



Where is happiness found?

The pursuit of happiness is a hot topic, it appears. In the Sunday Age this week there was an article dedicated to describing what does, and does not make people happy. While not a Christian article, the points made from study and research were interesting. There was nothing new, of course, but challenging just the same.



As Christians we would probably all say that the ‘things’ of this life (material possessions), or even the activities of life (pleasure), do not necessarily bring lasting happiness. So what does make us happy? There is not one simple answer to this question, but the above article makes a couple of points that are worth noting. “happiness is not so much about the trouble you meet in life but how you respond to it” says Dr George Vaillant, author of ‘Aging Well’ (Sunday Age, MEL, August 2, 2009). The Psalmist gives us another perspective on this, “Trouble and distress have come upon me, but your commands are my delight.” (Psalm 119: 143) Furthermore Paul encourages us to “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”(1 Thess 5: 16-18)

It is also interesting to note that, for many people, happiness is very much connected to having good relationships, stable marriages and strong family ties. I recently attended the National Christian Family Conference in Sydney and listened to a very helpful address on the characteristics of strong families and successful marriages. According to recent research the six qualities of strong families are:

? Commitment – the willingness to persevere and work in relationships to help them grow and last.

? Good communication – being able to talk openly and honestly, and resolve conflicts as they arise.

? Appreciation and affection – showing how much others are valued and appreciated with both words and actions.

? Time together – making time to be together and enjoy one another’s company. This means both quality and quantity time.

? Ability to cope with stress and crises – weathering the storms of life and supporting each other through the process.

? Spiritual wellness – having and sharing a real and active faith in the Lord Jesus.

Relationships will always have their challenges, and as we live together in marriage and family life we will encounter both joy and trouble. How well do you respond to the troubles of life? Will you be committed to growing strong relationships through both the joys and challenges that you and your family face? Perhaps, like me, there are areas above that

you could work on? I personally find it overwhelming trying to work on too many things at once, and I end up not working on anything at all. It is helpful for some families to target one thing for a time, just as the police may target one road issue at a time. You might even like to write it up somewhere for the family to see and be reminded by. What will you work on in your pursuit of happiness and strong relationships?

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