

The Secret to a Joyful Life Part 3

“He may have called himself ‘a rube of the rubes,’ and a ‘hayseed of the hayseeds’ but even the world described him as the greatest high-pressure, mass-conversion Christian evangelist the world or America has ever known.

And it all started in Ames, Iowa where he dreamed the typical boyhood dream of one day playing professional baseball. And for many it remained just a dream but for this man, his dreams came true. And for the next seven years he played in the National Leagues enjoying the classic era of baseball, hotdogs, and apple pie. But once he met Jesus, he traded in his sports career for the cross and began declaring the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

And it all happened one day when he was getting drunk with his teammates on a curbside in Chicago. There he heard the strains of a familiar gospel tune his mother used to sing to him being played by a tiny band across the street. And as the preacher from Pacific Garden Mission was preaching, he simply stood up and told his friends, ‘I’m through. I am going to Jesus Christ. We’ve come to a parting of the ways.’

And it didn’t take long to prove the genuineness of his profession. At a time in America when people were filled with loose immorality, he moved from city to city, week after week, month after month, preaching on the pitfalls of sin and the people’s desperate need of forgiveness.

And to the Church he didn’t hold back either and told them to stop playing around with sin with words like, ‘I’m against sin. I’ll kick it as long as I’ve got a foot, and I’ll fight it as long as I’ve got a fist. I’ll butt it as long as I’ve got a head. I’ll bite it as long as I’ve got a tooth. And when I’m old and fistless and footless and toothless, I’ll gum it till I go home to Glory!’ And then he encouraged the Church to ‘Quit fiddling with religion and do something to bring the world to Christ.’

And he not only lead the way, he did so with zeal! For instance, during a sermon he would skip, run, leap, and even fall down on the stage imitating drunkards, society women, liberal clergymen, or even moral backsliders. Then he would pound the pulpit, jump up on the pulpit, break furniture, and stamp his feet with perspiration spinning from his grimacing face.

And it was this enthusiastic, flamboyant, and humorous style of preaching not only won him an enormous amount of newspaper exposure, but God honored it with a massive outpouring of interest. For instance, in just one meeting, over 2,300,000 people attended during a period of eight weeks.

And they didn't just attend, they got saved. Tens of thousands of people were getting saved at a time of growing preoccupation with worldly pleasures and in just one revival in New York, nearly 100,000 people came to Christ. In fact, this one Christian man addressed over 100 million people without the aid of loud speakers, TV, or radio and as many as 1,250,000 people were saved as a result.

In fact, for the next 20 years, this one Christian man preached nearly 20,000 sermons until he literally 'burned out' for Christ. The man's name of course was, Billy Sunday."

Now folks, I don't know about you, but I'd say ol' **Billy Sunday** had a pretty cool life as a Christian, you know what I'm saying? In fact, so much so that I'd say **now that** is A Life Worth Living For, amen? But that's right folks, as we've been seeing, **we've got a problem**. You see, even though God's the same God and we're just as much His children as Billy Sunday is, most Christians read the Bible in one hand and take a look at their life in the other and say, "Man, something's missing here. Something doesn't match, something's not right. What's going on? Why do these people like Billy Sunday get to have an amazing walk with Jesus Christ and here I am keep fumbling around in the dark? I don't have a life worth living for. I've got a life worth giving up!"

Oh, but people, once again, I'm here to tell you this is the great news. It doesn't have to be that way! That kind of life, a life worth living for, like Billy Sunday had, **is available to every to every single Christian!** And that's exactly why we're going to continue in our series entitled, "**A Life Worth Living For.**" And what we're doing is taking a look at **4 different keys** that I believe are absolutely pivotal if we're ever going to have that amazing walk with Christ like Billy Sunday had. And we've already seen that **first key** to having **A Life Worth Living For** is when you and I finally learn **The Secret to a Worshipful Life** not a cry baby whiny complaining life. And then last **two times** we saw the **second key** was when you and I finally learn **The Secret to a Joyful Life** not a some sour ungrateful grumpy life. And last time we saw the **second way** we get tricked into missing out on **A Joyful Life** is by **Seeking Happiness in Behavior Instead of Joy from the Savior.** And there we saw instead of receiving a permanent joy in Christ, this world tempts us to find happiness in a **Perfect Bodies, Perfect Relationships,** and even **Perfect Lives,** which is called the ultimate pipe dream because as we saw God never promised us a perfect existence this side of heaven. And as long as we fall for that lie, our search for happiness is going to be a lie as well. But if we would just seek joy in God, we're going

to be able to rejoice no matter what kind of existence we have. But don't take my word for it. Let's once again listen to God's.

Nehemiah 8:5-12 “Ezra opened the book. All the people could see him because he was standing above them; and as he opened it, the people all stood up. Ezra praised the LORD, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, Amen! Amen! Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

The Levites—Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan and Pelaiah—instructed the people in the Law while the people were standing there. They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, This day is sacred to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep. For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Nehemiah said, Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

The Levites calmed all the people, saying, Be still, for this is a sacred day. Do not grieve. Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.”

Now folks, according to our text, it's pretty clear. It is the **joy of the Lord** and the **Lord alone**, that's becomes a **great source of strength** for you and I to have. How can you get any clearer than that, right? Call off the search party! The answer's right there! Joy can only be found in God! And herein lies our problem. Instead of calling of the search party for joy, the enemy tricks us into continuing our search for happiness.

And the **third way** he does that is by getting us to **Seek Happiness in Personal Exaltation Instead of Joy from the Lord of All Creation**. And the **first exaltation** we're tempted to find happiness in is in **Perfect Emotions**. You see, instead of receiving a permanent joy in Christ, this world tempts you and I to look for a temporary happiness in **fabulous sensations**.

For instance, we often say, "I'll be happy **when** I get that **perfect feeling**." But folks, if you and I start living by our feelings then we're asking for some serious heartache not happiness. Why? Because our feelings are merely a byproduct of our thoughts. For instance, if we think about something scary, we'll start feeling scared. Or if we think about something exciting, we'll start to feel excited, right? But just because we're thinking about something, doesn't make it true. And the problem is that our feelings don't know the difference between what's real and what's make believe.

For instance, we often have what I call **imaginary situations**. If you'll recall, these are those little private conversations that pop in and out of our minds concerning the **future**. For instance we start thinking, "I wonder if I'm going to lose my job." Or "I wonder if the economy is going to slow down and I'll lose my all my savings." Or "I wonder if my health is going to take a turn for the worst." And since our feelings don't know the

difference reality and make believe and we keep thinking about a **possible rotten future**, how do you think we're going to feel? Kind of rotten aren't we?

Oh but we not only give in to imaginary situations, we also give in to **imaginary conversations**. For instance, we start thinking about a **past event**, like a bad childhood experience, or a huge disappointment in life as a teenager, or even an argument we had with somebody four years ago. And since our feelings don't know the difference between reality and make believe, and we keep thinking about **past rotten events**, how do you think we're going to feel? Kind of rotten aren't we? And so guess what? Your search for happiness in your emotions will end up turning rotten too.

People of God, wake up! There's nothing wrong with being happy about having good feelings. Go ahead and enjoy them. But just don't make the mistake of placing your joy **in them**. Why? Because **Perfect Emotions** are not possible. Besides the Bible has a better way, like Paul and Silas learned.

Acts 16:22,23,25 "The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison...But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them."

People of God, the Bible is clear. If Paul and Silas waited until they had that “good feeling” before they were going to give God praise, what do you think would’ve happened? They never would’ve gotten around to it, would they? Rather, they made a choice to **praise God regardless of their emotions**. And people, unless you and I do the same, we’re going to create our own prison by waiting around for the “right feeling” to come our way. That’s why feelings come and feelings go, and so does trying to find happiness in them. But if you **seek joy in God**, you’re going to be able to rejoice, even if your feelings never change? And so I ask you, “Which would you rather have?”

Oh but that’s not all. The **second exaltation** we’re tempted to find happiness in is in a **Perfect Control**. You see, instead of receiving a permanent joy in Christ, this world tempts you and I to look for a temporary happiness in a **fantastic security**.

For instance, we often say, So then we say, “I’ll be happy **when** people **follow my priorities**.” But hello, you talk about arrogance! Just stop and think about that statement. Just because you follow a list of things that are important to you doesn’t mean there’s no room for adjustment. And until we learn this, our happiness will be out of adjustment too.

So then we say, “I’ll be happy **when** people **follow my plans.**” But hello, you talk about pride! Just because you have a plan, doesn’t mean it’s the right one or the best one or the only one! And just because somebody else’s plan doesn’t make sense to you doesn’t mean it won’t work, like this guy learned.

“One day two sisters found out that they had just inherited the family ranch and were determined to keep it going. But unfortunately, after just a few years, they were in serious financial trouble.

So in order to keep the bank from repossessing the ranch, they decided to purchase a bull so that they could breed their own stock. So the first sister takes their last \$600 dollars and heads out west to another ranch where a man has a prize bull for sale.

But before she left she told her sister, ‘When I get there, if I decide to buy the bull, I’ll contact you to drive out after me and haul it home.’

So the first sister arrives at the man’s ranch, inspects the bull, and decides she wants to buy it. And the man tells her that she can have it for \$599, and not a penny less. So after paying him, she drives to the nearest town to send her sister a telegram to tell her the news.

She walks into the telegraph office, and says, ‘I want to send a telegram to my sister telling her that I’ve bought a bull for our ranch. I need her to hitch the trailer to our truck and drive out here so we can haul it home.’

Well, the telegraph operator explains that he’d be glad to help her and that it just 99 cents a word. But after paying for the bull, the first sister only had \$1 left. And it suddenly dawns on her that she’ll only be able to send her sister one word.

So after thinking about it for a few minutes, she nods, and says, ‘I got a great plan. I want you to send her the word, comfortable.’

Well, at this the telegraph operator shakes his head and said, ‘Lady, that

doesn't make sense. How is she ever going to know that you want her to hitch the trailer to your truck and drive out here to haul that bull back to your ranch if you send her the word, comfortable?'

And the first sister explained, 'Well, you see, my sister's a blonde and she'll read it very slow. COME FOR THE BULL...''

Now that lady's plan sounded kind of dumb at first didn't it? But when all was said and done, it was some pretty smart thinking wasn't it? And folks, unless we can admit that **we don't know it all** and that somebody else might actually have a better way of doing things, we're never going to get out of the school of hard knocks. And so guess what? Your happiness is going to get knocked around too.

People of God, wake up! There's nothing wrong with being happy about having good priorities or even a good plan. Go ahead and enjoy them. But just don't make the mistake of placing your ultimate joy **in them**. Why? Because **Perfect Control** is not possible. Besides the Bible has a better way, like Martha learned.

Luke 10:38-42 "As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me! Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

People of God, the Bible is clear. Even though **the Lord himself** was right there with Martha, she still wasn't happy. Why? Because she was stuck on having things go her way. And here's the point. Because of this she not only became worried and upset, but she did so **even in the very presence of God**. And folks, as long as you and I also refuse to make adjustments to our plans and our priorities, we too will become worried and upset, even though Jesus is right here with us, like this story reveals.

“Many years ago, a little boy was given a priceless possession: his deceased grandfather's gold pocket watch. How he treasured it! But one day, while playing at his father's ice plant, he lost the watch amid all the ice and sawdust.

He searched and scratched, becoming frantic, but no watch. Then he suddenly realized what to do. He stopped scurrying around and became very still. In the silence, he heard the watch ticking.

In the same way, God has given each of us a priceless gift of joy in Jesus. How easy it is to lose our joy in the scurrying around of life. Yet it is always there to find, if we will but pause and listen to the beautiful presence of Jesus in our hearts.”

People of God, receiving the joy of the Lord is not that difficult. All we need to do is to stop scurrying around in life and pause long enough to choose that which is far better. You see, **the joy of the Lord is always with us because the Lord of joy is right here with us**. And that's why priorities come and plans go, and so does trying to find happiness in them. But if you **seek joy in God**, you're going to be able to rejoice, even if you never ever

get your way or people ever follow your agenda! And so I ask you, “Which would you rather have?”

Oh but that’s still not all. The **third exaltation** we’re tempted to find happiness in is in **Perfect Comments**. You see, instead of receiving a permanent joy in Christ, this world tempts you and I to look for a temporary happiness in a **fortunate appreciation**.

For instance, we often say, “I’ll be happy **when I get nothing but compliments**.” But folks, when it comes to flattery, I’ve learned two things. One is that only two groups of people fall for flattery, men and women. And two, flattery is like soap. It’s 90% lye. And folks, we’re living a lie, we’re living in a dream world if we think that everyone’s going to like us let alone give us nothing but compliments. Are you kidding me? Besides folks, I don’t know if you’ve learned this one yet, but if we start living for people’s compliments, it won’t take long before we become **a slave to them**. And so guess what? Your happiness becomes enslaved too.

So then we say, “I’ll be happy **when I get no more criticism**.” But people, you talk about a lie! Hello! As long as we live in this sinful world, there’s always going to be people who criticize us for one reason or another. In fact, it’s only getting worse! Why? Because I don’t know if you’ve noticed or not but our world is not just getting extremely critical, but it’s

getting extremely cynical. For instance, one moment you engage into a conversation with someone and they start off sounding kind of pleasant but the next thing you know they manage to squeeze in something negative, something cynical.

Like this guy who said, “Hey, when I’m feeling down, I like to whistle. Because it makes the neighbor’s dog run to the end of his chain and gag himself.” Or the person who said, “Don’t walk behind me, for I may not lead. Don’t walk ahead of me, for I may not follow. And don’t walk beside me either. Would you just leave me alone!” Or the truck driver who said, “Hey, if you don’t like my driving, don’t call anyone. Just take another road, will you. That’s why there’s so many of them.” Or the man who said, “This morning I woke up to the unmistakable scent of pigs in a blanket. I guess that’s the price you pay for letting the relatives stay over.” Or maybe it’s the person who said, “Be sure to keep your nose to the grindstone and your shoulder to the wheel, because it’s a whole lot cheaper than plastic surgery.” And finally, maybe it was the neighbor next door who said, “Yes, this land is your land. This land is my land. So stay on your land will you?”

Now folks does, that sound familiar or what? Of course! Why? Because we live in a sinful rotten world full of sinful rotten people who not only **do** rotten things but **say** rotten things! Therefore, the point is this. You

are living a pipe dream if you think you can somehow go through life without ever receiving any cynicism or criticism. Are you kidding me? And people, please don't misunderstand me. I'm not condoning cynicism or criticism. I'm just saying its part of life on this cursed creation! And until we accept this, we're headed for some serious trouble like these guys were.

“One day an old man a boy were taking their donkey to town. The boy rode on the donkey and the old man walked. And as they went along they passed some people who declared that it was a shame that the old man was walking and the boy was riding.

So the old man and boy thought that maybe the critics were right, so they changed positions. Later on down the road they passed some other people and they remarked what a shame it was for the old man to make the boy walk.

Well, at this the old man and boy decided they would both walk! And soon they passed even more people who said how stupid it was that they were both walking when they had a perfectly decent donkey to ride.

So, the old man and boy decided that both of them should ride the donkey. But then they passed yet another group of people who stated how awful it was to put such a heavy load on a that poor donkey.

So the old man and boy thought they were probably right, so they decided to carry the donkey. But as they crossed the bridge, they lost their grip on the donkey and they all fell into the river and drowned.”

Now folks, how many of you would say that wasn't a very happy ending to that story? No, not at all! But people unless you and I learn how to properly discard people's criticism, we too are going to be **drowned in it**. And so guess what? Your happiness gets drowned too.

People of God, wake up! There's nothing wrong with being happy about a nice compliment or even a day without criticism. Go ahead and enjoy it. But just don't make the mistake of placing your joy **in them**. Why? Because **Perfect Comments** are not possible. Besides, the Bible has a better way as the Apostles learned.

Acts 5:29,40,41 "But Peter and the apostles replied, 'We must obey God rather than human authority.' They called in the apostles and had them flogged. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go. The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer dishonor for the name of Jesus."

People of God, the Bible is clear. If the Apostles had decided to wait until they received the "praises of men" before they were going to praise God, what do you think would've happened? **They never would've gotten around to it**, would they? Instead, they were more concerned about **God's appraisal of them** than the praises of men. And people, I'm telling you, unless you and I do the same, we're going break apart when others try to tear us apart with their words. Instead what we need to do what the Apostles did and that is understand who we are in Christ and that only comes when we understand just who Christ is!

"The Bible says my King is a seven way King. He's the King of the Jews, He's the King of Israel, He's the King of Righteousness, He's the King of the ages, He's the King of Heaven, He's the King of Glory, He's the King of Kings and He's the Lord of Lords!

He's my King – Do you know Him?

My King is a sovereign King. He's enduringly strong, He's entirely sincere, He's eternally steadfast, He's immortally graceful, He's imperially powerful, He's impartially merciful.

Do you know Him?

He's the greatest phenomenon that has ever crossed the horizon of this world! He's God's son, He's the sinners Savior, He's the centerpiece of civilization, He's unique! He's unparalleled, He's unprecedented,

He's the loftiest idea in literature, He's the highest personality in philosophy, He's the supreme problem in higher criticism, He's the fundamental doctrine of true theology, He's the miracle of the age,

He is - yes He is, the superlative of everything good that you choose to call Him, He's the only one who qualified to be an all sufficient Savior;

Do you know Him?

He supplies strength for the weak, He's available for the tempted and the tried, He sympathizes and He saves, He strengthens and sustains, He guards and He guides, He heals the sick, He cleansed the lepers,

He forgives sinners, He discharges debtors, He delivers the captives, He defends the feeble, He blesses the young, He serves the unfortunate, He regards the aged, He rewards the diligent and He beautifies the meek.

Do you know Him?

My King is the key to knowledge: The wellspring of wisdom; the doorway of deliverance; the pathway of peace; the roadway of righteousness; the highway of holiness, and the gateway of glory!

His office is manifold: His promise is sure. His light is matchless. His goodness is limitless. His mercy is everlasting. His reign is Righteous. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

I wish I could describe Him for you, but He's indescribable! He's Incomprehensible! He's invincible! He's Irresistible!

You can't get Him out of your mind or off your hands! You can't out-live Him and you can't live without Him! Death couldn't handle Him, and the grave couldn't hold Him!

That's my King, That's my King, That's my King, and He's the kingdom and the power and the glory – Forever and ever and ever and ever and ever!

Do you know Him?"

People of God, when in the world are we ever going to learn that Jesus Christ is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and we belong to Him! Do you have any idea who you are? You are a child of the King! The Creator of the universe! Therefore, we are to be more concerned with what He thinks of us than what people think of us. And once you do you can stand your ground in the face of any opposition even if the whole world hates your guts! Why? Because you know who you are! You are a child of the King and what He says about you matters infinitely more than what people say about you and don't you ever forget it!

And that's why criticism comes and compliments go, and so does trying to find happiness in them. But if you **seek joy in God**, you're going to be able to rejoice, even if people's comments, thoughts, or attitudes never change? And so I ask you, "Which would you rather have?"

People of God, it's only by seeking joy in a **Perfect God**, not feelings, not control, and not even comments, that enables us to experience **A Joyful**

Life in Christ. It's really our choice. And if we find this impossible to do, then could it be that we're looking for a temporary happiness in personal exaltation instead of **joy from the Lord of All Creation?**

Phillips Brooks, "The religion that makes a man look sick certainly won't cure the world." How about us? Does our countenance reflect a healthy relationship with Jesus, or does it reflect a depressing religion that leaves one sick? Remember Jesus said, if we abide in His love, our joy **will be made full.** So I ask you the question. "How are you doing? Is your joy filled to the top? Or are you still scraping the bottom looking for happiness? People of God, if you're here today and you're not experiencing **A Joyful Life in Christ,** even as a Christian, then simply start seeking joy in God **today,** and start rejoicing again. It's that simple!

Oh people, don't you see what's going on here? This isn't just about joy. It's about being a witness! You see, the devil does not want you to be joyful in God. Are you kidding me? He wants you to be mad at God! He wants you to join him by shaking a fist at God by accusing Him saying, "God You're no good. You don't know what You're doing. And I'm going to scream and shout until I get it my way and the things that make me happy!"

And folks, lest you think there's no way to go through life with a smile on your face for Jesus, let's once again take a look again at the life of Billy Sunday. Did he have a perfect life? Did things always go his way? Are you kidding! Let's not just look at the fruit. Let's now look at the pain.

“Billy Sunday was not only born in extreme poverty, but he never even knew his father because he died when Billy was only one month old. And his mother tried her best to make ends meet and keep the family together but faced with even more tragedies, she was forced to send him to an orphanage when he was ten years old.

And there, he not only had to fend for himself, but he had to take on odd jobs to work his way through school, as a stableboy, errand runner, hotel worker, farmhand, and even an undertaker's helper. And you'd think the pressure would get easier after he got saved but it didn't.

Even though he was considered being one of the greatest evangelists of all time, the world accused him of being a tool of big business or some sort of money-grubbing charlatan and that he was preaching ‘the old, old doctrine of damnation,’ getting results by ‘inspiring fear and gloom’ in the hearts of people.

But it don't stop there. Even the so-called Church joined in on the attacks where he was accused by his fellow brethren of being too simplistic in his theology, that he was turning worship into vaudeville, and that his meetings didn't even produce results.

But through it all Billy Sunday not only ignored the Church's criticism that was designed to make him to stop, but he also ignored the world's temptations to get him stop.

You see, later in life Billy Sunday was offered \$1,000,000 to be in the movies, but he turned it all down so he could keep preaching the Gospel. Why? Because his treasure was being stored up in heaven.”

Oh people of God, here's the point. If anyone had a "right" to be sour and mad towards God it was Billy Sunday, right? But people, what did he do? Somewhere along the line **he had a choice to make**. And apparently he chose right! He chose once and for all not to scream and shout against God but to rejoice in God! **People, that's the secret! The Secret to a Joyful Life** and the key to unlocking **A Life Worth Living For**.

Therefore, if you're here today and you're sick and tired of reading the Bible in one hand and looking at your life and saying, "Man, something's missing here. Something does not compute. What is going on? Then maybe you too need to discover **The Secret to a Joyful Life**. Maybe you too need to stop living life as some ungrateful sad excuse for a Christian life and start living a life that rejoices in God **with your face!** And people, I'm here to tell you, once you do, you're going to discover just like that, that you just got empowered to finally have that **Life Worth Living For!**

To find the way to God, to understand the *truth* of God's Word, and to received the gift of eternal *life*, begin by repentance and faith through a prayer like this:

"Dear God, I understand that I have broken Your Law and sinned against You. Please forgive my sins. Thank You that Jesus suffered on the cross in my place. I now place my trust in Him as My Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."
