

Happy Future

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, we are going through a study on The Happy Christian by David Murray.! The subtitle of that book, The Happy Christian, is Ten Ways to Be a Joyful Believer in a Gloomy World. And today's lesson is called Happy Future. Happy Future. And each lesson comes with its own equation. And this week's equation is the future greater than the past equals more positive or more happy.
- That's what we're going to be talking about. But before we get to that, I want to think again with you. Why are we doing this study? What is so important about being happy or being a happy Christian?
- Remember, at the very beginning, about seven or eight weeks ago of this series, I asked two questions. The first question was, should Christians be happy?
- Should Christians be happy? And the second question is, are you happy? Are you happy? Now, should Christians be happy?
- [1 : 1 9] What's the answer? Should Christians be happy? Yes. Is there anything wrong with Christians being happy? Is holiness and being sad and morose the same thing?
- No, it's not. Should Christians be optimistic, positive people? Yes. Now, the way the Bible teaches that is not by ignoring all the hard, bad realities and sad realities of life.
- But, brothers and sisters, it does something amazing. It tells us that when we come to Jesus Christ, we are taken out of this world in a way and we are moved into a different kingdom.
- We're not of this world. We are aliens. Remember 1 Peter? We are aliens and strangers. This is not our home. We're citizens of a happy kingdom.
- So, take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter 14 and verse 7. We've kind of been talking. We had Stan Srebatovich here and he talked about the kingdom of God.
- [2 : 2 6] We had Nick Jackson from Owensboro. And he walked us through 1 Peter and said, now, this is our, we're aliens and strangers in this world. And we're members of the kingdom of God.
- And so, what is the kingdom of God? What's at the very heart of it? Romans 14, 7. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking.
- It's not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Now, the kingdom of God is not all about figuring out exact, precise rules about eating or drinking.
- That's the context in Romans. It's not getting to the right side of some religious rules or questions. It is something much deeper, and that's what the Apostle Paul is teaching here.
- The kingdom of God goes deeper than those eating or drinking rules. It is a matter of, it is experienced in, not eating and drinking, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

[3 : 38] The kingdom of God is a happy kingdom. It's a joyful kingdom. And so, when we're living in the kingdom of God, the more we live into that kingdom and more experience of it, the happier we are.

So, Jesus said on the Sermon on the Mount, he began it with, blessed, blessed, blessed, happy, happy, happy. The kingdom of God is a happy kingdom. So, should we be happy?

Yes. Yes, we should. But Jesus saved us for this. He brought us out of the kingdom of darkness and into his light. There is a hymn in our hymnal that begins, Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night, Jesus, I come.

Jesus, I come. Into your freedom, gladness, and light, Jesus, I come to you. The path of the righteous shines brighter and brighter.

It gets happier and happier, clearer and clearer. And it is for freedom. It is for joy that Jesus saved us. More than that, the joy of the Lord is our what?

[4 : 53] It's our strength. So, our holiness very much depends upon our joy. When our joy dries up and our optimism and hope dries up, obedience becomes a very hard road to go on.

And so, this really is one of the most important things that we're talking about. It's at the very heart. It's what it means to be living in the kingdom of God. And so, that's why we're talking about this.

That's why this is so important. So, this morning, happy future. Happy future. One key to present happiness, and one key, I suppose, to future happiness, is getting the right view on our past and getting the right view on our future.

And yet, a lot of us get it wrong on both sides. We look at the wrong things in the past. We focus on the wrong things in the past.

And we focus, or we don't look nearly enough to, the future. And so, this morning is about looking back, looking back in our past better, and looking to our future better, more.

[6 : 11] And if we can do that, if we can look at our back better, our past better, and look to our future better, we will be happier people and happier Christians.

And so, what we want to do first is look at some dangerous looks back. So, some wrong ways that we have the tendency to look into our past.

You remember Lot's wife. She looked back. And, obviously, that was a look back toward the world, missing what she was running from.

That was a dangerous look back. But we have our own different kinds of looks back that really hurt us. So, if this is you, if this is how you look at the past, I almost guarantee you that you're not a very happy person.

Because that past can be so powerful of an influence on our present. And so, what are some dangerous looks back?

[7 : 14] First, looking back at our sin. Not to learn from it. Not to move away from it. Not to repent of it. But just to look at it and to feel guilty and bad and weighed down all over again.

So, the devil loves to highlight the sin from our past. And he wants to bring that back. He's called the accuser of the brethren.

He loves to bring that stuff back. Put it on our conscience. And tell our conscience, now, sick him. Get him. So, he loves to say there's no forgiveness.

Can you believe you did that? If that's where you're at, thinking about past sins, going back, digging through old misdeeds, is that where you're at?

Are you still chained to them? Shackled to them? Thinking about past sins. Well, if you're shackled to those past sins, you can't fly.

- [8 : 19] You're not going to make progress. Your heart's not going to leap for joy. Any joy that you have will soon be vacuumed up with the past.
- Now, that's a dangerous way of looking back. What does God say about those sins? What does God say about those past sins?
- If you're a believer in Jesus Christ. No condemnation in Christ Jesus. You've been brought to the judge, the court, and he has said, not guilty.
- No condemnation. There's no judgment coming. What else has he said about those past sins? He will remember them no more.
- We might bring them up. The devil might bring them up against us. But that is not what God is going to do. What else does he say? Yeah.
- [9 : 25] If we've confessed them, he'll forgive them. One of my favorite verses is Psalm 130, verse 4. It says, with you is forgiveness.
- Therefore, you're feared. God has forgiveness. As far as the east is from the west. So far as he separated us from our sins. Now, so there we are.
- We're shackled to those past sins. And time can't cut those chains. We know that. Just distance and time doesn't make us free from them.
- Time doesn't cut us. Enough sorrow and misery can't cut that chain. But you know what God has done in Jesus Christ at the cross? He's taken his great cross-shaped bolt cutters and cut that chain.
- And he has set us free. He's forgiven us. And so he's cast it into the deepest sea. Just see. God says, I will remember them no more.
- [10 : 30] They're under the blood. And if they're under the blood, leave them under the blood. And if they're under the blood, think about what God has to do in order to get them again. And bring them out against us again.
- He has to go through his own son's blood. He has to belittle his sacrifice and say it wasn't enough. And he'll never do that. And so that past sin, one of the things that we have to continually do is put it under the blood of Jesus and keep it under the blood of Jesus.
- And in our own hearts, not let it come out again. So that's a dangerous look to the past. Second dangerous look. So first is we look back and we start focusing on our sin.
- And the second is we start focusing on our failure. On our failures. Now, I won't ask you to raise your hand, but I think everyone here can say, you know what?
- In important aspects of my life, I have made significant mistakes. Maybe they weren't necessarily sinful, but they were mistakes.
- [11 : 38] Maybe they were sinful, but they were mistakes. And we can become obsessed with our failures. Our failed exams. Our rejected ideas.
- Our blundering. Parenting. Our marital disasters. Our spiritual backslidings. Things that we've done that we shouldn't have done.
- Our missed opportunities. So we're talking here about regret. Where we can become obsessed and focused in our regret on our bad decisions, on our dumb decisions, our stupid decisions, those sorts of things.
- And we just, we like, we can't get past it. Maybe that's what you're like. You often bring up things that you've made mistakes, and that's sort of where your brain stays, your mind and your heart stays.
- Well, God has forgiven us all of our sin and all of our folly. Our mistakes, our disasters, our blunders.

- [12 : 44] God uses all of it for our good. All those failures gets thrown into the basket of Romans 8.28 that says, God says, I'm going to use that now for their good.
- So, it wasn't very smart what you did. But I'm going to use it for your good. Now, our past mistakes, then, are something to learn from.
- I know you know that. But just knowing it doesn't mean that we do a very good job of doing it. Our past mistakes are something to learn from. They're something to improve on or build on.
- But they're not, but we don't want our past folly and our past mistakes to become our present folly. And what I mean by that is, is when we get stuck in them, and then we don't do anything good about it.
- Well, that's compounding our mistakes. That's making another mistakes. So, you've made a bunch of mistakes as a parent. You see that now.
- [13 : 52] You didn't say the right thing. You had the wrong philosophy or whatever. You were misguided. Now, does your child really need a parent obsessed with her failure or his failure?
- Is that what your child needs? No. No, not at all. Now, how does that help them? If you're just stuck there in the past saying, man, I was really dumb.
- That doesn't help them. They don't need that. Wouldn't it be better if they had a learning, growing, optimistic, now I'm looking to Jesus.
- I'm faithfully trusting in him, moving forward, and I'm moving past my mistakes, and I'm looking forward to him. That's something that you want your children to see.
- Because they're going to make mistakes. And so, when they make mistakes, what are they going to do with them? Stay in them? No, you would hope that they would look to Jesus and be optimistic.
- [14 : 50] And we want to show them that. And besides all that, it's usually out of a big pile of mistakes that good comes. That good things happen.
- It's usually built on top of those things that something better comes out of the ashes. So you know about WD-40.
- Do you know why it's called WD-40? It's water displacement 40. You know what the 40 is for?
- Remember, the first 39 attempts didn't work. The first 39 formulas didn't work. The 40th one, they struck gold.
- Thomas Edison made 1,000 unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb. And when a reporter asked how did it feel to fail 1,000 times, he said the light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps.
- [15 : 56] He finally got it. Daniel Boone was once asked by a reporter if he had ever been lost in the wilderness. And Boone thought for a moment and replied, No, but I was bewildered for three days one time.
- That's kind of how I feel as a parent. That's how I feel about a lot of things. Learning is a lot about failure. Wisdom is learning from those mistakes.
- Not getting bogged down in them. According to one academic foundation, about 50%, 50%, about half of the Fortune 500 companies in the United States began in a recession.
- It was during recessions that these companies were founded. One economist said, Recessions are actually good for us because the breakthrough innovations come when the tension is greatest and the resources are the most limited.

And that's when people are actually a lot more open to rethinking the fundamental ways they do business. When times are tight, when the tension is on us, when you've made a bunch of mistakes, that's when people say, Hey, maybe I can do something different.

[17 : 30] That's true in business. And that's true in the spiritual world. By God's grace, we snatch victory out of the jaws of defeat.

Listen to, and it is God's grace, listen to David Murray. I've seen churches lose half of their members in prayer meetings come alive.

I've seen pastors leave churches in the lurch, transforming coasting elders into leaders. I've seen Christians lose their income and prosper spiritually.

I've seen Christians lose loved ones in tragic circumstances and grow in love to God. I've seen a murderer sentenced to life imprisonment find true freedom and eternal life in Christ.

Spiritual recession, scarcity, and loss provide us with opportunities for spiritual breakthroughs and for fundamental rethinking of our spiritual lives.

[18 : 40] Ask God to turn your defeat into a victory, your bane into a boon, and your recession into prosperity. Well, that's our past, our mistakes.

So how can we use that past? Not only, how can we avoid the dangers, but what can we do with the good for our joy? It's just to realize this, that at the very heart of Christianity is history, is a past, is actual events.

Christianity is a religion based on history as its essential component. It's not ideas. It's not philosophy.

It's historical fact. That's why so much of the Bible is taken up with just history. because it's recording God's works in history and in showing his works, he's showing who he is.

And God's history didn't end with the Bible. It's continued on. God is still at work. The Bible was given so that we would have understanding of what he is doing and what he's like and it's sufficient for that.

[20 : 09] But biblical history is called redemptive history. Why is it called redemptive history? Because what is the main theme of God's historical of his story?

What is it? Redemption. It's not sin. It's not failure. Those are all part of the story.

Those are all prerequisites of it. But it's redemption. Not regret. It's salvation from sin. Not living in your sin. Living in your regret.

It's coming out of slavery. Coming out of misery. Israel's history is not they went down into Egypt and then they stayed slaves there forever. They came out.

God took them out of that place and brought them into freedom. And their history is our history. What is the overarching story? What's the overarching theme of your whole story?

[21 : 12] It's not slavery. It's not slavery to sin. It's not regret. It's not your mistakes. It's not failure. It's redemption. It's salvation.

That's the thing that's running through the whole of your life. And so your history, your past, is a happy history. history. Because of what God is doing.

It's a happy history because of what God is doing in your life. You can read Psalm 105 or Psalm 106 and they are just long psalms recording in a very succinct fashion what God has done in the past.

There were songs. There were probably history lessons. There are long histories of God's love to Israel. And it's event after event of this is how God loved us.

And Israel is worshiping God for what he has done. We're turning your Bibles to Psalm 136. Psalm 136.

[22 : 25] And this is another one of those history psalms. verse. And it begins all the way back in Genesis.

But I want you to notice what is the shape of the history? What is the theme of this history? What is it saying about what everything that God is doing in history and in creation?

Look at it. each verse is something that God who God is or something that God has done.

And then there's the same response for every single thing. So let's just read a little bit. chapter 136 verse 1. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.

His love endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods. His love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords. His love endures forever. We can skip ahead to verse 7.

[23 : 27] Who made the great lights. His love endures forever. The sun to govern the day. His love endures forever. The moon and the stars to govern the night. His love endures forever. To him who struck down the firstborn of Egypt.

His love endures forever. His love endures forever. On and on and on it goes. When you look at the sun in the sky, what are you supposed to be thinking of?

His love endures forever. On one creation day in history, he created the sun. He showed us his love. It's this history of God's covenant love and faithfulness.

And it says his love, endures forever. It doesn't end. It doesn't end when Jesus came or when Jesus died or Jesus rose again.

It doesn't end when John wrote the book of Revelation. It goes on. And so this morning some things happened. And you know why they happened.

[24 : 31] You know why you're here. Because his love endures forever. So it's a history of Israel. Now what is wonderful is as you're thinking about your own past, you can write the same kind of story as we see here in Psalm 136.

You can write this same kind of story. story. So I was born on March 16, 1979. You know why?

Because his love endures forever. And I was born with two working hands and two normal feet and a brain that works pretty well most of the time because his love endures forever.

And when I was a baby or when I was a toddler, both of my parents were saved because his love endures forever. And I could keep going. My earliest memories are of going to church because his love endures forever.

Now you could put your own past, whatever that past is, and there's a hundred some people here, maybe a hundred, and each of you have a different history, but each of you can put your history into this template of Psalm 136 and write it down and say, you know why?

[25 : 48] Because his love endures forever. That's the true past. That's a happy past. That's a God-centered, God-glorified use of your past.

And so, can I encourage you to actually do that? I did that one time. I got out a piece of paper, and I wrote down at the top of the title page, a history of God's love.

And I started as far back as I can remember, and I just wrote down things that showed, you know what? God loves me. His love endures forever in my life. And it will take a little bit of time, and you'll probably want to add to it as you go along, and it will percolate, and you'll think of new things.

But you can make your own history fit Psalm 136, because it does. so looking at the past that way, when you're looking at the past in those terms, with that lens, with those eyes, what does it give you for the way forward?

What do you feel as you think about it for the way forward? Hope. Hope. Hope.

[27 : 09] Why hope? hope. Roger, why hope? Good.

Why hope? That's perfect. Why else? His love endures forever. His love endures forever. How does Psalm 23 end?

What's right before that? Surely, love and mercy, goodness and faithfulness, some version, variety of that.

The idea is God's covenant love will follow me all the days of my life. I'm going to be continually running into something in my whole life every single day.

God's love. So, as I look forward to that, tomorrow is a good day. Because God's love is going to be there. Goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

[28 : 18] That's Rogers. It's only going to get better. So, the future is full of God's love. And so, I'm going to be running into God's love and goodness and faithfulness every day of my life until I get to the ultimate expression of it, to heaven, to glory.

glory. So, my past teaches me hope. My past teaches me hope. And it's not an ethereal in the by and by, maybe something good will happen.

It's a confident expectation of future good. Why is it this confident expectation of future good? Well, because God's character hasn't changed.

His character hasn't changed. His love endures forever. It's based not on my feelings. It's based on God's character. And so, as much as we look to the past, we need to even be looking more to the future.

If we want to be happy, Christians, we handle our past in a God glorifying, God honoring way, and we look to the future even more.

[29 : 34] We make good use of the past, but our overall prevailing viewpoint is forward, is onward. It's not back.

We're not at the back of the boat looking, saying, oh, I wish I was going back to where I was. We're not at the back of the boat looking at the wake and missing what was beyond, behind, but what does Paul say?

Pressing forward, forgetting what's behind, and moving on towards what is ahead. So the whole creation is groaning, as in the pains of childbirth. It's in pain now, the whole creation, and we ourselves groan with the first fruits.

We are longing for this. We're groaning inwardly as we eagerly wait our adoption as sons. The resurrection of our bodies.

Apostle Paul says, for in this hope we were saved. The general, the primary direction of the Christian life is moving forward into something, into God's glory.

[30 : 50] So the whole earth, all of creation is not moving backward. It is moving forward. And it's not moving backward into sin or into slavery, but it, all creation is groaning.

It's longing for freedom. It's longing for redemption. It's longing for praise. All of creation.

So those blood stained fields of Gettysburg or Antietam, people just killed each other.

Or those poppy growing fields in Afghanistan. Those fields are looking forward to freedom. and we have polluted and overworked fields and overfished seas and melting ice caps and polluted rivers and, you know, the Pacific Ocean is filling up with plastic.

but it's not going back that way. The whole movement is towards recreation until the seas lift their voices and the mountains sing and the forests and the trees clap their hands with joy.

[32 : 17] That's where we're going. And who's going to lead this great creation choir? it's going to be, Psalm 8 says, it's going to be man.

It's going to be Jesus Christ and it's going to be us. And so there's this hope and it's not a fairy tale. It's a hope as strong and as sure as God's character.

He's going to do it because of who he is. And so my question is what weighs more on your heart? The sinful past or the glorious future.

You know, one of the fruit of the spirit is not nostalgia. I just thought of that. The way some Christians act and think, obviously there's a place for nostalgia, but the way some Christians act and talk, you would think nostalgia is next to godliness.

But it doesn't say nostalgia, wishing and longing for the past. It says hope. One of the fruit of the spirit is hope. And the wonderful thing is hope doesn't come alone.

[33 : 35] When you have hope, it brings a lot of other blessings along with it. Brings a lot of friends with it. Hope moves us forward.

Hope moves us forward. forward. The more you hope, the less you reminisce. And the more you hope, the less you regret. The more you hope, the more your expectations grow.

If you're stuck in the past, you live with small expectations and you're very doubtful about them. But if you have hope, your expectations grow and your desire to see those fulfilled grows.

so it decreases drag, you know, on a bow or on an airplane. Hope decreases drag and it increases momentum. Have you found that in your own life?

When you're hopeful, your Christian life, your spiritual life, your heart, your soul has a forward movement and it's progressing and it doesn't slow down. So forward is this happy direction.

[34 : 38] So hope moves us forward. Hope energizes the present. Hopelessness always ends in lethargy.

Hopelessness always ends in lifelessness and minimal effort. But hope powers the present.

So when we're hopeful, it keeps our eyes open for new solutions, new possibilities, new ideas. Hope energizes us to work through the difficulties.

Haven't you found that at work? If you have hope for a solution, it gives you energy for dealing with the problems. If you say, no, there's this deadline and I'm going to make it and if I can make it through, it will get a lot better.

Well, that hope powers you through the difficult days, doesn't it? Maybe some of you have retirement in mind and you say, I have that date and I can keep moving toward it. Or maybe you've been working a long stretch of lots of deadline where that's going to end and I move forward through it.

[35 : 46] Hope energizes the present. Hope moves us forward, it energizes the present and it is infectious. It spreads. You know, despair, disillusionment, they're infectious, they spread.

And sometimes they get into a church. And one or two and then three or four and then five or six and then just sort of everyone sort of has this defeated.

despair. And we can drag others into our moping, but the other side is hope is infectious too.

Hope is infectious. Sometimes we need our brothers and sisters to just, I don't know how to put this, but they're believing for us, aren't they? We hardly have enough faith in what we see. We see their faith and it encourages our own.

We see what they're doing and it encourages us. And so hope encourages us and hope encourages other sagging Christians. But it's not just in the church.

[36 : 50] Hope in a church, hope in a life shines outward into that gloomy world that we're talking about. They start to think, what is the reason for the hope they have?

Our hope is one of our most powerful tools for evangelism. And you know what despair does? It totally destroys all of our evangelism.

That's not good news if it ends up like that. And so if they're not asking what's the hope that they have even to themselves, then we still need to go deeper into all this happy Christian stuff.

Go deeper into it until it's worked into our souls. And so they're starting to say, they're a hopeful, he's a hopeful person. He's an optimistic person. So hope is infectious.

Hope is healing. It heals us spiritually. It heals us emotionally. It also has a powerful physical effect.

[38 : 00] One researcher showed that a low level of pessimism, so when you have high optimism and low pessimism, so you're a pretty optimistic person, it has a robust association with reduced incidence of a stroke.

So basically, the more optimistic you are, some way it safeguards you, your cardiovascular health. I don't know, that's what it shows.

The Mayo Clinic links high levels of negativity and pessimism with increases in mortality, increases in depression, stress, and heart disease. So optimism is heart healthy.

You know, oatmeal is heart healthy. Optimism is heart healthy. So hope is healing, body and soul. Hope is practical. Hope doesn't sit around and do nothing. Sometimes what we really need to do to do something is we just need hope.

And if we have hope, then we can find something to do. We can find a practical manifestation of that. We can go out and do something. So optimists set more goals than pessimists, obviously.

[39 : 09] Optimists set more goals than pessimists. And optimists put more effort into attaining those goals. And optimists stay engaged when the difficulties come.

Pessimists don't. Pessimists give up. Pessimists quit. They don't even bother. there. So, when we have a happy future, when we're hopeful people, we get to work and good things happen.

Hope purifies. Everyone who has this hope purifies himself just as he is pure. He's elected us to be sons of God.

And we are called sons of God. And sometime in the future, we will walk into that full inheritance of a son of God. And that hope purifies us.

We've been set free. We've been predestined. And so that hope purifies us. Hope broadens the mind. Who's more open to options where you work?

[40 : 15] The optimist or the pessimist? The hopeful or the despairing? Who's open to more options? Who's not stuck in their thinking? It's the optimist. Who gets stuck in one train of thought and doesn't leave it?

It's the pessimist. They just get in a rut. So our hope is good for our thinking. It's good for our thinking. It's good for our bodies.

It's good for our souls. We could say a lot more. So hope is good for us, body, soul, and spirit.

And the point here as we end is brothers and sisters, we have every reason to be hopeful. Our past tells us to be hopeful. The word of God tells us to be hopeful.

The spirit of God within us says, you have reasons to be hopeful. It's shining a light on Jesus. He's shining a light on Jesus and saying, now be hopeful. We have every reason to be hopeful,! And it's good for us.

[41 : 14] Well, we are dismissed. We are