

Happiness Is Giving Up Everything

I have discovered over the years that people almost always seek God at the point they are experiencing great pain at the deepest level. People might seek God on other occasions, but most people do not get serious until they are in pain and only then when they are unhappy. Maybe they lost a job or are in a financial crisis, or a crisis with a spouse. Maybe it is a loss of a dear friend. Perhaps they have been abandoned or a divorce has occurred. Perhaps there is rejection from a child or parent. Maybe there is even a medical crisis. I don't know what crisis would seriously impact you. I'm only giving examples, but the list of crises that motivate people to eventually seek God is long.

Search For Happiness. Sometimes Christians are so comfortable with the idea that they are forgiven and going to heaven that they give little thought to their behavior until faced with a serious trial. Most people do not get serious about seeking God until they are unhappy. At the moment of crisis or soon afterwards, they start seeking and what they seek is happiness. We become unhappy and start looking for happiness. We want to fill that unhappiness void. We want to eliminate that hurt. What we want is to be happy. So, that is for what we look.

We pursue happiness and think we can find it in food, drink or perhaps a relationship. Some find it in sex and on goes the list of things where people seek to fill the unhappiness void. On some occasions, we try to influence others to meet our needs. It is amazing what we do to make ourselves happy. People of Jesus' day were no different than we are today. Human nature has not changed. If we look at the gospels, we will see ourselves in the gospels.

In Mark 1, for example, we discover that Jesus is in a

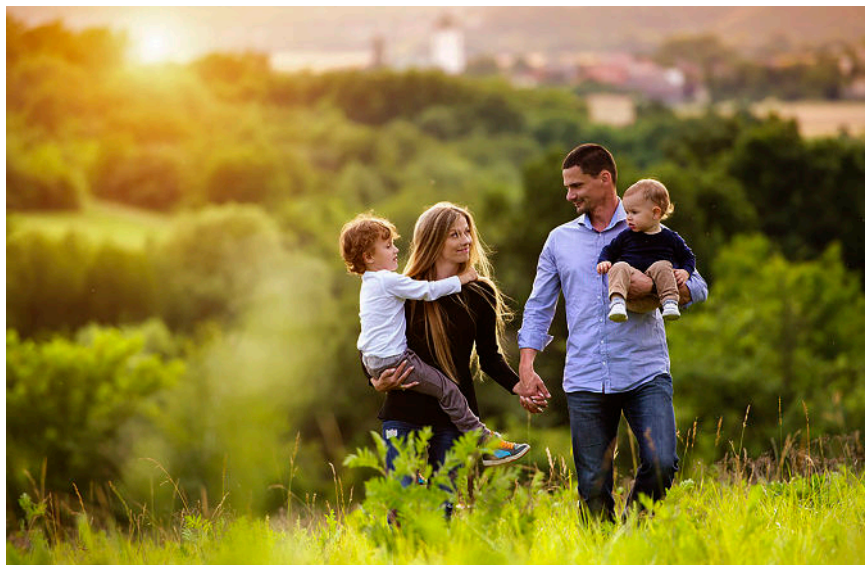
synagogue and has just healed a demon-possessed man. Those in the synagogue saw the miracle and were stunned. The demon-possessed man was freed of a demon and we are told in the passage that the people were impressed with Jesus' teaching. In verse 22 we are told that they were amazed at his teaching for He was teaching them as one having authority and not as the scribes. In verse 27, the idea is repeated and we are told that,

They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him." Mark 1:27 (NASB)

The people were stunned at what they were seeing and experiencing. So what happened?

Verse 28 says,

Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee. Mark 1:28 (NASB)



News about Jesus spread everywhere. Subsequently, the gospel records that massive crowds came to Christ.

Two Disciples Seek Jesus. In Matthew 4:24 we are told,

The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan. Matthew 4:24-25 (NASB)

People were coming from everywhere to find Jesus. Why were they doing that? In Matthew 8:1, we are told Jesus went down from a mountain and large crowds followed Him.

If you go to Matthew 19:2, you would find that everywhere Jesus went, the crowds recognized Him. On occasions when He tried to rest, people would not leave Him alone. People were looking and searching for Him. In fact, the gospels tell us that the crowds were coming for both healing and for His teaching. People came to have the dead raised. On one occasion we are told that a woman reached out and touched Jesus with the hope that she would be healed. On another occasion a woman was willing to be called a dog in order to have her daughter healed. On at least five different occasions, people begged for mercy. People wanted to see a sign or a wonder. They wanted to get healed. The massive crowds did not come unless there was something in it for them.

The only reason they came from long distances to Jesus is that they wanted something. That is why we all come. All of us share that one thing in common. Or we could put it another way. The people in Jesus' day had needs just as we do. Why do you think that when Jesus was talking to Nicodemus, He told Nicodemus that God loved him? God gave His unique Son so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). It is interesting that Jesus was talking to Nicodemus, a leader in Israel. Jesus told this adult man that God loved him. Why do you think Jesus told this leader that God loved him? The answer is

because he needed to know that. Nicodemus had a need to know that God loved him.

Do you have a need to know if God loves you? One of my favorite songs is "Jesus Loves Me This I Know For The Bible Tells Me So." I like to sing that song even though I am an adult. Even adults need to know that God loves them. In effect, that is what Jesus did for Nicodemus. He told Nicodemus, "Jesus loves you for the Bible says so." In John 7:37-38, we are told that Jesus on the last day of the great feast stood and cried out saying, "If anyone is thirsty" (John 7:37). What does that imply? Jesus knew they had a need. I have a need! You have a need and you want your need to be filled. He went on and said,

... let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, "From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water." John 7:37-38 (NASB)

If Jesus promises you that you are going to get rivers of living water flowing from your inside out, does that sound like you are thirsty? It sounds wonderful! Jesus was talking about the fact that we all have a need. If you are truly honest with yourself, you have a need inside that is not filled, even if you are a Christian. Deep inside there is still something that you want and need. In John 14:11, Jesus is talking to His twelve disciples in the upper room. It is the last day before He is going to die on the cross. He said,

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. John 14:27 (NASB)

Why did Jesus tell them that He was going to give them peace? The answer is they had a need. John 15:11,

These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. John 15:11 (NASB)

Jesus said that because the disciples wanted joy and we want joy. Jesus offered it to the twelve men that He will soon leave. It is incredible that Jesus knows our deepest need.

Disciples Come Seeking. I want to take you on an interesting journey. I want you to see the lives of four of the apostles. I want to start the journey by going to John 1:35. John the Baptist is with two of his disciples. Verse 35 says this,

Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples . . .
John 1:35 (NASB)

One of the disciples was Andrew. The other one was the apostle John. In the gospel of John, he never refers to himself. Therefore, we conclude that John is the other disciple. In verse 36, John the Baptist said,

"Behold the Lamb of God." John 1:36 (NASB)

The Greek text is helpful at this point. The impression we are left with is that John the Baptist sees Jesus at a distance, walking towards them. John the Baptist apparently points to Christ for his two disciples and says, "Behold the Lamb of God." That is who was coming.

In verse 37 we are told that as Jesus walks by John the Baptist, the two disciples heard Him speak and they followed Christ. Verse 38 says,

And Jesus turned and saw them following, and *said to them,
"What do you seek?" John 1:38 (NASB)

The idea is that Jesus actually pivoted about and He looked right at them. He asked this incredible question, "What do you seek?" Now I think Jesus knew exactly for what they were looking. But notice the word "seek." They were seeking or looking for something and they said to Him,

". . . Rabbi where are you staying." John 1:38 (NASB)

They wanted to spend some time with Him.

In verse 39, He said to them,

"Come, and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the

tenth hour. One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. John 1:39-40 (NASB)

Jesus invited them to spend the day with Him. They discovered that Jesus is the Messiah. They discovered that He was the Christ. Verse 41 says,

He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. John 1:41-42 (NASB)

He brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter)." John 1:42 (NASB)

Jesus changed his name.

In verse 43 we are told,

The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow Me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." John 1:43-45 (NASB)

In other words, the message was they had found the Messiah! Nathaniel said to Him,

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." John 1:46 (NASB)

We are told that Nathaniel went and saw Jesus -- saw him from far away. Verse 50 says,

Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these." John 1:50 (NASB)

We find in these few verses that two men found that Jesus

is the Messiah. They were so excited about what they had found that Andrew ran and found his brother Peter. He told him that they had found the Messiah. Then Jesus found Philip, who was so excited that he brought Nathaniel. Very quickly there were five disciples. Incredible! An incredible set of events happened so quickly, so fast!

That happened because they were looking for the Messiah. They had a need and were seeking, and they found Jesus. They found the Christ (John 1:41; 4:25).

Jesus at the Wedding at Cana. The gospel of John records the life of Christ in chronological order. It is not like Matthew which skips all over the place and orders the events of Christ's life topically. Here in John we find out that Jesus then went to the city, Cana of Galilee. In Cana of Galilee there was a wedding where they ran out of wine. Jesus' mother encouraged Him to turn water into wine. But what is amazing if you look at verse 11, this was the beginning of signs that Jesus performed. When Jesus turned water into wine, it was the first recorded miracle He did. Now look at the rest of the verse. It says,

... Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. John 2:11 (NASB)

In verses 11 and 12, the disciples are with Him. John, Andrew, Peter, Philip and Nathaniel followed Jesus after they found Him. He had commanded them to follow in John 1:43. They were being faithful to follow Christ. They did exactly what Jesus had asked them to do.

Jesus And The Woman At The Well. John 4 states that Jesus and His disciples went to the region called Samaria because He wanted to find a particular woman at a well. He wanted to introduce her to Himself, to the Messiah. She in time asked about the Messiah and Jesus offered her water. What's amazing about the passage is not that the woman and Jesus are there. Notice what is amazing. In verse 27 of chapter 4 it says,

At this point His disciples came and they were amazed that He was speaking with a woman. John 4:27 (NASB)

Now I am not interested that you see their amazement that Jesus was talking with a woman. I want you to notice that the disciples were there with him.

Again in verse 33, we are told, "So the disciples were saying to one another." The point is the disciples were there. The disciples found Jesus and followed Him to Cana of Galilee. Then they went down to Jerusalem in chapter 2. Then they went with Him to Samaria where Jesus found the woman at a well. Now we find something interesting. If you look at the chronological events of the different gospels, we can figure out exactly what Jesus did next in the chronological sequence. I want to make a point again that each of the gospels do not necessarily give you the next chronological event. But when we study all the gospels together and compare them, we can figure out exactly the sequence of events. The next thing that followed is that Jesus went to Nazareth.

Jesus And The Disciples Separate. Jesus left Samaria and went up to Nazareth. They did not follow Him. Instead, they went to Capernaum. They had just found the Messiah, the Christ. At first they followed him faithfully, to Cana of Galilee, then down to Jerusalem and on to Samaria. Now they go to Capernaum. Why are they not following Christ? It will become obvious that they did not. Go to Matthew 4:18. We will discover that Jesus came looking for them.

Jesus Called Four Disciples To Follow. Jesus eventually made a trip to Capernaum and while He is in Capernaum, He walked on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. We are told in Matthew 4:18 that He saw two brothers.

Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Matthew 4:18 (NASB)

Jesus walked along the shore where He found Peter and Andrew casting their fishing nets. I want you to notice what they were doing because we are going to look at another account that at first appears to be a duplicate of this one, but it is not the same event. In verse 19 we are told,

And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of

men.” Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. [Matthew 4:19-20 \(NASB\)](#)

I love this account. Jesus came to these men and He said, "Follow me." The literal Greek text means, "Come get behind me." It is not the normal Greek word that means follow. There are actually two different Greek words that can be translated as "follow." The literal meaning of this one is "to come, get behind Me." That is, they were to walk behind in His footsteps. Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

What is interesting about this passage is how these men reacted to Jesus. Jesus came to them. In effect He said, "Do you want a ministry? Do you want to be able to help men and women come to know Me, the Christ? It is as if Jesus said, "Do you want to serve in the church?" Immediately they followed Him. They wanted to be fishers of man. I have a question! What prompts or motivates people to serve in a church? Why do some people want to become elders, deacons, or deaconesses? Why do some people want to teach or help in a serving ministry? The answer is, they have a need and these disciples had a need. There was a need these disciples had, and serving in a ministry would meet that need. Is there another reason why they would want to do this?" Let's keep reading. Verse 21,

[Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. Matthew 4:21-22 \(NASB\)](#)

A total of four men, Peter, Andrew, James and John, followed Him to become fishers of men.

Someone might wonder if they did not just want to serve Jesus in whatever way that Jesus asked them to serve. Then why is it that after Jesus left for a ministry tour around Canaan to preach the gospel, these four men went back to their boats and did not follow Him? Why would they do that if they wanted to serve Jesus? Jesus just told them to

"follow Me" in verse 19. Then in verse 21, He repeated the same request asking them to follow. If they wanted to serve Jesus, why did they not stay with Jesus? Why did they start with Him and then go back to their boats?

They did that just as Christians do today! We believe in Jesus and start to follow Him. Then suddenly, Jesus is not that important to us. Our "boats," or whatever our personal interests are then hold greater importance than Jesus does. All the fish, all the nets and all the stuff these men owned was of greater value to them. Their original desire to serve Jesus was not truly about Jesus but about satisfying a need deep within them.

Third Call To Follow. In Luke 5:1, it would appear that this is the same set of events we just read in Matthew 4:18-22. But if we compare the details of this event with the one in Matthew 4, we discover they are different events. They are not the same events. This time, Jesus came back to them. For some reason they left Jesus. They went back to their boats and Jesus had to find and call them again. Luke 5:1 reads,

[Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret . . . Luke 5:1 \(NASB\)](#)

Gennesaret is another name for the Sea of Galilee. Here we discover that Jesus was walking on the shore and the crowds pressed around him. The Greek text has the idea that they squeezed against him. They were so eager to be with Him and to hear what He was teaching. Now this event is not about healings. It was not signs or wonders for which they were looking. They were hungry for the Word of God that Jesus was teaching. Verse 2 reads,

[. . . and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. Luke 5:2 \(NASB\)](#)

We are told that Jesus saw two boats. The fishermen had gotten out of the boats and were washing their nets.

Now in Matthew 4, they were casting and mending

their nets. Now they are not doing the same thing. They are washing their nets. This event is different. Verse 3,

And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. Luke 5:2 (NASB)

Why did He get into the boat and move out? If He could get away from the sea shore, then He could speak to all the people along the sea shore. They would be able to see Him and hear Him speak. In Jesus' day the rabbis would actually sit when they taught. So Jesus sat to teach from the boat and away from the shore so that everyone could hear Him. Verse four,

When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Luke 5:4 (NASB)

It is important to understand what was happening here. Jesus had just finished teaching. Then He told Peter to go out where the water was deep and to let down his nets. Peter let down the nets and in verse 5,

"Simon answered and said, 'Master, we worked hard all night . . .'" Luke 5:5a (NASB)

The Greek word for "worked" has the idea of very painful work. Peter is saying that they had worked and worked hard all night to no avail. They had caught absolutely nothing. Then Peter says,

. . . but I will do as You say and let down the nets. Luke 5:5b (NASB)

I cannot help but wonder what Peter was thinking. Jesus was a carpenter. Peter was the professional fisherman. Peter and the others were running a fishing business. Peter had been doing this for a living. He was not inexperienced in the fishing business. He had been fishing all night and had caught nothing! We can imagine what Peter was thinking;

that he was the professional - not Jesus. But what did Peter do? Peter addressed Jesus as Master.

When Peter said, "Master," it just meant that he recognized Jesus was someone of a higher rank than himself so he would obey him. He was saying, "If that is what you want me to do, then I will do it." Now verse 6,

When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break . . . Luke 5:6 (NASB)

Their nets began to break because there were so many fish that the nets could not hold all the fish. Verse 7 says,

. . . so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. Luke 5:7 (NASB)

Not only were there so many fish in the net that the net began to break, but now the boats were beginning to sink! Unbelievable! I wonder what Peter was thinking? The answer appears in verse 8,

But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" Luke 5:8 (NASB)

The word for "Lord" in this verse is different than the Greek word for "Master" in verse five. This time Peter used the word *kurios* which is the normal word for "Lord." This reveals that now Peter had a different attitude. When Peter saw this miracle, he fell down at Jesus' feet saying, "Go away from me, Lord."

One would have thought that Peter might have said, "Jesus, look at all these fish! This is the greatest catch I have ever caught in my whole life." You would think that Peter would have been absolutely thrilled with what had happened. But the first thing he said was, "Go away from me, Lord." Why? He said, "I am a sinful man." What an incredible response! Peter in his professional expertise realized that this was not a fake miracle. Peter understood that Jesus had just done a real miracle and only God could

have done it. Verse 9,

For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken . . . Luke 5:9 (NASB)

There were so many fish and this was so incredible. The four disciples were stunned by what had happened. Verse 10,

. . . and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." Luke 5:10 (NASB)

I want you to notice something very important now. In Matthew 4, Jesus said, "If you follow Me, I will make you fishers of men." This time Jesus said, "From now on you will be catching men." It is important to notice that something changed. It is not that they would become fishers of men. Now Jesus said, "You are fishers of men."

They Left Everything. A change has occurred. Verse 11 reads,

When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him. Luke 5:11 (NASB)

They left everything. The change was that they were now willing to leave everything. Someone will say, "Oh they only left all their fishing gear. But in Matthew 19: 27, we are told,

Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?" Matthew 19:27 (NASB)

Now Peter did not say this at the time of the encounter at the Sea of Galilee. He said it later. He responded with, "Jesus, we have left everything for you."

Finally, they had left everything because they were willing to leave everything for Christ. Jesus said now they were ready to be fishers of men which was what Jesus wanted all along. Jesus called them to follow Him and then He called them again. At first they just believed and followed. They were willing to follow Him for only a little while and returned

to Capernaum. Jesus found them on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Then He went to another area to minister, but they did not follow. He had to come back to them. Jesus had wanted them to follow, but they did not choose to do so. What Jesus was looking for and waiting for was a moment in their life when they were willing to leave everything for Him.

May I put it this way? Finally, they were no longer preoccupied with themselves. The ministry was no longer about what they could get out of it for themselves. The ministry was no longer about prestige for them. The ministry was no longer about them becoming fishers of men. The ministry was about following Jesus. Edmond T. Walton in his book called *Motives* writes,

Idols are the way we try to satisfy our heart desires.¹

May I ask you, "What is your heart's desire?" What motivates you? You know that there are some Christians who want to hang on to all the stuff in their lives and then they wonder why they are unhappy. Now, I want to make a point. Happiness is giving up everything for Jesus. Happiness is giving up everything in your life for Christ. When you do that, you will find true happiness. You see, we come to Jesus initially seeking something. We want to be forgiven and go to heaven. We start to follow and then we stop. Jesus knows when we do that. Then we are not very happy, and we will not be happy until we are willing to give up everything for Him.

I would suggest that if you are unhappy, there is something missing in your life. If there is some big hole or void, I would suggest that the reason you are that way is that you are looking for the wrong thing in life. You are looking to remove that unhappiness or to fill the void. Maybe people make you unhappy. Or you may have an illness that is making you unhappy. I don't know what relief you are seeking, but you can figure it out. The Holy Spirit will reveal to your heart what you are seeking. But the only way that you will find true happiness, joy, and peace is absolute, unconditional commitment to Christ to do whatever He

1. Edmond T Walton. *Motives*. R&R Publishing. p. 14.

wants you to do in life and nothing less.

Conclusion. Jesus said He came to give us peace and joy. His words are not hollow. In the gospels it is interesting that Jesus called His disciples to give up everything. Did you notice that? In Luke 14:33 for example, we are told,

So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. Luke 14:33 (NASB)

I wanted to show you this verse in case you thought I was just pulling something out of the air. I want you to notice that in the gospels, Jesus communicates the same message again and again. He says it in different ways.

Jesus wants you to give up everything for Him. It is interesting that Jesus said in Matthew 5:6

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied. Matthew 5:6 (NASB)

When we are unhappy or are not satisfied, we pursue happiness and satisfaction to fill that void in our life. Jesus told us that is the wrong way to become happy. We do not become happy by pursuing happiness or the pleasures of this world. Happiness comes when we hunger and thirst to be righteous. Jesus is the one who is righteous. If you pursue to be like Him, happiness comes for free. Happiness is a side benefit of becoming more like our Savior.

I want to close with a personal illustration. Years ago I ended up in a hospital. I had a blood clot in my right armpit and it extended through the subclavian vein about a third of the way across my chest. It was an elongated blood clot. The way I discovered it was by working on the foundation of my house with a hammer and chisel. I was trying to make a flashing wall. I was chiseling away and all of a sudden I noticed my arm was flush red and swollen. I thought, "This is a problem. I wonder what's going on?" So I quit and went into the house. We called our doctor and we told him what was going on. He said, "Oh you are probably okay. You are probably working too hard." So, I quit for the day and the next day I went back out to work again. All of a sudden, boom! My arm inflated quickly and was very red this time.

We called the hospital and they said," Get in here now." I went to the hospital and they ran some tests and said, "Welcome to the hospital. You are staying for the night." The next day they ran another test and informed me that I had a blood clot in my armpit. That night they gave me my meal and a sedative. Almost right away that put me to sleep.

They wanted me to just lie very still in bed. Throughout the day different doctors come to my room and asked questions. They discussed possibilities as to how they might get rid of this blood clot.

Finally, a doctor came at 10:00 p.m to recommend a solution. He woke me up! I was groggy and sleepy because they had sedated me. He told me they had already ruled out surgery and all other normal options. There was only one thing that was left. They recommended an experimental drug. They wanted me to give my permission so that they could give me the experimental drug. Before he asked me to sign the release form, he told me all the ways I might die as a result of this experimental drug. The likelihood of death was high. He added that there was no other option or hope for me. I asked, "Well, what would happen if I do not sign?" He said, "You will not live." I said, "Okay. I will sign." My wife was not there and I was not sure of what I was doing. So I signed the release form. At midnight the nurse came in and gave me an IV drip for the drug. I call it "Liquid Drano." The drug went through my vein, eating the clot away. They told me that I could have a heart attack or a problem in my lungs as a result.

All I know is that a couple of days later, I was being wheeled down the hall - flying down the hall! Nurses wheeled me first to an elevator and into a room to be tested for a potential blood clot in my lungs. They thought I was still in deep trouble. But in time, tests showed the clot was gone.

After ten days, I was released from the hospital. Later the two doctors visited who had tracked me the whole time in the hospital. I'll never forget the first doctor. When I saw him, he said, "You shouldn't be here." He said I should thank God that I was still alive. I went to the next doctor, and he said almost the same words. He said, "You know, you should not be here." I began to realize at that point how

serious the situation had been.

I know I should not be here. But I am, by the grace of God. God wants me to be here. He was and is not through with me! While I was in that hospital, I remember telling God that if I got out of the hospital, there was only one thing I wanted to do in my life. I wanted to serve Him. I did not care what it was, but I was going to give up everything for Him.

That is what the disciples did. They gave up everything for Christ. It is at that point that I found joy in my life as a Christian - a whole different perspective. Remember that Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

True happiness is not found in marriage. True happiness is not found in a spouse, your home, your job, education, family members or close friends, your health, or anything else.

The second comment is that real happiness is found when you give up everything for Jesus Christ, period. May I ask you? For whom or what are you living?