

Joy

**How to Find Happiness
in Everyday Living**



From the Writings of Norman Vincent Peale

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Introduction

WOULD YOU like to change yourself and become a happy person? Then why not begin right now? There is a human tendency to always think that we are going to begin being happy sometime in the future. The right time is now.

Your life can be full of joy. In fact, that is the kind of life God wants for you, has planned for you. Your mind may immediately go to all the reasons you can't be happy, all the problems that are crushing in on you. But Jesus Christ Himself said, "Take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). What you cannot do on your own, you *can* do with His help. "I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" (John 15:11). So get Christ in you!

You are a child of God, and spiritual power is available for you. This little book will show you ten steps to becoming a joyful person. It will help you realize that we are one with God no matter what is happening. So read it. And read it again. Believe God's promises and claim His gift to you: *Joy!*

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Rejoice in the Lord

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Philippians 4:4

GOD DESIGNED you for happiness. He created you to be joyful and fully alive. The gift of Almighty God to us is life, lots of it.

We are so constructed that we should be enthusiastic, vital, dynamic, eager—happy! These assertions do not mean that we can be delivered from pain, sorrow, suffering, or the difficulties of human existence. They



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are a part of our humanity. We have to live with them and deal with them. Life was never made to be easy, but by the same token, we were not made to be defeated by life. We were designed to rise above it and to live with delight and vigor.

With God's help, you can *choose* to be joyful, in spite of what happens to you. Remember the story from Acts 16 when Paul and Silas were thrown in jail? They had been humiliated and severely beaten, unjustly punished. And what were they doing at midnight? Rejoicing! Singing! They were strong in the Lord because of their joy.

Joy doesn't come from an easy life, but rather from facing and overcoming life's challenges. Happiness in depth (and that is the only kind of happiness that will stand the tempests of life and continue to be happiness) is to be found through struggle, hardship, pain, suffering, difficulty. It is a joy that comes from trusting—and praising—God in every situation.

I do not associate happiness with an unconcerned, irresponsible attitude toward life or the world or other people. Truly happy people are realistic and responsible, well aware of the suffering and the hardships of human



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life. But in spite of it all, they have a resilient inner spirit, a positive outlook, and a conviction that the good triumphs ultimately over the bad. They know they have reason to rejoice! The really happy people are those who strive to develop greatness in themselves. They face struggles, peril, and pain knowing these things can lead to both personal and spiritual growth. It is not what life brings to you that matters; it is what you do with what life brings you—that is the issue.

In this world of suffering and trouble, to people in despair, to people fighting terrible battles, Christ comes and gives them victory over all. And they are filled with joy.



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Find Your Inner Joy

Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:5

DON'T WASTE your time waiting for the perfect moment to be happy. The moment to be happy is *now*. If you postpone happiness until you have conditions that suit you, you will never experience it, because happiness is something created, with God's help, within yourself. Joy comes to those who have power over themselves, who are not conceited or self-absorbed, who do not judge

everything by how it relates to them. One of the worst things that can happen to a person is to become the victim of self-love or self-pity. The more you practice self-love, the more aches and pains you will have, the less vitality, the fewer healthy relationships.

Happiness lies in basic and simple things, not in something artificial like the latest technology or exotic vacations. People who aren't doing anything with their life except to serve their own interests and build their own comfort will never know joy and happiness. People who find something useful to do beyond themselves, who give themselves, those people know joy, real deep joy. And it is Jesus Christ who stimulates people to have a meaningful, happy life. If you want to be happy, expect little and give much.

Another way to cultivate inner happiness is by keeping your emotions under control. Happiness eludes the super-sensitive or quick-tempered person. Don't get so worked up about things; develop a philosophical attitude.

Believe that God is in control of every situation. This trust will bring you great inner peace. Be successful



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if you can, but when you do experience failure, don't let it throw you. And don't let success go to your head. Be calm and unruffled in the midst of life. Tense, perfectionist people are not happy.

To be happy you have to have a certain amount of inner tranquility, not taking your trials and troubles too seriously, not taking anything too seriously except God and virtue. Do the best you can, then put the details of your life in God's hands.

Rest in the Lord. Wait patiently for Him. Cultivate a rich inner life of communion with Christ. And you will possess one of the greatest secrets in the world, namely how to be happy.



Rise above Trouble

But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles.

Isaiah 40:31

PERHAPS YOUR life seems filled with dark clouds; perhaps you feel overwhelmed with gloom and hardship, with pain and suffering. What are you to do? Rise above those clouds! Pilots sometimes talk about a “low ceiling.” From the ground, everything looks overcast and dreary. But up above the clouds, the sun is always



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shining! Down here on earth's surface, groping around in the shadows under a low ceiling, a person may feel discouraged and sad. But you can dissipate those clouds by the power of faith and hope. Send up into the clouds that surround you bright thoughts of God's goodness and provision, affirmations of the wonderful greatness of life, of possibility.

Almighty God never meant us to go crawling through life on our hands and knees. He meant us to be alive. Right now we can be in tune with the life-giving power of the universe. Regardless of your age or physical condition, if you will yield to it, right now yield to it, let it flow through you, you can be remade; you can be refreshed; you can be revitalized; you can live with power. You can rise above whatever is holding you down!

Abraham Lincoln, long ago, said that "most people are just about as happy as they make up their minds to be." Fill yourself with the spirit of Christ and you will be filled with joyous vitality.

Think about God, rather than about your troubles. When problems come at you from every direction and



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baffle you, apply that rule. No wonder you feel tired and have no enthusiasm if you are thinking only about the dark side of life. Think about God and serve others. Your mind will then become quiet and peaceful. It will work efficiently as you attack your problems.

So let go of that gloom, let go of that discouragement, let go of that weakness, let go of that sense of failure.

Then get yourself with Jesus—really, personally. Go to Him, pray to Him, tell Him you want to live with Him, tell Him you want to be guided by Him. And the sun *will* shine on your life.

Note: If you struggle with depression, please seek help from a qualified health professional.



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Give God Your Worries

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7

JOYFUL PEOPLE are not ruled by worries, fear, or insecurity. Dwelling on the difficulties and “what ifs” of life quickly takes away the joy, the peace, and even the health of life.

You will never achieve happiness as long as you hold on to anxieties and apprehensions, as long as you carry with you a persistent, sinister fear that something

terrible is going to happen.

What does God have to say about all this? He says, in effect, to rest your burdens on the Lord and trust Him. Go ahead and do your jobs, meet your responsibilities. Have simple, childlike trust. Rest all your problems upon God.

Does this sound too simple? You will only find peace in Jesus, who is wise because He is so simple. It takes a greater intelligence to hold to simple trust than to struggle with involved problems. Put your trouble in God’s hands, ask Him to keep you free of tension, do what you can, and then trust in His providence.

God loves you so much that He is interested deeply in you and all your concerns. So when you are troubled or worried or frightened, talk to Him. He is always listening, always eager to help. Pray big, expectant prayers...and believe that you will get an answer and the help you need. Pray big prayers with deep and genuine belief, even if your problem seems small and routine. The Lord is very generous!

Never let trouble, no matter how devastating it may appear to be, take charge of your thoughts and



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determine your attitude. Always affirm the best, believe in the best, imagine the best, pray for the best—and the strong tendency will be for the best to come to you! The person who has faith in God’s providence has a reserve of serenity deep inside even when things are very tough.

So don’t be anxious. Don’t fret so much. Don’t struggle so hard. Do the very best you can about everything; then, having done your best, don’t nervously do it over again. Leave the results to the Lord. He is all wise, all knowing, all powerful. And He loves you very much.



Look to the Future

Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13–14

JOY IS given to those who can learn from the past—and then forget the past. People who can look forward. Dwelling on old disappointments or hurts will rob you of any hope of happiness. Everything on earth has been put here at humankind’s disposal. God intends for you



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to use life. He wants you to take advantage of all the things He has put here and to use them as resources and opportunities. He does not want you bound by past mistakes or decisions.

If things have not gone right, then study why they didn't go right, and plan to make them go right next time. If you have not done very well, find out why you didn't do well, ask God's forgiveness for any wrong you did, ask His guidance, and do better next time. If you have made a mistake—and everybody makes mistakes—learn something from it, extract whatever know-how it contains and then go on to do better next time. Don't wallow mentally in what you might have done.

There is such a thing in this life as a kind of victorious forgetfulness when you forget those things which are behind and reach forward to those things which are ahead. You have got to have that kind of common sense in order to be happy.

Every day can be a blue day to you, every night just another night of regret and misery. You produce in your daily life these very things by constantly impressing



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wrong ideas upon your mind. Every person living on this earth is as he or she is because of the pattern of past thinking. If your life has been unhappy up to now, then it is time for you to change your ideas and begin to practice a Christianity that will radiate happy living into your experiences.

Jesus Christ knows all about life, knows all about the good in life. And He wants you, as a child of His Father, to share that good life, to be happy with Him right now. You can make your life a happy one if you will forget and forgive the past, if you will learn to live one day at a time, believing that a bright future is yours.

Yesterday ended last night. Focus on *today*.



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Love and Serve Everyone

**My command is this: Love each other
as I have loved you.**

John 15:12

DO YOU want to be filled with joy? Just give it away! One of the basic principles of happy living is love and goodwill.

It is amazing what happiness a sincere expression of compassion and tenderness will induce. Fill your heart with love. Scatter sunshine. Forget self and think of

others. Do as you would be done by. When you arise in the morning, form a resolution to make the day a happy one for one other person. Try this for a week and you will be surprised at the joy it will generate in your own life!

Bitterness, hatred, bad-tempered thoughts about other people—all these are things that can steal your joy. Get love in your heart by eliminating all resentment. Love is the greatest curative force in the world. Jesus taught us to love and help one another. Forget your sorrows, your pain, your problems, your difficulties, and love other people. You will know true happiness. Did you ever see a person full of love who was unhappy? And the happiest individual of all is the one who loves not only his or her family and dearest friends, but all people of all religions, classes, and kinds. If you give yourself out in Christlike love for other people and are not cynical about them, by some fundamental law of the universe, you will be happy.

Modern psychology tells us that the way to age yourself and destroy your happiness is to dislike people and be frustrated, exasperated, angry. It tells us how important it is, for a person's own well-being, to be



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loving, forgiving, emotionally controlled. That is why people who accept Jesus Christ, who live with Him, who condition their lives by Him, who take Him into the essence of their very nature, become happy people.

It is a strange law of life that in trying to get happiness you lose it, but if you give it, you get it. We have to cultivate redemptive love, the kind of love that goes out to change people's lives and to change the world. People who practice redemptive love find it for themselves and contribute it to everybody else.

Joy and hate cannot coexist in the same heart. Joy increases as you give it. In giving it, you will accumulate a deposit of joy greater than you ever believed possible. The person who gives joy to others will receive joy in return.



Free Yourself from Sin

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.

Hebrews 12:1

SIN, IN any of its forms, takes the joy out of life. Wrongdoing produces a virus of guilt, which in turn penetrates the mind with the infection of diseased thoughts, making perfect happiness impossible. Thus people either become physically ill or they reduce the



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potential power, happiness, and efficiency of their lives.

Strive to do what is right, but know that you will fail in this endeavor if you rely only on your own strength. God will cleanse your soul of any wrongdoing that is poisoning you. Free from the burden of sin, you can avoid manufacturing your own unhappiness. Jesus Christ will help you if you take Him into partnership.

One reason people are happy is that their fears have been overcome and their sins have been taken away. They are no longer in conflict, no longer in misery. The words and thoughts of Jesus are bound to drive out and destroy all thoughts of despair, hate, or envy. And in due course your life will be flooded with joy and exultation.

You carry a heavy burden when sin is in your mind and in your life. And since sin leads to more sin, the weight becomes more unbearable every day. Many people live needlessly unhappy and ineffective lives because they won't let go of the weight of sin. But 1 John 1:9 promises, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

What is there that enables you to wake up happy? One



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thing is to live so that there is no guilt, no fear, no sense of defeat in your mind and heart. People who go to bed at night haunted by those evils carry into sleep a sense of deep unhappiness, and the first thing to strike their consciousness in the morning is that same unhappiness. But when your mind is free of guilt, free of abnormal fear, then you have a sense of victory. And that makes for happiness.

Jesus sets men and women free from sin and death. There are people everywhere today who are lacking in life. And it could be that some of them are, as the Scriptures say, dead in their sin (Ephesians 2:1). But one doesn't need to remain so. Anybody—and that means you and it means me—can come alive under the touch of Jesus Christ.



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Be Optimistic

**I have come that they may have life,
and have it to the full.**

John 10:10

A POSITIVE attitude that is joyful and enthusiastic will, if sincerely and long held, produce joyful, enthusiastic, and positive results in our lives. Optimism is a philosophy based on the belief that, basically, life is good, created and sustained by a good God. Optimists believe that, in the long run, the good in life

overbalances the evil. Optimists trust that in every difficulty and every pain there is some inherent good—and they mean to find that good.

Many of us manufacture our own unhappiness. Of course, not all unhappiness is self-created. Daily we are assaulted by conditions and challenges that contribute to our woes. Yet, to a large extent, by our thoughts and attitudes we distill out of the ingredients of life either happiness or unhappiness for ourselves.

Anyone who desires it, who wills it, and who learns and applies the right formula may become a happy person. Tomorrow when you arise, say out loud three times this one sentence: “The LORD has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.” (Psalm 118:24). Repeat it in a strong, clear voice and with positive tone and emphasis.

Then say, “I believe I can successfully handle all problems that will arise today. I feel good physically, mentally, emotionally. It is wonderful to be alive. I am grateful for all that I have had, for all that I now have, and for all that I will have. Things aren’t going to fall apart. God is here and He is with me and He will see me



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through. I thank God for every good thing.”

You must *think* joy to have joy. Joyful people do not harbor thoughts that separate them from other people or thwart their own ambitions. They do not engage in negative thinking; they expect the best. We should have a good, honest, objective reevaluation of ourselves, asking to be freed from anything in our mind that is separating us from other people, that is frustrating hopes and ambitions.

Are your thoughts making it difficult for your dreams to come true? Are they preventing you from having serenity and peace of mind? Then turn to the One who can cure you by giving you healthy, happy, creative, Christlike thoughts. God wants you to be a joyful and effective person. And once you are free from your unhappy thoughts, you will have power and energy and delight. You will be happy!



Choose to Be Grateful

Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

WOULD YOU like your life to be more joyful, more meaningful, more resilient? Then practice the art of thanksgiving!

When we learn to say, from our hearts, “Thanks for everything,” we are on our way to being healthy, happy people.



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Joyful people thank God for every wonderful thing they have—big and small. They make the most of whatever comes their way. Begin each day by saying aloud, “I am happy for all God has given me...and for all He will give to me.” Affirm your happiness, and in so doing you will be affirming your faith. Use visualization to picture amazing blessings from God. Thankfulness makes room in our hearts for the love of God.

Both spiritually and mentally, thankfulness, which is really an affirmation of God’s goodness, works to our benefit and tends to let loose in our lives untold blessings. If we emphasize that which is possible through Jesus Christ, and are hopeful rather than dwelling on the difficult, good things tend to come to pass. This does not imply that we are to be blind to the difficulties, the injustice, or the pain in human existence. But we are to thank God always that by His grace and power we can come to better days.

And we must never forget to thank God for who He is and what He does for us. “Thanks, Lord, that You are such a great God. We are grateful that You love us and that in the midst of our pain, our difficulties, our



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hardships, we’ve got a great loving shoulder to lean against; we have great, loving arms around us.” One of the greatest truths of all for which to give thanks is that we are not alone in the troubled world. We have Someone who loves us.

Look for things to be grateful for...and you will find them! If you get up every morning and go to bed every night thanking God for every wonderful thing you have, you will be healthier-minded, you will be stronger physically, you will be happy. The power of thanksgiving is in its perspective; they who appreciate most *have* most.



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Surrender Your Life to God

**Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.**

Psalm 51:10

HOW DOES one become a happy person? The answer is simple: You must surrender your whole self to God through Jesus Christ.

Life gets off course when we get off course. Believe that the God who created you can re-create in you a clean heart and a right spirit. He longs to do it even now.

The Bible says that when anyone comes to Christ, old things are passed away and all things become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). When you enter into a definite experience of commitment and identification with Jesus Christ, you become a “new creation.” And you are filled with joy.

When you take the Gospel and live by it, you become a well-organized, well-integrated individual. You have esteem for yourself and every other human being. You aim to be a part not of the world’s problem, but of the world’s cure. You gain a sense of peace and of identity with God in your heart. This is the recipe for happiness.

It is positively amazing what Jesus Christ offers to His followers. They are offered peace of mind, victory over every defeat, a deep, pulsating joy in their inmost souls, and finally, the immortality of the soul. These things are not offered cheaply. And the price is what? It is yourself. But if you give yourself to Jesus, He will give Himself to you, and life will be so wonderful that there is no describing it.

The kind of happiness that is true and deep is spiritual happiness. If you are not happy in the spirit, your



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happiness will be superficial and its roots thin and weak. But you must go beyond simply “believing” in God. You must rely upon Him, follow His teachings, commit yourself to His providence and guidance.

Trusting in Christ is the only way to live happily in an unhappy world; it is the way to make the world happy. It will solve problems that cannot be solved any other way. “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete,” said Jesus (John 15:11).

Happiness is in our union with God. We are of God. He is our origin. He is our end. He is our life. The happiest people are the people who know God the most intimately.





**We inspire the world to believe
that all things are possible with
faith, hope, and prayer.**

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