



“WALK THE PATH THAT happy people walk. If you do, your chance to find joy in unexpected moments, to find peace in unexpected places, to find the help of angels when you didn’t even know they knew you existed, improves exponentially.” –Elder Jeffrey R. Holland



By Elder
Jeffrey R. Holland

Of the Quorum of the
Twelve Apostles

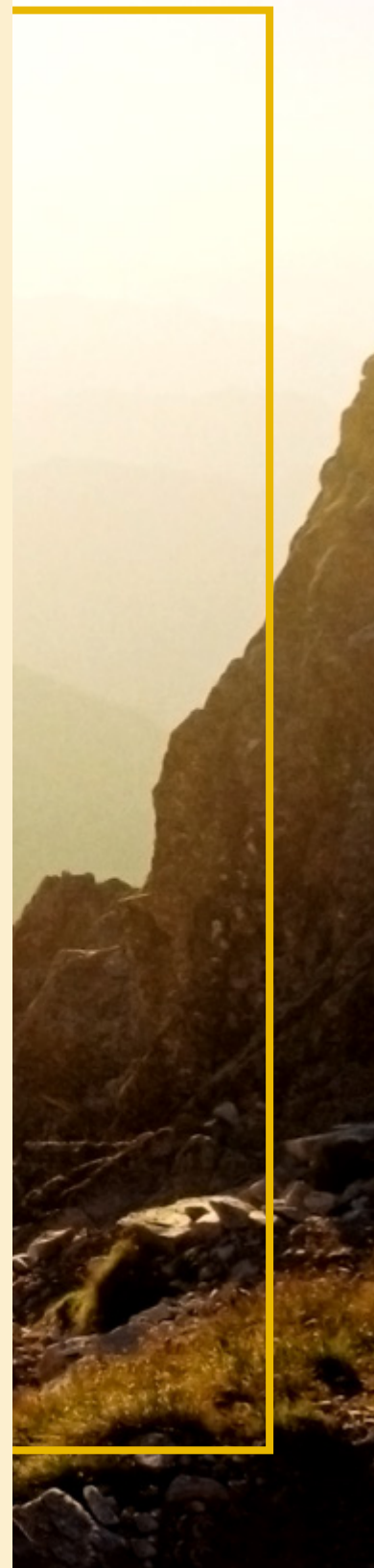
THE QUEST *for Happiness*

*So much of your happiness is in your hands, not in events
or circumstances or fortune or misfortune.*

wish to comment on Nephi's phrase about living "after the manner of happiness" (2 Nephi 5:27). It suggests a *quest* for happiness, not necessarily happiness itself.

I do not think God in his glory or the angels of heaven or the prophets on earth intend to make us happy all the time, every day in every way, given the testing and trial this earthly realm is intended to provide. As President James E. Faust (1920–2007) once phrased it: "Happiness is not given to us in a package that we can just open up and consume. Nobody is ever happy 24 hours a day, seven days a week."¹ But my reassurance to you today is that in God's plan we can do very much to find the happiness we do desire. We can take certain steps, we can form certain habits, we can do certain things that God and history tell us lead to happiness.

In short, your best chance for being happy is to do the things that happy people do. Live the way happy people live. Walk the path that happy people walk. If you do, your chance to find joy in unexpected moments, to find peace in unexpected places, to find the help of angels when you didn't even know they knew you existed, improves exponentially. Here are at least a few ideas about how one might live "after the manner of happiness."





CHRIST IS “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)—no one comes to true happiness except by Him.



1. LIVE THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.

Above all else, ultimate happiness, true peace, and anything even remotely close to scriptural joy are found first, foremost, and forever in living the gospel of Jesus Christ. Lots of other philosophies and systems of belief have been tried. Indeed it seems safe to say that virtually *every* other philosophy and system has been tried down through the centuries of history. But when the Apostle Thomas asked the Lord the question young people often ask today, “How can we know the way?” (and at your age in life that really translates, “How can we know the way to be happy?”), Jesus gave the answer that rings from eternity to all eternity, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. . . . And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. . . . If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it” (John 14:5–6, 13–14).

What a promise! Live my way, live my truth, live my life—live in this manner that I am showing you and teaching you—and whatsoever you ask will be given, whatsoever you seek you will find, including happiness. Parts of the blessing may come soon, parts may come later, and parts may not come until heaven, but they will come—all of them. What encouragement that is after a blue Monday or a sad Tuesday or a tearful Wednesday! And it is a promise the realization of which *cannot come any other way* than by devotion to eternal truth!

2. CHOOSE TO BE HAPPY.

Second, learn as quickly as you can that so much of your happiness is in your hands, not in events or circumstances or fortune or misfortune. That is part of what the battle for agency was over in the premortal councils of heaven. We have choice, we have the power to make our own decisions, we have agency, and we can choose if not happiness per se, then we can choose to live after the manner of it. Happiness comes first by what comes into your head a long time before it comes into your hand.



KINDNESS AND PLEASANTNESS AND FAITH-BASED OPTIMISM are characteristics of happy people.



For example, “Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly” (D&C 121:45). That is not only good counsel against the modern plague of pornography, but it is counsel for all kinds of gospel thoughts, good thoughts, constructive thoughts, hopeful thoughts. Those faith-filled thoughts will alter how you see life’s problems and how you find resolution to them. “The Lord requireth the heart and a willing mind” (D&C 64:34), the revelations say. Too often we have thought it was all up to the heart; it is not. God expects a willing mind in the quest for happiness and peace as well. Put your head into this. All of this takes effort. It is a battle but a battle for happiness that is worth waging. Don’t be passive. Think and speak and act positively. That is what happy people do.

3. DON’T BE NEGATIVE, MEAN, OR ANGRY.

You can never, worlds without end, build your happiness on someone else’s unhappiness. That is what bullying is. That is what catty remarks are. That is what arrogance and superficiality and exclusiveness are. Perhaps we think if we are negative enough, or cynical enough, or just plain mean enough, then expectations won’t be too high; we can keep everyone down to a flaw-filled level and therefore our flaws won’t be so glaring. Happy people aren’t negative or cynical or mean, so don’t plan on that being part of the “manner” of happiness. If my life has taught me anything, it is that kindness and pleasantness and faith-based optimism are characteristics of happy people. A related step along the path toward happiness is to avoid animosity, contention, and anger in your life.

4. WORK HARD AND STUDY.

One last suggestion when there are so many others we should consider: Nephi said that in an effort to find happiness in their new land after their 30 years of trouble, “I, Nephi, did cause my people to be industrious, and to labor with their hands” (2 Nephi 5:17). By contrast, those from whom they fled “became an idle people, full of mischief and subtlety” (2 Nephi 5:24).

If you want to be happy in school, or on a mission, or in a marriage—work at it. Learn to work. Serve diligently. Don’t be idle and mischievous. A homespun definition of Christlike character might be the integrity to do the right thing at the right time in the right way. So don’t be idle. Don’t be wasteful. Do the right thing at the right time. “Seek learning, even by study and also by faith” (D&C 88:118). “Be industrious, and . . . labor,” including laboring for and serving others, one of the truly great keys to true happiness.

GOD WANTS YOU TO BE HAPPY.

The Book of Mormon teaches many powerful, provocative truths. One of them is that the nature of God is synonymous with the nature of happiness (see Alma 41:11). It also teaches, therefore, that “wickedness never was happiness” (Alma 41:10). So I ask you to reject transgression in order to live consistent with the nature of God, which is the nature of true happiness. I encourage you and applaud you in pursuing the path that leads to happiness. You can’t find it any other way.

My testimony to you is that God, your Eternal Father in Heaven, is always encouraging and applauding your pursuit even more lovingly than I. He wants you to be happy, to have true joy. The Atonement of His Only Begotten Son provides the right path and, if necessary, a new start on it, a second chance, a change in our nature if necessary. Christ



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From a Brigham Young University–Idaho devotional given on Sept. 23, 2014.

NOTE

1. James E. Faust, “Our Search for Happiness,” *Ensign*, Oct. 2000, 2.