

# *The Pursuit of Happiness*

*Isaiah 58:1-12*

**Main Idea:** Authentic joy comes in service to others and closeness to God.

## **1. *PROBLEM* – Happiness eludes us when we live an internally focused Christian life. *Isaiah 58:1-5***

- A. *Background* – As the chapter opens, God confronts Israel about their sin. 58:1
  - 1. This chapter takes place during the exile.
  - 2. The people are huddling together with little concern for social needs of community.
  - 3. The people are compartmentalizing their lives: secular and sacred.
- B. *Positively* – The people were practicing spiritual disciplines. 58:2
  - 1. They seek God regularly and delight in his ways. 58:2
  - 2. They obey God’s law. 58:2
  - 4. They pray for just decisions. 58:2
  - 5. They enjoy worship. 58:2
- C. *Negatively* – The people complain about their spiritual un-fulfillment. 58:3a
  - 1. They sense God is not responding to their fasting with blessing.
  - 2. Their problem is our problem: We can do all the right things and feel no joy.
- D. *Confrontation* – The problem with Israel was a divided life. 58:4, 9b
  - 1. They aren’t living their faith at work. 58:4
  - 2. They aren’t living their faith in their relationships. 58:9b
  - 3. God says this is not the kind of religion I want. 58:5

## **2. *SOLUTION* – Happiness comes when we serve the poor. *Isaiah 58:6-12***

- A. *Exhortation* – God describes true religion as *service to the needy* in three concentric circles. 58:6-7
  - 1. Citywide: Deal with the injustice that is taking place within your community. 58:6
  - 2. Personal: Feed the hungry, the homeless, and the poor. 58:7-8
  - 3. Internal: Don’t harden your heart against fellow human beings. 58:8
- B. *Present results* – God promises present happiness. 58:8-11
  - 1. You will experience personal spiritual healing from your gloom. 58:8a, (See also 10b)
  - 2. You will experience nearness to God and satisfaction. 58:8b, 11
  - 3. You will experience answered prayer. 58:9a
- C. *Future results* – God promises the happiness that comes from future hope. 58:12
  - 1. For Israel: God promises that in the future the walls of Jerusalem will be rebuilt.
  - 3. For Us: God offers promises of eternity to us.

## **3. *EXAMPLES:***

- A. Research cited in Outside Magazine
- B. Research cited in 20/20
- C. Maryland Family Magazine family of the year