



# Headline: What Is Your Happiness Index?

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It is always fascinating to find out by the middle of the year, which country is going to be declared as the happiest nation in the world. This year, the winner is Denmark, followed closely by Switzerland, Iceland, and Norway. India was ranked 118th in the list, slipping down one slot from 2015.

Every year, *The World Happiness Index* team surveys numerous people from various countries around the world in search of the world's happiest population. They put together a World Happiness Report which is a measure of happiness published by the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network. The report takes into account the GDP per capita, life expectancy, social support and freedom to make life choices as Headline: What Is Your Happiness indicators of happiness and this is done by collecting different kinds of data from people in several nations across the world.

When we think about it, happiness is truly one of our lifelong goals. It is also interesting to note that in the world happiness is all about the things we do. Let us take a look at all the ways that scientists have put forward to become happy: A study in a journal of health psychology says happiness is a direct result of daily exercise while an article in *Research Digest* says it is directly linked to how well you sleep. A Harvard happiness expert says that we will definitely be happy if we have a good family and maintain cordial relationships with people. Smile more, says another scholar who heads a study on the subject of happiness. Fake happiness, even if you don't feel it, says another. And yet another researcher tells us to meditate, get a new hobby, learn a new language, get busy and learn to let go and get on with life if we really want to be happy.

Do these methods work? As some of the above principles are based on scientific precepts, there are truths in them and we would be wise to take heed of scientific study. But the fact remains, that most of the above methods are based only on self-effort and the belief that our circumstances have to be perfect for us to be happy. A famous American author, essayist, biographer and memoirist, Elizabeth Gilbert, sums

up this idea by putting it this way: "Happiness is the consequence of personal effort. You fight for it, strive for it, insist upon it, and sometimes even travel around the world looking for it.... You must make a mighty effort to keep swimming upward into that happiness forever, to stay afloat on top of it."

But what will help us along the way, is remembering that the Bible has a set of different criteria for happiness. It is only when we hold these Biblical truths close to our hearts that we will understand the subject more clearly. The Bible invites God's people to a deeper level of happiness, where circumstances have little to do with this emotional state, and dwelling on God and not ourselves, is the only way to be truly happy.

Paul, who went through some of the most horrific circumstances of life, advised us to 'Rejoice in the Lord always' and lived his life in commitment, song and adoration right through. He called his hard and trying times 'momentary light afflictions' because he always saw his life from an eternal perspective, rather than an earthly one.

Make no mistake. We are never told that affluence and a problem-free life will make us truly happy. Instead we are told "in the world we will have tribulation". How then do we bypass these troubles and difficulties and stay happy? The answer lies in Scripture which says that delighting in the Creator at all times is the only way to true happiness. As the psalmist says in Psalm 16:11... "You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

Many of us believe that as long as we are doing everything right externally, we are on the right track to happiness. But happiness is far more than keeping rules and doing the right things. It is an attitude we adopt, by choice. It is about making a decision to be happy and shifting our perspective to seeking God's approval, rather than His gifts.

So, the next time, you feel your spirits lagging, don't seek happiness – seek the One who is the source of all joy. As noted writer, literary critic and academic C. S. Lewis, says, "God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other."

Life will never be fair and perhaps, never as perfect as we want it to be. But when we trust God, delight in Him and seek Him, our world will change. And, inevitably and inexorably, happiness will follow.

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