

You Can't Depend on Others For Your Happiness



David Wilkerson June 1, 1979

A sad young minister and his wife came to me for counseling recently. After four troubled years of marriage and two children, they were contemplating divorce. She was the saddest looking wife I have seen in years. Her husband, the young youth minister, stood nearby, shuffling his weight from foot to foot, while his teary-eyed wife sobbed out her confession to me.

"There is absolutely no hope for our marriage," she cried, "We are in two different worlds. He is so wrapped up in his work, he has no time left for me and the children. My whole world has been wrapped up in him, but now I'm getting tired of sitting home waiting for him. I'm not accomplishing anything on my own. I don't even know if I love him anymore."

It hurt me to see such a lovely couple acting like strangers to one another. I recognized the cause of their problem immediately. Both were bored, restless and unhappy with each other. Just like multitudes of other couples, they once stood before a minister to be married, gazing lovingly into each other's eyes with their hearts filled with hope and anticipation that their marriage would be happy and fulfilling. Now, just a few years later, their hopes are in ashes. They become disillusioned and, try as they may, they can't seem to rekindle the spark of first love. It is then the ugly thoughts of divorce surface.

I looked that young wife in the eye and said, "What a shame that all your happiness depends only on what your husband does. If he is a good husband, if he treats you the way you think you should be treated, if he spends a little time with you - then you may find a little happiness. But when he lets you down, you have nothing left. Your whole world rises and falls on the actions of your husband. That is why you are so empty."

She nodded affirmatively, then bowed her head sheepishly while I continued. "Young lady, you're not a whole person. You're just half a person. You cannot survive if you depend on someone else for your happiness. True women's liberation means finding your own happiness in yourself through God's power. You must become your own person and quit depending on your husband or someone else to make you happy."

She knew I was right - I had hit the nail right on the head. She promised to change her way of thinking and get involved with life herself. I left them, convinced she was determined to step out of her role as an emotional cripple and find her own source of happiness through a new relationship with God.

True Cause of Divorce and Broken Relationships

Husbands and wives are becoming emotional cripples who lean all over each other, causing both to fall. We mess up our relationships because we live under the influence of a lie. We have convinced ourselves we have a right to happiness and that our spouse is morally obligated to create it for us. The danger of that lie is that when we can't find the happiness we expect from them, we put all the blame on their failure to do what was right.

Our divorce courts today are overcrowded with husbands and wives seeking divorce simply on the grounds their marriage gives them no happiness. One such divorced husband told me, "God bless my dear wife; she tried so hard. I gave that woman three of the best years of my life, hoping she could learn to understand me and make me feel like a man. She just didn't have it in her. She simply did not know how to make me happy."

That man will probably get married once or twice again, hoping a new wife will succeed where the first one failed. Some keep marching down the aisle one new partner after another, trying desperately to find one understanding soul mate who will create happiness for them. But they seldom find it. Their misery and unhappiness increases with each new marriage partner.

No other human being on earth can create happiness for you. You must create it for yourself through the work of God in your own life. Marriage is not made up of two halves trying to become a whole. Rather, marriage consists of two whole people who are bridged by the Spirit of God. Marriage never works unless both parties maintain their own identity, settle their own values, find their own sense of fulfillment and discover their own source of happiness. They must be complete in themselves through the Lord.

Why allow what someone else does to destroy your life? Why permit the actions of another to rob you of your peace and joy? Why can't you be your own person? Why can't you look life right in the eye and say, "From now on, I'll not allow someone else to drag me down. I am determined to be a whole person and I will discover my own source of happiness. No more leaning on someone else to give meaning and purpose to my life! I want a happiness that will not be lost just because somebody fails me."

Step Out of Your Bondage to the Actions of Others

I say to every housewife who will hear me: "Step out of your bondage of living your life only through others." God never intended that you find happiness only through your husband or your children. I am not suggesting that you forsake them - only that you forsake your degrading bondage to the idea that your happiness depends only on other people. God wants you to discover a life of true happiness and contentment based only on what you are as a person and not on the moods and whims of people around you.

Wives who become clinging vines are not attractive to intelligent men. Husbands eventually walk all over wives who lean on them and exude an attitude that suggests, "You are my whole world and if you ever let me down, I might as well kill myself." Wives who become independently happy and content in and with themselves suddenly become mystifyingly attractive. The truly attractive wife is the one who can say to her husband, "I love you and I'll be your friend, but I'm a person, too. I'm going to act like a whole person and my happiness will be what I create through my own relationship with God."

This is also a message that every young person must heed to survive the pressures of broken relationships so common today. How can young people find happiness when their parents are splitting up and their homes are disintegrating? They, too, need to learn not to depend on others for their happiness.

A 19-year-old girl confessed, "My dad and mom have been in love for over 23 years. I think their's is just about a perfect marriage. If I ever learned they had been having problems and were putting on a good front just for me - I think I'd die. In fact, if my folks ever got a divorce, I'd go out and do drugs, sex and alcohol just to get even with them. I'd throw my life away."

"What a horrible concept," I told her. "Isn't it a shame that all your happiness depends on what your parents do. If they fail, so does your purpose in life. You will go all through life substituting others in the place of your parents. You will always have to have an idol - someone to be your good example. You will never be your own person. You will fail only because someone else fails you. What a pity!"

Our young people today must learn to find their own source of happiness; they must no longer depend on their parents to create it for them. Thank God I am now meeting hundreds of young people who have found their own place of happiness in the Lord. One young man told me, "I love my parents, but I'm not going to allow their divorce to affect me. I'm going on with God. I have my own life to live and I'm not going to let them drag me down by their actions."

We must give ourselves to the needs of others. We must help heal the hurts of those we love. We must get under one another's burdens, but we can do all of this only when we are happy with ourselves. We can help others find themselves only after we have found ourselves in the Lord.

There Is a Right Way to Find Happiness

I'm not one who cares much for formulas or how-to directions. But in my own experience, I have found a simple way to find a true happiness that does not depend on what others do. It is a happiness that does not come and go

and it is not affected by the moods, words or actions of people in my life - even those I love the most.

What is that secret? I have discovered that my needs are spiritual, not physical! Our basic human needs include food, water, shelter and the air we breathe. Beyond that, our needs are spiritual. And those needs can't be met by any human being.

All unhappiness is a result of trying to meet our needs through human relationships. When another human being fails to meet our needs, we become frustrated and unhappy. For example, the husband comes home from work tired, short-tempered and feeling a need for a kind, understanding word from his wife. He is depressed and he wants his wife to make him feel better. In turn, his wife has her own needs. She is feeling down, lonely and she is wanting him to lift her spirits. So they lean on each other. The unspoken message rings out, "I'm hurting, honey; heal me. I'm down; lift me up. I'm depressed; make me happy. I'm blue; take my blues away. I'm in need; meet that need. Put your arms around me and love all the hurt out of me."

Of course, neither of them can meet the needs in each other, because those needs are spiritual and only God can meet them. You can be in the arms of someone you love all night long and still wake up crying inside. The discovery is soon made that those needs cannot be met by sex or by a tender word. That is why some men pay a prostitute \$100 a night just to sit up and talk with them. They hope their blues can be talked away. It never works, because the next night, they are seeking someone else to share their problems with.

We expect our spouses to do Godlike work. We expect miracles of them. We know only that we have overwhelming needs and that they must be met.

I have had lonely people tell me, "If only God would give me someone to love, I'd be such a better person and a better Christian. I know all my unhappiness is a result of being so alone all the time. I need a friend - only then will I be truly happy."

I say - not so! Another person, male or female, may give you temporary relief from the agony of loneliness, but unless you are a whole person with your own source of inner strength, the old feelings of despair and loneliness will once again overwhelm you.

Two years ago my wife and I counseled a young lady who insisted she was the loneliest girl in the state of Texas. She said, "If I could only find a husband, get married and settle down, I'd never be lonely again." We helped pray in her prince charming. She did get married to a fine young Christian gentleman. But three months after the wedding, she was back to us in tears, crying, "I'm still lonely. I'm still empty. I know now it wasn't just the man I needed. I haven't settled things in my own life yet." That girl will never be a good wife until she learns to quit leaning on other people to meet her needs.

A young divorcee asked my wife and me to pray that her estranged husband would return. She was nearly hysterical, crying, "I want him back so badly. I know I messed up our marriage - I was so crazy and immature. But now that he's gone, I want him back. I think I've grown up. I've matured. I know I can do it right this time, but he's been dating another woman. I'm so desperate that if God won't bring him back to me soon, I'm going to go out to the nearest bar and tag on the biggest drunk you ever saw."

I informed her we would not pray for his return, because she was not ready for him. She would mess it up all over again. Why? Because she was still not a whole person. She was ready to throw her morals away if he did not come home to try once again to make her happy. That is why many people don't get such prayers answered. They are not ready to try again. They would make the same mistakes all over again - even if remarried to someone else. They are still leaning on others - always using someone else as a crutch to hold them up. They have not become a whole person and they are not complete in themselves.

God Alone Is the Only Source of All Happiness and Contentment

Paul said, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). Not your husband or your wife, pastor, psychiatrist or your best friend - but God! Go ahead and share your problems with your friend or pastor or a professional counselor. But, in the final analysis, they can help you only if they make you face yourself. You must do it on your own - take your needs to the Lord and allow Him to make you whole. Eventually, you must get rid of every crutch and lean completely on Jesus alone.

When your relationship with the Lord is wrong, it affects all human relationships. Most Christian married couples

are not having trouble with their marriage - rather, they are having trouble with God - with faith - with prayer; therefore, they have trouble with each other.

When people confess to me their marriage is in trouble, I don't have to dig too deeply until I discover they are not where they should be with the Lord. They are bored with the things of God, so they are bored with life and marriage. They have lost touch with God and, in turn, have lost touch with their spouse. They are not really suffering from a lack of communication with each other; they are suffering mostly from a lack of communication with God. When people quit talking to God, they quit talking to one another. And people who quit talking to God soon get very lonely and depressed. They are actually lonely for God, hungering for communion with Him, yearning for His close love and nearness - but, instead of recognizing these needs as spiritual, they blame their lack of fulfillment on their husband or wife.

If most Christians were truly honest, they would have to admit there is nothing terminal about their marriage problems. What is wrong is their relationship to the Lord. Their faith is in trouble and when people are not on right terms with God, they get frustrated and take it out on the one they love the most. They are actually angry with themselves. That empty, restless feeling is a hunger for God. But instead of returning to the secret closet to satisfy that thirst, most Christians drift further away and fall deeper into despair.

There is not a Christian in this world who, deep in his heart, is not aware that God will help him. We know God can heal all our hurts - that He can heal any marriage - that He can wipe away every tear and bring joy, but we simply do not take the time or effort to run to Him in our hour of need.

You can be happy. You can be a whole person - and you need never again lean on another human being. That is not to say we don't need one another. We need the prayer, help and comfort of loving friends and family. But there can be no lasting happiness if we expect others to create it for us.

Why not allow Him to renew your heart - renew a right spirit in you - and reveal to you that in His presence there is fulness of joy and pleasures evermore? That is why Jesus said, "Be of good cheer...Lo, I am with you alway" (Matthew 14:27, 28:20).

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