

ACTION GUIDE #3: REJOICE ALWAYS (Focus on the Positive; Be More Optimistic)

Are you a positive person? Would your closest friends say that you are uplifting, encouraging, and loving? Are you fun to be around?

How can you improve your life in this area and become more positive? Here are some ideas.

1. **Are Your Words Positive and Inspiring?** What's your favorite word or phrase? Jesus said that we would be judged by our words. (MAT 12:36-37) Replace a negative/neutral word or phrase that you use often with a positive word or phrase for the next three weeks!
2. **Meditate on the Following Verses.**
 - a) 1 THES 5:16 *Rejoice always.*
 - b) PHP 4:4 *Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*
 - c) PHP 4:8 Follow the Apostle Paul's mandate and aim at thinking about highly positive things.
3. **Learn to Think Optimistically:** "What do you think when you fail?" Your habitual way of explaining bad events, your explanatory style, is the hallmark of whether you are an optimist or a pessimist. Positive Psychology has helped many people find a more optimistic outlook on life. Marty Seligman started the field of Positive Psychology. His book *Learned Optimism* (1998) has been life-changing for many. He is a leading authority on learned helplessness and on explanatory style. Hundreds of experiments also show that optimists do much better in school, at work, and on the playing field. Pessimists can learn to be optimists by learning a new set of cognitive skills. Here are three helpful techniques Seligman writes about:
 - a) **DISTRACT Yourself** when negative thoughts occur. Try to think of something else. Paul gives us eight things to think about (PHP 4:8).
 - b) **DISPUTE** thoughts that keep occurring: 'Disputing' negative thoughts is more effective in the long run because successfully disputed beliefs are less likely to recur again and again.
 - c) **Stop RUMINATING:** Brooding and thinking about how bad things are, starts the sequence. Learn to sing praises to God and learn to ruminate on positive things. If someone in your life is driving you crazy, forgive and forget (MAT 18:21-35). The only one that you are hurting by ruminating on sad things is yourself.
4. **Choose to React Positively in Negative Situations.** It's easy to sit back and blame others for our unhappiness. Victor Frankl, survived a horrendous ordeal in a Nazi concentration camp while his family died. The Nazis couldn't control how Victor reacted to all this. He reacted positively and survived. Think of a terrible situation that you went through. How could you have reacted positively?
5. **Cultivate a Positive Philosophy of Life:** Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people? How do we deal with the bad things that happen to our friends or family?
 - a) What Bible verses show a time is coming when ultimate justice will occur?
 - b) Find a positive element in what has happened. Something positive can be found or created from almost every negative development. This idea helped me face the accidental deaths of my father and my brother. (ROM 8:28) "All things work together for good" is a tremendous comfort in times of tragedy. After each of these tragic accidents, it took some time before I could see the good that had emerged from them.

JOIN THE THREE-WEEK QUEST FOR HAPPINESS

- 1) Rate yourself on happiness overall from 10 (full & incredibly happy) to 0 (empty & incredibly sad).
- 2) Rate yourself on how positive and optimistic you are from 10 (positive) to 0 (negative).
- 3) Focus on rejoicing more for three weeks. After three weeks, share an email of your results to happy@tekeffect.net. Comment: ~Was this time well spent? Why or why not? Would you recommend this to others? What helped you most on this quest?