

VERITAS

Equipping Christians to live by truth—veritas—from God.

Chip Ingram graduated from Dallas Theological Seminary in 1984 and has taught the Word of God to millions of listeners on the daily radio broadcast *Living on the Edge* since 1995. After graduating from Dallas Seminary, Chip spent eight years planting and leading



a church in a rural area outside Dallas. In 1990, when the young church had grown to over 450, God called Chip to serve as teaching pastor of Santa

Cruz Bible Church in Santa Cruz, California. The church grew to 3,000 members and spawned a network of 35-40 existing churches in the Santa Cruz area working toward the common goal of reaching the area for Christ. In 2002, Chip accepted the position of president of Walk Thru the Bible in Atlanta, Georgia, where he will also continue to minister through *Living on the Edge*.

Chip Ingram has a B.A. in Education from West Liberty State College, an M.S. in Education from West Virginia University, and a Th.M. from Dallas Seminary. He is the author of the recently published books *I Am with You Always* and *Holy Ambition*.

This address was given at Dallas Seminary Week at the Mount Hermon Christian Conference Center in Mount Hermon, California.

Rediscovering the Lost Art of Being Happy

Chip Ingram

What motivates you? What do you really want? Think about it. Is it

a job? A dream? Your family? Relationships? Money? Success? Impact? What would you say?

Directly related to what motivates you and what you really want is the idea that if you get it or achieve it, you'll be happy.

One of the most famous sermons ever given by the Son of God was basically about how to be happy. "Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . blessed are those who mourn" (Matt. 5:3-4). Jesus taught us a different way to get there. We're not talking about trivial events that provide an emotional high. We're talking about deep fulfillment, joy, and meaning.

Okay, I confess: I want to be happy. I do. I want to be happy with my wife, with my children,

(continued on page 2)

(continued from page 1)

with myself, with my relationship with God. I want to be happy, and I don't think that is wrong.

The problem is that I've tried a lot of ways to get there, and most of them have been unsuccessful. And I've been trained by the world, which says that if I do certain things, I will be happy. And I've tried those things, and they didn't work. So I tried other things, and they didn't work either. I imagine you have been down some of those dead-end streets as well.

Over the Rainbow

Many years ago, as a relatively new Christian, I attended a Navigators conference. The speaker's message was titled "Empty Buckets," and it reshaped my life.

He used an illustration about following rainbows that end in golden pots. Some people follow rainbows that lead to the golden pot of fame, while others seek the golden pot of money, or the golden pot of success, or the golden pot of beauty and sexuality. We think that if we obtain fame, wealth, athletic prowess, or great musicianship—*then* we'll be happy.

The speaker described Marilyn Monroe as the most beautiful woman of her day—and her tragic death. He told of Muhammad Ali's athletic prowess—and the time Ali took his Olympic gold medal and threw it from a bridge because he was so discouraged. And he talked about *the* people of the day,

everyone of whom had made it to the end of the rainbow and looked into the golden pot and found it empty.

The point is that most of us spend our life unknowingly following rainbows into empty buckets.

Now does this mean that it's impossible to be happy? Absolutely not.

God has actually made a promise concerning how you *can* be happy. He *wants* you to be happy. If you will stop following rainbows into empty buckets and start following His road map, He guarantees that you will be happy.

In First Peter, God states this promise about a guarantee of blessedness or happiness to a group of people who are being persecuted. They are being killed, being thrown to the lions, suffering. God makes an absolutely radical promise in the midst of their injustice, pain, suffering, and even martyrdom: *You can be happy.*

First Peter 2:11–12 says, "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans [even in the midst of all you're going through] that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." So live in this world as an alien or a stranger with such a spotless, winsome, and wonderful life that those making

accusations against you would be put to shame.

Next, Peter talks about submission—at a time when you would think they would want to exert their rights and ask, “Where is God?”—in verse 13: “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men.” Can you imagine hearing that read in your congregation in Peter’s day, and then looking at the Roman government?

Inherit a Blessing

Then Peter says in verse 18, “Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters,” even though they are unjust. And Christ will be the model.

First Peter 3:1 says, “Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands.” And verse 7 says, “Husbands, in the same way be considerate.” You will live the exemplary way of life—a winsome life of blessedness by God in the midst of persecution and pain. “Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.”

He says, “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called”—*and here’s the purpose clause*—“so that you may inherit a blessing” (1 Peter 3:8–9).

You can enjoy God’s favor so you can have happiness in your heart and supernatural joy in the midst of an absolutely difficult, chaotic world!

And then Peter reaches back into Psalm 34 and gives the reason for this text: “Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.

Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it” (vv. 12–14). Why? “The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the LORD is against those who do evil” (vv. 15–16).

The key to happiness is written to a first-century church going through deep suffering.

But what does this mean for us today?

I can tell you that it is possible—it is commanded—to inherit

a blessing and live as aliens and strangers “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life” (Phil. 2:15–16). And our lives in the midst of this are the strongest apologetic for the reality of Jesus Christ.

Does this mean that we don’t read the newspaper because we don’t want to confuse life with reality? No. There is a way to enjoy

***You can enjoy
God’s favor so
you can have
happiness in
your heart and
supernatural
joy in the midst
of an absolutely
difficult,
chaotic world!***

(continued on page 4)

supernatural joy, the literal blessing of God, and happiness in the midst of very difficult circumstances.

I believe the answer is found in 1 Peter 3:8–9, which says, “Finally, all of you . . .” Notice there are five commands in verse 8: “live in harmony,” “be sympathetic,” “love as brothers,” “be compassionate,” and “[be] humble.” Grammatically, these are all imperatives, not options. Peter is not saying that this might be a nice idea. He is saying, “You are believers under the authority of Jesus Christ; live this way in relationship to one another.”

The command in verse 9 says, “I prohibit you from responding in negative, evil vengeance to the injustice you are receiving.” The next command says, “Instead, I want you to return good for evil, with blessing.” And the reason he gives these commands about how the family of God is to treat one another, how to respond to injustice and evil, and how to give back good for evil is that we are called by God in the midst of this world to inherit a blessing, to experience happiness, joy, and life, and to not spend all of our time telling one another how terrible it is.

You Can Have Great Cause for Joy

Have we not learned that God is good, holy, and sovereign? Have

we not believed that He does not change? Do we not know that He keeps His promises? We have great cause for joy—the kind of joy that the world shakes its head at in disbelief.

Now, how do we apply this today and live it out in relationship with one another? I suggest that you do some thinking about where you’re at, what motivates you, and how you can experience happiness.

You may be saying to yourself, “Jesus wants me to be happy, not in a trivial way but in a significant sense. I want to be happy, but it’s hard to be happy in the world that we live in.”

But the fundamental behind happiness is to *get your focus off yourself*.

As long as you are doing deep self-analysis, you will be depressed

most of the time. Are you asking, “What about my problems? What about my family? What about my finances? What about my job? What about my house? What about me?” *Me, me, me.*

When the focus is on you, happiness will elude you. We live in a culture in which every advertisement—literally thousands a day, some conscious, some unconscious, some printed, some verbal—focuses on *you*. And that’s why being in God’s Word is so important, so that the Spirit of God can renew your mind.

How do you live in harmony

**The
fundamental
behind
happiness is
to get your
focus off
yourself.**

with other people? You've got to look at *their* needs. You must consider other people as more important than yourself.

To help you do this, I suggest writing down the names of two people whose needs today are a lot greater than your own. Perhaps they are going through a divorce, or they have cancer. Every time you start focusing on yourself, pray for these two people. Every time you start asking, "What about my finances? What about my kids? What about my pain? What about me?" I want you to say, "God, I'm going to pray for these two people." See what happens to your attitude when you do that. See if you experience some of this happiness we're talking about.

Next, *get your focus on others*. "Be sympathetic." Enter into the feelings of others. Compassion is more than just pity, more than a deep welling up in your heart. In the Old Testament, the word "compassion" had to do with "out of the womb" or "out of the inner organs." When Jesus saw someone in great need, He didn't just feel for him or her; He acted.

So get your focus on someone else. Be sympathetic. Walk in their shoes. Feel what they feel. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although

He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant . . . becoming obedient to the point of death" (Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus came as a servant to focus on other people.

Now, can we do this practically? When something terrible happens or when something wonderful happens, what do you want to do more than anything else? Don't you want to share it with someone?

My wife was in labor for 27 hours before she gave birth to Ryan, our third child. Every time a contraction would occur, Ryan's heartbeat would just about stop. And during those 27 hours, we gave Ryan back to God about 11 times. We didn't

know if he was going to make it.

Finally, they put our little baby into my arms. I was exhausted, soaked with sweat—and absolutely relieved after praying longer and more intensely than I'd ever prayed in my life. As I walked around with Ryan and he smiled up at me, I thanked God and just wanted to sing out loud. After I gave him back to the nurses, I literally got down on my knees on the linoleum floor and wept, in thanks to God.

When I got up, I just wanted to tell someone. And then an elder in our church walked in the door.

When Jesus saw someone in great need, He didn't just feel for him or her; He acted.

(continued on page 6)

(continued from page 5)

He's a very wise man, and he looked at me, wrapped his arm around me, and said, "Come on, Chip. I'm going to buy you a hamburger. I want to hear every detail."

We went to a restaurant across the street from Baylor Hospital, and I realized in looking back that I don't think he said a word for two hours. I just talked and talked. And in sharing my joy, he grinned from ear to ear.

Your Recommended Daily Dose

Isn't it interesting that, unconsciously, we think we will be happy when we get this, when we can control this, when this turns out our way, when all of our ducks are in a row, when we're financially secure? Then the reality hits that the greatest moments of happiness in our life are when we're not even thinking about ourselves, but we are engaged in serving and focusing on someone else. Something miraculous and beautiful takes place.

So Jesus wants you to be happy. And here in this text He tells you exactly how to do it. He says, first, get your focus off yourself. Second, get your focus on others. Third, do one good deed a day.

There was a season in my life

when I realized I had become so self-focused that I had to break the habit, so I made a willful decision and actually recorded in my diary that I would do one good deed a day. At the end of my morning devotional time each day I would ask, "Lord, what good deed would You have me do?" And sometimes it would be, "Write so-and-so a

letter." I'd write them a letter. Sometimes it would be, "Give so-and-so a call." I'd give them a call. Sometimes it would be, "I'll show you later today."

But I spend my day—imagine what this does to your psyche—walking around and asking, "Now, where's the good deed? What good am I supposed to do?" Sometimes it is just to get a cup of coffee for the guys in the office. Sometimes I see someone struggling and frustrated, and because I've predetermined that I'm going to do a good deed, I go meet the need.

Would you like to be happy, no matter what the situation? I mean, even if there was persecution? Get your focus off yourself. Get your focus on others. And then—let's get down to where the rubber meets the road—do one good deed a day. Try it for the next seven days and see what happens.

**Lord,
what good
deed would
You have
me do?**

How to Change the World

Do something for others every day. That's Chip Ingram's game plan for happiness. And here's why it works.

Not because Chip said it, or I agree with it, but because God, our Creator, *programmed* it into us when He formed us in His image. Then He redeemed us by His own selfless, others-oriented work.

That doesn't mean it comes easily for any of us—sin sees to that.

But once you get it trickling, as Chip said, it begins to flow. God starts pouring His love into you, and you begin pouring it out to those around you.

Remember what Jesus said?

"On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood"—calling attention to Himself—"and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will *flow from within him*'" (John 7:37-38; emphasis mine).

It's the two commandments: First, love God—focus on Him. Then, love others—focus on them.

What would happen if you practiced that, every day?

What impact would we have if the church lived that out, every day?

Indeed, if all humanity lived by those two principles all the time, basically every problem the globe faces today would be substantially knocked down!

At Dallas Seminary, we're not so naive to believe that the church can, or is even called to, bring in utopia through right living. Only Christ, preached and taught, will meaningfully change lives now. And only Christ, returning in glory, will transform the planet forever.

But we're also not so cynical as to think that Christians can't live out Chip Ingram's challenge on a higher level and draw millions to Christ by modeling His life.

And that includes your giving, which is a practical way to focus on others. Your time, talents, and *treasure* are powerful tools in God's hands when *given away*. Given to Him, to benefit others who need Him and His Word.

That's especially true as the year begins. If you have already sent a gift to renew your support for 2003, may I say thank you? And if not, now is a great time to act. Thank you for your focus on God and those He calls us to reach.



DR. MARK L. BAILEY
President
Dallas Theological
Seminary

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Bailey".

In A ppreciation for Your Support as 2003 Begins . . .



IF YOU'RE HUMAN, YOU'LL BE
BLESSED BY THIS BOOK.

Chip Ingram explains God by carefully, simply, and encouragingly looking at how He is portrayed in the Psalms, some of the most moving passages in Scripture.

Readers will discover that the Lord is faithful to hear their cries when they are hurting. Whatever your distress or challenge—whether you're gripped by fear, going through a crisis, feeling abandoned or depressed—this book will help you see the Lord as an ever-present help. By pointing out keys to understanding the Word of God, Chip points you to the God who is willing and able to give you comfort.

*Please accept a copy of **I Am with You Always** by Chip Ingram as our thank-you for your support of God's work at Dallas Theological Seminary.*

To receive your copy, use the enclosed reply card (for subscribers) or call Dallas Seminary at 1-800-992-0998.



DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

DR. MARK L. BAILEY, PRESIDENT

3909 SWISS AVENUE • DALLAS, TX 75204 • 214-824-3094

For your free subscription to *Veritas*, visit www.dts.edu or call 800-992-0998.