

TOPIC 2.4**BELIEVING IN GOD MAKES YOU
HAPPY. FACT OR FICTION?****Conversation Points**

- ★ If I had no problems I would then be happy. **AGREE or DISAGREE?**
- ★ If I was going through a checkout and the cashier undercharged me significantly on an expensive item, I wouldn't say anything.
AGREE or DISAGREE?
- ★ I think the purpose of life is to be happy. **AGREE or DISAGREE?**

Reflection

Arthur grew up with the pain and shame of his father being admitted to a mental asylum where his father soon died from insanity. This pain led the young Arthur to doubting his own sanity and eventually turning to alcohol in an attempt to numb his pain. But his alcoholism came at a high price. In the pursuit to finally deal with his inner pain and overcome his addiction, he checked himself into a psychiatric hospital that had been established to deal with returning World War I veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. But he checked himself out after it became obvious they couldn't help him with either problem.

The years of Arthur's homeless wandering of the streets of inner Sydney led to his misery and pain getting worse. These destructive years of alcoholism wrought much damage and led to many run-ins with the Police. When he was arrested yet again for being "drunk and disorderly" by a frustrated Police officer, his fed-up trial-magistrate used a threat: "*Don't you know I have the power to put you in Long Bay Jail or the power to set you free?*" Arthur replied meekly: "Yes, sir." He was let off lightly that time and released back into the community. But he was now aware that he had no ability to stop drinking. He begged the Policeman escorting him out the court room to lock him up in the holding cell without

success and even walked himself out from court over to the Regent Street Police Station asking *them* to lock him up so that he couldn't keep drinking. He told the duty sergeant, "*Sergeant, put me away. I'm no good and I haven't been sober for eight years. Give me a chance and put me away.*" The sergeant sniffed and said, '*You stink of metho. Get out!*'"

In 1930 Australia was in the grips of the Great Depression. It was August 6th when Arthur left the court house. He had heard that nearby St. Barnabas' church had a Wednesday night weekly men's meeting where everyone was given a cup of tea and a rock cake. Three hundred homeless men gathered in the hall at the back of the church, while six well-dressed members of the church sat in the front pew. Arthur remarked, "*Well, look at them and look at us. I'm having a go at what they've got.*" The minister of the church, Rev. R.B.S. Hammond, would preach for about an hour before the tea and rock-cake was served. That night Arthur Stace heard the gospel. Pastor Hammond announced, "*If any of you men are sick of the lives you are living, there is One who loves you who will set you free and His name is Jesus.*"

Arthur then drank the tea and ate the rock-cake on offer. He walked out of the church hall, went across the road into Victoria Park (next to Sydney University), knelt down in the dark of night at the base of an old fig tree. The words of Rev. Hammond were still ringing in his ears. "*There is One who loves you who can set you free and His name is Jesus.*" Arthur "*realised that Christ was stronger than strong drink*" and later said that he desired "*to be delivered from its bondage.*" Overcome by emotion and weeping, he prayed, "*God, God be merciful to me a sinner!*" He arose from that prayer and was completely delivered from alcohol and never touched another drop.

The next day the new Arthur Stace went back to St. Barnabas Church and told Rev. Hammond what had happened to him and encouraged to continue attending Wednesday nights and Sundays. After hearing a guest evangelist, John Ridley, preach on Isaiah 57:15 - "*For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is*



of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite." Arthur was struck by the word *eternity*. Piggin (2020) tells us, "In retrospect, reformed alcoholic Arthur Stace, who chalked in copperplate the word "Eternity" on the footpaths of Sydney streets, has become the most celebrated convert of the interwar evangelism" and notes that Stace chalked this word on footpaths "half a million time over 35 years" (Piggin, *Attending to the National Soul*, 2020:179).

People crave happiness. Arthur Stace certainly did. History tells us that often when people make *happiness* their life-goal it actually alludes them. **If then happiness is a by-product of having the right life-goal, what might the right life-goal be?**

Often we feel life is unfair. Hard times and tough circumstances can trigger self-doubt and despair. I understand that well. But the Bible says, "Consider it a pure joy, whenever you face trials of any kinds." That is a lesson I struggled many years to learn...I was born with neither arms nor legs...[But] I am truly blessed. I am ridiculously happy.

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Life Without Limits, vii-viii

The Relationship Between What a Person Believes and How Happy They Are

Psychologists and sociologists have spent years researching what makes people happy. We barely need these researchers to tell us though what the answer is because we have all done our *own* testing with our own lives! **Based on your own testing, what times in your life have been your happiest?**

Researchers have found what most of us have found as well - that our happiest moments are often when we are with others, and especially whenever we are helping someone. Sometimes this also comes from being grateful to others in need.

You will discover, if you haven't already discovered, that life will present you with moments where you will have to make a choice. Some of these choices will involve you making a big decision. There will be times when you won't know what to do. It is in times like these that you may find it easier to determine what you *should* do before you can decide what you *should*. This is similar to the principle for being happy. There are certain things that people believe will bring them happiness, but the truth is they won't. **What might these include?**

For many people their happiness is determined by what is *happening*. However, *true* happiness actually comes from an inner peace that comes from the confidence that *there is no need to worry*. **But how can we obtain this confidence?**

From the Bible

1. What affect would experiencing the Holy Spirit's infilling have on a believer based on Galatians 5:22-23?

2. What did Jesus command His followers to do and on *basis* did He command it? (See Matt. 6:25-26)

3. Under what circumstances did the Lord expect His children to apply Philippians 4:4? (Note 1Thess. 5:16)

4. It is unrealistic to expect to happy all the time. In someone's moments of sadness how are we to respond based on First Corinthians 12:26?
 - a) Tell them to stop being a sook.
 - b) Empathise with them by expressing an acknowledgment of their feelings.
 - c) Ignore them.
5. According to Second Samuel 6:5, how did the king and those with him express their great happiness?

6. Read Acts 16:22-25 and note how Paul and Silas had been treated. Despite this, based on Acts 16:25, how did Paul and Silas respond and what does this tell you about their emotional health?

Additional References

Vujicic, Nicholas James. 2011 (2010). *Life Without Limits. How to live a ridiculously good life.* Crows New, NSW: Allen and Unwin.