

# Good News > Bad News = Positive

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 03 June 2018

Preacher: Jason Webb

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, in this class we're going through the book Happy Christian by David Murray, Ten Ways to Be a Joyful Believer in a Gloomy World. And this week we are looking at Happy Media. Happy Media is the title of our chapter.

And like I said, every chapter has an equation, a greater than equation. And today's equation is this, that good news greater than or more than bad news equals positive, equals happiness.

Good news more than bad news equals positive. Now, bad news, good news. I looked up the news at drudge report dot com.

And maybe some of you look at this website. If you don't know what it is, it's a very conservative news aggregator. They just gather stories from all sorts of sources. And they put it on their website.

And so this was from last week. Or maybe, I guess, two weeks since technically today is a new week. But this was the headlines. Unvarnished. Unchanged.

[ 1 : 14 ] This is some of what it said. Five dollar gas in New York. Prices to go higher. Military running out of bombs and parts to make them.

Growing sinkhole opens in White House lawn. Lava nears Hawaii power plant. MS-13 gang member nicknamed Animal. Sentenced to 40 years.

Customers fear homeless camps. Rattlesnake plunges from tree into kayak. And then starts attacking. Wow.

You better watch out, Stan, when you're out on Lake of the Woods. Landmark lawsuit claims Monsanto hid cancer danger of weed killer for decades.

So, at this point, I said, okay, that's probably enough. You get the point. This website collects a lot of negative stories. And let me see if I can find some positive. And this is just the truth.

[ 2 : 14 ] And this is what I found next. I just scrolled down a hair more. And this is what it said. Saudi Arabia expands crackdown on women's rights activists. Ultra clean homes.

Trigger cancer? Oh, man. I didn't even know. Citizens sued for insulting dead firemen. New law bans defamation of heroes.

Dangerous side effects reported from fitness trackers. Remember that, Roger Michaud? You were saying how you're so happy about your fitness tracker. Well, Florida City warns...

I don't know what this one means. Florida City warns residents of power outage, comma, zombies, dot, dot, dot. Wow, things are bad in Florida.

Florida. So now I said, okay, I have to find something good. I have to find something somewhat positive. And I looked through the whole thing, and this is the best.

[ 3 : 13 ] This is honest truth. This is the best I could come up with. Putin's unlimited range nuke missile crashes after 22 miles.

Or conservationists fight to save animals as mass extinction looms. So I guess those are kind of good.

So now turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 4. This is a passage that we looked at rather extensively on Wednesday night.

And this is a passage that is very familiar to you. But Philippians chapter 4. And verse 8 and 9. Actually, we'll just do verse 8.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.

[ 4 : 29 ] Whatever you learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put it into practice, and the God of peace will be with you. Now, as we look at that verse, we do need to be really clear that Paul is not using this as a just general principle in this passage.

This verse is very much grounded in the local situation in Philippi. The church is having a conflict between Euodia and Syntyche.

There are loggerheads. And it's a big enough of a deal that the Apostle Paul, who is outside of the situation, has to write from a prison cell and begging them to agree with each other.

And you can imagine the tension in the church. And so Paul is writing that into that situation. He's not just speaking in general.

He's speaking about a particular situation and how to handle conflict in churches where you have disagreements with one another and where there's tensions.

[ 5 : 40 ] And we're going to look at, and he's saying, this is how you need to look at each other in the church. You need to be thinking about what is good and pure and right and praiseworthy and admirable in your brother or your sister in your local congregation.

And we're going to talk about that. And we're going to look at that again when we look at this chapter on happy church. How do we have a happy church?

Well, this is a big part of it. We need to see what God is doing in others and praise that, recognize that, enjoy that.

But if we start with that specific principle and we say, you know what, this is mostly about how we relate in the church. It does apply in a more general way. If we are going to live in peace and contentedness, looking at the pure and admirable and right and noble and so forth is something that we need to train ourselves to do, not just in the church, but in our whole life at what is good and beautiful.

And so let me be clear and very specific. That means we just based on this verse, we do need to really limit our use of websites like drudgereport.com or places like that or any news source where it is a constant.

[ 7 : 09 ] There is a tendency and a bias towards what is negative and doesn't have anything to do with conservative or liberal or anything like that. It's just what but websites and media where it is negative, negative, negative.

We need to limit our use of them if we want to be happy. Listen to David Murray.

In an age of multiplying and diversifying media sources. We don't need to accept being force fed the junk food of what is evil and ugly and distressing.

Instead, we can and we should feed our minds a media diet that is biased towards what is good and beautiful.

And then he goes on to quote Philippians chapter four and verse eight. And then this is what he says in this epistle of joy. That's what Philippians is called an epistle of joy.

[ 8 : 13 ] It's the theme of the book. Paul was not arguing for unrealistic isolation from bad news. That inevitably fills a fallen world. So is there going to be bad news?

Yes. And he's not saying you just isolate yourself from that. No, this is not a warrant for monasteries and convents. But it is a warrant and even a demand that we choose a deliberate imbalance in favor of what is inspirational and wholesome instead of the mainstream media's imbalance on the side of what is dispiriting and gross.

I think we need to be honest with ourselves. I think we need to be honest with ourselves. And we really need to think about our relationship with news media outlets.

First of all, is there a place for them? Yeah, there definitely is. Do they provide a real service? Yeah, they do.

A service that we desperately need. Are there good, honest people working in news outlets? Yes. In newspapers and so forth.

[ 9 : 32 ] And so a free media is one of the hallmarks of free, prospering countries, nations. We want media and reporters to go searching for stories, and we want them to go searching for even bad stories because it's really under that kind of scrutiny that government stays away from its worst abuses, especially in democracies.

A free media is a check on political power. And that media is good for us all. Okay? I just think of, you know, the Washington Post in 1970, what, two or three?

They did some deep digging, and they discovered some bad things going on in the White House. That's good reporting. In the, you know, whatever, 10 or 15 years ago, I think it was the Boston something or other, they did some deep reporting on the Vatican abuse scandal.

Those things are ugly and bad, but that's good work that they're doing. But, and the media is good for us all in that sense.

But with that being said, we do need to ask ourselves something. So let me ask you. Do NBC, CBS, CNN, Fox News, all these papers, all these websites, whatever, do these as corporations actually really care about your happiness and well-being?

[ 11 : 16 ] When they sit in their boardroom, do they ask, how can I make these people feel secure and happy and confident and make their lives flourish?

How can we reduce their anxiety and give them peace? Do they actually say that? No. What do they care about?

Selling. Selling. Money. They do. Advertisement dollars. Advertisers. Advertisers.

In a very real sense, we aren't their first customers. You realize that? We aren't their first customers. Their first customers are the advertisers.

The companies that are paying for the ads. And let me ask you. What are they selling to the advertisers? Access to you.

[ 12 : 25 ] Your ears. They're selling your eyes. They're selling your attention. And what? And you know what gets attention? Good news or bad news?

Bad news. There's a slogan in the media world. If it bleeds, it leads. And now there's this 24-hour news cycle.

That 50 years ago or 40 years ago or 30 years ago there wasn't. There's this 24-hour news cycle. And there's internet websites. And there is this constant demand for more and more bad news.

For more and more blood. For more and more bad things. And I hate being so skeptical. And maybe I'm too skeptical. Maybe I'm too much of a pessimist.

But there's a lot of good news that doesn't get told a lot of the time. Dr. Bradley Wright wrote a book called Upside.

- [ 13 : 28 ] Surprising good news about the state of our world. And in that book he explained that journalists are incentivized. That means they benefit to tell us about the worst events. And the worst trends in the world. Because that's what attracts the most ears and the most eyes. We want to know about all the dangers out there. So that we can take evasive action. And listen to how he puts it.
- He gives us some examples. If life expectancy decreases. People are dying younger. If it increases. It strains the social security system.
- An unpreventable disease harms people. A preventable disease means disparities in access to medical treatment. High birth rates causes overcrowding.
- Low birth rates cause school closings. And lowered future tax revenue. Do you get it? And so I was sitting at a table at a wedding not so long ago.
- [ 14 : 37 ] And we were all talking about how times have changed. And I shared something about seeing a kindergarten preparation list from 1980.
- So this is something that the school sent out with parents with little kindergartners and said, this is what your child needs to do to be able to enter into kindergarten. And it's, like I said, from 1980.
- And one of the items, along with a lot of the other things, one of the items was that they need to be able to walk two blocks on their own. As a five-year-old. They need to be able to walk two blocks on their own.
- And some people said, oh, you just can't do that. Now it's too dangerous. The people out there. And all the news today has made it seem like our world is much more dangerous in a much worse place than it was 40 years ago.
- And the truth is, that's not true. It's not true. And it's not me being a young, naive person who doesn't remember the good old days.
- [ 15 : 47 ] Someone once said, nothing's more responsible for the good old days than a bad memory. There's more of a perception of danger that there, there's more of a perception of danger out there than there was in the past.
- But perception and fact aren't necessarily, they don't necessarily go together. And so, I want to give you a news report this morning.
- And it's all true. But it is biased. It's biased in that I picked out some things that show that the world is actually improving.
- Can you believe that? And things aren't as bad as the media makes it out. And the good old days just maybe weren't so good after all.
- So, I'm going to try to do this slide here. And, Ben, am I just going, clicking it? Okay. And so, here's some biased good news.
- [ 16 : 55 ] Things that have changed. First of all, you see here, this is a chart that says, the fall of the autocrats. Which basically means, since the end of the Cold War, the number of countries considered autocracies, dictatorships, oppressive regimes, that sort of thing.
- That's the black line. It's in a steady decline. And the blue line is, the number of democracies in our world. Well, the number of people that are getting to choose their government leaders in free elections.
- So, autocracies have gone way down in the last 40 years. This one. This is the crime rate in the United States since 1990. Things are better.
- Safer. Less criminals. This is violent crime since 1990. Things are going better. Here's another violent crime rate.
- This one goes since 1973. This chart. This is actually pretty crazy. This is homicide in five Western European regions since 1300.

[ 18 : 08 ] So, you want to live in the safe old days of 1300? I don't even know how to read that chart. But basically, like, all that left stuff.

You're in 1500. You want to live in the Reformation time because it was such good old days. You had 200, 300, 400 times chance of being murdered. This is literacy worldwide.

So, the orange thing is illiteracy. The blue section is literacy. Since 1800. Since 1800. I have another chart that basically says in 1800, 13% of the people in the world could read or write.

And now, it's 87%. Things are getting better. And the ability to read and write. Average years of education. So, people are going to school and staying in school longer.

Here's infant mortality rate. So, infants dying per 1,000 births. Here's maternal mortality.

[ 19 : 14 ] So, women dying in delivery and in the immediate time after that. You notice it's almost down to zero now. Whereas before it was 800, 900, 1,000.

So, here's the life expectancy at birth. That's since 1960. So, the last 60 years.

People are living longer. Here's extreme poverty. This is incredible. So, I'm going to give you some more details on that.

But in 1820, 94% of the people in the world lived in extreme poverty. And now, it's down to less than 10%. Here's malaria deaths.

That's going down. Here's childhood deaths from infectious diseases. That's all going down since 1990. Here's polio.

[ 20 : 17 ] Polio. Back when some of you were kids, people died of polio. Now, there's only been 37 global cases in the whole world in 2016.

Okay. Here's income spent on food. We used to spend a lot more money. This is 1960 is where it starts. You almost spent 20% of your money on food.

Now, it's way down to 10% or 12%. Okay. And then I have some other good news.

This is what I want to give you. This is some other good news. 200 years ago, 85% of the world population lived in extreme poverty. 20 years ago, so 20 years ago, the year 1998, 29% still lived in extreme poverty.

Today, only about 9% live in extreme poverty. So, in the last 20 years, we've knocked out 20% of the extreme poverty around the globe.

[ 21 : 24 ] Okay. How about flying? Flying is now 2,100 times safer. It's gotten 2,100 times safer over the past 70 years. 2016 was the second safest year in aviation history.

The odds of being fatally injured in a plane crash are now .000025%. So, one in, I think, if I did my math wrong, like one in 10 million.

The real price of plane travel in the United States has fallen in half since the 1970s. In 1905, a Vermont doctor and a chauffeur were the first people to successfully drive a car across the country from San Francisco to New York.

Guess how long it took? Anyone want to guess? Higher? 63 days. 63 days.

Today, you can fly across the United States in a few hours and have internet access the whole way. In 1900, 37% of deaths were caused by infectious diseases.

[ 22 : 39 ] That number dropped to less than 5% by 1955 and now is under 2%. The average American now retires at age 62.

100 years ago, the average American died at age 51. I'm going to ask you to raise your hand if you're 51 or older.

Time spent on laundry fell from 11 1/2 hours a week in 1920 to 1 1/2 hours in 2014.

Early in the 19th century, I gave this, 12% of the world could read and write. Today, it's about 83%. The world's nuclear stockpiles have been reduced by 85% since the Cold War.

Americans are half as likely to be murdered as they were 24 years ago. In 1929, Americans spent more than 60% of their disposable income on the basic necessities.

[ 23 : 44 ] Food, water, shelter. Water, shelter. By 2016, that's fallen to under a third. Between 1961 and 2009, the amount of land used to grow food increased by 12%, but the amount of food that was grown increased by 300%.

The number of people in extreme poverty... I love this number. Remember, the number of people in extreme poverty has fallen by an average of 137,000 people every day for the past 25 years.

Since we're a Christian news organization, I want you to hear some of the good news from the kingdom of God. From 1960 to 2000, the global growth of the number of reported evangelical Protestants grew three times that of the world population.

And twice that of Islam. In 1900, there were 9 million professing Christians in Africa. Now there are 541 million.

Mongolia in 1989 only had four professing Christians. Today there's over 20,000.

[ 25 : 13 ] Cambodia. The late 1970s with Khmer Rouge and that sort of thing. There was only 2,000 Christians. Today, now in Cambodia, there's over 150,000. China.

In 1949, there were 1.2 million Christians. And they went through severe persecution under communist rule. And today, there's an estimated 100 million Christians in China.

Now, I hope you're just a little bit happier about hearing the good news. Now, what's the point of all that?

It's just this, that we can't let the existing media world with its constant negativity destroy our perception of the world.

Of what is going on. Of what God is doing. Of how, and define how we feel. We need to eat a diet more in line with Philippians 4.8.

[ 26 : 18 ] What is true? What is noble? What is right? What is pure? Lovely? Admirable? Excellent? Praiseworthy? Think about such things. So, look for what is true.

And look for what is noble, not what's base. Murray says this, Trash the tawdry. And nourish the noble in your life.

Seek out and consume books, magazines, websites, TV programs, movies, and art. That elevate, the heroic, that inspire awe, that generate worship.

Instead of looking for what is so wrong out there, look for what is right. Ask yourself, who in my life is doing a good job?

Look for what people are doing right instead of always picking out what is wrong. A team of psychologists visited 60 companies and directly transcribed every word in their business meetings.

[ 27 : 25 ] So, they sat in business meetings and they directly transcribed everything that was said in these meetings. And then they analyzed each sentence. They put it in the negative.

Is this a negative kind of statement or is this a positive statement? And they worked out this ratio of positive to negative. And their conclusion was this. There is a sharp dividing line.

Companies with better than three to one ratio for positive to negative. So, if they say three positive things for every one negative, those companies are flourishing.

So, where there's business meetings, where people are praising and encouraging and helping, at a rate of not one to one, but three to one, the companies are flourishing.

Below that ratio, companies are not doing well economically. They're eating each other out, eating each other up from the inside. They're destroying themselves.

[ 28 : 24 ] So, look at your family. Look at your children, your job, your place, and say, what is working well here? What are my kids doing that's right? What's the best thing about this?

Then purity, not filth. Beauty, not ugliness. Maybe instead of watching ugly TV, you can watch some beautiful TV. Have you guys seen the Planet Earth documentaries from the BBC?

There's two series. It's just the photography, the cinematography is amazing. And, yeah, there's a little bit of evolutionary stuff in there. But you should see the beauty of God's creation, the animals, the variety.

Praise, not complaint. So, focus on what is constructive rather than what is destructive. Look for a brother or sister to praise this week.

Look for something to praise in your spouse or in your children. And do it every day. That's not giving glory to another. That's pointing out what God is doing in their life.

[ 29 : 35 ] That's appreciating God's grace in their life. So, what else can you do? Well, a practice that we do every now and then.

We try to do it at least once a week. But it would be really good if we could do it every day or every other day. Is ask everyone at the dinner table. So, you sit down at the dinner table. And you ask everyone who is seated there to list three good things that happened that day.

Three good things that are going right. Three good things that you saw. That you enjoyed. Three blessings. His mercies are new every morning. Our praise should be new every evening.

And so, you go around the table. And you do three blessings. That's what we call it. And so, you do it as a family. And you get to hear your kids saying, Oh, this is so good.

Instead of hearing them complain. Do it personally. I've told you about my Thanksgiving book. I try to record blessings every day. One study tracked 500 participants.

[ 30 : 41 ] And they recorded three blessings. They called it that. These psychologists said, Can you track three blessings, three good things every day? And that's what these people did.

These 500 participants. And the study found that just that one practice. Of writing down three things you're thankful for. Three good things in your life. Every day. That practice lowered depression.

And increased happiness. And not just immediately. But three months. And even six months later. Now, if unbelievers can do that.

If unbelievers can find three things to be thankful for. And experience joy from that. Shouldn't we be able to? Shouldn't we be able to find.

Since we know God's grace. And find those things. And say, thank you. So. A few weeks ago.

[ 31 : 40 ] Probably about three or four now. We listened to some happy truths. Some things. Some facts. That should make us happy. And today what we want to do is. List some happy blessings.

Things that. Things are going right. Things are going good. God is helping. God is doing good. And so I'm going to ask you. What are you thankful for? I know we do that once a year.

At the Thanksgiving service. There's no reason we can't do it more than that. So let me ask you. What are you thankful for? And I'm going to start out with three of my own. And the first is. I really enjoy this study.

I really like looking at happiness. It makes me happy. To study it. I am so thankful for the sunshine.

And the spring. Winters are such a bummer sometimes. It's so good to have sunshine. And the last thing. I am so thankful that I.

[ 32 : 38 ] This is my super duper special privilege. I get to stand up there. And listen. To you guys singing. I wish. I wish.

We could. You could each take a turn. To just stand up there beside me. And experience it. So. What are you guys thankful for? You don't have to list three things.

How about some one things? Mom. I love the words that God has given us. And I love how. In the spring.

Old. Old friends are back. You're talking about your birds? I'm talking about my birds. Yes.

I am attached to them a little bit. But. I get to sit. And. And. And look out the window at them. And. The colors.

[ 33 : 33 ] They are. But what. What I love the most is. Even though I'm feeding them. I know that God has brought them there. You know. In just a small way.

He's given. Some of. Our seed. And I just. Thank the word for that. Very good. What else? Don't be shy. Dad.

This has to be more than a web thing people. I love all the seasons. I love that we change that up. Wherever we live. We get to enjoy all four seasons.

We. You know. People. Winter. And. You know. After you go through a hot.

Hot summer. The fall. And. So many people I've talked to. Fall is the best season. You know. The leaves are changing. And then.

[ 34 : 30 ] Winter. You know. You gotta. I don't know. You gotta be weird like me. You gotta. Love the different seasons. And the winter.

You know. Being snug in your house. Warm. While the wind is blowing. And. The temperature is dropped. All of that. Fair enough.

I agree. I love that yesterday morning. We got to spend. Some one on one time. The most special person in my life.

My wife. Kayaking around the way. New in the lake. A snake didn't drop in your thing? Thank you. We have a snake. We have the bodies that could.

Exert physical energy. And you can enjoy the serenity. There on the lake. And then afterwards. Enjoy the chaos of three grandsons.

[ 35 : 28 ] All right. Mark. I'm thankful to still be doing factory work at age 62. And the medical technology.

That put a device in my chest. That used my heart regularly. Just the way the Lord provides. I thank him for all the things on your list.

That were secular things. That God rules over. And he caused all that. Yeah. And indirectly. And through all these different forces. And people.

And governments. And he's in control. Yeah. He's making life better for all those creatures. He's being merciful, isn't he? That's right. Thank you for new mornings.

Just new promises that are true. I'm thankful for family and friends and relationships that he's enabled us to have.



- [ 36 : 25 ]    Yeah. Will? I'm thankful for a nice job where I can have lots of physical exercise.  
And I get lots of supportive friends. It's a very nice job there. I'm very happy for you, Will. I love that you have a good job.  
What else? We have time. I'm grateful for technology that allows me to be in contact with my family. I also love the world. I love the world. That's what I love to see.  
Enjoyed playing with my kids outside yesterday. They still need help and guidance on how to interact with each other. And treat each other. But it's a blessing to see them love each other.  
And have fun. And growing in that. Yeah. That's a blessing. Anyone else?
- [ 37 : 28 ]    Clara, it's good to see you. Good to see you, too. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. I'm thankful for campfires and flowers and pets.  
I'm really happy. Yeah. Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. That's it. I'm thankful for all the authorities that want to do us good.  
I think often what it would be like if we had a trash collection or sewage systems or people that fix electricity. If you have a problem with waterworks.  
And sometimes it would be like what my kids are. Amen. You saw that chart of, like, the homicide rate.  
Good grief. There's no police back then, was there? Anything else? Dan. Thank you for showing that God's goodness to have to bring joy into our lives and be Jewish after chaos in the world.
- [ 38 : 38 ]    Mm-hmm. Something special about being a child. Mm-hmm. I'm thankful for homeschooling and for having that ability as a parent that we still have that says we can decide what's best for our kids.  
Medically, educationally, all those things, and we still have that right. And I think we're bad. Mm-hmm. It's too open.  
Go ahead. Let it roll. I'm thankful I listened on my podcast. I see you say the world news. They've got a daily podcast, thinking in news from a balanced perspective.  
But also, they're aiming their mission to do it with a biblical worldview. I believe their mission is to conform, educate, and inspire. I just really enjoy that 30 minutes drive back and forth to work each day or listen to that.  
And that's very helpful for me. Mm-hmm. Very good. Well, we're out of time. Hopefully, we're not out of Thanksgiving.
- [ 39 : 44 ]    We're dismissed. Thank you.