

The Odyssey to Happiness

JAMES E. FAUST

My beloved brothers and sisters, it's a great thrill to be here and to see you all and to have heard these lovely musical numbers. I remember some years ago traveling along a street where there was a church. In front of the church was advertised what would take place the coming Sunday, and the sign on this particular day said, "What hell is like"; then written below was "Come and hear our choir."

This evening we've heard a heavenly choir. And if you could have seen the charm and the grace and the enthusiasm on Sister Troub's face as she led this group, you would have beheld something which was as magnificent as the sound which the choir produced. I was thrilled to hear Sister Joan Larsen Lundt play so beautifully on the violin. I claim her. She is one of my girls. Her family lived in my stake when I was stake president. I also claim her husband because I was blessed to perform the sealing at the time they were married.

President Oaks and members of the presidencies of the ten stakes, it is a great thrill and honor and a delight to be with you this evening. I must confess that the responsibility of speaking to you has driven me to my knees several times. The burden has been heavy because I have never had the responsibility of speaking to so many young adults and special

interests members under one roof. I also feel a burden because of the subject about which I have chosen to speak to you. I would speak to you this evening about the odyssey to happiness. I am immeasurably fortified because she who has made my own journey to happiness so complete and fulfilled is behind me giving me the same love and support she has every day and every hour of the more than thirty years that we have been married. Ours has been a happiness which, on my part, has exceeded my fondest hopes and expectations.

The Pursuit of Happiness According to Philosophers

Because you are and because you are here, I assume that you share with all mankind the desire to be happy. Most of you, being Americans, claim this as a God-given right to pursue, for our founding fathers said that among your inalienable rights is the right to pursue happiness. Early philosophers like Aristotle, Locke, Aquinas, and Mill declared

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that the most fundamental of all human searches was for happiness. Because most of you are single and because I am one of those assigned to have special concern for you, I must warn you about the conflict that always exists between feeling happy at a given moment and being happy for a lifetime—or, expressing this concept in another way, always living happily. It will often be necessary for all of us to choose between having a good time and leading a good life.

Aristotle chose to define a happy man as one who wants for nothing. Plato, in this regard, was wiser than Aristotle because he related happiness to spiritual well-being, producing a harmony in the soul. The Savior of the world taught us to seek the inner peace which results from a proper order of all of the soul's parts. In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates explains, "The just man does not permit several elements within him to interfere with one another. He sets in order his own inner life and is his own master and his own law and is at peace with himself." Tolstoy, speaking through Pierre Bezukhov in *War and Peace*, stated: "Man is created for happiness; that happiness lies in himself, is the satisfaction of his natural human cravings; that all unhappiness rises not from privation but from superfluity."

In the minds of some there is a question as to whether all normal human beings can achieve happiness or whether it can be achieved only by those gifted with very special talents. This questioning comes because the peace about which the Savior spoke, even "the peace . . . which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4:7), seems to have escaped so many of his followers. Spinoza says, "All noble things are as difficult as they are rare." One thoughtful man said, "Happiness is a wine of the rarest vintage and seems insipid to a vulgar taste" (Logan Smith, *Afterthoughts*, 1931). Some may feel that before we can learn to live well we must learn how to face death or to live being rid of the fear of death. The rationale of the ancient

philosophers seems to have been that happiness is the possession of all good things and the satisfaction of all desires.

The Pursuit of Happiness According to the Prophets

Many years of listening to the tribulations of man have persuaded me that the satisfaction of all desires is completely counterproductive to happiness. Instant and unrestrained gratification is the shortest and most direct route to unhappiness. We have seen in the past years, especially in the most recent eighteen months, one of our leaders, President Harold B. Lee, pursue a most intense course in his efforts to help and bless. Common to both President McKay and President Lee, from my own observation, was the great capacity in each of them to love and to lift. Every contact with another of God's children was for these towering giants neither casual nor perfunctory. So sincere was President McKay's communication with me, even though brief and not frequent, that I was persuaded that President McKay loved me more than he loved anyone else in the whole world. In a foolish moment I told President Brown that I was so convinced of this transcending love that I could not quite understand why President McKay had chosen him and President Tanner to be his counselors, rather than myself. Now the interesting dimension of this feeling was that everyone else with whom I talked, member and nonmember alike, who had a similar contact with President McKay, got precisely the same feeling that I did: in particular, that he loved them more than anyone else in the whole world.

The radiance and the benevolence of President Kimball and his great capacity for personal relationships are matchless. No one could ever be in the presence of President Kimball and leave without being permanently complimented and strengthened and sustained. So does not the odyssey to happiness

lie in a large measure in our capacity to have and be a friend?

The elusiveness of the “true peace of soul” spoken of by Spinoza lies in a discontent with things—things we have and things we wish we had. In a time when we are both obsessed and sated with the possession and the acquisition of objects, the counsel of Moses seems more needed than ever: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, . . . nor any thing that is thy neighbor’s” (Exodus 20:17). I no longer covet my brother-in-law’s big, \$10,000, many-horsepowered, gas-eating Cadillac.

Individuals Who Have Achieved True Happiness

May I share some experiences of people who have obtained a remarkable felicity in their lives. For well over fifty years our family has been close to little Ella Hoover, who sits down in front of me in a wheelchair with her red cape over her shoulders. She is presently living with a favorite aunt in Delta, Utah. Delta is quite a place. I was born there. It’s near Hinckley. It takes Brother Gordon B. Hinckley and all his eloquence to do justice to either Delta or Hinckley. Brother Hinckley says he can’t understand why certain Utah towns like Faust, Utah, and Hinckley, Utah, have not prospered as well as some others like Murray and Ogden.

Ella is a remarkably happy and outgoing woman who is only a little over two feet tall. While still an infant, she was playfully thrown in the air by someone who failed to catch her properly, so that she fell to the ground and suffered injuries which resulted in a permanent deformity to her back and her arms and her legs. Despite these crippling physical deformities, she grew up, went to school, and attended Brigham Young University for a time. Because of the sweetness of her spirit, her great personal charm, her fine intelligence, and her happy disposition, she won the love of and

married a completely normal, full-sized man. Through a miracle as great as any miracle that ever happened, she was able to conceive and carry and bear a normal child, whom they named Billy, after his father, and who is also here with us tonight.

One day before Billy was three, the Bill Hoover family was riding in their car in west Salt Lake County and the tire went flat. The father, Bill Hoover, pulled his car over to the side of the road and got out to check the wheels. In the process, a driver drunk with wine came along and struck the Hoover car and killed Bill Hoover instantly. Somehow this young widow, who never walked a step in her life without pain and without a crutch, raised this son to be an exemplary man. He in turn married and in time became a father in his own right and raised up four grandchildren to the great joy and delight of little Ella Hoover. This remarkable woman, despite all these obstacles, difficulties, and heartaches, is and has been an extremely faithful, well-adjusted, noble woman. Now in her seventies, she blesses the lives of all who meet and know her because she gives so very much of one commodity—herself. Hers has been an odyssey of faith without bitterness, in which she has found great happiness through tears and pain and sorrow.

Recently, I had the blessing of meeting Patriarch James R. Boone and his wife Ruth in Jacksonville, Florida. Their odyssey to happiness has come through their faithfulness to the redeeming principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and in being the parents of thirteen children. Four children—David, Elaine, Melinda, and Martha—presently attend this University and may be in this audience. Brother and Sister Boone’s happiness was not complete with only thirteen children, so they adopted another one—Sammy, now age three, making fourteen. In their Christmas letter of this year, they said of Sammy, number fourteen, “He is very special, this boy.” I was at a conference meeting when Sister Boone was released as president

of the stake Relief Society after having served faithfully and well for twelve years. In this family, among the children in one generation, there have been eleven full-time missionaries, and nine of the boys have earned Eagle Scouts, which may be a national record. Patriarch and Sister Boone have great joy and rejoicing in their posterity, who at this point number an even fifty. Time, I am sure, will do much to increase the measure of their joy and rejoicing.

We are indebted to Dr. Homer Ellsworth for sharing with us two contrasting stories about the happiness of mothers. Often, expectant mothers are so set upon having a boy child or a girl child that when a baby comes with a different sex the mother is temporarily disappointed. Generally, this disappointment is forgotten as soon as the mother cuddles her newborn in her arms for the first time. A few new mothers demonstrate their immaturity for a day or two. One, who wanted a boy baby and happened to receive a girl baby, threw tantrums and objects all over her hospital room for a day or two to show her displeasure. One wise old nurse, when feeding time came, took a baby boy born with a harelip from the nursery and quietly slipped him into the disconsolate mother's arms. The immature mother replied, "This is not my child."

The wise old nurse said, "Well, it has the right sex. Maybe its mother will be willing to trade babies with you." There followed no more demonstrations of immaturity.

In contrast, some years ago there was born to a young mother a special child. This child was born without eyes. It was normal in all other respects except there was nothing to resemble eyes or sockets above the nose. This wise mother might in bitterness have said, "Why did this have to happen to my child?" or "Why did this have to happen to me?" Instead she said, "The Lord must really love us and have confidence in us. We really must be favored to have been given this child. To think the Lord picked out our home, knowing how

much special love and care this child would need, is very humbling and comforting. We are grateful for this special child and for the blessings it will bring to our home."

The fox in the story *The Little Prince* was wiser than he knew when he said, "Now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye." The odyssey to happiness lies in the dimension of the heart. Such a journey is made on stepping-stones of selflessness, wisdom, contentment, and faith. The enemies of progress and fulfillment are self-doubt, a poor self-image, self-pity, bitterness, and despair. By substituting simple faith and humility for these enemies we can move rapidly in our journey to true felicity.

Definitions of Happiness

Nephi tells us that we must "come down in the depths of humility. . . . The things of the wise and the prudent shall be hid . . . forever—yea, that happiness which is prepared for the saints" (2 Nephi 9:42–43), which to me is the answer to Spinoza. The Lord, speaking through King Benjamin, reminds us:

I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness. [Mosiah 2:41]

As one travels around this land and observes the many cultural and recreational activities as advertised on the marquees of the theaters, in the newspapers, and on the television screens, one turns to the meaningful statement of Alma: "They have gone contrary to the nature of God; therefore, they are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness" (Alma 41:11).

There is much talk these days about the rights of consumers to enjoy products free from

defects. The problem is there are too many of us trying to consume happiness rather than generate it. Happiness is not unlike an atomic energy breeder reactor. Deliver to the breeder reactor the energy of three truckloads of coal, and it will return the energy of four or maybe five truckloads of coal. Shakespeare expressed a philosophy in *As You Like It* which seems commendable: "I am a true labourer: I earn that I eat, get that I wear; owe no man hate, envy no man's happiness; glad of other men's good" (*As You Like It*, 3.2.65–67). One wise man has said, "Happiness adds and multiplies as we divide it with others" (A. Nielsen).

The relationship of money to happiness is at best questionable. Even the *Wall Street Journal* acknowledges, "Money is an article which may be used as a universal passport to everywhere except heaven, and as a universal provider of everything except happiness." Henrich Gibson reminds us, "Money may buy the husk of many things, but not the kernel. It brings you food, but not the appetite; medicine, but not health; acquaintances, but not friends; servants, but not faithfulness; days of joy, but not peace or happiness."

An unknown writer has said:

*Success is speaking words of praise,
In cheering other people's ways,
In doing just the best you can
With every task and every plan.*

*It's silence when your speech would hurt,
Lightness when your neighbor's curt.
It's deafness when the scandal flows
And sympathy with others' woes.*

*It's loyalty when duty calls.
It's courage when disaster falls.
It's patience when the hours are long.
It's found in laughter and in song.*

*It's in the silent time of prayer,
In happiness and in despair.*

*In all of life and nothing less,
We find the thing called success.*

The blind Helen Keller reminds us, "Your success and happiness lie in you. External conditions are accidents of life. The great enduring realities are love and service. Joy is the holy fire that keeps our purpose warm and our intelligence aglow. Resolve to keep happy and your joy and you will form an invincible host against difficulty."

Marriage and Happiness

It was Seneca who said, "Thou must live for another if thou wishest to live for thyself." Many of our single members of the Church feel that because they are not married they cannot be happy. One noted woman writer, Kathleen Norris, has said, "Marriage is a job. Happiness or unhappiness has nothing to do with it. There never was a marriage that could not be made a success, nor a marriage that could not have ended in bitterness and in failure."

An unknown author advises, "Success in love consists not so much in marrying the one person who can make you happy, as in escaping the many who could make you miserable." This may sound unkind, but it has a sufficient basis in fact when misery is related to being exposed to traits of selfishness, transgression, immaturity, inconsideration, and brutality in a marriage partner. (I am sure, President Oaks, there are none of these at BYU.)

Occasionally someone suggests it would be appropriate to have a computer dating program set up under Church auspices, or some kind of a marriage search committee set up so that the Church could more directly be involved in marriage partner selection. This institution is not without some reputation in that regard. My response to such suggestions is that the selection process for eternal companions is so sacred that no one can or should intrude into the making of these choices except the individuals themselves, who should

assume and bear that responsibility with divine guidance, parental counsel, and in some cases if necessary the help of a wise bishop.

For those choice ones among us who think their chances for their odysseys to happiness through marriage are gliding past, I plead with you in the words of Elder Boyd K. Packer:

Now a word to those who want to love and to be loved who are slipping past the usual age for marriage. I am thinking of the many of these lovely, worthy sisters who feel that life is passing them by. Unfortunately, you sometimes feel that way when you are nineteen. These suggestions: Do not give up. Hold to your standards. It may well come to you as a September song and be twice more precious for the waiting.

We know a wonderful sister to whom marriage came as a September song. Her name is Freda Joan Lee.

Elder Packer continues:

Stay attractive—and I do not mean the cover girl appeal—but attractive in disposition and in attitude and in service. Stay available. Do not be so content with what you do that you cease to care. To some it may not come, but surely there is a compensation that the Lord has in store for the righteous who have held to his standards, but who remain unmarried through no choice of their own.

Prerequisites for Happiness

In summation, the odyssey to happiness seems to depend almost entirely upon the degree of righteousness to which we attain in terms of the degree of selflessness we acquire, the amount of service we render, and the inner peace which we enjoy. It also hangs to some degree on those loved ones and friends on whose smile and welfare our happiness so much depends—in my case, the members of my family who are here tonight. There are also a host of others, unknown to us personally, within and without the Church, to whose

destinies we are bound by ties of common interest and sympathy.

President Kimball said in *The Miracle of Forgiveness*:

What is the price of happiness? One might be surprised at the simplicity of the answer. The treasurehouse of happiness is unlocked to those who live the gospel of Jesus Christ in its purity and in its simplicity. Like a mariner without stars, like a traveler without a compass, is the person who moves along through life without a plan. The assurance of supreme happiness, the certainty of a successful life here and of exaltation and eternal life hereafter, comes to those who plan to live their lives in complete harmony with the gospel of Jesus Christ and then consistently follow the course they have set.

I commend to you the 127th Psalm: “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that built it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psalms 127:1).

Now some who have detoured from the road to peace and happiness have done so through transgression. With all my heart I urge you to see your bishop immediately and clear up any problem, that you may again enjoy a quiet and a peaceful conscience.

In conclusion, may I suggest even a further distillation or refinement of the elusive and endless quest of being able to live happily every hour, every day of every month, and every year of our lives. The golden pathway which is the most certain and direct route to the happiness which would enrich and bless your life and the lives of others who cross your pathway is your ability to love. The road to happiness is selfless giving of love, the kind of love that has concern and interest and some measure of charity for every living soul. It will require that you show love even for your enemies and seek to give a benediction to them that curse you. “Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you” (Matthew 5:44). In so doing you will

enjoy the love of God himself and be able to soar above and through the ill winds that blow, above the sordid, above the self-defeating and the bitter. You have the promise that “your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things” (D&C 88:67).

As a humble servant called to bear witness, I testify to you with all my being that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Redeemer, and the Savior of the world. Having sat last Thursday in the sacred rooms of the Salt Lake Temple in the presence of a new prophet of God, with the other Brethren, I leave with you the conviction of my soul that Spencer W. Kimball will lead us, if we willingly follow, in the odyssey to happiness and to eternal life. As faithful members of the Church, you are entitled to know that the General Authorities of this Church feel that the mantle of the prophet of God has fallen upon President Kimball, who did not seek it nor want it any more than any who have held

that sacred calling. I sustain President Kimball and his stalwart counselors, President Tanner and President Romney, each of whom is so great in his own right and whom I love with all my soul. I also fully sustain President Ezra Taft Benson as the President of the Council of the Twelve, who as you know is a man of great leadership and dedication and who is filled with kindness and humility.

We all grieve in the loss of our great and beloved leader, President Harold B. Lee. We felt his presence with us and were comforted by it. The spirit of President Lee bears witness to us that we should support and sustain President Spencer W. Kimball and that everything that has been done is in accordance with the mind and the will of the Lord. We also felt in that meeting the spirits of the previous Presidents of the Church, including the Prophet Joseph, and of the Lord sustaining President Kimball in his great calling, to which I testify in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.