

3 REASONS

**YOU
WILL
NEVER
BE HAPPY**

BY PASTOR MIKE BOBULA

The goal of this little book is to encourage you, and hopefully at the same time challenge you, to explore where unrest in your soul comes from.

Beyond the usual complaint about being too busy, I hear more and more people expressing feelings and concerns that sound like despair or hopelessness.

Of course there could be clinical reasons for these feelings, but it could also be that there is so much noise in your life that sometimes you cannot even think straight.

So I want to ask you to slow down for a few minutes as you read through this material, and be ready to take an honest look at where you are searching for happiness and peace.

I would also like to invite you to be part of our new online church campus, simplifychurch.org.

We will be using social media to explore and discuss questions about life, faith, and challenges we all face - in a new format that should provide a safe place to explore questions like, “Do I have to go to church to meet with God?” “Why can church people be so mean?” And “At what point do you take matters into your own hands?”

So grab a coffee and dig in.

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WHY YOU WILL NEVER BE HAPPY:

REASON 1: YOU ARE COMPARING YOURSELF TO OTHERS

If there's one way to guarantee you will never be happy, it is to compare yourself to others. I like to play guitar. I enjoy it. But when I compare myself to the greatest guitar players of all time, I'm tempted to quit playing altogether. What a mistake it would be to quit doing what I love just because I'm not the best.

Even if you actually *are* better than everyone else at something, when you start comparing yourself to them you run the risk of not enjoying what you are doing. And you will start to notice that you are not as good as them at other things. But for most of us, we are probably not the best at what we are doing. However, and this is an important point, the goal is to be the best we can be with the talent and skills we have. Our goal should be to make the most of every opportunity we have and do what we do to the best of our ability.

So if your goal is to be the best (good luck defining "best" by the way), understand it takes more than hard work. It almost always takes a lucky break and being in the right

place at the right time. I mean think about it, there can only be one best. Everyone else, and I mean everyone, is second or worse. Silver medal. Runner up. Close but not close enough. I get frustrated when I hear someone at the top telling everyone else “If I can do it so can you.” That sounds great as motivation to do your best, but the goal of being #1 is unrealistic for everyone except the one who makes it to the top for a short time.

STOP REACTING TO CIRCUMSTANCES THAT ARE OUT OF YOUR CONTROL

In addition to all of this, there is also the reality that some things are simply out of your control. You can do everything right and *still* be derailed by some unforeseen circumstance. Flat tire in a race. Covid 19 shuts down the world. Somebody cheats and still wins. You get the idea. And if your goal is to be better than everyone else, you will start reacting to these circumstances and be tempted to cut corners, to cheat, to destroy someone above you etc.

After 15 years of successful ministry (however you want to define it), I made the mistake of comparing my ministry to Billy Graham’s ministry. Big mistake. It took me a while to recover and grasp the truth of what I’ve written in this section so far. Rev. Graham did what God called him to do, I do what God called me to do. I’m not supposed to be Billy Graham. I’m supposed to be me.

Here’s one final thought on this: The only way you know someone is better than you or not is to compare yourself to them.

So I want to encourage you to stop comparing yourself to others and try to be the best you can be.

WHY YOU WILL NEVER BE HAPPY:

REASON 2: YOU ARE THINKING EVERYONE ELSE HAS IT BETTER THAN YOU DO

This is one area that was a real eye opener for me early in my ministry. It seemed like everyone else in the church “had it made.” They looked happy. They seemed to have it all together. But the more I got to know people, the more I realized that everyone has something going on just below the surface that they don’t really want anyone else to know about. Everyone is carrying some kind of burden.

It can be a huge drain on your energy and your soul if you keep thinking that you are the only one with struggles, setbacks, and disappointments. Admittedly, whatever circumstance you are going through might, in fact, be unique to you, and no one can truly understand your particular circumstance; but everyone has something *similar*. My dad died in a plane crash when I was 19. Nobody knows the pain that caused me. But other people have had parents die young from illness or other accidents. I’ve never lost a child, and I can’t imagine what a parent goes through trying to deal

with that. But even though some tragedies seem worse than others, everyone has something going on that they are trying to deal with.

I remember talking to someone once who told me a relative was going through what was for them an embarrassing and disappointing situation, and they were not sure if they should bother their pastor with that (I was not the pastor). I told them they would probably be surprised to find out that other people were going through the same thing, and their pastor would rather talk to them about this situation instead of doing the mundane things that occupy so much of his time. So what's the point of this? You are not alone when circumstances rob your soul of happiness. But there is a big difference between happiness and joy.

DON'T CONFUSE HAPPINESS WITH JOY

Happiness seems to be a huge goal for many people, but the problem is this: happiness depends on circumstances - many of which are out of your control. The solution to most, if not all, problems, is not happiness; it is joy. Joy can fill your soul even when tragedy strikes and circumstances change. I am talking about a joy that comes from God and knowing that He is in control. He loves you. And He is helping you carry your burden.

So if happiness seems elusive, change your target to finding joy. We will be looking at this subject in great detail at our new online campus at simplifychurch.org and related social media interactive events.

WHY YOU WILL NEVER BE HAPPY:

REASON 3: YOU ARE FOCUSING ON WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE INSTEAD OF BEING GRATEFUL FOR WHAT YOU DO HAVE

This is a huge challenge for many people. Living in the United States, or any other prosperous country, presents a big challenge when it comes to material things, blessings, and the drive to get more and more. I remember eating dinner on a business trip with three other sales people who were at the same trade show I was attending. One man was from a small village in Africa, and he sent most of his money back to his family and village to help them simply survive. He said that the cost of our dinner that night could provide food for his village for a month. He then added, "What many Americans consider blessing are really just extras. The real blessing is having a meal, a roof, and a family." Now he was not bashing America, nor was he complaining about the struggles of his village. He was simply pointing out how great we all had it where we live and work. What a great reminder!

I was talking to a friend the other day who shared this: “You need to ask yourself three questions. First, do you know someone from whom you can borrow a car? Second, do you own more than one pair of shoes? Third, do you have a choice of what you will have for dinner tonight? If you could answer yes to any one of these questions, you’re one of the richest people in the world.”

There are many more examples like this, but you get the idea. The reality is this: we all have much more than we think we have, and if our goal is to get even more, we will never be happy. Period.

JOY COMES FROM A MUCH DEEPER PLACE THAN HAPPINESS

When we lose the ability to be grateful because we are focusing on what we don’t have, our happiness is tied to an *impossible* goal and situation. Happiness tied to getting more will never compete with joy, because joy comes from someplace much deeper. The joy that God offers you is something He puts in your heart and soul, and it is not tied to better circumstances, more money, more stuff, more *anything*. It is a state of peace in your soul that enables you to truly live no matter what the circumstances.

A thought to close this section: It is very likely that you were never meant to settle for happy because joy is the real goal.

POSTLOGUE

PRACTICES THAT CULTIVATE DISCONTENT

Let's close this little book by looking at what my wife calls *practices that cultivate discontent*. Many things could fill a list of things that disappoint, discourage, and cause unrest in your soul, and this list is a good map to a life of discontent. Everyone has a list. Everyone can probably add to their current list. Everyone, deep down, is searching for an elusive happiness that ultimately ends up at discontent. But the good news is this: discontent does not have to become a way of life. There is a way out of it.

The challenge is to avoid getting caught in a dangerous spiral of *practices* that lead deeper into discontent. You must be aware of these *practices that cultivate discontent* if you hope to get free. Constantly comparing yourself to others, thinking everyone has it better than you do, and focusing on what you don't have are practices that can become habits that ultimately rob your soul of the peace you are looking for.

To reverse that pattern and climb out of the spiral, begin your journey by being the best version of you that you can, looking for someone going through something you can help them through, and being thankful for what you do have.

I invite you again to be part of a new online, interactive church community called simplifychurch.org. Information about our social media groups will be explained on the website. God bless you on your journey.

simplifychurch.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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