



THE ROAD TO JOY Nehemiah 8:1-10

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The Declaration of Independence states that “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” are divinely imparted inalienable rights. But an honest appraisal of modern life shows that for most people happiness is fleeting and for many may already have fled. Is this the best we can expect?

I. Happiness Depends on Happenings.

- A. Happiness is feelings of satisfaction, elation and well-being when things are going well.
- B. This leads to considerable desire to control life’s happenings to achieve a happy outcome.
- C. But life stubbornly refuses to be controlled by human effort, ingenuity or technique.
- D. So happiness is frequently probable, but unhappiness is guaranteed.
- E. *There is a God-given alternative—it’s called JOY—and it isn’t governed by happenings!*

II. “The Joy of the Lord Is Your Strength.” v. 10

- A. A case history—an O.T. story of God’s dealings with His unhappy people.
- B. The returning exiles frustrated by opposition, delays & relationships have a revelation!
- C. Maybe their situation will not yield to political, military or economic solutions.
- D. Ezra has been telling them for 13 years: YOU HAVE A SPIRITUAL PROBLEM!
- E. Finally they *get it*. “Bring the Book,” they cry in unison, hungry to hear from the Lord.
- F. Ezra reads, Levites interpret, people understand—they see God’s story in Torah.
- G. They’re overcome with grief—you can’t get a vision of God without seeing yourself.
- H. Repentance results but must be in perspective—first they must find “Joy in the Lord”!
- I. *It’s a matter of obedience, intentional appropriation of blessing and selfless sharing.*

III. It’s a Matter of Perspective.

- A. Focus on the Lord & the scale of His plan rather than yourself & your personal preferences.
- B. See the immediate situation you’re dealing with in light of His final triumph.
- C. If you were made for eternity, then admit that time/space cannot satisfy fully & finally.

Points to ponder: Happiness majors on me and what I want, but joy majors on the Lord and what He’s doing.