

thought for today

Happiness

I read today that the search for happiness is the pursuit of God. I guess if we always realized that, finding happiness might be easier.

We look for happiness in so many wrong ways first. I think we all feel that gnawing unhappiness with life at times and try to find a way to fill the emptiness and to still the fears. We try to find happiness with romance, with food, with the right home, or clothes, or new stuff. It is elusive. As soon as the new “thing” comes into our lives, some other new “thing” is the next one to make us happy.

What is that unhappy feeling? It is the call of Soul looking for truth. We want life, especially our life, to have meaning. Giving a crying child a toy when he is hungry can distract him for a time, but he will soon tire of the toy and cry again for food.

My own road to happiness has been a long one.

At times I still forget how to be happy. At least now I know that my happiness comes from inside myself and not from something out there. I also know that happiness is an act, not a gift. I have to make the switch in my mind to look for it at the times when it is hardest.

The most important keys are intention, focus, and the ability to accept change. M. Scott Peck said depression is the inability to accept change. I would say that any unhappiness is also the inability to accept change. The sooner we accept a situation and start finding our new options, the sooner we are happy.

Intent is important too. If we intend to be happy, it becomes something to go for. We understand that it is up to us to find it. Like in the movie *Pursuit of Happyness*, we seek it out. We don't wait for it to come and find us or someone else to give it to us.

I have learned that all of life is change. There is no "happily ever after" in the fairy tale sense. Each moment is a new moment in our life. If we expect it to bring one thing and it brings another, then we grieve for what we expected. How long we grieve is how long we are unhappy.

This morning I fixed my son oatmeal for breakfast.

I usually add butter, apples and brown sugar. I did not have brown sugar. I sweetened it with agave nectar. He looked at it and said he couldn't eat it. Thinking it was not sweet enough, I added white cane sugar to the agave sugar already in it. It still didn't taste right. I realized it wasn't just the sweetness. He was used to the caramel color of brown sugar in his oatmeal. Nothing else would do. Someone with more happiness skills might have made do with white sugar or found other options. They would have pursued a way to make the situation a happy one.

You might think from reading this that my son is three years old. He is sixteen.

I thought about the oatmeal and about how unhappy he was. Surely by the age of sixteen he should know how to be more accepting. But, these have been stressful days for him. I have been gone for a week. He missed being nurtured. When I came back I nurtured him, but it wasn't quite the same. He had his first date this weekend. He has been spending late nights at play rehearsals. And, he has his regular school to worry about. He has had all the stresses and more of high school, without his Mommy close by. So, today he was unhappy with the oatmeal and just couldn't find his happiness.

I began to wonder how we find happiness. How do

I do it? What can I tell him? Will he even listen if I do tell him?

How can one person find happiness even in the midst of losing a husband of forty years and one person be unhappy because she can't find the perfect sweater to wear for a dinner? Is one person wrong for not going to bed with depression, or the other wrong for caring too much about something so frivolous? Or are they both right? Or is it just that it isn't right or wrong, it is just where they are right now?

Does one have greater coping skills than the other, or does one just have a greater need to cope?

I don't want to make light of the one who lost her husband. She loved him deeply. They had their times of squabbles, but most times were good. Life will never be the same. She desperately needs to keep on living and is doing all she can not to lose her life to grief. She probably also has some help from him. I believe and so does she, that our loved ones help us with our grief after they die. That also helps her cope. A light dusting of snow in a town that rarely sees snow became a sign on the day of the funeral. Mike grew up in Colorado and loves the snow. Some of their happiest times were in the snow.

Life for her has more meaning because she sees support in spirit. She has a connection with God. If my other friend could see a connection with spirit

in the sweater maybe she would be happier too. What if the perfect sweater is really a jacket? What if there is something already in her closet that is perfect? What if this is the time to break her connection with pretty sweaters as a means of finding artificial happiness? What if this is a turning point? In a spiritual life where all has meaning it is possible for the lack of a sweater to be pregnant with meaning. What if this is the key that turns the lock on happiness?

This may sound far-fetched. But if happiness can be found in a bowl of oatmeal or a dusting of snow, why can't we be happy all the time?

Blessings,
Kathy O'Dell