



# The secret of happiness

BY CHARLES T. CRABTREE

**W**ithout question, most people would doubt the wisdom of using the title “The Secret of Happiness” for such a relatively short dissertation on a subject that has given birth to thousands of books by some of the most gifted authors who ever lived.

However, the secret of happiness is not really a secret at all. It is boldly declared by Jesus himself in John 15:10,11: “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and *that your joy may be complete*” (NIV, emphasis added).

It is amazing how little has changed since the Garden of Eden when our first grandparents 100 or so times removed brought so much tragedy and grief into the human family. It is there we learn the secret of unhappiness: a spirit of rebellion and an intentional decision to disobey God’s commandments.

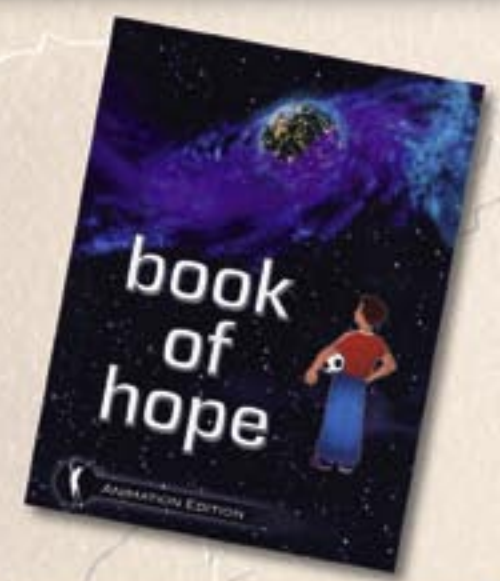
Somehow Satan has succeeded in deceiving people of every age and culture into believing they can find happiness by focusing on selfish goals, seeking instant gratification and insisting upon self-rule.

Leaving God out of the formula for happiness is like drinking saltwater to quench your thirst or borrowing money to spend your way out of debt. It may bring a brief moment of pleasure or relief, but it simply delays the inevitable tragedy. Proverbs 14:12 brings a self-directed life into focus: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.”

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# the GODMAN



Created by the Book of Hope ministry, now in its 20th year of outreach, *The GodMan* is the Word of God in film form ... and God promised in Isaiah 55:11 that His Word cannot return void!

One half the world's children cannot read and may never learn ... yet, the Lord told us to take His Word to *all* the children of the world. *The GodMan* is one amazing way this can be done!

Help us speed this film around the world by equipping and sending local church teams to present *The GodMan* in schools, churches, auditoriums and open-air settings.

Jesus loves *all* the children of the world. And thanks to *The GodMan*, Anael now knows this. With your help, we can reach the next Anael.



## God's Word for Anael — and all the children of the world!

A little 8-year-old girl named Anael had lived in cosmopolitan Buenos Aires, Argentina, all the short years of her life. She did not attend church ... until she was invited to a special showing of a children's film called *The GodMan*. This movie dramatically tells the life story of Jesus.

**That night, Anael gave her life to Christ.**

And Anael's wonderful story is not unique! Right now, *The GodMan* — a computer-generated, photo-realistic animation — is reaching children like her in many nations throughout Latin America and southern Asia, as well as the former USSR and Africa.

Send a gift to equip and deploy GodMan teams today, and we'll send you a brand-new DVD presentation with selections from *The GodMan* film. You will see how we are meeting the heartfelt needs of children and youth, and witness how thousands are coming to Christ around the world.

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## The secret of happiness

Most of the popular self-help books on success and happiness should carry the following warning label:

THIS BOOK MAY BE INJURIOUS TO YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH. ITS BASIC PHILOSOPHY IS HUMAN DEIFICATION. ITS APPEAL IS TO PRIDE, AND THE ONLY SUCCESSES PROMOTED ARE TEMPORAL.

Jesus came into the world to show us how to gain true happiness by overcoming the spirit of disobedience, which is part of our Adamic nature, and to restore a joyful relationship with our Heavenly Father. It is through a simple but profound process:

- Acknowledge you have rebelled against God's rightful authority. In other words, admit you have chosen your own selfish desires over God's will for your life.
- Believe with all your heart God has given you the way to establish and sustain an eternal relationship with Him through the full payment of your sins by the sacrificial death of Jesus, the Lamb of God.
- Choose to surrender your will to God by making Jesus Lord (i.e., the ruling authority of your life) and become a disciplined student of His life and commandments with a goal of becoming just like Him.

The way to happiness is as simple as ABC, but the enemy of your soul will do everything in his power to make you believe becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ is the end of joy and freedom and the beginning of a life of rules, regulations and rigor mortis. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

When you become a disciple of Jesus, you choose to learn the secrets of authentic living from the Master himself. Do you think for a moment the students of Rembrandt felt cheated or the football players under Vince Lombardi were

ashamed of their coach or interns under De Bakey and Cooley could be persuaded to learn heart surgery from any other?

What a privilege to be chosen and invited to become a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and to be led into all truth through His Holy Spirit by having daily communication through prayer, reading His Holy Word, and being made strong in all situations by His divine power.

When you become a disciple of Jesus, you enter into a relationship of pure and undefiled love. Those who follow Jesus and are obedient to His commands live with a certain knowledge they are not only the sons and daughters of God but also deeply loved and safe from the powers of evil.

Furthermore, there is an attending sense of well-being and peace when anyone chooses to please God in thought, word and deed — much like children who choose to obey their parents. Children instinctively know a parent's love is a source of happiness. When they disobey, there is very little happiness, but they know that happiness can easily be restored if they seek forgiveness and promise to do what is right.

My father was a wonderful, loving parent, and I always knew he would take care of me. But my happiness was almost completely contingent upon my obedience to his directives. When I had done what he had assigned, I looked forward to seeing him; when I had disobeyed him, I did my best to avoid him. "Loving" God as a mere mental focus does not make us happy, but love expressed through obedience brings lasting joy.

When you become a disciple of Jesus, you are set free from the domination of Satan and the spirit of the world. This truth alone should motivate everyone to reject the appeal of evil and

the temptation to be influenced by those who are in opposition to Christ and His kingdom. It is a terrible bondage to become the slave of everyone's whims and be led astray by the fickle fools of a temporal world.

First John 2:17 says: "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." As a follower of Jesus, you have no obligation to bow to the pressures of a secular culture and godless philosophies.

When you become a disciple of Jesus, you have the assurance His destiny becomes yours. All good teachers desire to lead their students into the life they have discovered and the future they envision through the relationship they have established.

Human instructors, at best, are limited in their ability to transmit

wisdom and ensure a glorious future for their disciples, but Jesus has no such limitation. Jesus saved you and called you to be with Him. Your happiness will be complete when — after a life dedicated to Christ in obedience and service — you enter into the eternal presence of your God and Savior.

After reviewing some of the benefits of becoming a disciple of Jesus, it is quite clear why Jesus said what He did in the Great Commission: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Jesus wants everyone everywhere to follow Him and obey Him so He can be with them as their teacher and friend forever.

It is my prayer for those who have never discovered the joy of serving Jesus that they will accept the divine appeal to become a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. To those who already know Him as Lord and Savior, my prayer is that they will continue to trust and obey Him so their "joy may be complete" (John 15:11). **tpe**

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Editor's note: See also Charles T. Crabtree's article "Crisis, Cause, Cure: Discipleship in the Church" in the Nov. 19, 2006, issue.

E-mail your comments to [tpe@ag.org](mailto:tpe@ag.org).

## UNLOCKING PRISON DOORS

*I don't have many friends. I don't go to movies or play on a soccer team. I don't have my own room or know how to play video games. I am 11 years old ... and I live in prison.*

*For seven years, I have lived in a depressing federal prison, thankful to be with my mom and dad, but searching for something more. My parents' drug use bought me and my siblings this life behind bars ... the only life we knew ... until someone like you stepped in and made a difference.*

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