

Happiness is a Choice

Tanya Moore

In the last issue of the e-zine, I wrote about having a hard 2018 and searching, many times without success, for joy.

I do not want this article to be taken as an antidote for that or as a disclaimer for the things I wrote. We have hard times, sometimes just too hard, and we search in vain for joy. The “times” can be caused by circumstances that are really difficult; or by physical conditions; or by reactions to weather; or for no reason at all. If the sadness doesn’t lift after a few days or a few weeks, we need to get help. Talking to a trusted friend is a good way to start because we may need someone else who can see things more clearly than we can at the moment. We may need to talk to a counselor or a doctor who can prescribe medicine to help us. There is no shame in getting help. We are people who need help in our lives and trying to go it alone is not healthy or wise.

So, I said all that to say this. Sometimes we say to ourselves, “I will be happy when this changes.” The “this” could be a spouse, or a wayward child, or a financial hardship, or a health issue, or a job, or a housing situation, or winter. I don’t know what your “this” is. Recently, my husband was in the hospital and wasn’t doing well. It occurred to me I had the choice to be happy when the situation changed; or I could be happy now.

Now is all we may have; things may never change in our “this.” If there is not a clinical or situational depression taking place, and we’ve done all we can to change the things that are making us unhappy, we may just have to decide to be happy now. I know this sounds simplistic and I don’t mean to sound like Pollyanna. Sometimes happiness is a choice. We can choose to be miserable until something changes, and it may never change, or we can choose to be happy.

Choosing to be happy is not easy. It’s something we have to learn how to do. The Apostle Paul had to learn to be happy when things were hard.

“I’m glad in God, far happier than you would ever guess – happy that you’re again showing such strong concern for me ... Actually, I don’t have a sense of needing anything personally. I’ve learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances. I’m just as happy with little as with much, with much as with little. I’ve found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty. Whatever I have, wherever I am. I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am.” (Philippians 4:10-13, The Message).

Tanya Moore is a writer and innkeeper.