

# Jesus Is The Way

## Lesson 8: Jesus Is The Way To A Joyful Life



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

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Learn why following Jesus results in a joyful life and what this joyful life looks like

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### Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

**Study Number:** DGW202

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**About the author:** My name is Eric Krieg. I am a disciple of Jesus, a Bible student, a truth seeker, and an evangelist. My interest is in using the Bible as my only guide in my faith. My desire is to help others understand the message of the Bible and pursue true, New Testament Christianity.

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**My plea:** It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Jesus is the way to everything that is important and worthwhile. As we have already seen, Jesus is the way to truth, the way to victory over sin and death, the way to God, the way to Heaven, and the way to a better life. Now, we need to recognize that Jesus is the way to a joyful life. In John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Everyone wants to be happy and experience true joy in their lives. As a result, people look to many different physical things to produce pleasure. Sometimes it’s money. Sometimes it’s stuff. Sometimes it’s physical experiences. Sometimes it’s relationships. Sometimes it’s earthly standing, authority, or power. Sometimes it’s a substance (i.e. alcohol or a drug).

Many people even spend their entire lives pursuing happiness and pleasure through such things. The common belief is that the more of these physical things a person can have and experience, the happier that person’s life will be. So, they spend their lives chasing after the next thing that is necessary to be “happy.” Like King Solomon, they tell themselves, “Go ahead, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy what is good” (Ecclesiastes 2:1).

Then, as part of their never-ending quest for happiness, they view any kind of difficulty or hardship as a negative experience that takes away from their overall experience in life. The typical

belief is that because these things cause difficulty or pain, they surely cannot help you live a happy life. So, these things are avoided as much as possible and dreaded whenever they are experienced.

However, this kind of life that constantly pursues pleasurable experiences that produce the emotion of happiness and temporary satisfaction is a worthless pursuit of something you will never be able to truly find. You see, the kind of happiness and pleasure most people pursue is based on an emotion. It is a feeling of pleasure and enjoyment based on something that is going on in your life. The problem is that these emotions and feelings are dependent on your conditions in life (which are always changing).

So, since perfect life conditions do not exist that would constantly produce these positive feelings and emotions, happiness is not always within your control. When bad things happen in your life or you fail to experience things that produce the emotion of happiness, you will not be happy that day (or for however long your life’s conditions do not allow you to experience that emotion). Therefore, rather than chasing after this feeling that is dependent on your earthly conditions, you need to unlock the secret to true and lasting joy that is not dependent on your earthly conditions!

In this eighth lesson, we want to consider the fact that Jesus is the way to a joyful life. We will consider that worldly things don’t produce true joy. We will consider that Jesus does produce true joy. And, we will take a look at the joyful life. So, no matter where you are right now, you must recognize that Jesus is the way to a joyful life!

## Worldly Things Don’t Produce True Joy

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As we have just been observing, most people in this world will look to worldly things to make them happy. But, in doing so, they miss out on the greater joy they could experience. For, the simple fact of the matter is that earthly things fail to produce true joy.

## ***Worldly things produce temporary pleasures***

We've already considered the fact that happiness is an emotion or feeling produced through pleasurable experiences. And, make no mistake about it, earthly things do produce temporary pleasures. Whenever the Hebrew writer wrote about Moses' decision to follow God rather than live in Egypt as the adopted grandson of its king, he said that Moses "chose to suffer with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin" (Hebrews 11:25).

A person can just imagine the kinds of things Moses had available to him in this position. Standing. Riches. Possessions. Pleasures. Now, notice that the Bible does say that staying in Egypt would have resulted in "pleasure" for Moses. So, if Moses had stayed in Egypt rather than leaving Egypt to serve God, he would have had (presumably) many experiences in his life that would have produced happiness.

But, the Hebrew writer clearly states the limitations of this pleasure. For, he said that it was "fleeting." So, if you are searching for pleasures that do not last that will produce temporary feelings of happiness in your life, then you *can* find them through worldly things. However, you need to consider whether this is really what you are searching for. As Moses considered his opportunity to experience worldly pleasures that produce temporary happiness, he "considered reproach for the sake of Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, since he was looking ahead to the reward" (Hebrews 11:26). Therefore, he recognized that there was something else much greater than the temporary sources of happiness!

Sadly, many people never wake up and recognize that the physical pleasures that produce momentary happiness are not the same as lasting and true joy! So, they live their entire lives chasing the next pleasure – to experience the next emotion or feeling of happiness. Yet, in doing so, they miss out on the true joy that is available to them (more on this later).

## ***Worldly things don't satisfy***

While worldly things do produce temporary experiences of pleasure that lead to feelings of happiness at times, they cannot and do not fully satisfy! Think about it this way: What most people are looking for is not a few emotions or feelings of happiness during their lives. Instead, they actually desire a life in which they can always feel happy. However, this constant feeling of happiness simply does not exist!

You see, life is not perfect. In fact, it is far, far from it. So, even people who have great riches, great earthly standing, great earthly pleasures, etc., are often the most unhappy people on this earth! Not only do they still experience the pains and hardships that go along with this life, but they have also tried to find a continual feeling of happiness through things that cannot possibly produce it.

For example, pursuing these feelings of happiness through worldly pleasures actually results in chasing after something you will never catch. While you will experience moments of happiness, you simply cannot find true satisfaction through worldly things. Listen to King Solomon (who had tried to find happiness through physical things) in Ecclesiastes 5:10. He wrote, "The one who loves silver is never satisfied with silver, and whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with income. This too is futile."

Think about this practically. When a person is dependent on worldly things to produce happiness, he/she is always chasing the *next* worldly thing to experience the next moment he/she feels happy. The newness of something wears off. The pleasure subsides. The money gets spent. And, so it goes throughout life. One thing is achieved to experience the momentary feeling of happiness, then the next one must be sought. Nobody who seeks happiness through worldly things ever gets to a place where they have "enough" for the rest of their lives.

Furthermore, worldly things cannot produce true satisfaction because they often cause trouble – which steals from the feelings of happiness. For example, 1 Timothy 6:9-10 warns, "But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many

foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

I remember hearing a story on the news about a man who did not have much money winning the lottery. Afterward, one bad thing after another started happening to his family – all connected to the money. His family was ruined by the money. Although it was initially thought to be a blessing that would make him and his family happier, it actually had the opposite effect. And, he is certainly not an isolated case of worldly things causing sorrow rather than happiness!

### ***Worldly things don't last***

Even if worldly things actually produced the kind of pleasure people hope they will produce – and even if you could experience the feeling of happiness continually throughout your life because of them, the fact remains that the sources of the pleasure will not last! Not only are the sources of pleasure often taken from you during your life, but they will always be taken from you at death! So, if you are dependent on these things for your happiness, you live with the terror of death, knowing that you will be separated from the things that make you happy at that time!

Think about King Solomon. He had it all, from a worldly perspective. He tried all the common sources of happiness people look to. As king, he had fame and earthly standing. He had more money than anyone else. He had an elaborate palace. He had the best earthly possessions money could buy. He had many relationships. He had the chance to experience great earthly pleasures. He had earthly knowledge.

But, listen to his conclusion in Ecclesiastes 2:9-11. “So I became great and surpassed all who were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom also remained with me. All that my eyes desired, I did not deny them. I did not refuse myself any pleasure, for I took pleasure in all my struggles. This was my reward for all my struggles. When I considered all that I had accomplished and what I had labored to achieve, I found everything to be futile and a pursuit

of the wind. There was nothing to be gained under the sun.”

Even this man, with all the worldly pleasures and possessions at his disposal, was not truly happy! For, he recognized that trying to find true joy through worldly things was like trying to catch the wind. It simply could not be done. While I'm sure he had moments when he experienced the emotions of happiness, they were always temporary.

Furthermore, the book of Ecclesiastes makes it clear that this man knew death would be the end of experiencing any kind of happiness or pleasure through these worldly things. This is just like the man in Jesus' parable in Luke 12:16-21. Jesus told this story about a man who put his focus on earthly things. So, he made plans to tear down his old barns and build bigger ones. Then, after doing these things, he said that he would take it easy and enjoy himself (verse 19). However, that night, God told him, “You fool! This very night your life is demanded of you. And the things you have prepared – whose will they be?” (verse 20).

One day, you will also die. And, if you have pursued happiness through physical things, your happiness will also be gone! For, you simply cannot take any physical thing with you whenever you die. 1 Timothy 6:7 says, “For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out.”

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## **Jesus Produces True Joy**

While worldly things can produce temporary feelings of happiness, these feelings must not be mistaken for true joy. The fact is that worldly things cannot produce true joy. It is impossible! However, it is possible to find and experience true joy. Jesus Christ has made it available!

### ***Passages connecting joy with following Jesus Christ***

There are many passages in the New Testament that connect following Jesus Christ with true joy. In John 17:13, Jesus said, “Now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world

so that they may have my joy completed in them.” Jesus was praying to His Father concerning those who were His disciples at the time and their spiritual wellbeing. In the very next verse, He mentions in His prayer that they were hated by the world. Yet, even though they were hated by the world and the devil had his sights set on them, Jesus spoke about the joy they had available to them. And, notice that Jesus said the joy was “my joy.” So, it is only available through Jesus and given to those who are faithful to Christ.

Next, listen to the description given of the early Christians shortly after the Day of Pentecost, when the gospel was preached and many were baptized. Acts 2:46-47 says, “Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” So, Christians were the ones who had “joyful” hearts. They had been forgiven of their sins and entered a saved condition. Now, they were able to rejoice.

Next, consider two other occasions of joy after people were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. In Acts 8:39, we read about an Ethiopian man. It says, “When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him any longer but went on his way rejoicing.” Then, in Acts 16:34, we read about a Philippian jailor and his household. It says, “He brought them [Paul and Silas] into his house, set a meal before them, and rejoiced because he had come to believe in God with his entire household.” In both of these passages, we notice that becoming a Christian by being baptized into Jesus Christ was a cause for great rejoicing! After all, this is the moment someone is forgiven of sin and enters a saved condition.

Next, those who are Christians can rejoice because of all Jesus Christ has done to save us and in the hope He has provided. Without Jesus Christ, even baptism would not be an occasion for rejoicing – because no one could save themselves. Romans 5:11 says, “And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we

have now received this reconciliation.” It is only through Jesus Christ any sinner can be saved so that through Him we can rejoice in being reconciled to God! Because of this, we can have the hope of eternal life in Heaven.

Next, because of the hope God has made available through Jesus Christ, Romans 12:12 instructs Christians to “Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer.” As Christians keep their focus on the hope of eternal life in Heaven, we are able to endure the struggles and hardships that are associated with this life. And, even though our earthly circumstances may be less than what we would desire for them to be, we can still live rejoicing in the hope Jesus Christ has made available to us.

You see, there is no mistaking the point from the Scriptures that those who live for Jesus Christ can experience true joy. 1 Thessalonians 5:16 instructs Christians, “Rejoice always.” Philippians 4:4 instructs Christians, “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” Then, Galatians 5:22-23 demonstrates that “joy” is one of the fruits produced whenever someone lives for God. So, there is a clear connection in Scripture between living for Jesus Christ and experiencing true joy.

## Following Jesus results in great treasure

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Now, I want to explore this joy at a deeper level. Earlier in this lesson, we considered how worldly things produce temporary pleasures that can result in experiencing the emotion of happiness. But, the kind of true joy we have just considered as being connected with following Jesus Christ is much deeper than this. Rather than being an emotion that comes and goes, it is rooted in much deeper realities that never change. Therefore, this kind of true joy should be the way of a Christian’s life rather than moments of certain emotions or feelings.

Listen to Jesus’ parable in Matthew 13:44. “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy

he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field.” This single parable contains the pieces we need to properly understand the joy that is available in Jesus Christ.

First, consider the treasure. The treasure is readily available to everyone. This is the opportunity to be part of the kingdom of Heaven. This is everything to do with the reign of God. So, this includes the opportunity to serve King Jesus and be one of His kingdom’s citizens. Being part of this kingdom includes both responsibilities to serve Him on this earth and blessings. But, these blessings are *not* worldly blessings that are temporary. Instead, these blessings are spiritual and eternal!

While you live on this earth and serve King Jesus by devoting your entire life to Him, He gives you certain spiritual blessings to enjoy. These include the hope of eternal life in Heaven, the forgiveness of your past sins, the ability to communicate with God in prayer, the adoption as a child of God, peace with God, and such things. Ephesians 1:3 simply states that God “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ.” So, no matter how your life goes on this earth and what serving King Jesus demands of you, these spiritual blessings never change as long as you remain faithful to Christ!

Then, all of these spiritual blessings will culminate in the greatest blessing of all on the Day Jesus Christ returns. This is an eternal home in Heaven! In talking about the hope of eternal life in Heaven for Christians that will be experienced when Jesus comes, Peter wrote, “Though you have not seen him, you love him; though not seeing him now, you believe in him, and you rejoice with inexpressible and glorious joy, because you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8-9). This eternal treasure will be glorious beyond all imagination and free from everything that is evil and painful (read Revelation 21:1-22:5)!

Second, consider the one who finds the treasure. Jesus’ parable speaks of a man finding this treasure. That person can be you! If you will listen to the gospel’s message, you will hear what following King Jesus requires of you and how He promises to bless you if you do. You will hear of all that Jesus

Christ has done to save you. You will hear about what Jesus requires you to do in order to be saved. You will hear about all that Jesus requires of you to follow Him. And, you will hear about the wonderful spiritual blessings available if you do follow Him.

Hearing this message of salvation will leave you with a couple options. You will either want to hear as much of this saving message as you can so you can believe and obey it or not. The fact is that not everyone who hears this wonderful message actually thinks it is a wonderful message. Instead, there are many people who hear this message and consider it to be foolish. Some simply have no desire to do what the message requires of them. Some want to obey the gospel to receive its blessings, but they let other things prevent them from doing so.

Therefore, as you look at the opportunity, how will you react? Will you reject the gospel or will you obey it? Hopefully, you will be like the man in the parable and rejoice that you have found the wonderful blessings God has provided through Jesus Christ and do everything God requires of you.

Third, consider that the sacrifices made were considered well worth it. The man in the parable recognized that there was a high price to pay to have the treasure. But, the man also considered that the treasure was well worth the price! Again, he was overjoyed about the opportunity to have the treasure. So, he sold everything he had in order to buy the field.

Yes, the cost of being one of Jesus’ disciples is high. In fact, it will cost you everything. Your entire life must be devoted to following Jesus and living in obedience to Him. This will also include hardships and persecutions associated with following Jesus and being hated by this world. But, the joy the man in the parable had over the treasure caused him not to hesitate at the prospect of selling everything and buying the field. To him, it was a great bargain!

But, what about you? Will you be so overjoyed to be able to follow Christ and access all the wonderful spiritual blessings through Him that you will gladly make any sacrifices to be part of Christ’s kingdom? And, will you willingly endure any/all sufferings associated with being part of Christ’s kingdom? If you will, you will experience

the true joy that only kingdom citizens can experience!

### ***True joy through Jesus is not dependent on your earthly circumstances***

True joy is not only available to people who are the most wealthy or have the best experiences available to them. Instead, everyone has the opportunity to find true joy through Jesus Christ! And, this true joy is far different from the temporary feelings of happiness worldly pleasures produce.

While worldly things and pleasures produce temporary feelings of happiness that soon fade away and that will never last, the joy available through Jesus Christ is far different! As we have seen, the true joy available in Jesus Christ is not something that comes and goes based on your earthly circumstances. In fact, the true joy in Christ is completely unrelated to your earthly circumstances!

Notice this truth in a few passages. In Acts 5:41, after the apostles had been flogged for preaching in Jesus' name, the apostles left "rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be treated shamefully on behalf of the Name." In Philippians 4:4, we saw Paul instruct the Philippians to continually rejoice in the Lord. But, this joyful letter was written while Paul was being held as a prisoner because he served Jesus. Then, when Peter wrote about the hope of eternal salvation Heaven, he told the Christians he was writing to, "You rejoice in this, even though now for a short time, if necessary, you suffer grief in various trials so that the proven character of your faith – more valuable than gold which, though perishable, is refined by fire – may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Here are just three examples of people who continued to experience joy in Jesus Christ even when their earthly circumstances were far from being ideal. So, true joy in Christ is not dependent on you feeling good or experiencing good things on this earth. Instead, you can continue to experience true joy in Christ Jesus even when things in your life are difficult. For, even when life is at its worst, nothing and nobody can rob you of the true joy we can experience in Jesus Christ. Those who are Christians

simply know "that all things work together for the good of those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). That is, we can always remain overjoyed that we have access through Jesus Christ to every spiritual blessing and an eternal home in Heaven when Jesus Christ returns! So, we know that everything will work out well for us spiritually!

## **A Look At The Joyful Life**

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If you were asked to write down your picture of the most joyful life you can imagine, what would you write? Hopefully, by this point in our study, you recognize that the joyful life does *not* look the way most people look for happiness. Instead, true joy is dependent on having the right relationship with Jesus Christ. So, consider a few ways in which the joyful life is pictured in the New Testament. As we do this, please recognize that the Greek word translated "blessed" can also mean "happy."

### ***Those who are poor in spirit***

Jesus began the section commonly known as the "Beatitudes," "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs" (Matthew 5:3). Rather than having a pride-filled spirit that fails to recognize your need for God, you need to consider yourself in desperate need of all that God has done to save you through Jesus. If you will do this, you can be happy knowing you can enter the kingdom of Heaven!

### ***Those who mourn***

Next, Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). Whenever earthly circumstances cause you to mourn, you should be reminded of your need for God and allow those situations to strengthen your faith. Then, you should always mourn over any sin you have committed so that you will repent and find forgiveness through Jesus Christ. If you will do this, you can be happy knowing that true comfort will be found through Jesus Christ!



### ***Those who are humble***

Next, Jesus said, “Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). You should always live controlling yourself so as to bring yourself under God’s control in all things. If you will do this, you can be happy knowing that great blessings wait for you!

### ***Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness***

Next, Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6). You should have a burning desire to learn and obey all that is fitting with God’s standard of righteousness rather than living to please your own fleshly desires. If you will do this, you can be happy knowing that you will find true fulfillment!

### ***Those who are merciful***

Next, Jesus said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy” (Matthew 5:7). You need to have the disposition that is willing to grant forgiveness to those who have done you wrong. Rather than hold a grudge, seek revenge, or selfishly repay another person with evil, you should act in ways that are loving and helpful toward him/her. If you do this, you can be happy knowing that God will be willing to grant you mercy!

### ***Those who are pure in heart***

Next, Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8). You should always pursue purity in your heart (i.e. your mind). For, a pure heart will produce pure actions throughout your life. If you do this, you can be happy knowing that you will see God in Heaven one Day!

### ***Those who are peacemakers***

Next, Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). You should be committed to doing whatever you can (short of compromising the truth of God’s word) to make peace with other people rather than contributing to conflict. If you do this,

you can be happy knowing that you can be a child of God!

### ***Those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake***

Finally, Jesus said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12). You must be willing to endure persecutions and hardships for the sake of Jesus Christ in living according to His standard of righteousness. If you do this, you can be happy knowing that you have a great reward in Heaven!

### ***Those who are obedient to Jesus***

In Luke 11:28, Jesus said, “blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it.” In James 1:25, James wrote, “But the one who looks intently into the perfect law of freedom and perseveres in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer who works – this person will be blessed in what he does.” You must not only hear God’s word, but also give your entire life in obedience to God. If you do this, you can be happy knowing that God is pleased with you and you will have Heaven as your eternal home!

### ***Those who give***

In Acts 20:35, Paul reminded people that Jesus said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” You must be willing to give of yourself (physically and emotionally) to serve and help others. Not only should you give to help people physically, but especially to help them spiritually. If you do this, you can be happy knowing that God is pleased when you give yourself in service to Him and to others in His name!

### ***Those who endure***

James wrote, “Blessed is the one who endures trials, because when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life that God has promised

to those who love him” (James 1:12). You must be diligent in obeying God through the trials and temptations of this life. In fact, James even talked about how Christians can find joy in times of trials (James 1:2-4). If you do this, you can be happy knowing that the trials will help you become stronger in the faith and that you will have eternal life in Heaven!

## Conclusion

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Jesus is the way to a joyful life! No, following Jesus does *not* mean that you will never experience feelings of sadness on this earth. However, your life will be joyful by serving Jesus Christ because you can always rejoice in the fact that God is pleased with you, that He has given you wonderful spiritual blessings, and that those who die in the Lord are the happiest people of all because they will live eternally in Heaven (Revelation 14:13)!

## Study Questions

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How do many people suppose they will find happiness through earthly things? Why will that actually fail?

### 1. Worldly Things Don't Produce True Joy

Do worldly things produce any kind of pleasures? Why or why not?

Do worldly things satisfy? Why or why not?

Will worldly things last? Why or why not?

### 2. Jesus Produces True Joy

List and briefly explain some passages that connect joy with following Jesus Christ?

How does following Jesus result in great treasure?  
How does this connect with true joy?

Is true joy through Jesus dependent on your earthly circumstances? Why or why not?

### 3. A Look At The Joyful Life

How do those who mourn find happiness?

How do those who are humble find happiness?

How do those who hunger and thirst for righteousness find happiness?

How do those who are merciful find happiness?

How do those who are pure in heart find happiness?

How do those who are peacemakers find happiness?

How do those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake find happiness?

How do those who are obedient to Jesus find happiness?

How do those who give find happiness?

How do those who endure find happiness?