

Happiness is a product of the help we give to others

This week let's think about the fact that *happiness is a product of the help we give to others*. Contrary to the popular rule that happiness comes from what we get, it is the giving of ourselves that makes life a joy. In fact, there is no real, lasting joy for the self-centered person who thinks only of what he can get from others. It is no exaggeration to say that most of the dissatisfaction and unhappiness in the world is in the minds of those who, for one reason or another, have allowed their basic focus to shift from the work of filling others' needs to the question of whether their own needs are being filled in the manner they desire. In a world where the primary emphasis is almost always on self, we ought not to be surprised that so many people lead lives of great unhappiness. The prevalence of anxiety and unhappiness in a me-first culture is not surprising.

Each of us is primarily a “producer” or a “consumer.” Either our lives are characterized by the doing of productive things for others, or they are characterized by the consuming of that which others do for us. As someone has put it: “There are basically two kinds of people in the world — hosts and guests.” Which trait is the predominant one in our own lives? Are we mostly givers, who find our happiness in the service we render to others? Or are we mainly takers, who frequently find fault with the quality of what is given to us?

Jesus taught, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” ([Ac. 20:35](#)). That doesn't just mean that giving is more pleasing to God; it means that the giver himself is more “blessed” — in other words, he is more fortunate, more joyous (cf. [Prov. 11:24-26](#)). Although it sounds contradictory, the giver gets more of the good things in life than the taker. We are made in the image of God, and it is inherent in God's own nature that He finds joy in the giving of Himself. He is outwardly oriented toward the needs of His creatures, and not primarily concerned about Himself. Like Him, we are made such that we find our true fulfillment and happiness in being outwardly oriented — in being givers rather than takers. A creature in God's image who tries to be happy by selfish means is trying something that is, in the long run, an impossibility. May we learn this week, by meditating on God and His word, that blessedness comes from pouring ourselves out for others.

Monday: Philippians 2:1-11

Key Idea: Jesus, our example, was more concerned about others than about Himself.

Questions for Family Growth: Was Jesus primarily a giver or a taker? What motivated Him to die on the cross for our sins? During His lifetime, what did Jesus spend most of His time doing? What does it mean that He “went about doing good” ([Ac. 10:38](#))?

Wisdom for the Day: [Proverbs 8:12-36](#).

Tuesday: Mark 6:30-44

Key Idea: Jesus did not complain when the people around Him took away His time for rest.

Questions for Family Growth: According to **vv.31,32**, why did Jesus go to a deserted place? How do you think He felt when He got there and saw the multitude? What does **v.34** say His attitude was? What did He spend the rest of that day doing?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 9:1-6.**

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 12:14,15

Key Idea: As Christians, we should be glad to use ourselves up working for others.

Questions for Family Growth: What did Paul say he was glad to do for his brothers and sisters in Corinth? In your own words, what does it mean to be “spent”? What motivates a parent to spend himself or herself for a child?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 9:7-9.**

Thursday: Matthew 25:31-46

Key Idea: When we serve the needs of other people, we are doing good deeds to Jesus Himself.

Questions for Family Growth: Can we go to heaven without doing good for others along the way? What are some things Jesus said we should be doing for others? What did Jesus mean when He said, “As you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (**v.45**)?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 9:10-12.**

Friday: Proverbs 11:24-26

Key Idea: The more of ourselves we give away, the richer we become.

Questions for Family Growth: What does it mean to be “stingy”? Can a person get rich (in the truest sense) by being stingy? Why is it so hard to part with our possessions? Which do you think is harder to share with others: our money or our time?

Wisdom for the Day: **Proverbs 9:13-18.**

Gary Henry — WordPoints.com