sin/ When It's Driven By Circumstances**

There's a deeper gift that God gives us, and that's a gift of joy...

**3. God Doesn't Want You Happy...He Wants You Joyful (REPEAT)**

What's the difference between "Happiness" and "Joy?" The fullest meaning of the word, "Joy" has to do with an inward contentedness that is not affected by your circumstances. That is the kind of joy God desires for his children!

Here's the difference: ***Happiness is an emotion, joy is state of being.***

(ILLUS: Above ground stream vs. Underground river)

Two years ago I took the family to DisneyWorld. Do you know what they call DisneyWorld? "*The Happiest Place on Earth*" Do you know what they call the parking lot of DisneyWorld at the end of your visit? "*The Meanest Place on Earth.*"

In contrast to looking for the happiest place on earth, look at Psalm 34, "*Taste and see that the LORD is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him! Fear the LORD, you his godly people, for those who fear him will have all they need. Even strong young lions sometimes go hungry, but those who trust in the LORD will lack no good thing.*" Psalms 34:8-10 (NLT) Taste and see! ***If you pursue happiness, you'll miss God. If you pursue God, you'll find true joy!***

I love this quote from John Piper, "*God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.*" John Piper Are you seeking God for your greatest pleasure?

Stop pursuing happiness and start pursuing God! He will bring you true joy!—————

You know, I realize that everyone longs for happiness. Every person of every age wants to find true happiness. But we go about it the wrong way. We look to people, or possessions to fill us and fulfill us. The problem is: *We are too easily satisfied!*

Everyone longs for a fulfilled life, but if we seek it from money or power or lust or a relationship with another person, we'll miss out on the best thing on earth.

This past week in my morning Bible reading I came across this awesome verse about having true joy. It's from Psalms 32. Listen to this, "*Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight!*"

*"Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty!"* Psalms 32:1-2 (NLT) **GOSPEL (God, Us, Jesus, You)**

Here's what we do not do. We do not go to God for him to serve our desires to make us happy.

We go to him as his servant, and as we enjoy him our Savior. We learn to take our delight in him, as our forgiver and leader.

And here's the good news: The good news is, God doesn't always want you happy. He's always got something much, much better for you than that.

The Weekly has a few take home questions for you to talk about with your family this week.