

PROVERBS – Lesson 13

The Merry Heart

By Beverly McKey

I. INTRODUCTION – The more things change the more they remain the same.

- A. The problems with which modern people struggle are the problems that challenged people from the first generations which we read about in Genesis.
 1. Because of this, we know most assuredly that the Bible is relevant for every generation.
 - a. God's word addresses the issues which have always plagued the souls of man.
 - b. A study of Proverbs still offers teachings and insights from the simple to the profound that are useful to every age.
 2. Much of the teaching of the Bible provides instruction on how to achieve happiness by pursuing righteousness while avoiding evil.
 3. The Bible does not teach us an intangible, illusive emotion that is affected by everything that surrounds us.
 - a. Webster's number one definition for "happy" is, "*avored by luck or fortune.*" This is the definition that most of the world accepts.
 - b. This concept of happiness deals with the chance happenings and circumstances that affect one's life.
 - c. Because of this, many are constantly disappointed with life because they believe that they are just unlucky and have no control over "happiness".
 - d. The Biblical idea of happiness, however, involves blessedness, a spiritual reason behind the happiness.
 - 1) Knowing that you have been granted salvation through obedience to the gospel is the source of that blessedness.
 - 2) **Acts 8:39** – "*Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.*"
 - 3) Paul also taught in **Philippians 4:4** that we should "*Rejoice in the Lord!*"
 - 4) Paul used the word "rejoice" nine times in the four short chapters of Philippians.
 4. To be sure, we are living in less than an ideal world; we do not live among perfect people (ourselves included).
 - a. The weather is not always fair.
 - b. Times are not always good.
 - c. Circumstances are not always conducive to cheerfulness.
 - d. People are not always kind, thoughtful, and helpful.

- B. We must remember that Jesus said that we are the “*light of the world*”.
1. When that light is working we are a positive influence on the world around us (lights cast out darkness).
 2. There is a reason we are not called “*clouds of the world*”. Clouds dim the light of the sun and thunder clouds are frightening.
 3. A negative, grumpy Christian never attracts anyone to Christianity.
 4. We will never be spiritually effective until we have first become spiritually attractive.
- C. One of the greatest desires of every person is to be happy.
1. In spite of the fact that all men want happiness and strenuously strive for it, very few people achieve a real state of happiness.
 2. We need to learn that true happiness is not dependent upon external situations and circumstances.
 3. Many have not found happiness simply because they have not learned to look for it in the right way and in the right place.

II. WHAT THINGS PRODUCE A MERRY HEART? (the word “heart” as used in the Bible is really referring to the “mind” where attitudes and feelings reside.)

- A. Finding wisdom and getting understanding brings happiness.
1. **Proverbs 3:13-18** – “¹³ *Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding;* ¹⁴ *For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold.* ¹⁵ *She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.* ¹⁶ *Length of days is in her right hand, In her left hand riches and honor.* ¹⁷ *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* ¹⁸ *She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her.*”
 2. Wisdom and understanding are so precious, so valuable that they are to be sought more than gold, gems, or any other material blessing or treasure that we could imagine.
 3. It is never too late to get wisdom, according to **James 1:5** – “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*”
 4. However, understanding comes only with effort on our part.
2 Timothy 2:15 – “*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*”
 5. It is a never-ending work in the life of a Christian to continue growing in wisdom and understanding.
 6. However, the end result is well worth the effort we put forth, for we will be truly blessed of God.

B. Counseling peace brings happiness.

1. **Proverbs 12:20** – *“Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but counselors of peace have joy.”*
2. It was Jesus who said, *“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God”*. **Matthew 5:9**
 - a. Notice that Jesus did not say “peace lovers”, but “peace makers”.
 - b. We must be actively involved in promoting peace were ever we can.
 - c. Gossip is the cause of most division whether between friends or in a congregation. We must avoid it at all cost.
3. **Romans 12:18** – *“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”*
 - a. We must avoid being the source of strife in our homes, in the church and in the community.
 - b. *“As much as it depends on you...”* means that we may not be able to control whether someone else acts in a peaceful manner, but we can control our own attitudes and behaviors.
4. **Romans 14:19** – *“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”*
 - a. “Pursue” is an action word and therefore requires us to do something.
 - b. We cannot achieve peace by simply avoiding conflict, although we must do that also.
 - c. We must seek a life style that exists in peace and that helps promote peace in every situation we face in life.
 - d. Pursuing peace, however, does not apply when we are faced with a situation where the truth of the gospel is being perverted.
 - 1) We must be ready to stand our ground and defend the truth, even when it may cause some conflict.
 - 2) Compromise is not acceptable in matters of salvation.

C. Showing mercy on the poor brings happiness.

1. **Proverbs 14:21** – *“He who despises his neighbor sins; but he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.”*
 - a. How does showing mercy on the poor make one happy?
 - 1) Selfishness is the root of many sins and it is almost impossible to be selfish and develop a heart of mercy.
 - 2) Paul gives us this instruction: **Philippians 2:3-4** – *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”*
 - 3) The verse known as the “golden rule” tells us how to achieve this: **Matthew 7:12** – *“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”*

- 4) We all want mercy shown to us when we make mistakes, so we must be able to show mercy to others.
2. We are obligated to be merciful because God has been so merciful to us by sending His beloved Son to earth as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world.
 - a. One of the best examples of showing mercy was taught by Jesus in the parable of the Good Samaritan **Luke 10:25-37**.
 - 1) In this parable, a man was robbed and beaten while traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho.
 - 2) A priest of the Jews passed by on the opposite side of the road from the injured man so he wouldn't have to deal with the man's problems.
 - 3) Next a Levite passed by on the opposite side of the road leaving the injured man to die.
 - 4) Finally, a Samaritan came upon the scene.
 - a) The Samaritans and the Jews were bitter enemies.
 - b) Jews would usually not even pass through Samaria when going from Judea to Galilee, but instead would go miles out of their way to keep from touching Samaritan soil.
 - 5) The Samaritan stopped, bound the man's wounds and placed him on his own donkey and took him to an inn in the city.
 - 6) There the Samaritan paid the inn keeper to care for the man and promised to pay more when he returned if necessary.
 - 7) While this story is usually applied to teach us "who our neighbor is", it is primarily a lesson on unselfishly showing mercy; especially to an undeserving person.
 - b. Jesus also taught us that showing mercy brings a great blessing with it: **Matthew 5:7** – "*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*"
 - c. Paul put it this way: **Acts 20:35** – "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*"
- D. Seeing what is good or giving a good report brings happiness.
 1. **Proverbs 15:30** – "*The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and a good report makes the bones healthy.*"
 - a. The glowing face that shows a pure, happy heart and a friendly disposition lift the spirits of those who see it.
 - b. "*Giving a good report*" or speaking to people with kindness and respect engenders good relationships and helps us develop a good reputation in the church and in the community.
 2. **Proverbs 15:13** – "*A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance (face), but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.*"
 - a. Most people show their emotions in the facial expression.

- b. Usually, it isn't hard to tell when someone is angry or sad or happy or confused or even sick.
 - c. The evidence of each of these emotions on our face will very often determine how others will react to your mood. For example:
 - 1) Anger usually brings out hostility in others.
 - 2) Sadness elicits compassion from most people.
 - 3) Happiness is usually reciprocated with a smile, even from strangers on the street.
- E. Trusting in the Lord brings happiness.
1. **Proverbs 16:20** – *"He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he."*
 2. Trusting in the Lord brings happiness because it also brings other benefits, such as:
 - a. Mercy – **Psalms 32:10** – *"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him."*
 - b. Safety – **Proverbs 29:25** – *"The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe."*
 - c. Strength – **Psalms 125:1** – *"Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever."*
 3. When mankind trusts in himself instead of God, it always results in death and destruction.
 - a. **Proverbs 14:12** – *"There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."*
 - b. **Jeremiah 10:23** – *"O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps."*
- F. Justice brings happiness
1. **Proverbs 21:15** – *"It is joy to the just to do judgment: but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity."*
 - a. Sometimes the sentence structure or the words used in a verse make it a little hard to comprehend easily, and in my view, this is one that veils a very simple meaning.
 - b. My preferred study Bible is the English Standard Version, which is a very accurate translation and in many places uses more accurate words and phrases.
 - c. However, these lessons are based on the New King James, to accommodate the most used version here.
 - 1) I found the phrase *"to do judgment"* to be unclear.
 - 2) Here is the same verse in the ESV: *"When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers."* This is very clear.
 - d. Right and wrong are ingrained in the righteous, so when justice prevails or when one can assist in bringing justice about, it is a joy to the righteous person.

- e. Evildoers should be in terror of justice, since their lives are in direct opposition to the principles of right and wrong.
 - f. They understand what they do is wrong and that punishment is waiting if or when they are caught. Such a lifestyle can never lead to peace or happiness.
- G. Having a righteous child brings happiness.
1. **Proverbs 23:15-16** – *“My son, if your heart is wise, my heart will rejoice—indeed, I myself;¹⁶ yes, my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak right things.”*
 2. **Proverbs 23:24** – *“The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice, and he who begets a wise child will delight in him.”*
 3. One of a parent’s greatest joys is seeing the children they raised following the word of God and letting it guide their thinking, speech, and actions.
 4. Nothing should ever bring a Christian parent more pleasure from the lives of their children than to see the wisdom of God being lived out in their lives.
 5. One of my very favorite verses in the Bible is found in **3 John, verse 4**:
 - a. *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”*
 - b. I realize that John is speaking of his “spiritual children”, but this verse also applies to parents who have taught their children to love God and live to see the day when they have fully developed their own faith and continue to “walking in truth”.
- H. Having a constant reverence for God and His word brings happiness.
1. **Proverbs 28:14** – *“Happy is the man who is always reverent, but he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.”*
 - a. Reverence for God is what keeps the righteous on the right path.
 - b. Constant study of God’s word provides guidance helps us make the right choices in our day-to-day lives.
 - c. Making good choices will always bring happiness.
 - d. Solomon compares this “reverent” person with the evildoer in the second half of the verse.
 - e. The evildoers hold no reverence for God or his word, so they fall into calamity because they constantly make poor choices in life.
 2. **Proverbs 29:18** – *“Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law.”*
 - a. When the revelation of God is not in consideration, there exists confusion, disorder and rebellion.
 - b. Where no absolute standards of right and wrong exist, the people “cast off restraint.”
 - c. The fleshly nature of mankind is weak when it comes to self-control.
 - d. Worldly people give in to the lust for instant gratification and do not consider the consequences nor the effect it has upon society.

- e. Today, many people want “freedom from religion” rather than the “freedom of religion” that our constitution provides.
- f. They fail to realize that the civil laws we are compelled to obey are based upon the laws that God laid down for mankind in the Bible.
- g. Of course, in modern times, some laws have been passed that are totally against God’s law.
 - 1) Abortion, same sex marriage and legalization of marijuana for recreational purposes are a few we have seen in our lifetime.
 - 2) These changes in society regarding “right and wrong” are inevitable when any society disregards God and His word.
- h. When the people of Israel finally settled in the “promised land”, and Joshua died, *“...another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done in Israel. Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals.”* **Joshua 2:10-11**
 - 1) The anger of the Lord was “*hot against them*”, however, He periodically raised up judges who delivered them out of the hands of their oppressors. **Joshua 2:16**
 - 2) The people remained faithful while the judge lived, but when he died, the people reverted and were more corrupt than before. **Vs. 19**
 - 3) The very last verse in the book of Joshua says: **Joshua 21:25** – *“ In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.”*
- i. The only thing that can save the society we live in today is for the majority of its citizens to come to a knowledge of the truth of God’s word – which has the power to change individuals as well as society.
- j. How will that ever happen if we are too lazy or too afraid to speak to our neighbors and friends about Christianity.

III. WHAT ARE THE MANIFESTATIONS OF A MERRY HEART?

A. Inward Emotions

1. **Proverbs 15:15** – *“All the days of the afflicted are evil: but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast.”*
 - a. Our emotions or feelings are directly affected by our attitudes and state of mind.
 - b. One of our greatest blessings as a child of God is that, no matter the afflictions or problems we face, we can still have an attitude of joy or rejoicing because these circumstances are temporary and our reward will be eternal.
 - 1) **2 Corinthians 16-18** – ¹⁶ *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are*

seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

- 2) **Romans 8:18** – *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."*
 - 3) **Matthew 5:10-12** – *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*
2. For the Christian, true happiness is not defined by external things, but by the state of the heart.
- a. In spite of sorrowful circumstances, the heart may be at peace and be joyfully confident in God.
 - b. No one has experienced more tragedy in life than Job and yet he set this example for us when he said:
Job 1:21 – *"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."*
 - c. Paul and Silas taught us that a Christian can sing in a prison as well as in a palace:
Acts 16:25 – *"But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."*
 - d. Paul describes first century Christians who actually exhibited this example after suffering great persecution.
Hebrews 10:32-34 – ³² *But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings:* ³³ *partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated;* ³⁴ *for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven."*
 - e. In **Habakkuk 3:17-19** is recorded a "Hymn of Faith", which we would do well to adopt.
¹⁷ *Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls—¹⁸ Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹ The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.*
- B. Outward Manifestations
- a. Emotions or feelings are generated in the heart; however, they have an outward expression or manifestation that is seen by others.

- b. Just as people only know our thoughts when we reveal them in words, our emotions are revealed through facial expression and body language.
 - c. There is sympathy between the mind and body, so that a merry heart is reflected in the happy expression of countenance (face).
 - d. This is a general psychological truth, that the condition of the heart leaves its stamp on the appearance and on the activity of the person.
 - e. We commonly show when we are happy or merry of heart by the smiles on our faces, our demeanor, our speech, and even in the way we carry ourselves. It is difficult for a happy person to disguise it.
 - f. Even small children react to facial expression. They instinctively know the difference between an angry face and a happy face.
2. It has been said, "the face is the mirror of the soul," showing that we have an appearance that is usually related to the way we feel or think.
- a. As Christians, what is there in this world that should ever remove the smile from our faces?
 - b. What should ever cause the manifestations of a merry heart to depart from our countenance.

IV. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HAVING A MERRY HEART?

A. Physical

1. **Proverbs 17:22** – *"A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones."*
 - a. Since time immemorial, sages and physicians alike have advocated a merry heart as a perfect remedy for life's ailments. For instance:
 - b. The Greek poet Pindar wrote, "The best of healers is good cheer."
 - c. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote, "Joy, temperance and repose, slam the door on the doctor's nose."
 - 1) Recent studies have focused on the correlations between happiness and health.
 - a) Happy people live longer healthier lives.
 - b) Women in a "Happy Heart Study" at Massachusetts General Hospital became happier and improved their risk of heart diseases.
 - c) The state of happiness is associated with lower stress related hormones and better immune function.
 - d) There is evidence that happiness is a protective health factor and a predictive health factor.
 - e) The effect of laughter on the heart is rather like a vigorous massage.
 - 2) It is fitting then that modern medical research should discover that laughter is a good medicine for the heart.

- a) During laughter, the heart beat quickens and blood pressure rises; after laughter, both heart rate and blood pressure drop to a point that is lower than its initial resting rate.
 - b) Laughter is medicine that is free, has no bitter taste and has no dangerous side effects and it doesn't cost anything.
 - c) However, laughter is contagious. It spreads from one person to another quickly.
- 3) My advice for young women has always been to find a Christian husband who has a great sense of humor.
- a) When the looks fade, the sense of humor will still be attractive.
 - b) When things go wrong, a sense of humor will bring things back into the proper perspective.
 - c) In my humble opinion, happy is a woman who has a husband with a great sense of humor (assuming that she has one as well). Or perhaps she should learn to appreciate humor from him.

B. Spiritual

1. Not only does a merry heart produce many physical benefits, a merry heart produces spiritual benefits.
 - a. A merry heart causes a Christian to be able to find joy in everything.
 - b. Those who belong to the Lord should be the happiest people in the world, because they have the true happiness which comes from being blessed by God.
 - c. Christians have these spiritual blessings:
 - 1) Salvation from sin (**Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14**)
 - 2) Fellowship with God and His people (**1 John 1:3; 1 John 1:7**)
 - 3) Looks forward to a home in Heaven (**Ephesians 5:23-27**).
 - d. Considering the spiritual blessings that we receive in Christ, Christians have the greatest reasons for rejoicing in spite of any situation or circumstance.
 - 1) **James 1:2-3** – *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”*
 - 2) **Romans 5:2b-3** – *“...rejoice in hope of the glory of God.³ And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;⁴ and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”*
 - 3) **1 Peter 4:16** – *“Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”*
 - e. Because Christians think properly, they do not let circumstances or situations dictate their rejoicing.
 - 1) Anyone can be “happy” if everything is going their way, but what happens when things are not going so well?

- 2) In every situation, place and time Christians have the greatest reason for rejoicing in the Lord because they are living for Christ.
 - a) **Philippians 1:21** – *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*
 - b) **Galatians 2:20** – *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”*
- 2) When circumstances are not pleasing, we handle the circumstances by living in Christ.
 - a) There was nothing about the betrayal, trials, scourging, or crucifixion of Jesus that comes across as pleasant.
 - b) The entire situation was physically and emotionally painful.
 - c) His fleshly nature prayed that, if it was possible, he might be spared that ordeal; yet He yielded to the will of God obediently.
 - d) We can easily understand that, in His human nature, Jesus was dreading all that was about to happen. **Luke 22:41-46**
 - e) Even though the situation was a dreadful one, Jesus still found joy in what He was doing for us, because He saw our great need and He loved us that much.

Romans 5:6-8 – *“⁶ For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*
 - f) Christians must follow that example and love others, even when they are unlovable.
 - g) Are we always ready to serve others; and always ready treat others the way we want to be treated ourselves?
2. The Bible also provides us with answers as to how we can learn to react properly in difficult, or even desperate situations.
 - a. **Colossians 3:1-2** – *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”*
 - b. **1 John 2:15-17** – *“¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”*

- c. **Luke 121:15** – “ *And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."*
- 3. Being joyful, truly happy, is not simply a suggestion or desirable trait for a child of God.
 - a. The abundance of passages instructing us as to what it takes to have joy in our lives means Christians must take these instructions as requirements.
 - b. While our lives and demeanors should reflect the serious nature of our faithful, even sacrificial, living (**Romans 12:1-2**), however, that in no way should cause us to lose the joy that we find in Christ, or the expression of that joy in our lives.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. An account is given of a lady, traveling by public transportation, who watched two people displaying opposing emotions—one was weeping while the other was laughing.
 - 1. She noted the response of the people surrounding them—that, soon, everyone was gathered with the one who was laughing, eager to join in the laughter.
 - 2. She later penned this poem, the first few lines of which have become a cliché:

B. The Way of The World

Laugh and the world laughs with you;
 Weep and you weep alone,
 For the brave old earth must borrow its mirth,
 It has troubles enough of its own;
 Sing, and the hills will answer,
 Sigh! It is lost on the air;
 The echoes rebound to a joyful sound,
 But shrink from voicing care.

Rejoice and men will seek you,
 Grieve, and they turn and go,
 They want full measure of all your pleasure,
 But they do not want your woe;

Be glad and your friends are many,
 Be sad, and you lose them all;
 There are none to decline your sweetest wine
 But alone you must drink life's gall.

Feast, and your halls are crowded,
 Fast, and the world goes by,

Succeed and give, and it helps you live,
But no man can help you die!

There is no room in the halls of pleasure,
For a long and lordly train,
But one by one we must all file on,
Through the narrow aisles of pain.

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1884)

- C. We need to let the world see our joy in Christ.
1. Speaking to His apostles, Jesus held up their love for one another as a "badge of discipleship".
John 13:35 – *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*
 2. Just as our love for one another is evident, we must show our joy to the world if we are to have any hope of converting others to Christ.
 3. We need to be impressed with this mark of spirituality in our lives!
 - a. As Christians we do not rejoice for all things, but in all things: there is a great difference.
 - b. Sinners need to see that, if they will come into Christ, they can also rejoice in all things.
 - c. A merry heart may make all the difference in converting a lost soul.
- D. We have to decide to be happy.
1. As with every attitude and emotion that we possess, happiness is a chosen response.
 2. We must decide that we want to be happy, and then do something about it.
 3. The Book of Proverbs teaches us much of what we need to do if we want to have a merry heart.
 - a. We must be obedient to the commands of God.
 - b. We must obey the Gospel of Christ so that we can:
 - 1) have forgiveness of sins (**Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Romans 1:16-17**)
 - 2) get "into" Christ (**Romans 6:3-4; Galatians 3:27**)
 - 3) be added to the church (**Acts 2:41-47**)
 - 4) enjoy all spiritual blessings (**Ephesians 1:3-14**)
 - 5) look forward to a home in heaven for eternity (**Hebrews 5:8-9; Ephesians 5:23-27**).
 4. The tragedy of our day is that people, even some members of the Lord's church, think that following Christ forbids real enjoyment and pleasure in living.
 - a. No theory could take you further from the truth.

- 1) As we have just studied, we are shown, Biblically, how to have a merry heart, what benefits arise from having a merry heart, and that we are even commanded to have a merry heart.
 - 2) Don't we realize that something is wrong when people seem to get more enjoyment out of worldly, material pleasures than they do out of the spiritual blessings and benefits that are in Christ?
- b. Jesus stated in **John 10:10b** – *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."*
- 1) If we really believed that, it would be difficult to hinder Christians, or to dampen their joy in carrying forth their God-given responsibilities in every area of life.
 - 2) If we turn to God's word and follow its precepts, we will be blessed of God, which will produce a merry heart and all the blessings that come from truly being happy.