The Pursuit of Happiness Without Rest for the Soul Remains Empty

People are looking for happiness. You can see it in the wishes we give one another: "Happy holidays!", "Happy New Year!" We look forward to vacations, weekends, quiet evenings and special moments. And yet, even when we get what we wanted, we often feel that something is missing. Joy comes for a while, then fades, leaving behind the same restlessness or the same emptiness.

The explanation is simple: man was created not only for rest of the body, but also for rest of the soul. The body feels good when it is fed, cared for and rested. The soul, however, has other needs: peace, inner security, love, lasting joy and a sense of meaning. These needs cannot be met by passing things.

Think of a car. It runs best when it is used for the purpose it was designed for. If it is used against its intended purpose, it wears out quickly and burns fuel for nothing. The same is true of a person. If he lives only for work, for pleasure or for collecting experiences, he never reaches the fulfilment he was created for.

True fulfilment is bound up with the values of the Kingdom of God: a pure heart, righteousness, longsuffering, love, goodness, mercy and meekness. These are not mere concepts but states of the heart that bring peace and stability to the soul. Through the fall, man drifted away from these values and lost access to the true springs of fulfilment. That is why he looks for substitutes.

This is where the deception begins. The need for happiness is exploited through promises that sound appealing but cannot deliver what they promise. Money, fame, quick gratification and "the pleasures of sin for a season" seem to offer happiness, but what they give is little and short-lived. Once the excitement passes, the thirst remains.

What is more, any happiness gained at the cost of sacrificing the soul's rest is not true happiness. If, to get something, a person has to live in fear, guilt, anxiety, greed, envy or inner conflict, then what he has gained has not brought him fulfilment, only a passing satisfaction. A joy that troubles the soul is no real gain. Genuine happiness does not destroy the peace of the heart; it strengthens it. It does not leave behind emptiness, reproach or unease, but brings rest, quiet and stability.

Rest for the soul does not appear by itself, nor can it be bought. It is found only when a person reaches its true springs. Just as thirst is not quenched by looking at water but by drinking it, so rest does not come merely from knowing what is good, but from living it. Here are some of its springs:

A clear conscience. The person who lives uprightly has nothing to hide and nothing to fear. Injustice and lies trouble the soul, while righteousness brings peace.

Forgiveness. Anger and resentment are burdens carried by the one who will not forgive. When a person forgives, he sets down a weight that has been pressing on him for a long time.

Peace instead of strife. Whoever gives up the need to settle every score himself and always have the last word stops living in constant conflict. In this way he finds the rest that endless fighting can never give.

Meekness and humility. The proud heart is always on guard: it compares, justifies and defends itself. The humble heart has nothing left to prove, and it finds rest in that very freedom.

Contentment. The contented person steps out of the endless cycle of wanting, getting and being disappointed. He learns to enjoy what he has.

Love and doing good. The joy that comes from doing good to someone else lasts long after passing pleasures have vanished. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

So the problem is not that people seek happiness, but where they seek it. If you look for it in things that cannot last, you will stay trapped in an endless cycle of wanting, getting and being disappointed. If you look for it at its true springs, you will discover that happiness is not an intense, fleeting emotion, but the state of a soul that has found its rest.

In reality, genuine happiness and rest for the soul cannot be separated. Rest for the soul gives birth to true happiness, and true happiness preserves the soul's rest. Any happiness that demands the sacrifice of the heart's peace proves, sooner or later, to be nothing but an illusion. True happiness is the kind that can live side by side with a clear conscience, a peaceful heart and a soul at rest.

Source: *The Pursuit of Happiness Without Rest for the Soul Remains Empty* — Purpose of Life
truepurposeoflife.com/articles/the-search-for-happiness-without-rest-for-the-soul-stays-empty