

ACTION FOR HAPPINESS

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You know those people who seem to be good at everything? The ones who can't decide whether to go down the science stream at school or stick with humanities because they are equally strong in each? I think if God was a school pupil he'd be one of those. God is just so amazingly wise! He knows everything we know and patiently waits for us to catch up.

Often human beings make the mistake of thinking we have found something new and then when we look harder, we realise it was there all the time... we just hadn't noticed it or else we had got too busy and forgotten it. As a result, ancient godly wisdom is being repackaged and rebranded for our contemporary world in shiny new ways.

For example, recently I have discovered a movement called Action for Happiness. It aims to bring about 'positive social change...by bringing together people from all walks of life who want to play a part in creating a happier society for everyone'. The

website is full of simple and relevant ideas exploring how we can increase our happiness and the happiness of the communities of which we are part. The movement is the work of a group of eminent economists, psychologists and educationalists and claims to draw on the latest scientific research into how we tick and what makes for our well-being. Aimed not merely at personal happiness, but also at how we can create greater happiness in the world around us, it seems to me to be a helpful contribution with some useful suggestions.

There is a lot on the website that is interesting and personally I am grateful for initiatives like this which are seeking to make the world a better place for all of us. When I look more closely at the suggested actions, however, (twelve of them and the idea is that you take each of them one day at a time and try to apply them in your life) I realise the concepts behind them are all very familiar.

Dare I say that despite all the scientific research and the expertise, there is nothing really 'new' here. That clever fellow,

God, has already told us all of this... all we have to do is listen and apply his words. That's the hard bit, I know, but nevertheless the bit we are called to work on all the way through our lives.

It's interesting to look at some of the actions listed and to see how these compare to the wisdom of God.

Action 2... Do kind things for others. The principle here is that as we do kind acts, we will feel better ourselves, and others will also feel better and more able to do kind acts as well... thus the happiness spreads. The site tells us 'we are hard-wired for love and compassion'. As we are made in the image of God, the source of all love and compassion, I am sure we would agree with that one.

Action 4 ...Find three good things each day. 'Science is showing that gratitude is known to be good for us and those around us'. You could call this having a 'gratitude attitude'. It is easily achieved by focussing on good things that have happened to us over the course of one day...maybe another person's thoughtfulness, a good meal or a beautiful bit of music we have heard. As followers of Jesus, we know that thanksgiving is an important part of our daily lives.

Action 5 ... Thank the people you're grateful to. 'Science shows that gratitude increases how willing we are to help and forgive others, which helps us all get along'. A Biblical example? Zacchaeus, the tax collector who was so grateful to Jesus that he reached out to his former enemies and put things right.

Why not have a look at the website yourself and see how God's ancient wisdom is being shared, albeit with no reference to the source.



We all want to be happy and so long as that desire is not pursued selfishly at other people's expense, there's nothing wrong with that and indeed, as the

website shows, much that makes for our common good. So how can we sum up all that makes for that deep inner happiness we long for? Jesus, wisdom personified, gives the answer, 'Steep your life in God reality, God initiative, God provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday concerns will be met.' Matthew 6v33, Message Bible.

www.actionforhappiness.org 

Re:Think

