



"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."—Proverbs 15:1

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How to Beat a Bad Mood

By Becky Sweat

Page 3

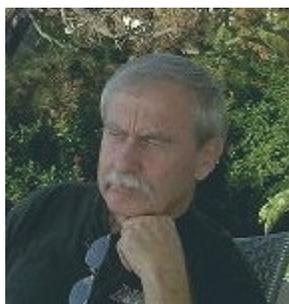


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For Men: Grief, and How to Deal With It

By Graemme Marshall

Page 8

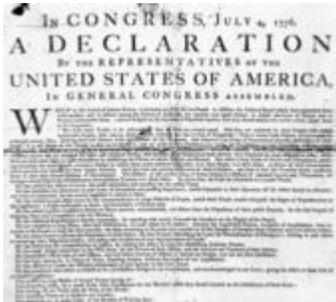


"A time to cry and a time to laugh, a time to grieve and a time to dance" (Ecclesiastes 3:4, New Living Translation). When the time comes for grieving, how should Christian men deal with it?

Is the Pursuit of Happiness a God-Given Right?

By Don Hooser

Page 11



What did Thomas Jefferson and the other writers of the Declaration of Independence mean by “the pursuit of happiness”? How important is this right according to history and the Bible? (This is the third article in a series on the God-given rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”)

Arrangements Pending

By Michelle Grovak

Page 18



The older gentleman had lived his life on the social fringe, and exited the world almost unnoticed—but the occasion of his death provided a lesson for those still living.

Betrayed by a Friend

By Robert Berendt

Page 21



Betrayal is never easy to come to terms with, especially when it comes from those we trust and love. Are we at risk of betraying anyone?

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How to Beat a Bad Mood

By Becky Sweat

Everyone faces frustrating and irritating situations from time to time. We don't have to pretend they're fun. But we also don't have to—and shouldn't—let these things get to us.



YOU SLEEP THROUGH YOUR ALARM CLOCK, and wake up five minutes before you need to leave for work. Even though you slept in, you're dead tired because your neighbors kept you up until 3 a.m. with their fighting. When you see gray storm clouds and drizzle outside for the umpteenth day in a row, you don't feel any better. The commute to work is 30 minutes longer than normal, due to the rain and a major wreck that brings traffic to a standstill.

When you arrive at work, the first thing you do when you reach your cubicle is turn on your computer. You immediately hear a strange grinding sound emanating from it. Your hard drive has crashed ... and you haven't backed up any of your work from the last week. At that moment, one of your coworkers walks by your cubicle and, in her ever-perky demeanor, demands you smile. But you feel like snarling, not smiling.



Sound familiar?

Probably most people find themselves a victim of the “grumps,” at least every now and then. Gloomy weather, a run-in with your boss or a coworker, not feeling well, receiving bad news, encounters with rude drivers on the road, an overloaded schedule, pressures at work, tension at home, misunderstandings with friends—any of these can set off a bad mood.

On those days, you don't feel like smiling. You've had one thing after another go wrong and it's really starting to get to you. If anyone even looks at you funny, you're ready to tell him or her off. But you don't HAVE to get in a bad mood. In fact, it's vitally important to God that we get our attitudes and emotions under control. The Bible tells us, “For as [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). Your thoughts determine your actions, and what kind of person you are. If

you allow yourself to get in a bad mood and that happens over and over again, moodiness becomes part of who you are.

Certainly, we're all going to face our share of frustrations, disappointments and irritations in life. We don't have to pretend they're fun. But we also don't have to—and shouldn't—let these things get to us. In other words, while you cannot control what other people do to you or prevent life's "lemons" from coming your way, you do have complete control over how you react to situations. Here are 10 ways you can break the grip of a bad mood:

1. Take time to pray

Sometimes we shortchange our prayer time when we need it the most. Maybe we're running late for work and are pressed for time, or we're feeling under the weather and don't feel motivated to do much of anything. So we don't spend a lot of time, if any, that day in prayer. No wonder we find ourselves getting cranky! If we only took the time to pray, we would certainly be in a much better frame of mind.

It's vitally important to spend some time with the One who is able to help—everyday, and especially when your attitude isn't what it should be.

It's vitally important to spend some time with the One who is able to help—everyday, and especially when your attitude isn't what it should be. James 4:8 says, to "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." That is the number one step to dealing with any kind of difficulty. Ask God to help you to shake your bad mood, and to not be bothered by other people or situations that are out of your control or that don't really matter in the long run. Ask God to help you do what you can to remedy whatever situation has you upset, and then trust Him to do the rest.

2. Hit the gym



You also need to address your physical condition. Exercise is one of the best ways to end a bad mood. Physical activity releases serotonin and endorphins (the body's pleasure chemicals), which lift your spirits. Brisk walking, jogging, swimming, tread milling, bicycling, aerobics and tennis are all good tension reducers. Physical activity is also a good distraction, diverting your attention away from whatever has you feeling gloomy.

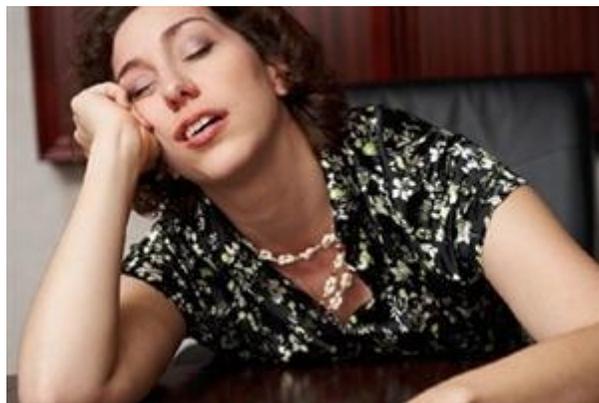
"Moderate exercise is the key here," says Larry Christensen, Ph.D., a psychology professor at Texas A&M University. "You don't want to go out and exercise until you're totally fatigued and exhausted, but you want enough to make you feel energized. You don't want to work yourself so hard that you're totally wiped out because then you'd be counteracting the effect."

3. Get enough sleep

If you're not getting enough sleep, you're going to feel irritable and your body is going to feel worn-down. You won't have the physical stamina necessary to face day-to-day challenges. Most adults need 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night, depending on their level of physical activity.

“If you don’t get enough sleep, you’re going to be much more pessimistic and fatigued, and you won’t have the patience to deal with problems,” Christensen says.

“When you get a good night’s sleep, you’re going to feel like you can handle whatever comes at you, and you’ll be a lot more energetic and optimistic.” (Now if you’re feeling edgy because you’re tired and haven’t been able to sleep due to noisy neighbors, that is another challenge all in itself!)



4. Watch your diet

The temptation when you’re having a really rough day may be to treat yourself to a hot fudge sundae, but don’t. “A lot of people, when they start feeling bad, instantly go for sugary junk food, which may give them a temporary lift, but then their energy level drops to a lower level than it was before,” Christensen says. That is why it is important to stay away from refined sugar when you are down.”

Colas, coffee drinks, and chocolate all contain caffeine, and should be avoided as well. “Caffeine is a stimulant, and can cause irritability and nervousness—which is the absolute last thing you need when you’re feeling cranky or irked about something,” he says. Eating well-balanced meals is always your best bet. Proper nourishment will help you feel better, and give you a more positive mindset.

5. Talk things out

Talking things out with a discreet and trusted friend can also be helpful. A friend may not give expert advice, but you may figure out the answer for yourself just by talking things through. Often you just need someone else to listen as you sort out your feelings.

But talking it out doesn’t mean complaining. “If you go around talking about your situation to all your friends, one after another, moaning and groaning and saying ‘Oh, woe is me; isn’t my life terrible?’ without trying to do anything to get yourself out of the situation, that kind of talk will only make you feel worse,” says Jacqueline Persons, PhD, a psychology professor at the University of California at Berkeley, and one of the nation’s leading researchers into mood and anxiety disorders. As you talk things out, she suggests you put yourself in problem-solving mode. Try to figure out what you can do to improve your situation.

6. Don’t blow frustrations out of proportion

Some of the things that bug us the most—being waited on by a grouchy salesperson, another driver cutting you off or beating you to a parking space, waiting in long lines, a “bad hair” day, receiving poor service at a restaurant—are really not big deals at all when you look at the big picture.

You need to ask yourself, “How important will this be a few weeks or months from now?” Chances are, it won’t be a major issue then. Truly, what has you super-irritated at present may not even be a problem once you put things in perspective. That being the case, there’s no reason to let it get you down. It’s really not an issue in the long run.

7. Replace negative thoughts with positive ones

Rather than dwell on everything that's wrong, think about all that you have to be grateful for—your family and friends, your health, the home you live in, your stocked kitchen pantry, your clothes, etc. The Bible tells us to be thankful for the little things. You might make a list of all the good things you have. That includes the knowledge of the Bible and God's way of life. When you start thinking about the good things God has done and is doing, it gets your mind off the negative and onto the positive.

If you are trying to look at the bright side in situations you face, you are more likely to take positive action and have a positive mindset that will ultimately make your life happier.

Philippians 4:8 admonishes us, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." Dwell on what's good and virtuous. If you are trying to look at the bright side in situations you face, you are more likely to take positive action and have a positive mindset that will ultimately make your life happier. However, if you focus on the negative, your attitude will reflect the same...and it'll be just about impossible to get over the grumps.

8. Look for the humor

There are often humorous aspects to the frustrating situations we all face. I have had more car-related predicaments than I care to admit, but there's almost always been an amusing aspect to each one. Seeing the humor is often just what is needed to face these situations with a positive mindset. Proverbs 15:13 tells us, "A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken."

Okay, I admit I wasn't smiling the exact moment I recently backed into a muddy ditch with my minivan, and I was getting drenched in mud while standing alongside a country road waving for help and wearing high heels. However, about the time the tow truck arrived on the scene, I began to see the humor to the whole situation, and that helped me put on a constructive attitude. Telling the story to others has made them laugh, too.

9. Act the right part

It may sound too good to be true, but acting happy can actually make you feel happy when you're not. According to psychologists, if you change your behavior, your emotions will gradually go in the same direction.

"People will sometimes tell me things like, 'I don't feel like going to the church social. I won't enjoy it,' but if they manage to get their body out the door and go to it, they usually end up enjoying themselves and they start feeling better," Persons says.

Do the things a happy person would do. Put yourself in a cheerful environment. Open the curtains and let some sunshine in. Listen to some upbeat music. Watch a funny movie or television show. Read the comic section of the newspaper. Get up. Get out. Spend time with some friends who are typically happy and cheerful. If they are laughing and having a good time, it is bound to rub off on you.

The temptation when you're having a really rough day may be to treat yourself to a hot fudge sundae, but don't.

10. Do something nice for someone else

Do some things to try to make other people happy. Give your elderly neighbor a phone call and ask her how she's doing. Write out a cheerful card to a friend or one of the elderly shut-ins from church. Send a note of encouragement to your child's teacher. Read your children a story, or play their favorite board game with them. Treat a friend to lunch at a restaurant. Pay your spouse a sincere compliment. Bake some cookies for your fellow employees at work. It is amazing how when you get your focus off yourself and try to make someone else happy, you find yourself being cheered up, too.

To sum it all up, everyone gets down now and then. However, you don't have to let life's irritations get you down. Have a plan of attack ready for the next time you feel down in the dumps. Take control of a bad mood before it takes control of you.

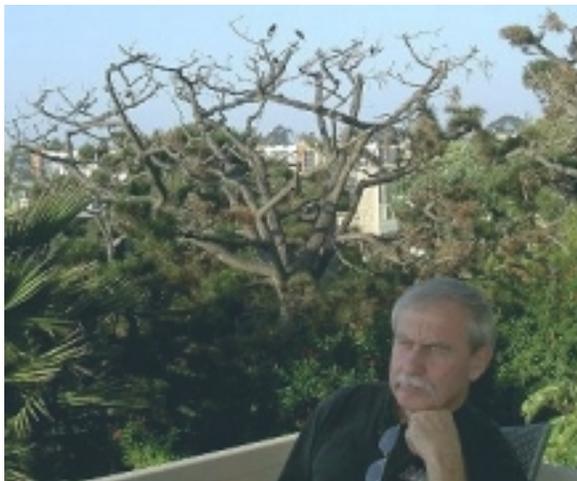
Further reading

For more reading, request our free booklet [*Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*](#).

For Men: Grief, and How to Deal With It

By Graemme Marshall

“A time to cry and a time to laugh, a time to grieve and a time to dance” (Ecclesiastes 3:4, New Living Translation). When the time comes for grieving, how should Christian men deal with it?



GRIEF IS THE EMOTION AND PAIN WE FEEL in response to significant losses in our lives. Grief counselors list the following as some common precursors of grief:

- Ending a relationship
- Loss of career or employment
- Death of a pet
- Loss of key role, position or status
- Loss of health
- Loss of cherished goal or dream

But probably the most disturbing loss is the experience of bereavement: the death of a person who is significant to us.

Bereavement grief

This grief is the physical and psychological reaction to the changes forced upon us by a loved one's death. We must then find a different way of going about our lives, coping with the gap, and facing many unforeseen changes.

Bereavement is not only a major loss in itself, but it often sets off a chain reaction of other losses too:

- Loss of income or financial security or stability
- Loss of routine and having to adapt to new roles, tasks and responsibilities
- Loss of a future together, or one in which the deceased would have played a major role
- Loss of home or accommodation arrangements
- Loss of friends and social gathering that was linked to the deceased's work or interests

Grief may be felt for an extended period, even for several years. Sometimes the pain of grief intensifies during the first few months after death because not only are the realities and consequences just “sinking in,” but also the support of others tends to fall away. This is often because those less affected have moved on, or those similarly affected are preoccupied with their own pain and struggle.

Bereavement is not only a major loss in itself, but it often sets off a chain reaction of other losses too.

Grief is a *journey* that demands a preparedness to experience much sad emotion. It calls for courage and daring to walk a new path, and to adapt to new challenges.

Every person will grieve in his or her own particular and individual way. And there is a difference in how men and women tend to grieve. Women generally grieve more publicly, and it is helpful to understand how the sexes differ.

Women and men grieve differently

Women are usually very good at seeking out support for themselves. They tend to relieve their emotional pain through the open expression of it, and to verbalize it in the company of others. When women encounter difficulties with grieving, it is more often because they pay too little attention to the tasks, challenges and practicalities of restoration: attending to life changes, doing new things, and forming a new identity and new relationships.

Grief is a journey that demands a preparedness to experience much sad emotion.

Men exhibit differences in grieving because of dissimilar biology, brain function and hormone systems, and from the stereotype entrenched in society that “real men don’t cry”.

How men tend to respond to grief

They are generally not as self-caring or help-seeking as women. Men pay less attention to the initial emotional pain than women, until those around them seem “safe” and things appear “in order.” Men often distance themselves from the emotional content of difficulties or threatening situations as part of the masculine trait of protectiveness toward others.

Men tend to need more time to connect with grief emotions. They often need privacy, to be alone, before facing and experiencing emotional pain. Being generally less verbal than women, men prefer to “mull things over” and “think things through.”



Men tend to exhibit more anger than women. This can pose a problem for men, as people tend to be sympathetic to the subtler emotions that women exhibit and unsympathetic to men who might express anger (although God says, “*Be angry, and do not sin*” in Ephesians 4:26). What lies behind the anger are usually the more subtle emotions of sadness, yearning, helplessness and suffering.

Men often respond negatively to the pressure to be more public in their grieving than with what they personally feel comfortable. They usually cope through activities, action and “mulling things over,” while women do this by talking and crying out their grief. Men benefit from the company of other men (or working alongside them)—not necessarily by verbal exchanges, but just by other men being present who care without intruding.

How grieving men can best help themselves

Men can move more healthfully through the grieving process by:

- Showing courage in allowing themselves to experience the painful emotions of grief (rather than continuing to push them under the surface)
- Communicating clearly to others their need to be alone (to deal with their feelings in private)
- Not shutting out others, but keeping communication open in relationships
- Staying close to reliable friends and talking to them

All who grieve, whether men or women, can take comfort that this painful emotional experience will in time be of help to others going through similar life experiences. “God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4, New Living Translation).

Men tend to need more time to connect with grief emotions.

Further reading

If you have lost a loved one and want to know when you will see him or her again, please request our free booklet [*What Happens After Death?*](#)

Is the Pursuit of Happiness a God-Given Right?

By Don Hooser

What did Thomas Jefferson and the other writers of the Declaration of Independence mean by “the pursuit of happiness”? How important is this right according to history and the Bible? (This is the third article in a series on the God-given rights of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”)



THE AMERICAN DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, adopted on July 4, 1776, contains these famous words: “We hold these *truths* to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are *endowed by their Creator* with certain *unalienable rights*; that among these are life, liberty, and *the pursuit of happiness*” (emphasis added).

Understanding the history and meaning of this sentence is worthwhile because it has been called “one of the best-known sentences in the English language” (Lucas, “Justifying America,” 85) and “the most potent and consequential words in American history” (Ellis, *American Creation*, 55–56). And this three-article series has been written to show from the Bible that God has granted humanity considerable freedom—freedom which is highly valuable and which man should try to preserve, protect and use for godly purposes.

Another purpose of this article is to explain what Thomas Jefferson and the American founders were thinking when they wrote that one of our natural rights is “the pursuit of happiness.” In this 21st century, some people falsely assume that what the founders had in mind was a kind of shallow devotion to perpetual pleasure and emotional bliss. They use the noble phrase “pursuit of happiness” to justify self-centered hedonism.

But the emphasis in these previous writings was never on a shallow pursuit of sensual pleasure.

What did Thomas Jefferson, the primary author of the Declaration, and the other founders have in mind by the word “happiness” and the phrase “the pursuit of happiness”?

(The meanings and significance of the words “truths,” “self-evident” and “unalienable” were explained in the first article in this series.)

Regarding people being “created equal,” the Bible reveals that all people have the same spiritual potential and ultimate opportunity, and God judges all in the same way. “God shows personal favoritism to no man” (Galatians 2:6).

This also means that human governments should follow the example of God in respecting the rights of every citizen and treating everyone fairly and equally under the law. No one should be “above the law,” not even the highest officials in the government. Additionally, the rights and freedoms of the weakest members of society should be guarded as zealously as the freedoms of the strongest members.

“Pursuit of happiness” doesn’t mean pursuit of pleasure

The right to pursue one’s own happiness (or similar wording) is a concept found in several documents from the 17th century forward, including the 1693 *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* by British political philosopher John Locke. Locke, who often referred to the authority of the Bible, was a major influence on Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams and other American founders. But the emphasis in these previous writings was never on a shallow pursuit of sensual pleasure.



Today, many people consider the pursuit of happiness a high priority, but in a way much different than the American founding fathers had in mind. Today’s self-centered, touchy-feely society is dominated by materialism, humanism and hedonism—hedonism being the “pursuit of or devotion to pleasure, especially to the pleasures of the senses” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition).

In a parable about the sin of covetousness, Jesus warned against a craving to “take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:15-21).

The apostle Paul wrote, “But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money...without self-control...headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1-4). In these “last days,” anyone can see that these problems are rapidly getting worse.

True, lasting happiness can only be obtained by living a virtuous life and having a close relationship with God. In most Bible translations, the beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-10 begin with “Blessed are...” However, the Greek word translated “blessed” can also be translated as “happy.”

Much more than happiness, the Bible emphasizes joy. Happiness can be viewed as a temporary emotion based on what is currently happening, whereas joy can be a permanent state of mind. “God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight” (Ecclesiastes 2:26).

It’s natural to enjoy pleasure, but many people have their priorities upside down. They are “lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God” when it should be the other way around. The United States has been blessed to have been founded by men and women who, in most cases, loved God more than they loved pleasure.

Pursuit of happiness overlaps with life and liberty

To understand the right to pursue happiness, let's first consider its most elemental meaning—the freedom to pursue whatever you think will make you happier. In this last sentence, “happier” is more appropriate than “happy.” The founders were probably all mature enough not to think in terms of “I’ll be happy only after I acquire or accomplish something.”

The right to pursue what you think will make you happier is a broad extension of the God-given rights to life and liberty. The founders wanted to make it clear that our liberties go well beyond being free from tyrannical rule or imprisonment.

It can be helpful to think of the relationship between the words “happy” and “happen.” Rather than a person considering himself (or herself) to be a hapless and helpless victim, he can realize that he has freedom and potential to *make things happen*.

The right to own property

To the founders, the right to the “pursuit of happiness” included certain specific things, including the right to acquire and own property. They believed that the powers of federal governments should be largely limited to protecting what John Locke considered the three great natural rights—life, liberty and property—from threats from within (crime) and without (invasion).

Private property is fundamental to liberty. John Adams, second president of the United States, saw private property as the most important single foundation stone undergirding human liberty. He said, “Property must be secured or liberty cannot exist.”

Dr. Ludwig von Mises (1881-1973) of Austria, one of the world's foremost economists and proponents of libertarianism, wrote, “All civilizations have up to now been based on private property. Only nations committed to the principle of private property have risen above penury and produced science, art, and literature.”

Private property includes everything a person owns, including what he or she creates. But in most discussions, the focus is on land and what that land can produce. If a person has a house and a piece of land with room for a garden that are debt-free and tax-free, he or she could get by with very little income. Additionally, land can provide an opportunity for a profitable farm or cottage industry. And land can be collateral for needed capital.



All of one's property and wealth can be called “capital.” There is much truth in the statement, “It takes money to make money.” Therefore, the basic idea of capitalism is the use of capital (available money, property and other assets) to produce goods or services that will be financially rewarded. It's unfortunate that the word “capitalism” is sometimes used to refer to greed and unethical tactics. The general meaning of capitalism is the combination of private property and a

free market economy. These are principles taught in the Bible, and we see examples of capitalism throughout the Bible.

The Bible encourages private ownership of property

God’s commandments that forbid stealing and coveting presume the right of private property. In addition, the system of justice demanded reparation and restitution to the victim of theft rather than fines paid to the state. If the thief had insufficient money and goods to make restitution, he or she was not off the hook. The thief could “sell” him or herself into debt servitude to the property owner until the debt was paid. But the maximum time of servitude was six years.

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God, of course, is the ultimate Owner of “the world...and all its fullness” (Psalm 50:12). However, when God created Adam and Eve, He gave them and their descendants “dominion” (rule and stewardship) over the earth and all its creatures (Genesis 1:28). As the psalmist put it, “The earth He [God] has given to the children of men” (Psalm 115:16). This implies God’s desire for each family to “own” a debt-free piece of property (like a permanent *lease* of God’s property). This is highly significant.

When God formed His own nation—the nation of Israel—He gave the citizens a wonderful start. God had promised to give the children of Israel “large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant” (Deuteronomy 6:10-11). That was all debt-free and tax-free!

Another prosperous time was during the reign of King Solomon when “Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree” (1 Kings 4:25).

During the coming Millennium, under Christ’s rule, “Everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid” (Micah 4:4).

Furthermore, God commanded a “land Sabbath” every seventh year (Leviticus 25:1-7). This law had several benefits. One was that anytime land was sold, such as to pay a debt, the original owner or one of his relatives had the right to redeem it (buy it back) at any time (Leviticus 25:24-27).

And a most remarkable law was that of the “Jubilee” (Leviticus 25:8-19). This 50th year was a holy year that was an additional land Sabbath. More importantly, it was the year when all land was returned to the original owners or their descendants. Thus, if a family had not been able to buy back their land before the Jubilee year, they would still regain possession of that land in the Jubilee year. Thus, Israel’s land titles were inalienable (never to be permanently transferred).

The Jubilee’s announcement was an exciting event: “And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and *proclaim liberty* throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family” (Leviticus 25:10).

God explained, “The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me” (Leviticus 25:23). In a sense, land was not actually *sold*—it was *leased* for a maximum of 49 years. The property value of a lease was a price proportionate to the time lapse until the Jubilee (verses 15-16).

The Jubilee law had many implications and benefits. It helped to prevent the rich from taking advantage of the poor and the escalating problem of “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.” It largely prevented cyclical economic depressions. But most obviously, it showed God’s desire for families to own private property in perpetuity.

Some people have mistakenly claimed that the new Christians gave up their right to private property in exchange for communal socialism based on these verses: “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need” (Acts 2:44-45; see also 4:32). However, keep in mind that they could not *sell* what they did not *own*. These were examples of *voluntary charitable sharing* with fellow believers, not communism!

The account of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) proves that these were *voluntary* acts of generosity. They were not punished for refusing to sell their land, but for their *lying*. Peter asked Ananias, “While it [their possession] remained [unsold], was it not *your own*? And after it was sold, was it not in *your own control*?” (Acts 5:4).

*What God gives,
only He has the
authority to take
away, and He will
never take away
the rights of those
who voluntarily
submit to His
loving and
beneficent rule over
our lives.*

If space permitted, much more biblical evidence could be presented to show that, in God’s plan for mankind, God places great importance on the private ownership of property. A major purpose of government should be to protect property rights.

Views of the founders regarding rights to private property

As stated previously, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Adams and other colonists had been strongly influenced by the writings of John Locke, whom history remembers partly for his emphasis on the triad of “life, liberty, and property.”

Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*, published in 1690, begins with references to the Bible. It later states, “The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which...teaches all mankind...that being equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his *life, health, liberty, or possessions*: for men being all the workmanship of *one omnipotent, and infinitely wise maker*; all the servants of *one sovereign master*, sent into the world by his order, and about his business; they are his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another’s pleasure... Every one...may not, unless it be to do justice on an offender, take away, or impair the life, or what tends to the preservation of *the life, the liberty, health, limb, or goods of another*. God hath certainly appointed government to restrain the partiality and violence of men.”

In 1772, Samuel Adams, wrote a short piece entitled “Rights of the Colonists as Men.” His words included the following: “Among the natural rights of the Colonists are these: First, a right to life; Secondly, to liberty; Thirdly, to property; together with the right to support and defend them in the best manner they can.”

Later in the same document, Adams wrote: “Just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty, in matters spiritual and temporal, is a thing that all men are clearly entitled to by the eternal and immutable laws of God and nature...”

The 1772 wording by Samuel Adams influenced the choice of words in the “Declaration of Colonial Rights,” a resolution adopted on Oct. 14, 1774 by the First Continental Congress, and the wording of the Declaration of Independence adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776.

Therefore, many colonists expected the phrase “life, liberty and property” to be in the Declaration of Independence. However, Benjamin Franklin was in agreement with Thomas Jefferson (the primary author of the Declaration) in downplaying protection of “property,” replacing the idea with “happiness.” This broader concept (the right to pursue happiness) is traceable through the Federalist Papers of John Jay, James Madison and Alexander Hamilton.

However, “happiness” is not mentioned in the U.S. Constitution, while “property” is. The Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution declares that no citizen can “be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.”

The Fourteenth Amendment adds “nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.”

The first 10 amendments of the U.S. Constitution are known as the Bill of Rights. Of utmost importance is the First Amendment, which states: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

One’s vocation is related to “property” because it is a person’s way of obtaining an income (wealth). An American legal case decided in 1884 defined the right to “the pursuit of happiness” as, “The right to pursue any lawful business or vocation, in any manner not inconsistent with the equal rights of others, which may increase their prosperity or develop their faculties, so as to give them their highest enjoyment.”

Hence, America would not have a class system whereby some professions could only be pursued by certain privileged classes of people. Theoretically, any American can pursue any lawful vocation.

Although the “pursuit of happiness” is much broader than mere protection of private property, we have seen from history and the Bible how important is the freedom to own property. That freedom has many important implications.

Much more could be written about what the American founders had in mind when they wrote about the God-given right to the pursuit of happiness, and what principles should guide God’s people today when they “pursue happiness”!

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Will all humanity ever have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness?

The answer is “yes”! Because God is not fickle or capricious, the rights that He gives human beings are immutable and inalienable. What God gives, only He has the authority to take away, and He will never take away the rights of those who voluntarily submit to His loving and beneficent rule over our lives.

The purpose in human life is to build godly character to achieve a Christ-like mind (Philippians 2:5). That process of spiritual growth—continually resisting temptations and choosing what is right—requires the free moral agency that God has given us. And the ideal environment for spiritual growth is one in which neither people nor governments deprive us of the freedoms that God has given us.

The good news—the *wonderful* news—is that Jesus Christ someday “will come again” to earth to set up His world-ruling government (John 14:3; Mark 13:26-27). Then the influence of the arch-tyrant Satan the devil will be completely removed, and the Kingdom of God will replace all the oppressive human governments! (Revelation 20:1-2; 11:15).

Then all humanity will enjoy God’s gifts of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

Much more importantly, God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Christ will give every human being the opportunity to learn God’s truth and “inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34).

And only when we are spirit and have God’s nature (when we no longer have human nature and human weaknesses) will we have life to the full, liberty to the full, and happiness to the full!

Further reading

For more on the subject of why God has given you these inalienable rights, request our free booklet [*What Is Your Destiny?*](#).

Arrangements Pending

By Michelle Grovak

The older gentleman had lived his life on the social fringe, and exited the world almost unnoticed—but the occasion of his death provided a lesson for those still living.



AS I PREPARED TO LEAVE THE HOUSE for a day of errands, the newspaper on the kitchen table, open to the obituary page, caught my eye. It's a regular occurrence for the guys of the house to read the sports page while eating breakfast, but the obits? Never. A story's headline intrigued me, so I grabbed the page to read while eating fast food later. Very soon, I was to learn the special significance of that action.

At lunchtime, I read the article—the subject of which now escapes me—and munched on the last of my sandwich, surprised to note that the newspaper was yesterday's edition, one I had seen the day before. Out of the corner of my eye, a tiny ad at the edge of the page caught my attention. It read simply on the top line: **Arrangements Pending**. On the second line was the name: **Wayne Duff**. The funeral home was also listed.

Could this be our Mr. Duff, who attended services with us? I had not seen him for weeks. With Mr. Duff, it was neither a surprise to see him, nor a surprise not to see him. He had some sort of emotional disability and remained socially at the fringe in our congregation.

Scanning the page for an obituary or death notice was fruitless. I knew of a fee for obituaries, but wasn't a death notice to mark someone's passing newsworthy? Trying to ascertain if this could be the man who worshipped with us, I called the funeral home. Describing him as a thin, older man with graying hair who wore large horn-rimmed glasses, I determined this most likely was our Mr. Duff.

There would be no visitation, no funeral. A female minister, a stranger, would pray at the gravesite. Burial was the next day!

The funeral director explained Mr. Duff had suffered a stroke and that he had no family, no means to pay. His legal guardian had arranged the burial. There would be no visitation, no funeral. A female minister, a stranger, would pray at the gravesite. Burial was the next day! Burial was in less than 24 hours? What could we do?

"I don't think Mr. Duff would have liked having a female minister do his service," I said. The funeral director quickly agreed my husband Michael, a minister, could officiate. At the forefront of my mind was that no one, especially someone in our congregation, should have such an ignominious passing, buried in an unmarked grave observed only by a legal guardian, a paid preacher and a funeral home attendant.

Because God loves all His little ones, I firmly believe He led me to that day-old obituary page containing Mr. Duff's name, which seemed to jump out from a one-column-inch notice.

Immediately, my conscience was pricked. I realized how little I knew about this man simply because I hadn't befriended him while he was alive. Now it was too late. The first part of James 2 came to mind. It reads, "For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, 'You sit here in a good place,' and say to the poor man, 'You stand there,' or, 'Sit here at my footstool,' have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" (James 2:2-4).

I had not completely ignored the man, but I had failed in not befriending him. There was no door to enter to go back in time to change the past, but with less than a day to make it happen, a simple, dignified farewell was arranged. The next morning at the burial plot, we joined a few hurriedly notified brethren, one couple from another church, and the guardian. We were surprised when a fire truck pulled up, and several firefighters in full gear joined us. Forming a circle around the grave, each shared how we knew the deceased. The firefighters had befriended Mr. Duff after dousing a fire at his apartment.

A bitter winter wind blew across the cemetery, buffeting the bright orange gerbera daisies as they sat atop the inexpensive casket. Not typical funeral flowers, but this wasn't a typical service and I had requested something cheerful. The funeral home had donated the plot; it was no shock when a freight train roared close by, drowning out Michael's words as he began to speak. A strong wind whipped the pages of his Bible, and tears sprang to our eyes, both from the cold and the loss we felt.



But the words of Job rode on the wind that winter day, reminding us we will meet again in a better world where disabilities of mind and body will be healed. Speaking above the wind, Michael said, "That you would appoint me a set time and remember me! If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes. You shall call and I will answer You; You will desire the work of Your hands" (Job 14:13-15).



More than one winter has passed since that day, allowing time for reflecting on what lessons could be taken from this unusual 24-hour period. One of several things brought home to me with Mr. Duff's passing is how very much God loves all His little ones, rich or poor, able or disabled. If He cares and notes the passing of a mere sparrow as in Matthew 10:29-32, how much more does He care about the passing of the least of us? Because God loves all His little ones, I firmly believe He led me to that day-old obituary page containing Mr. Duff's name, which seemed to jump out from a one-column-inch notice. Of course, presently, Mr. Duff is unaware of the details of his interment. But in the resurrection, I think the man will appreciate the farewell provided him. It was the right thing to do.

I imagine Mr. Duff will come to mind each time I hear the term *arrangements pending*. But reflecting on the term, doesn't it pertain to all humanity, set by God's timetable and plan for the resurrections? I am so grateful that our pending arrangements are in His capable hands, and that we will not be forgotten or misplaced.

Another lesson: *carpe diem*. Seize the day. We cannot be sure when we arrive at Sabbath services if we will return next week or if someone we expect to see again will be gone from our midst. So any befriending, any sharing, any honoring we intend to do, we need to do now.

The next person I meet who is shy or seems to be on the fringe at church, it is my intention to befriend him or her. I will do it in memory of Mr. Duff. I think he would like that. And I know it will please our Heavenly Father.

Further reading

To learn more about what comes after this life, request our free booklet [What Happens After Death?](#)

Betrayed by a Friend

By Robert Berendt

Betrayal is never easy to come to terms with, especially when it comes from those we trust and love. Are we at risk of betraying anyone?



ONE OF THE BEST-KNOWN STORIES IN THE BIBLE is that of Judas and his betrayal of Jesus Christ. Jesus was destined to suffer and die, and there was a prophecy that He would be betrayed (Psalm 41:9). That Judas planned ahead of time is evidenced by his going to the priests seeking the thirty silver coins for his deed (Zechariah 11:13; Matthew 26:14,15).

No doubt it pained Jesus to tell Judas to leave the last supper and obey Satan. It most likely pained Jesus even more that Judas betrayed Him with a kiss of friendship, recognition and brotherhood (Luke 22:48). Betrayal by someone who is close to you and whom you trust is far more painful than if an enemy appeared and brought you harm. When we ask what pain is greatest, we can list marital infidelity among the worst. Infidelity in our relationship with God carries with it a far greater penalty (Hebrews 6:4-6).

We humans experience many problems in life—and for that reason, we seek those we can trust to support and stand by us. When we find such a person, we slowly let down our guard and, in time, there are few areas of life that we will not share. We reveal that which lies deep in our hearts and we become vulnerable because of the revelation of our weaknesses.



A friend is someone who stands by us in times of weakness or need (Proverbs 17:17). They are there to laugh with us when we are happy and cry with us when we are sad. We may expect danger from various places, but not from a friend. That is why the betrayal of this sort is the worst.

Family members are perhaps those we trust the most. One of the people we grow closest to in our lives is our spouse. We have a deep love for our children, but we realize they have to live their own lives. Our mate is the one we expect to be closest to—until death do us part. We expect even the closest person in our lives to die eventually, but as painful as that is, it is not betrayal.

“Et tu, Brute?”

William Shakespeare captured the essence of the betrayal we feel in his play *Julius Caesar*. In the famous scene where his fellow senators stabbed Caesar to death, the final and most unkind cut came from his friend. “Et tu, Brute?” said Caesar. “Then fall, Caesar!” It is as though that was the sword cut that caused his death. In the funeral oratory by Mark Antony, Shakespeare called it “the most unkindest cut of all.” Shakespeare grasped the additional pain that betrayal by a friend brings.

We reveal that which lies deep in our hearts and we become vulnerable because of the revelation of our weaknesses.

Jesus Christ was sent to this world to die for the sins of mankind. Paul noted that it is rare that one person would die to save another (Romans 5:7). His gift was so precious that we do not have words to describe it, nor do we have the ability to fully grasp this gift in our minds. His blood cleanses us from all of our past sins. At the point of our acceptance of His gift (at baptism), our sins are forgiven and our names are written in the Book of Life (Phillipians 4:3). God requires that we not betray Him or do anything that would take away from His majesty.

Satan and the demons take note of us—and Satan tries with all of his might to devour us. (1 Peter 5:8). One strong example of God’s trust is found in the book of Job. He knew from Job’s pattern of obedience that He would be faithful; God judged Job’s heart and knew that He would be faithful. Before all the angels of heaven, God proclaimed to Satan that in spite of Satan’s attacks on Job, Job had not betrayed God (Job 2:3). Satan tried and tried, but to no avail. And Satan tried everything to cause Jesus to betray His Father (Matthew 4:1-10).

It caused great pain to God when Israel betrayed His trust (Hosea 11:1, 8). Israel was the wife God chose. She betrayed Him in that closest of relationships—marriage. That betrayal brought a great anger and wrath from God and He divorced the wife He had betrothed unto Himself (Jeremiah 2:2). God is God! He is Almighty, so even if He is betrayed, He never loses control (and one day will bring Israel back to Himself).

Humans who accept the blood of Jesus Christ and who have their names written in the Book before His throne are betrothed to Him. If they break their promise and turn their backs on the One who loves them and died for them, they will be cast away—eternally. There is no second chance for them (Hebrews 6:6). The penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Betrayal of that great love and gift deserves to be punished.

Higher than the heavens

We cannot comprehend the fullness of the mind of God. This difference in power and glory was captured in the words of a prophet. God does reach out to us because He knows our weaknesses. He makes Himself available, but we are the ones who need to ponder His majesty. His thoughts

and His ways exceed anything we can dream of, since His thoughts are higher than our thoughts as the heavens above the earth (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Psalm 139 ought to make us sit up and take notice. It tells us that God knows our intentions and the thoughts in our heads. He knows when we sit down or when we stand up. Even husbands and wives are not that well acquainted with one another. The concept of husband and wife is used by God to show how closely we need to be bound to Him. Everything we think, say and do in life ought to be directed towards learning of His thoughts and ways—and working toward the gift of eternal life God offers.



One of the wonderful character traits God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ possess is that they never break a promise—and They promised that They would never forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:8). Sin cuts us off from God, but He provided a Savior for mankind. Even though God may step back for a little while when we need to learn some lessons about how to properly serve and love Him, He never forgets His people. He will never betray those who follow Jesus' example and are truly repentant when they sin. He will never betray a friend.

One of the wonderful character traits God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ possess is that they never break a promise—and They promised that They would never forsake us.

One of the first teachings Jesus gave as He began His ministry was to show us that we are to become like the Father (Matthew 5:48). That is a tall order, and one of the ways in which we are to become like Him is in the category of not betraying a friend. Betrayal may sometimes be unintentional, and that we might forgive. When it is deliberate and causes us hurt, we all have trouble putting it aside. God is betrayed when a person for whom the blood of Jesus Christ has been shed through baptism turns away from Him. That betrayal cannot be rectified if it is truly a willful act and is not repented of. God speaks strongly when He says that betrayal that comes after one is enlightened will not be forgiven without true repentance. It would amount to Jesus Christ being required to die a second time (Hebrews 6:6). Amazingly enough, this verse tells us that this act would put Christ to an open shame.

How can that be? The shame would be ours, but it does hurt God when He has granted a person repentance and shed Jesus' blood for them—only to find out that this person treats that sacrifice so lightly that they simply go back to their old ways and old sins. That is a betrayal of Jesus Christ's sacrifice, because He stood in the gap for us—He paid for our sins. How can we so easily kiss Jesus and call Him friend while we have made arrangements for thirty pieces of silver with God's enemies? We cannot, we must not.

Further reading

For more interesting reading, request our free booklets [Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?](#) and [Making Life Work](#).