

# The Secret to Happiness

Dan Nelson

2004

Ojai Valley News

As a young boy, I lived by the code as best I could; the code of boyhood that is. Every insult is returned with a remark more punishing. Every punch in the arm must be responded to with added pain induced. To do so is to save face, to keep your pride and the respect of the other kids. You couldn't just let another kid get away with overpowering you so escalation many times would lead to fights. Unless an outsider interceded, such as a teacher, parent, or school bell, childhood would have been even more painful. I have discovered that the idea of fighting for top position and not allowing oneself to be defeated doesn't just end in childhood. People are constantly trying to step on others to get what they want. They are willing to say and do many cruel things in order to be on top, to save their pride, to be recognized, to receive their prize.

Only the artist knows the secrets to the masterpiece. Only the builder truly knows what goes into the project. The engineer is the one best equipped to write an operator's manual. When it comes to happiness in life, who better qualified to explain the secrets to true happiness than the inventor Himself. I see people in pursuit of their happiness while in rebellion to God's instruction manual as though they believe themselves to be the authority on happiness and that God is the architect of all that is dull and boring. However, some may be honest enough to admit that their understanding of happiness leads them only to what is fleeting, temporary, and quickly gone.

Jesus gave the secrets to happiness but they are so far from the way we were raised to live that many of us would rather endure all of the misery that our current philosophies have brought us rather than have to live His way. To use a phrase borrowed from Peter Pan, we would rather "drink poison" than live His way. He said greatness in the Kingdom of God requires that you be changed on the inside, humble yourself, admit the truth of yourself, trust Him, receive from Him, and live like Him. But it is the humbling of oneself that has most people stuck in the gate. But Jesus said unless you humble yourself you have no part of the kingdom of heaven. He further instructed us to reduce ourselves and follow His example, for He had come not to be served but to serve. Then He demonstrated what He was talking about by performing the duties of the servant in washing His disciples' feet. He said I am doing this as an example so you can do likewise. But the problem was

that the disciples still did not get it and they continued to argue over who was to be "top dog" in the Kingdom. That is encouraging because neither do most of us get it, yet. The Bible describes the life of a follower of Christ as the life of a servant. The further we grow in our understanding, the more willing slaves we become. Ouch! Yes, it does say slave; the kind that does so willingly. The path of reducing oneself to be servant of all is Jesus' idea of greatness. He then says follow me as He picked up His cross and proved this willingness to lay it all down for others.

This is not how many people see Christians; as servants. They see them as selfish, ambitious, rude, strong willed, striving with one another, asserting themselves over others, and so many times Christians are labeled as hypocrites. Sometimes the ministers themselves become chief offenders. Jesus judged by this same criteria and called the Pharisees hypocrites. They were not humble. They were not willing to serve. They wanted to be held up high in the opinion of others. They want to be served.

Next week, a movie will be released that will focus on one part of Jesus' humility. The portion of His "slavery" that is described in Philippians 2 as reducing Himself from a position of equality with God down to the pitiful position of a humiliating death on the cross. Go see the movie. You may redefine your priorities. You may see everything differently.

Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. This article was published in 2004. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



P.O. Box 1443  
Ojai, CA 93024  
(805) 640-9498  
[www.calvaryojai.org](http://www.calvaryojai.org)

## **Sunday Worship:**

**9:00 & 10:30am**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave, Oak View

## **Mid-Week Study:**

**7:00pm Thursday**  
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley  
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View