

## Happiness

Although in contemporary usage *happiness* denotes a feeling of satisfaction or pleasure, it is classically understood as a sustained sense of well-being and flourishing. Aristotle identified happiness (*eudaimonia*) as the highest human good, “doing and living well,” something sought for its own sake and nothing else. Pascal wrote: “All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end.” For Christians, God is the ultimate source of happiness. In his *Institutes*, Calvin clarified, “If God contains the fullness of all good things in himself like an inexhaustible fountain, nothing beyond him is to be sought by those who strive after the highest good and all the elements of happiness.” Similarly, Teresa of Avila, in her *Exclamations*, noted that “God is happy, since He knows and loves and rejoices in Himself without the possibility of doing otherwise. . . . Thou wilt not enter into thy rest, my soul, until thou becomest inwardly one with this Highest Good.”

*Shalom* may be the OT term most closely aligned with this classical meaning, signifying well-being, wholeness, fulfillment, prosperity, and absence of strife; and translated in the Septuagint as *sōzō* (“save”), *eirēnē* (“peace”) and *teleios* (“complete”). The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* suggests that shalom “was influential in broadening the Greek idea of *eirēnē* to include the Semitic ideas of growth and prosperity.” Blessed are those receiving God’s shalom (Num. 6:24–27; cf. Luke 2:14). Messiah is called the “Prince of Shalom” (Isa. 9:6; cf. Eph. 2:14; Jesus “is our peace”).

In the NT, *makarios* (“blessed”) may be translated as “happy” (e.g., Rom. 14:22 NASB), as can be *chara* or *chairō* (“joy, rejoice,” e.g., Matt. 18:13; 25:21; 2 Cor. 7:9). Jesus Christ offers his people abundant eternal life (John 10:10) through the Holy Spirit (John 7:38–39), whose fruit is joy (Gal. 5:23; cf. Luke 10:21). Paul wrote, “The kingdom of God is . . . peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). Complete, everlasting happiness will be the believers’ eschatological experience when God dwells among his people (Rev. 21:3), and they “will see his face” (Rev. 22:4), the beatific vision of God, which is not yet possible (1 Tim. 6:16, cf. Ex. 33:20). Pascal encapsulates the matter in his *Pensées*: “Happiness is neither without us or within us. It is in God, both without us and within us.”

See also Anxiety; Depression; Joy.

For Further Reading: J. Houston, *In Pursuit of Happiness* (1996); D. Naugle, *Reordered Love* (2008); T. Oden, *The Living God* (1987); L. Rouner, ed., *In Pursuit of Happiness* (1995).

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