

## Resisting Happiness (Kelly, Matthew)

Do you worry about things you have no control over? Worry destroys happiness. Do you compare yourself with others in an unhealthy way? Comparison is a destroyer of happiness. Do you cling to bad relationships? Bad relationships destroy our happiness. Do you have a lot of self-doubt, or even self-loathing? They are destroyers of happiness. Do you buy things you can't afford and don't need? Debt is a destroyer of happiness and a creator of stress. Gossip, laziness, fear, excuses, negative thinking, ingratitude, and jealousy are all destroyers of happiness.

Have you ever wanted something good for someone more than he wanted it for himself?

Your job is to coach them well by faithfully following the coaching program. Otherwise you will end up crossing a line that a coach should never cross. You will find yourself in a place where you want it for them more than they want it for themselves. Then you will make your first mistake. You will do something for them that they should be doing for themselves. You will think you are helping them, but it is a lie and you know it. Your job is to empower those you coach; when you do for them what they should be doing for themselves, you create entitlement and dependency rather than empowerment.

Bob Dylan's autobiography *Chronicles*. Dylan was talking about his grandmother—his mother's mother—who lived with his family when he was a child: "She was filled with nobility and goodness...and told me once, be kind because everyone you'll ever meet is fighting a hard battle." Wow. What a fabulous insight.

Jesus invites us to "take up [our] cross daily" (Matthew 16:24). And some days we are called to take up someone else's cross also, so he can catch his breath, have a short rest, or simply have his faith in the goodness of humanity restored.

Resistance will tell you that the problems are too many and that you will never make a difference. Ignore it. Resistance is a liar.

We live in a culture that says the meaning of life is to get what we want, and that when we get what we want, then we will be happy. We yearn for happiness because we were created for it, so we fall for the lie. We race off into the world to get what we want, but sooner or later we all realize that getting what we want doesn't make us happy.

But the lukewarm also tend to choose convenience and comfort over what is right and just.

Knowing that death is not far off brings remarkable clarity. After that news, there is no middle ground; something is either very important or not important at all.

They told me that people who are dying very often talk to the nurses about how they wish they had lived their lives differently.

Every moment of every day, every situation, every person we encounter is an opportunity to become a-better-version-of-ourselves.

The primary purpose of work is to help us become the-best-version-of-ourselves.

When you work hard, pay attention to the details of your work, and do a good job, you grow in a number of virtues, including patience, diligence, perseverance, and integrity. Every time you grow in virtue, you become a-better-version-of-yourself.

God loves ordinary things.

The culture fills our hearts and minds with spectacular dreams about hitting home runs, but life is about getting up every day and hitting a single.

Do you make your decisions based on fear or on faith?

Fill your mind with thoughts of God. Spend your days thinking about things that are good and true and beautiful and noble, and you will become good and true and beautiful and noble.

Boredom is a manifestation of selfishness. It can only occur when we are overly focused on ourselves. It always means that we have set God and neighbor aside to focus exclusively on ourselves, and that is never a recipe for happiness.

In reality, most people are not as good as they think they are at these things. The false perception is the result of illusory superiority. This is cognitive bias, whereby individuals overestimate their own qualities and abilities relative to others.

GOD IS DEAD. NIETZSCHE. Then below that it read, NIETZSCHE IS DEAD. GOD.

There is a direct relationship between truth and happiness. Truth leads to happiness. Lies bring misery.

It is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that because we can't live up to a truth we should deny it or, worse, attack it.

When we resist truth we resist God and we resist happiness. We cannot be happy separated from the truth; we cannot be happy in a world of lies.

During the 1960s and '70s a well-known series of studies on delayed gratification, now known as the Stanford marshmallow experiment, was conducted by psychologist Walter Mischel, who was at the time a professor at Stanford University.

They are wrapped up in two thousand years of Catholic genius. Saint Augustine wrote, "Conquer yourself and the world lies at your feet."

He wants us to press on and try again. In the words of Saint Francis de Sales, "Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself. Do not lose courage in considering your own imperfections but instantly set about redeeming them—every day begin anew."

Let us pray for the grace to be the kind of friend who helps others in the great pilgrimage of life.

Believe: Have faith that holiness is possible, and that everything you do every day leads you closer to or further from the-very-best-version-of-yourself and the holy life God wants for you. •Ten minutes a day: Create a daily habit of prayer. •Hour by hour: Offer every hour of your life to God as a prayer, especially your work. •Feed your mind: Spend time reading the Bible and other great spiritual books. •Serve powerfully: Get outside yourself by finding ways to make a difference in the lives of others. •Mass: Attend daily Mass once or twice during the week to develop a deeper love and understanding of this great mystery. •Fasting: Deny yourself in small ways many times a day so that God can fill you with incredible spiritual strength. •Reconciliation: Confess your sins regularly and open yourself up to spiritual coaching.

We all have a great need to belong, to be loved and accepted.

What makes a great friend? Our best friends are those people who encourage and challenge us to become the-best-version-of-ourselves.

Dynamic Catholic exists because of that intervention. I was comfortable and satisfied, and looking back that should have set off alarm bells, but we all have blind spots.

This Latin phrase, taken from Matthew's Gospel, means "Let your light shine."

"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

The obvious is that God wants you to let your light shine. The less obvious is that Jesus assumes that you will do good works. He doesn't say, "If you do good works" or "On the chance that you get around to doing some good works in the midst of your very busy life." No, he assumes that you will do good works. You were made for good works. You were created to let your light shine.

What stops you from letting your light shine? Fear, laziness, procrastination, selfishness, addiction, obsession, comparing yourself to others, allowing your critics to drain your energy and direct your life, an unwillingness to move beyond your comfort zone, self-doubt, gossip, negative relationships, worry, excuses, and so many others.

God didn't create us to be served; he created us to serve.

We have spoken at length about our quest for happiness. One of the essential lessons in this quest is that we ultimately find happiness not by seeking gratification for ourselves but by serving others. You were made for mission. You were created to serve powerfully. And you will never be truly happy until you find a way to lay down your life for others that engages your talents and abilities.

“Place your talents and enthusiasm at the service of life.” This was the message of Saint John Paul the Great as he traveled around the world speaking to people of all ages. Service is central to the life of a Christian. We are not the masters; we are the servants.

Often I have been lazy, afraid, and comfortable, and all these things have caused me to delay the next step. But over time you realize you will never be happy unless you take that next step, and by some grace you overcome the resistance and move forward.

So we talked a lot about how as Christians we are called to be in the world, not to run away from it. We are called to elevate every environment we enter, and every honest human activity. We also talked about how important it is to have good business leaders who care about their employees rather than treat them like numbers, who pay a fair wage and run their businesses with integrity.

The critics will always be there, but it is not the critic that counts. Have you ever seen a statue of a critic? No. I haven't either. Do they award any Nobel Prizes for Critic of the Year? No, there is no Best Critic Ever statue or award.

There is another quote that I like to reflect on from time to time, written by Calvin Coolidge, the thirtieth president of the United States: “Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education alone will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.”

With blessing comes responsibility. Jesus was clear when he said, “Anyone who has been given much, much will be expected of him” (Luke 12:48).

Without gratitude what was extraordinary yesterday becomes ordinary today. Without gratitude a sense of entitlement takes over and begins to rot our soul. Without gratitude we get old and grumpy, or even young and grumpy. Gratitude keeps us young. It anchors us to the present moment. It reminds us of what matters most and what matters least, and fills us with the resolve to carry on the great mission God has entrusted to us.