



## GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

Release: July 26, 2017

Subject: Happiness

# WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES GOD MAKE?

But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. 1 Corinthians 6:11

“Happy? Grouchy? Could Be Your Genes,” says the topic of a article featuring the research of psychologists at the University of Illinois. Said Daniel Goldman, formerly from the *New York Times*, “Studies of happiness in several countries have found that money makes little difference to perceptions of happiness, except among the very poor. Nor do education, marriage and a family, or any of the many other variables that researchers have sought to correlate with contentment. Each facilitator may make a person a little happier, but it has a minor impact, compared with the individual’s characteristic sense of well-being.”

In the study which a husband and wife team of psychologists did, research determined that about half of your ability to be happy comes from heredity; the other half from environment. The study included identical twins, some of whom were raised together and some who were raised apart from each other, yet, according to Edward and Carol Diener, there was little difference in the well-being of the twins.

Neurologists, whose specialty is the brain, have located a spot in the brain where pleasure or happiness is registered. They have also found that unhappiness seems to be registered in the pre-frontal lobes of the brain. Individuals with depression seem to have more activity on the right frontal lobe of the brain. Where do we go from here?

Most people laud the progress that has been made in better understanding our brains, and especially the relationship of our emotions to our brains. Perhaps better understanding will eventually result in being better able to help unhappy people. Yet everyone is born with a certain genetic disposition. Happy babies are usually the product of happy parents, but the issue which totally consumes me is this: Can unhappy people be transformed into happy people who have something to live for, something worthwhile to do, and something to look forward to? Those are three of the ingredients which make life worth living.

There is a factor which secular research usually doesn’t recognize, and that is the God factor, the change which comes to those who do an about-face and begin to live for something and for someone. Take, for example, the late Malcolm Muggeridge, the sharp-tongued editor of *Punch*. He was described as a cynic, a skeptic, a liberal, and a brilliant man of letters.

In World War 2, involved in British intelligence, Muggeridge was stationed in Mozambique. He was depressed and decided to end his life. His plan was to start swimming in the ocean and not come back. But something happened-- something which began to change his life. A bright light appeared before him. He didn’t understand it. He only knew that God was there, and God wasn’t ready to see him end it all. Then this cynical, sharp-tongued, never-quite-happy fellow met Mother Teresa. He never spoke of it as a conversion, but that’s what happened. His life got turned around. He became a Christian and wrote about the regret that he had in not making his discovery years before.

You were born with a certain disposition, and the transformation of conversion will not change you into a different personality type, but will radically change your outlook on life. Muggeridge is but one of millions who can say, “When I found God, He changed my life, and I wouldn’t go back for all the gold in all the world.” The researchers are right: Winning the lottery, seeing your dream come true, reaching your goal is a momentary lift, but the “God-lift” never ends.

Resource reading: Ecclesiastes 2:1-11