



BIBLEWAY MINISTRIES

MAKING A DIFFERENCE—THE BIBLE WAY



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We are one of the richest countries in the world, and yet *USA Today* reports that there are 40,000 suicide deaths in the United States each year. This is equivalent to one suicide every 13 minutes. (Zoroya, 2015) One of the major contributors to suicide is unhappiness. It seems odd to think that with all America has to offer there would still be unhappiness. There are many places unhappy people go to look for happiness, but each provides only temporary happiness. To the surprise of many, happiness is not found in friends, family, or any of the other things available in this life.

True and total happiness can only be found in the Lord. In 1 Corinthians 1:9, we are told “God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.” (NIV) To seek total happiness anywhere else will, at the end of the day, still leave us unfulfilled. The psalmist understood this and provided advice to us in Psalm 37:4a, which sums this up in six words: “Delight thyself also in the Lord . . .” The simplicity of this statement presents us with a problem: There must be more to delighting in the Lord than that. We have all experienced delight in something or someone. We are delighted that in each experience, we found pleasure. Unfortunately, such pleasure can be quickly changed by our circumstances such as health conditions, a job loss, or financial difficulties.

If true delight is in the Lord, how do we find pleasure in Him? It begins when we seek our complete happiness in Him and Him alone. This can only be experienced when we know the Lord, not only in the sense of having knowledge of Him, but knowing Him in an intimate way whereby there is a relationship. In his book, *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer reminds us, “Knowing God is more than knowing about Him; it is a matter of dealing with Him as He opens up to you.” (Packer, 1973) To delight in God is to know Him in a personal way! When such a relationship exists, we realize that there is nothing else which God has provided for us in this world that will provide total happiness. The ability to make us complete is reserved exclusively for Him. He alone has the provisions for happiness. We were, in es-

sence, created to find total happiness only in Him. He has blessed us with great families, friends, and even material possessions — none of which are wrong to have. However, in God’s dynamics they are only like gravy; the real meat is in Him.

When a relationship is built with God, we are reminded of what God wants to do in us. Peter explains, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” 1 Peter 2 (NIV) David understood this when he said, “I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also shall rest in hope.” (Psalm 16:8-9) In verses 5-8 of Psalm 16, David compared his inheritance to the allotment of land which was given to the tribes of Israel after entering the Promised Land. All the tribes received their allotment but the Levites. One would think that they would be the first to receive an allotment since they were the spiritual leaders, but this was not true. Their inheritance, their joy, and their delight was to be found in the Lord. David is saying that, like the Levites, the basis of his joy and hope was in the Lord. He exclaims, “My heart, my mind, and everything that is in me respond to the thrill of this hope in Him!”

When we delight in the Lord, there will still be ups and downs in this life. The good news is our joy or happiness will not be diminished by the ups and downs because they are not predicated on circumstances, material possessions, friends, or even family. Our total happiness is in the Lord!

Packer, J. (1973). *Knowing God*. In J. Packer, *Knowing God* (p. 39). Downer's Grove: IVP Books.

Zoroya, G. (2015). Retrieved November 27, 2015, from *USA Today*: <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/10/09/suicide-mental-health-prevention-research/15276353/>.



Q: How can we have hope during the holidays in the face of tragedy?

A: Tragedies happen every single day; but they never lose their edge, especially during the holidays. According to the *Washington Post*, 355 mass

shootings (four or more people killed or wounded, including the shooter) have occurred within the past 336 days. Do the math, and you'll see this adds up to more than one per day. These mass shootings include the recent incident in San Bernardino, California, as well as the terrorist attacks in Paris, France. Both of these mass killings were either inspired or executed by ISIS, a group which has brought tragedy to tens of thousands in Iraq and Syria.

People have had mixed responses to the recent tragedies. Some have offered their prayers for the victims and their families. Others have scoffed at the idea of relying upon God in tragedy. In a bold effort to challenge what it perceived as "empty platitudes" from Republicans who offered prayers without proposing solutions, the *New York Daily News* published this controversial cover: "God Isn't Fixing This." While the article's intent was not to throw a punch at Christians, God, or prayer specifically, its title suggested God was unable to solve the greatest problems facing our nation and world. In other words, it revealed a lack of hope.

When tragedy strikes and you feel like God isn't fixing life for you, or the luster of the holidays is dimmed by circumstances beyond your control, take heart and find hope in this truth: *God is not dead!* He is still in control; He is still working in the details of your life as you live them out; He still has perfect plans for you; He still loves you; He is still with you; He is still for you; He is still good — because He is alive. This encouraging reality led the prophet Jeremiah to write these words from his own place of heart-wrenching tragedy and despair: *The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.* (Lamentations 3:24-26)

This holiday season, find your hope, not in news headlines, the Christmas tree, gifts, friends, family, the weather, or the right set of circumstances, but in the God who is alive. In Him, your hope will never be shaken.



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