

WHAT THE BIBLE DOESN'T SAY

“God Just Wants Me to Be Happy”

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” Jer 29:11 KJV

Introduction:

Gloria Copeland, the wife of famous tele-evangelist Kenneth Copeland, in her book entitled “God’s Will is Prosperity,” stated, “give God ten dollars and receive one thousand, give one thousand and receive one hundred dollars – in short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal.”

Mark 10:29-30

29 And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,

30 But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. KJV

Sister Copeland’s teaching represents a distorted biblical view that has become very popular within the last twenty-five years. This kind of teaching is called by many names: The Prosperity Gospel, Health and Wealth Gospel, Name it and Claim it, Blab it and Grab it... and the list goes on. Regardless of what you call this type of doctrine, the primary message is the same – “God wants all of us to be happy.”

Questions: Exactly, how do you define happiness? Do you believe everyone shares the same definition of happiness? Who gets to define happiness?

THE LESSON

Sister Copeland’s quoted Mark 10:30 as a biblical support for her Prosperity Gospel teaching. But by isolating this verse from the rest of the chapter, we failed to get to the entire message that Jesus was expressing. In the verse directly above (v.29), Jesus talks about the level of real personal sacrifice required before any increase can be received. Furthermore, when we interpret these verses within the wider context of the teaching of Jesus, it becomes apparent that Jesus is not talking about individual prosperity, but rather the glory of the church of God that is to come.

Happiness is a subject that gets talked about a lot, but seldom is it clearly defined. It is so important to our society that the Founding Fathers included it in our nation’s constitution

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

Having the right to “pursue happiness” sounds great – but where is this happiness and how do I go after it? Perhaps, for many of the early white colonists, obtaining “happiness” might have involved gaining the wealth acquired through slave labor. Definitely, not so happy from the enslaved African Americans’ perspective. Amazing how one man’s happiness might well be another man’s nightmare.

The concept that God Just Wants Me to Be Happy is often attached to the Jeremiah 29:11. This is one of the “go-to” scriptures that the prosperity teachers use to affirm their belief that God’s main goal is our happiness. So, what is happiness? Most would agree that happiness would involve a totally drama free life, full of nothing but successful experiences, and complete personal satisfaction.

QUESTIONS: Did Christ die and rise again from the dead so we might have this kind of “happy” life? Why is the Prosperity Gospel so popular today?

CHECK THE CONTEXT

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” Jer 29:11 KJV

This was a part of the prophetic message of the Prophet Jeremiah to the people of God at a time when the nation had almost entirely turned from God choosing rather to adopt the ungodly and unrighteous behavior and practices of the heathen nations around them. God gave Jeremiah a message to give to His people.

Jer 25:11-12 (Read Jer 25: 1 – 12) for a full understanding.

11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

12 And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations. KJV

Jeremiah tells the people of God’s intentions to judge them for their unrighteous behavior by allowing them to be taken into bondage for 70 years. After that, God would restore them and bring them back into their own nation. It is in this context that Jeremiah tells the people that God says.. “I know the plans I have for you...” Jeremiah is telling the people that even though 70 years is a long time to wait for a better situation, God wanted them to know that He had not forgotten them. We must understand that God is still at work, even when things are not going our way.

The Prosperity Doctrine brings with it a sense of entitlement and instantaneous blessing and rewards. This is not the context of Jeremiah 29:11. God was at work restoring the soul of His people. This was a slow process that would take some 70 years to complete.

JUST A LITTLE DEEPER

(Read Matt 5: 1 – 12)

This portion of scripture is often called the most powerful sermon ever preached!

QUESTIONS: Is Jesus describing the kind of “happy” life often expressed through the Prosperity Gospel’s message? Are any of the blessings that Jesus mentioned something tangible like houses and other possessions?

(Read Matt. 16:26) What can the world provide us that will sustain our happiness?

IN SUMMATION

John 15:11

*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.
KJV*

One way to better define what happiness is can be accomplished by contrasting it with joy.

Joy is a “knowing” – it finds its power through having faith in God alone.

Happiness is a feeling – it is grounded in what is “happening” at any given moment.

Joy is secure, while happiness is always in a volatile condition.

Happiness is always looking for the next experience. Joy is fully content with being in God’s will.