

God's Ultimate Gifts: Happiness and Love

As a young Christian woman, I believe there is a divine purpose to our existence. We may not ever hope to know what this purpose is, but we can guess at it. As young children, we ask thousands of questions; we simply don't have the capacity to understand deep meaning at first. Simple wonders, such as the blue color of the sky, intrigue us to an incredible degree. Once we grow older, we begin to ask fewer yet stronger questions. They are refined; we include why and how into our vocabulary. Eventually, the question of the meaning of life, of why we exist, starts to weigh on our minds. Though others think differently, I find that we are here on this planet living this existence so that we may enjoy the gifts of happiness and love in our God-given lives.

One of the key factors in our enjoyment of life is quite simply happiness. Depending on various circumstances, such as where one is in the world, the word happiness can have different connotations. That said, one thing is certain; happiness is not merely pleasure. As Rabbi Evan Moffic states, "happiness is long-lasting. It is flourishing, which is a word preferred by the founder of the scientific study of happiness, Professor Martin Seligman." With this idea in mind, people can then begin to pray for everyone's happiness. After all, "it is the happiness experienced through a life of meaning and purpose" (Moffic). Every day, all over the world, something is celebrated: a birth, a wedding, a graduation, an anniversary, a birthday, or even a holiday. Most if not all of these center around an unspoken ritual that involves gift exchanges, food preparation, and the ever-important togetherness of family and friends. In essence, people openly invite merriment during these times. In celebrating these so-called sacred moments, we are following Seligman's acronym PERMA: "positive emotion, engagement, relationship,

meaning, and accomplishment” (Moffic). It is these five ideals that give our lives meaning and provide us not only with a sense of happiness but also of purpose. In fact, sometimes, we aren’t even aware that it happens. It is my belief that God implanted the concepts of these celebrations in our minds so that we may experience His joy in creating us as our own.

Of course, the other key factor to finding enjoyment in life is love. When it comes to the concept of love, people tend to think of only one form; romance. What most don’t immediately realize is that there are actually, according to the Greeks, six different types of love. Though we may not experience every form in our lifetime, we don’t necessarily have to feel all of them in order to enjoy our existence. I find that God gave us this variety so that we may feel love just as He does for us. The first type of love is known as Eros which “represented the idea of sexual passion and desire” (Krznaric). Most notably seen with younger married couples, this form of love can be both a good thing and a bad thing. In fact, the idea of “falling madly in love” with a person stemmed from Eros. It is with Eros that we find our true partners that we may spend the rest of our lives with. The second kind, which the Greeks considered far better, is that of Philia. This form of love represents deep friendship and centers around “showing loyalty to your friends, sacrificing for them, as well as sharing your emotions with them” (Krznaric). In this way, we are giving back to the members of our chosen family who care so much about us. In their own way, friends fulfill our innate desire for companionship; it is a bond that we establish for the purpose of enjoyment in life through togetherness. Even the remaining four types of love, ludus, agape, pragma, and philautia, (Krznaric) are just as important in our purpose, our enjoyment of this life.

Unfortunately, this happiness and love are eventually lost with our impending doom—death. How can we enjoy life when we know it must always come to an end? As a Christian, I believe that there is an even better life beyond death's dark shadows. Yet this ideal view does not suit everyone. Nonbelievers may think that death is the ultimate end and that nothing comes after. According to Titus Lucretius Carus, however, we still have no reason to fear death. As translated by Cyril Bailey, he asks; 'why is death so great a thing to thee, mortal, that thou dost give way overmuch to sickly lamentation? why groan and weep at death? For if the life that is past and gone has been pleasant to thee, nor have all its blessings, as though heaped in a vessel full of holes, run through and perished unenjoyed, why dost thou not retire like a guest sated with the banquet of life, and with calm mind embrace, thou fool, a rest that knows no care" (Titus Lucretius Carus)? In other words, there's no sense in worrying about death if we lead fulfilling and joyful lives, doing the very best we can do to spread compassion and acceptance. Even if there is no place beyond this mortal Earth, we shall die knowing we enjoyed our fleeting existence. Our divine purpose is not so that we may be afraid of death, but that we may find purpose in life.

Works Cited

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