

ARE WE THERE YET?

I read this statement this week from Dennis Waitley, the motivational speaker and writer: **“Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn, or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude.”**

A man with a huge grin approaches a priest.

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned," he says. "I've spent the week with seven beautiful women."

"Do not fret, my son," says the priest. "All you need to do is take seven lemons, squeeze the juice into a glass, and drink the juice."

"Will that cleanse my sin from me?"

"No, but it'll wipe that stupid smile off your face." (Reader's Digest Website/Jokes)

Happiness cannot be traveled to.

How many of us have heard our children begging to be allowed to go with their friends to the movies, a party, Six Flags, the beach for spring break, pleading as if their lifelong happiness

depended on their being able to take this trip! As parents we know, happiness cannot be traveled to. But as individuals, how many times do we pin our hopes and dreams on that trip to Europe, Hawaii, or even to the new Outlet Mall out I-20 in Leeds? We become attached, even addicted, to our picture of how things SHOULD BE. And, on some level, we believe our happiness depends on TAKING THIS TRIP. Remember the scene from Mel Brooks' History of the World Part I when Moses steps out on the mountaintop carrying three large stone tablets? He orates in full, deep, sonorous voice to his people: "I BRING TO YOU FROM JEHOVAH THE FIFTEEN. . ." one of the tablets falls to the ground and breaks into a thousand tiny pieces. "TEN COMMANDMENTS." Some of us agree that one of those lost commandments reads "Thou shalt not *should* on thyself or thy neighbor." **Happiness cannot be traveled to.**

Happiness cannot be owned. Our son Marty, when he was about eight or ten – when did the first Star Wars movie come out? SEVENTY SEVEN? And then THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

IN ABOUT 80. So he was probably about eight. Let's talk about attachment and addiction. Every action figure, every related toy, the Millennium Falcon, the whole escape sequence set up with the trash compactor, he had to have them. I was traveling quite a bit for the Air Force at the time and I finally learned to buy the toy before I left, take it with me, and pull it from my carryon when he and Don met me at the airport four days later. Not many years later when he was making room for his new attachment to music with amplifiers and stereo systems and all the accoutrement, all that Star Wars stuff got donated. Somewhere some collector is bemoaning the absence of Han Solo's teeny tiny plastic vest, which I found a few weeks later in a dish of potpourri. Now, I can laugh and poke fun at Marty's pre-adolescent attachments, but I have my own. And I'm sure you have yours. Any of you coveting an IPAD? Me, too. But as a spiritually evolved adult capable of delaying gratification I postponed that purchase. I bought an IPOD-Touch instead. It has brought me a small amount of *pleasure*, but my level of *happiness* took a bump because I know I

did not stay in integrity with my agreement with myself to *delay gratification*. But, wait, just as **happiness cannot be owned, happiness cannot be earned, neither by works nor living up to our principles, nor following rules.**

These are all honorable pursuits: sharing of our time, talent, and treasure; living our spiritual principles; being good citizens and good stewards of our selves and our world, **AND happiness cannot be earned. Happiness. Are we there yet?**

There were two friends, widowers, Ira and Herbie, who had outlived their wives by many years. They spent lots of time together playing chess, taking walks, have long philosophical talks. In their study of philosophy they became very curious about the afterlife. They made an agreement that whoever went first would try very hard to contact the other to let him know what it was like on the other side. As life would have it, Herbie went first. Several months went by and Ira missed his old friend. He was sitting on a park bench in the warm sunshine thinking about him and he sort of dozed off. In his relaxed state he heard a soft voice, “Ira, Ira.”

“Is that you, Herbie?” Ira asked. “Yes! It’s me! I finally got through to you!” “Herbie,” Ira said, “tell me. What’s it like on the other side?” “Well, Ira. It’s like this. Every morning I wake up, I have a little something to eat, and it’s romance, romance, romance all morning long. Then I have a little something to eat, take a little nap, and it’s romance, romance, romance all afternoon. Then I have a little snack, a little more romance, sleep ten hours, and start over the next day.”

“Wow, Herbie.” Ira said. “Are you in heaven?” “No,” Herbie said. “I’m a bull in Colorado.”

Happiness is different for different people, but this is constant: Happiness cannot be, worn, or consumed. No matter how much I believe shoes or jewelry, or a new winter coat will make me happy, it is simply not the truth. No matter how much I desire that extra scoop of rich vanilla bean ice cream, based on experience and outcome, I know – like one of my master mind partners in Ft Walton Beach used to say, there is not enough Hagen

Days in the world to fill the hole in my soul. Happiness. Are we there yet? Jesus said it this way:

Matthew 6:19 (NRSV) "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; **20** but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. **25** "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? **26** Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **27** And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? **28** And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, **29** yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. **30** But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is

thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? **31** Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" **32** For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **33** But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."

You may notice I did not quote "seek first the kingdom?" This is from the New Revised Standard Version, where Bible scholars, not religious scholars, worked very hard to correct some areas which may have been mistranslations. Of course, we don't have the original Aramaic manuscripts. The New Testament as we know it was translated from the Greek which was itself a translation. Back to the point: it's possible "seek" is a mistranslation since Jesus had already told us the kingdom isn't missing; it's right here with us, all around us, through us and in us. And, secondly, as I mentioned when I first began this lesson, in the words of Dennis Waitley:

“Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude. “

Perhaps that’s what it looks like to strive first for the kingdom and its righteousness. To live every minute with love, grace, and gratitude.

So we love our children enough to teach them the value of delaying gratification. What’s the best way to do that? What’s the best way to teach anybody anything? By example. By modeling it. By the way we live our lives. With love, grace, and gratitude.

We love ourselves enough to step outside of the circumstance and *gracefully* observe our attachments and addictions and ask ourselves “What is my purpose for acquiring this IPAD, 60” LED 3D television, carton of vanilla bean ice cream? Am I rationalizing, deluding myself, living in the illusion that happiness is connected to any of these things?” Our answers may surprise us. And it can’t hurt to just stop and consider for a moment our purpose. And ask, are we there yet?

Now, let's remember that last week Baine Palmer reminded us as children of God, we must ASK for what we want. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus instructed us to ASK. And sometimes the lesson is in the *process* of asking and receiving, or seeking and finding, of knocking and receiving an answer. It's like window shopping in the refrigerator. Do I want that? Do I want this? First I eat it. Then I say, no, that's not it. Are we there yet?

It's all about building our spiritual consciousness. We may start out applying our spiritual principles to manifesting, making a few demonstrations of travel, and acquisition, and consumption. And along our path we come to a point where we simply trust all these things and greater things are already ours for the asking. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace, and gratitude. Are we there yet? There is no *there*.

When the challenges come--and they will come, or why else be here on this Earth plane in these Earth suits except to experience challenges—when they come, we remember love, grace, gratitude.

When the attachments and addictions show up—and they will show up—we remember love, grace, gratitude.

When the burning desires hit us—and they will hit us—we remember love, grace, gratitude.

We love ourselves and our spiritual path so much that we know we have everything we need is in us to meet each challenge and rise above it, grateful for the experience, graceful in our acceptance of our progress. We love ourselves and our spiritual path so much that we know the attachments and addictions are just information. Information we can observe and gather and learn from, grateful to know ourselves more fully, graceful in our humility. We love ourselves and our spiritual path so much that we know the burning desires are just symbols, symbols of the burning passion in us to know ourselves as Spirit know us, full of love, and grace, and gratitude. For we are offspring of the Most High, heirs to the kingdom, and WE ARE HERE. LET US PRAY.