

The 4 Levels of Happiness!

There's a song that came out **27 years ago** that spoke of a foundational drive within the human person. **What do you think that drive is?**

It's the desire for happiness!

Perhaps you'll recall the **1988 hit** by **Bobby McFerrin** entitled,
"Don't worry, be happy".

(Here's a few verses)

In every life we have some trouble
But when you worry you make it double
Don't worry, be happy

Ain't got no place to lay your head
Somebody came and took your bed
Don't worry, be happy

Ain't got no cash, ain't got no style
Ain't got no gal to make you smile
Don't worry, be happy

'Cause when you worry your face will frown
And that will bring everybody down
Don't worry, be happy

It's a **catchy little tune** that highlights the **common drive** of us all ... the drive for happiness.

Think about it ... Happiness is the one thing that is an end in itself!

All other things that we seek and do are chosen to make us happy.

All other things are a means to attain happiness (food, spouses, cars, money, toys)

**Well, many scholars that have studied the human pursuit of happiness ...
divide it into 4 levels ... the **4 Levels of Happiness.****

1st Level of Happiness is **Immediate Gratification**

- We **all begin** at this level ...where all we're interested in is **our own happiness.**
- At this point, it's all about me and getting my pleasure

2nd Level of Happiness is **Personal Achievement**

- At this level we find satisfaction in all the **stuff /titles** we've accumulated
- It's **ego centeredness** ... it's all about our things and **our accomplishments**
- There's a high level of concern over how we compare & measure up w/ others.

3rd Level of Happiness is **the Good beyond the Self**

- At this level, happiness comes from making a contribution of self to something beyond yourself.
- This level involves living the principles of **Justice, Love and Community**.
- **Decisions** here are made with a focus on the Greater Good.

4th Level of Happiness is **the Ultimate Good**.

- At this level, happiness is obtained by participating in transcendent goodness, ideals and love.
- It involves living the Godly principles of **Truth, Love, Justice and Beauty**.

So in the realm of happiness,

1st Level brings immediate gratification

2nd Level brings short term gratification

3rd Level brings long term gratification

4th Level brings eternal gratification.

The **goal** is to live our lives and operate in the **3rd and 4th** levels of happiness.

This is **where our behavior** becomes **God-like** as we show **care** and **compassion** to others. This is where we demonstrate a generosity that reflects the **goodness of God**.

The happiness we experience here is **significant** ...
surpassing that of the previous levels.

It's common to see this in **many** of the **Rich and Famous**.

Once they accumulate **so many awards** and **so many material things** ...
they decide to be generous ... outside themselves and **their family** ...
and they contribute freely to the **good of others**.

From **Presidents of companies** ... to **Singers and Actors** ... to **NASCAR drivers** and **other Athletes** there comes a time where they decide to contribute to a **cause** ...
and when they do they experience a longer lasting happiness.

Maybe it's establishing a foundation for the **Mentally Retarded** or for **Battered Women** or arranging Food for the Poor or funding School Endowments and **Expansions** or aiding Medical Research to find a cure for a disease ...

These are **visible expressions** of giving of oneself to others ...
and the happiness those people receive is long-term.

But the truth is that many don't ever rise to Level 3 Happiness ...
but get stuck in living their lives in Levels 1 and 2!

Those who stay in the 1st level of happiness are those who never grow up.
They remain selfish takers who are concerned about nothing other than themselves
and their own personal, immediate gratification.

Many do rise above the 1st Level ... only to find themselves stuck in the 2nd level!

And they live their lives stressing about ...
how much they have in comparison to others.

This is **precisely where the Apostles** are in **today's Gospel** passage.
Jesus has just told them that **the day is coming ...**
where He will be handed over and killed ...

and **what do they do?**
They continue to argue among themselves about who is the greatest!

Where are they?
They're stuck in Level 2 ... looking for the happiness that comes from trying to be:
bigger, better, richer, faster, smarter, stronger, wealthier, greater ... than others!

It's a **short-term happiness** that carries several negative feelings such as:
jealousy, fear of failure, contempt for the success of others,
loneliness, despondency and yes, even **despair**.

St. James speaks about this in his letter today saying,
"Where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder.
He says, *"You covet but do not possess. You envy but you cannot obtain ...*
because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions."

Comparison happiness involves looking for the bad news in others.

Whereas, **Level 3 and 4 happiness** involves looking for the good news in others.

Comparison happiness involves keeping oneself free from commitment

Level 3 and 4 happiness involves keeping oneself free for commitment.

Jesus tries to elevate His Apostles to Level 3 happiness by instructing them:
"If anyone wants to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."

Being in service to others is what brings the **longer-lasting Level 3 happiness!**

What **Jesus** is saying and what **St. James** is saying is that
“*Getting more, means giving more*”.

Getting more happiness comes from giving more happiness.

This is a great paradox of God. It goes against our **human wisdom**.

Society says grab for everything you can ...
gather and **collect** and **store up** as much as you can.

But **God** says, **no, don't be selfish ... be selfless!**

Jesus says, “*Come follow Me*”

He says, “*Learn from Me ... for I am meek and humble of heart.*”

And that's **why having faith in God is so important!**

Without faith, we'd go right on doing **what we think** we should do.

We'd go after our **selfish desires** and reach the **end of our lives**
stuck in Level 2 Happiness and not ready for Heaven!

But with faith in **Jesus** and in **His guidance**, we begin acting in accordance with
God's direction and that keeps us on the **road to eternal happiness**.

In order to get the title of Great in the eyes of God,
you have to give of yourself to **others!**

We see this in Jesus ... He gave everything for us ... and He's called the Greatest!

God is the Great Giver.

And since we're made in His image and likeness, we're made to be givers too.

It's giving of ourselves for others that brings us Level 3 and 4 Happiness now,
and prepares us for the eternal happiness of Heaven.

Please make a point to read David Ander's article in the One Voice paper this weekend. It's entitled, “*Do you have a mission?*” and it speaks directly to this whole idea of getting outside of yourself and giving to others.

Anders writes, “*Love is not mere affection or good will, but a determined willingness to seek the real good of another and a desire to live in union with the other.*”

This is right in line with Jesus' words:

“*If anyone wishes to be first, he must be the last of all and the servant of all.*”

Yes ... **the Servant** of all!

That's **the way** God designed us for Greatness ...
it's through our capacity for self-giving love!

And once we begin to give of ourselves to others ... to render service to others ...
we immediately begin to experience happiness ... we feel it in our souls!

Happiness is good.

All 4 levels of happiness are good.

God designed us for happiness ...
And **life** is about discovering the greatest happiness of all ...
which is **being with God!**

We will merit this happiness if we seek it now.

Ps. 54 referred to this with the words

*“Freely will I offer you sacrifice.
I will praise your name, O Lord, for its goodness.”*

Happiness here on earth is **fleeting.**

Happiness with Jesus in Heaven is **not fleeting.**

That happiness will endure forever!

Let's contemplate the Levels where we seek happiness
And strive to live in levels 3 and 4

God will grace your every effort to elevate your happiness ...
so that you attain eternal happiness.

Yes, **God** is on your side to help you

So regardless of **the obstacles** you meet every day ... **Don't worry, be happy!**

Be Godlike in your **care** and your **compassion** of others ...
and you'll never have to worry again ... for you **will be happy** forever.