

Life: Stick with love

April 9, 2015

• *The Bible Studies for Life* lesson for April 26 focuses on John 15:9-14.

A quick Internet search for “How to be Happy” yields 619 million results. Happiness eludes so many people and is so desperately craved that websites, books and businesses try to help people find it. *Prevention* magazine even recently reported [“10 Foods to Make you Happy.”](#) The magazine claims people who eat lots of clams, walnuts and radishes are happier, because these foods stimulate the release of dopamine and other mood-elevating hormones.

Happiness commonly is thought of as a feeling brought about by good circumstances. Conversely, we feel sad when something “bad” happens to us. However, Jesus offers us something better—how to live a completely joyful life, regardless of circumstances.

The kind of joy Jesus gives is deeper than happiness. It can’t be found on a website, by following 10 steps in a book or eating plenty of radishes. A believer’s joy, unlike the happiness we experience, is not based on circumstances. Rather, the source of joy for believers is Jesus’ love.

His love is the foundation for our joy

In John 15, Jesus explains how his love is the foundation of a believer’s joy. Jesus tells us he loves us in the same way the Father loves him. Believers who are blessed to have been reared in families with godly parents can understand the comfort, encouragement and safety a father can give his children because he loves them. On the other hand, believers who were not part of Christian homes may have difficulty understanding the kind of love God has for his children.

In whatever way you have experienced love from an earthly father, you can know God's love is infinitely more than that, better than that. God's love is just what you're looking for; it can fill all the gaps in your soul. God's love is found in Jesus.

Discovering Jesus' love is just the beginning. Jesus also asks us to "remain in his love" (v. 9). *The Message* translates the meaning of this phrase as "Make yourselves at home in my love." I consider home to be the place where I feel totally safe, at ease and accepted. Being home spiritually positions a believer to fully experience Jesus' love for them. How do we live joyfully in God's home? By following Jesus' commands, just like Jesus follows his Father's commands. This does not mean we follow a set of rules so we earn our way into heaven.

Gift of grace

Note Jesus already was the Son of God, and subsequently he followed his Father's commands. A believer's salvation is an entirely free gift of grace from God. Then, as we follow Jesus' commands, we make ourselves at home in the way of life God provides for his children. Homes where the family members are bickering or even abusive toward one another are not safe places. On the other hand, God's home is full of love and joy. We live there peacefully and ready to face the difficult circumstances of life when we keep his commands.

What are Jesus' commands? A religious scholar asked Jesus this very question. Jesus responded: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:36-37). Jesus' commands are built around love: God's love for Jesus, Jesus' love for you, and your love for others. In fact, Jesus reminds us the greatest love anyone can ever bestow on another person is to give his or her life for that person (v. 13).

Because Jesus loves us, he gave his life for us. By laying down his life for us, Jesus calls us friends. In turn, we keep Jesus' commands when we love others sacrificially as well as loving God with every part of our being. The result? Complete joy.