

IN PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

All of us will agree that being happy is one of our prime goals in life. It means 'being in a state of tranquility, free from anxiety and emotional disturbance'. Everyone deserves to be happy, right? The State Constitutions, in their Declaration of Rights, provide that "all men are created equally free and independent; they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." So, basically, to be 'happy' is to feel safe, carefree, and to have the freedom to live the quality of life we choose. Sounds good, doesn't it?

I started to think about what makes me happy. I live where I choose. I have a loving family. I feel valued. I am free to pursue the course of my own life. There is something wrong with these sentences. Do you notice that every sentence started with 'I'? On Sunday morning, our Pastor read this quote from Leo Rosten.

"I cannot believe that the purpose of life is to be 'happy'. I think the purpose of life is to be useful, to be responsible, to be honorable, to be compassionate. It is, after all, to matter: to count, to stand for something, to have made some difference that you lived at all."

Wow! That makes me reconsider my definition of happiness. Sure, I have the right to pursue all of those things I stated above, but while I am thinking about myself, I am not thinking about others' happiness. Many will tell you that their real joy comes from giving to others.

I received an email today from a guy we met many years ago. "To keep you up with my life since my wife went to be with the Lord - I graduated from the School of Worship this year and will begin the School of Ministry in the fall. I minister at the Rescue Mission monthly (33 years now). I just returned from serving in Haiti. We went out nightly into Tent City showing the 'Jesus' movie in French. Huge blessings, I also formed a Haitian French worship team from locals that I took along to evangelize. Huge success. To God be the glory for the great things He has done. I have gone from a broken heart to a healed heart."

There are very valuable lessons to be learned in becoming truly happy. We need to teach our children what it means to be truly happy, also. Happiness is not in 'stuff', but in opportunity, in freedom to realize our purpose and potential and to help others experience the same. Giving brings healing to our own wounded spirits and healing brings us happiness.

"True happiness is not attained through self-gratification, but through fidelity to a worthy purpose." (Helen Keller)

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.