



The Happiness of a Sunbeam
By KellieAnn Halvorsen, October 19, 2013

Happiness in life is something semi-elusive that we all are searching for. No matter our life situation or current blessings we already have, we reach for this “Happiness Goal” for ourselves, our family, our friends. We in the church are blessed with the knowledge of having a loving Heavenly Father, who we learn wants only our Happiness in life and has established a plan and path that is to lead “Men that they may have joy.” (2 Nephi 2:25) During this past General Conference, this is the idea that seemed to permeate my thoughts as I listened to the apostles and leaders of the church. That even amidst the trials and tribulations of my life, God wants *me* to be happy. I would like to bear my testimony to you today brothers and sisters, that God wants *you* to be happy too.

We are taught this concept many times from the time we are small children. I can look back with fondness to when we were asked in primary to sing the song, “Jesus Wants me for a Sunbeam.” (Children's Songbook, pg. 60) I remember even as a little three year old how excited I was to participate in this my first ever memorized Sunday hymn. I loved waiting to spring out of my chair and become that spastic ray of sunlight “shinning for Him each day” with my arms extended out and falling

back down only to spring back up once more.

At that time I didn't quite understand what the point of the song actually was, I remember graduating from my Sunbeam class and being confused that we would still be asked to sing the song even as we were no longer in the 3-year-old Sunbeam's age bracket. I admit that it wasn't for years that I understood that, besides using up the build up energy from attempting to sit quietly during primary, that the song was asking me to be a happy person. To find and shine the excitement and joy that comes from learning and living the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

While writing this talk I couldn't help but smile as I imagined using this song as a regular hymn during our sacrament services. In my mind's eye I could see the entire congregation, adults and children, bursting forth in the same energy that I witness during singing time as a primary teacher. The congregation singing with hand and body movements proclaiming proudly how “Jesus wants me for a sunbeam to shine for Him each day.”

In the sessions of this past General Conference some of my favorite apostles talked on this matter of happiness, and conversely, matters dealing with sadness and depression. Pres. Eyring spoke of finding happiness in the gospel, in the keeping of commandments and creating it within the walls of our homes. He gave these wise words, *“Heavenly Father has made each of us unique. No two of us will have exactly the same experiences. No two families are alike... Yet a loving heavenly father has set the same path of happiness for all of His children. Whatever our personal characteristics or whatever will be our experiences, there is but one plan of happiness. That plan is to follow the commandments of God.”* close quote. (Eyring, October 2013)

This plan Goes hand-in-hand with the knowledge of the plan of salvation. God is our loving Heavenly Father. He sent us to earth to become more like him. To be more like him we needed to be make our own choices and grow in our own understanding. Along the path of this understanding we come across harsh trials and powerful blessings. We all stumble and become unworthy to return to

Him. So in God's wisdom he incorporated into the plan, the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Wherein we can be forgiven of these sins, learn to live a righteous life, and return home to Him. This is the path of Happiness that the God wants us to live. To have faith, repent, and strive keep the commandments, this will leave to long and lasting happiness. Not the fleeting and often hollow happiness of this temporal mortal life, but an eternal joy in the kingdom of God.

I know from personal experience, that happiness can be hard to find, even while striving to live a Christ centered life. Sometimes the weight of our trials and sins, wither active transgression or sins of omission, can weigh on our lives and cause us great sorrow and depression. Blocking our vision of happiness and even our desire to reach out for it. When in this state of mind it can be extremely difficult to hear the encouragement or reprimand of others. It is in these times of darkness that we must turn from comforting ourselves by wallowing in our own misery, and actively seek for the light. The light that emanates from the life and atonement of the Savior Jesus Christ. To find and exude that ray of "Sunbeam" in our lives.

During conference Elder Holland in his amazing talk "Like a Broken Vessel," spoke on the reality of depression, mental illnesses and sadness, adding through observation and experience his own advice on how to work through these times of doubt and darkness saying *"Faithfully pursue the time-tested devotional practices that bring the Spirit of the Lord into your life. Seek the counsel of those who hold keys for your spiritual well-being. Ask for and cherish priesthood blessings. Take the sacrament every week, and hold fast to the perfecting promises of the Atonement of Jesus Christ. Believe in miracles. I have seen so many of them come when every other indication would say that hope was lost. Hope is never lost. If those miracles do not come soon or fully or seemingly at all, remember the Savior's own anguished example: if the bitter cup does not pass, drink it and be strong, trusting in happier days ahead."* close quote. (Holland, October 2013)

It can be hard to keep moving ahead, to keep the fires of hope stoked when our righteous desires

seem to be coming to us to slowly or not at all. I must admit that I struggle daily with this, but I am still a happy person. When in doubt I often think of a marvelous talk giving by President Eyring to the students at BYU thirty years ago called “ A Law of Increasing Returns.” (Eyring, March 1982) I listen or read this talk often, on what feels like a weekly basis having downloaded it even to my every handy kindle.

It speaks of working hard at your goals, even if the rewards are not coming to you a quickly or as often as you like. Eyring speaks of keeping a vision of the blessings and happiness you would like to achieve. Of working towards the “Late harvests” in life. Near the conclusion of his talk he states that *“There are some things you should work for and expect results now. But along with getting early harvests, I hope you’ll work and wait for the late ones. That will take seeing the law of increasing returns as an opportunity, not just a test. Delayed blessings will build your faith in God to work, and wait, for him. The scriptures aren’t demeaning when they command, “Wait upon the Lord.” That means both service and patience. And that will build your faith.*

It may help you to watch both for the chance to smile and the blessings around you on the way. And it may help to picture both the future of the people whom you serve for God and his promise of peace in this life.” Close quote.

Brothers and Sisters, I ask of you today to watch for these chances to smile while working on finding your happiness in life. To remember that excitement of a youngster springing from a chair to declare that merits of “shining for Him each day.” Let us strive to live by the simple lyrics of this children's Hymn.

*Jesus wants me for a sunbeam,
To shine for him each day;
In every way try to please him,
At home, at school, at play.*

*A sunbeam, a sunbeam,
Jesus wants me for a sunbeam.
A sunbeam, a sunbeam,
I'll be a sunbeam for him.*

I bear my testimony that happiness comes from continually striving to live the commandments of God, the little and the big. I also would like to bear my testimony that we all struggle with sadness along this path. That we all struggle with our own pet sins and vices. But that through the atonement of Christ and the power of repentance these weaknesses can become our strengths. Again I would like bear my witness that God truly wants you to be happy and that true and lasting happiness can only come through following the promptings of the spirit and keeping the commandments of God.

I say these things in the name of Jesus Christ Amen.

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