

Week 7

*Happiness in this life
and the next*



*Seeking
Serenity
Devotional Book*



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Serenity prayer

God, grant me the Serenity
To accept the things I cannot change...
Courage to change the things I can,
And Wisdom to know the difference
Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,

Accepting hardship as the pathway to peace.

Taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it.
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His will.

*That I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.
Amen.*

Acknowledgement:

A Prayer for Serenity, Trevor Hudson, Struik Christian Media.

MONDAY

Reasonably Happy



Lamentations 5: 15 (NRSV) *The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning.*

Psalm 30: 11-12 (NRSV) *You have turned my mourning into dancing; You have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.*

So which is it?

When we are at a funeral of a loved one the world wants us to be sad, even if the deceased had been suffering. When our child is born, the world wants us to be happy, even if it wasn't planned. But life is more complex than that. When we are full of joy, it doesn't take long before we are reminded that it probably won't last. When we are sorrowful, we are

supposed to turn to Christ who brings us joy. But is that realistic?

In the Serenity Prayer's penultimate line, it blesses us with a delightful conservatism. It calls us to aspire to "reasonable happiness", at least in this life. Certainly, we will experience joy. Certainly, we will catch glimpses of God's kingdom as it slowly emerges on the earth. But it won't be perfect. And that's okay.

That I may be reasonably happy in this life



Prayerful reflection: What joy are you carrying today?
What heartache are you carrying today?

TUESDAY

Happiness begins on the inside



Psalm 13: 1-2, 6 (NIV)

How long LORD?

Will you forget me forever?

How long will You hide your face from me?

*How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?*

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

*I will sing the LORD's praise,
for He has been good to me*

I have always been struck by the juxtaposition of sorrow and joy in this Psalm. The psalmist identifies the sorrow that is in his heart. But he also recognises that in the same heart is the impact of the goodness which he has experienced.

The hope that we carry in our heart as Christians is that God is restoring everything that is broken. God is reconciling all of creation back to Himself. It is a hope which is not born by seeing everything around us as perfect but believing that everything can

be made better. Including the brokenness in the same heart where hope resides.

Trevor Hudson writes:

"Happiness, like serenity, originates inside ourselves. Too often we depend on outside things, and even other people, to make us happy." While we may trace the root of negative emotions like anger, jealousy and greed to outside things, happiness, joy and love tend to emerge from inside of us. The same place we as Christians believe our God resides.



Prayer reflection: What negative emotions are you feeling today?

Can you name them?

Can you find positive emotions that your heart is yearning to feel and express?

Can you name them?

WEDNESDAY

Happiness is a by-product



Ecclesiastes 2: 1 (NIV)

I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless.

Isaiah 65: 1a (NIV)

"I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me."

*Happiness is a butterfly.
The more you chase it,
the more it will elude you.
But if you turn your attention to
other things,
It comes and sits softly on your
shoulder.*

- *Henry David Thoreau*

Have you ever bought something that (really) brought you lasting joy? Have you entered a relationship convinced that it will be the solution to all your problems? Have you ever pursued a new job opportunity convinced that it will be the place you find purpose and joy (or a

higher salary which will fix everything!)?

The line in the Serenity Prayer about "being reasonably happy" follows on from the lines about "trusting that He will make all things right" and "[surrendering] to His will". Could it be, that we do not only find true happiness when we are looking for it? Could it be that as we live in relationship with Christ, with all the beauty and complexity that such a relationship brings, **His joy will appear when we least expect it?**



Prayerful reflection: Are you chasing after happiness, or allowing it to find you?

THURSDAY

Supremely Happy



Psalm 84: 1-2 (NIV)

How lovely is Your dwelling place,
LORD Almighty!

My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh cry out
for the living God.

Some Christians consider it pious to yearn for heaven. Others feel we should worry less about life after death and more about life today. The Serenity Prayer lands somewhere in between. It recognises the relevance of life today but ends with the hope of being “supremely happy with Him forever”.

As Christians, we can find a healthy balance between these two. The hope of an afterlife, in whatever form it may be, can give context to the struggles of today. We can know that while life on

earth has its hardships and limitations, there is more to our existence than what we know today. There is more to love, joy and peace than what we know now. There is the promise of supreme happiness.

As Christians, we get to be a part of bringing people from places of brokenness and pain to places where they can experience happiness even if it is only “reasonable happiness”. And we get to live as beacons of the hope and supreme happiness that is to come.

And supremely happy with Him forever in the next



Prayerful reflection: What do you hope most for in the afterlife? How could you make that a bit more possible in our world today?

FRIDAY

With God forever



Revelation 21: 1-4 (NIV)

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth, ”for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

As we conclude our journey through the Serenity Prayer, spend some time reflecting on what the series has meant for you. Has it forced you to face difficult realities? Was it a source of comfort through dark times? Did it teach you that it is okay not to be okay?

In the hardest of times, God may feel very close or very far away. But as Christians we live in the knowledge that we cannot be

separated from Him. And we yearn for a time when we will be fully united with Him, forever.

For now, death, mourning, crying and pain are part of our reality.

God has taught us through this timeless prayer how we can journey through that reality, knowing that we will never walk that journey alone.



Prayerful reflection: Consider reading the full Serenity Prayer as you reflect on what God has taught you after the past seven weeks.

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