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# Paths to True Happiness

**M**ore than anything else, Heavenly Father desires our true and lasting happiness.

“Our happiness is the design of all the blessings He gives us—gospel teachings, commandments, priesthood ordinances, family relationships, prophets, temples, the beauties of creation, and even the opportunity to experience adversity. . . . He sent His Beloved Son to carry out the Atonement so we can be happy in this life and receive a fulness of joy in the eternities.”<sup>1</sup>

People everywhere are looking for something. In their own way, what they are really looking for is happiness. As with truth itself, however, many are kept from happiness “because they know not where to find it” (D&C 123:12).

Because they do not know where to find true and lasting happiness, they look for it in things that actually bring temporary pleasure

only—buying things, seeking honor and praise from the world through inappropriate behavior, or focusing on physical beauty and attractiveness.

Pleasure is often confused with happiness. It seems that the more people seek temporary pleasure, the less happy they become. Usually, pleasure endures for only a short time.

As President David O. McKay (1873–1970) said: “You may get that transitory pleasure, yes, but you cannot find joy, you cannot find happiness. Happiness is found only along that well beaten track, narrow as it is, though straight, which leads to life eternal.”<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately for many, happiness is elusive. Scientists know that “more than simply positive mood, happiness is a state of well-being that encompasses living a good life—that is, with a sense of meaning and deep satisfaction.”<sup>3</sup>

Research shows that happiness is not the result of bouncing from

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one experience to the next. Instead, achieving happiness typically involves a long-sustained effort for something more important in life. Happiness is determined by habits, behaviors, and thought patterns that we can directly address with intentional action. Much of our happiness is actually “under personal control.”<sup>4</sup>

Let us consider the importance of some of the paths of happiness found in the scriptures and taught by modern prophets and apostles. Faithfully and firmly planting our footsteps on those paths will allow us to enjoy happiness in the journey ahead.

### **Virtue**

The first of these paths is virtue, which is a pattern of thought and behavior based on high moral standards. It encompasses chastity and moral purity, which qualify you to enter the Lord's holy temples. Virtuous

people possess a quiet dignity and inner strength. They are confident because they are worthy to receive and be guided by the Holy Ghost. Virtue begins in the heart and mind, and it is the accumulation of thousands of small decisions and actions each day.

“Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dew from heaven.

“The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever” (D&C 121:45–46).

President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) has taught that “there is no friendship more valuable than your own clear conscience, your own moral cleanliness—and what a glorious feeling it is to know that you stand in your appointed place clean and with the confidence that you are worthy to do so.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Uprightness**

A second path of happiness is uprightness. Elder Richard G. Scott (1928–2015) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught:



*“Recognize that enduring happiness comes from what you are, not from what you have.*

“Real joy comes from righteous character, and that is built from a pattern of consistent righteous decisions. . . . Your righteous decisions determine who you are and what is important to you. They make doing the right things easier. For happiness now and throughout your life, steadfastly obey the Lord.”<sup>6</sup>

As we study the scriptures, we learn that the promises made by the Lord to us encourage righteous living. Those promises nourish our souls, bringing us hope by encouraging us not to give up even in the face of our daily challenges of living in a world of waning ethical and moral values. Therefore, we need to make sure that our thoughts, words, and actions are leading us along the path back to our Heavenly Father.

### **Faithfulness**

A third path to happiness is faithfulness. It is fundamental to understand that God blesses us according to our faith, which is the source of living with divine purpose and eternal perspective. Faith is a practical principle that inspires diligence. It is manifest in our positive attitude and

desire to willingly do everything that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ ask of us. It is what takes us to our knees to implore the Lord for guidance and encourages us to arise and act with confidence to achieve things consistent with His will.

As you go forward in your journey, you will be tested to see if you will do all things that the Lord your God commands you (see Abraham 3:25). This is part of the mortal experience. It will require that you press forward with steadfast faith in Christ, being led by the Spirit and trusting that God will provide for your needs.

Remember that you must not waver in your faith—even in times of great difficulty. As you are steadfast, the Lord will increase your capacity to rise above the challenges of life. You will be enabled to subdue negative impulses, and you will develop the capacity to overcome even what appear to be overwhelming obstacles.

### **Holiness**

Holiness, another path to happiness, is related to spiritual and moral perfection. Holiness indicates purity of heart and intent. How can we labor each day to feed ourselves spiritually so that we can develop such godly character?

President Harold B. Lee (1899–1973) answered: “We develop our spiritual selves by practice. . . . We must have daily exercise by our spirits by prayer, by doing daily good deeds, by sharing with others. We must feed our spirits daily by studying the scriptures every day, by [family home evening], by attendance at meetings, by the partaking of the sacrament. . . .

“The righteous man strives for self-improvement knowing that he has daily need of repentance.”<sup>7</sup>

Another important element of holiness is related to making and keeping covenants in the temple. If we are faithful, these covenants can elevate us beyond the limits of our own power and perspective. All the promised blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ can be ours through our faithfulness to the ordinances and covenants we make before Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ in the temple. Part of the pattern of living “after the manner of happiness” includes building a temple in which to worship and make covenants with the Lord (see 2 Nephi 5:16, 27).

The key point of this path is that we should be very careful to develop spirituality and be morally pure.

## Obedience

Keeping all the commandments of God is related to the other paths to happiness. After the Nephites had separated from the Lamanites, they prospered exceedingly as they kept the judgments, statutes, and commandments “of the Lord in all things, according to the law of Moses” (2 Nephi 5:10). This pattern is another important element of living “after the manner of happiness.”

President Monson has taught: “When we keep the commandments, our lives will be happier, more fulfilling, and less complicated. Our challenges and problems will be easier to bear, and we will receive [God’s] promised blessings.”<sup>8</sup> He also said, “The knowledge which we seek, the answers for which we yearn, and the strength which we desire today

to meet the challenges of a complex and changing world can be ours when we willingly obey the Lord’s commandments.”<sup>9</sup>

The Savior entreats us:

“If ye love me, keep my commandments. . . .

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:15, 21).

## Selflessness and Love

The golden pathway to happiness is one of selflessness and love—love that has concern, interest, and some measure of charity for every living soul. Love is the direct route to the happiness that will enrich and bless our lives and the lives of others. It means, as the

Savior said, that you show love even to your enemies (see Matthew 5:44).

In doing so, you will be fulfilling the greater commandment to love God. You will soar above the ill winds that blow—above the sordid, the self-defeating, and the bitter. True and lasting happiness comes only when we choose to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matthew 22:37; see also Deuteronomy 6:5; Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27).

May each of us choose to love the Lord and follow His paths to happiness, which is “the object and design of our existence.”<sup>10</sup> ■

*From a commencement address, “Paths for Happiness,” given at Brigham Young University–Hawaii on June 8, 2017. For the full address in English, go to [devotional.byuh.edu](http://devotional.byuh.edu).*

## NOTES

1. “Happiness,” Gospel Topics, [topics.lds.org](http://topics.lds.org).
2. David O. McKay, in Conference Report, Oct. 1919, 180.
3. “Happiness,” *Psychology Today*, [psychologytoday.com/basics/happiness](http://psychologytoday.com/basics/happiness).
4. “Happiness,” *Psychology Today*.
5. Thomas S. Monson, “Examples of Righteousness,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2008, 65.
6. Richard G. Scott, “Making the Right Decisions,” *Ensign*, May 1991, 34.
7. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Harold B. Lee* (2000), 176, 178.
8. Thomas S. Monson, “Keep the Commandments,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 83.
9. Thomas S. Monson, “Obedience Brings Blessings,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2013, 92.
10. Joseph Smith, in *History of the Church*, 5:134.



Learn what true happiness is at [lds.org/go/41849](http://lds.org/go/41849).