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Title: *Happier: Compelled and Satisfied*

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

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Well, I want to add my Happy Mother's Day to all the moms who are here and part of our online community, the Strip, Butler, and Chapel. Hey, it has been said and you've probably heard it said that a mom is only as happy as her unhappiest child. Think about that for a moment, because if that's true, who would sign up to have your happiness dependent on the happiness of somebody else?

And sometimes we try maybe in life as a mom to say, I'm going to push back and have a happiness that's apart from my child. But it starts when they're fairly little. They start by crying and saying, feed me, attend to me, give me something. And you scramble to try to give them what they want. And then when they get a little older, it's, well, I need this or I need that.

And you watch them come home and be unhappy and think, if I could just provide the right context, the right thing, then they'll be happy. And even when they're adults, they still have happiness and unhappiness that can affect your happiness if you're a mom. And well, today we're going to talk a little bit about motherhood. This isn't just a message about being a mom. This is about where our happiness is sourced.

We've been in a series that we've called *Happier*. We're looking at First Corinthians seven through ten, and we've talked about marriage and singleness. And today, at least in part, parenting. And these are all things that affect our sense of well-being, and our sense of happiness. I saw one article on motherhood, and it talked about the 30-day challenge to being a better mom, a happier mom.

And let me just give you a few of the things. And their suggestion was that you would do one of these things every day for 30 days. Here are a few. Number one, before you raise your voice, take a breath. All right. That's pretty good, right? Number two, greet your children each morning as opposed to ignoring them.

Number three, end their day on a good note. Number four, do an activity with each child every day. Number five, be super grateful for every good thing that they do and make sure that they see your gratitude. Number six, reduce the use of technology for you and your kids. Number seven, ask for help with something, then praise them. Number eight, listen. Really listen.

Number nine, if you discipline them, do it correctly. And number ten, try to substitute the word no for something softer. Now, that's just ten of the 30. And the reason I share this with you is not that those aren't good ideas, but it's a little exhausting to think about trying to do all of those things all the time to make a little bundle of discontentment Happier in their life. If you know what I'm talking about.

So, here's my question for you, especially if you're a mom, and that is, do you really make yourself happier by making your children happy? And is that really the call in your life or the call of what it is to be a mom? First Corinthians, chapter seven verses 29 through 31 is where we find ourselves today.

And this is in the context of obviously the whole letter of First Corinthians. And First Corinthians is a letter that deals with the idea of the cross of Christ. If you go back to chapter one, chapter two, Paul says, I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And the idea of the cross is the idea that every person is so sinful that they need a savior, which is offensive to many in our modern world.

And it's the idea that we're so loved by God that God sent Jesus Christ to be our savior. And what Paul does is then he applies it to every facet of life. So, he's talked about it with marriage. He's talked about it with being single, and he's talking about it in terms of different areas of life. And so, this is really the application of living out this message of the cross of Christ.

And when we come to chapter seven, verse 29, this is what he says at the beginning. He says, "What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short." So, he says, here's what I want you to know. I want you to know that your time in this life is short. Even if you live a hundred years, your time will go quickly.

You'll look back one day and say, where did all the time go? And if you're in the early years of parenting, it feels like those days will never go. But what does every parent who's through those years tell you? They'll say, they go so fast, cherish those moments, and you don't believe it when you're in the middle of it.

But then someday you hear yourself saying goofy things like that. Like, I wish I had a few more days with my kids when they were little. I still remember a comment that I heard an older dad make when I had really little kids. He said I would gladly trade a thousand days of my life for a single afternoon to have my kids in my backyard playing with me.

And that statement haunted me because at that point my kids were little, and I was wishing away some of those afternoons. And it just made me say, one day, if I'm anything like that guy, I would trade three years of my life. I'm not sure I'd trade three years, but the point was well-taken. You want to cherish those moments.

And so, he says time is short, but I don't think that's all that he has in mind here because listen to what he says next. He says, "From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not;" Okay, that seems a little odd. Then he says this. He says, "those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, (there's that word again) as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away."

And here's what I think is being said. He says I want you to know the time is short, so I want you to live if you're married as if you're not, not saying get unmarried or live as if you don't have a spouse. Some of you are thinking this is the coolest message ever. I can golf all the time. Now, that is not the takeaway, by the way. I think what he's saying is don't let your relational concerns become so dominant that it's all that you live your life around.

And then he talks about this idea of grieving and I think here he's talking about our emotional concerns. What many of us do is spend all of our lives trying to manage and avoid anything that will bring grief or unhappiness into our lives or our kids' lives. And here he's saying, I want you not to make this your dominant thing.

And then he says, those of you who are happy as if you're not happy. This is probably some of our recreational concerns. He's saying what some of us do is we spend all of our time trying to find the thing. The next thing that we can do that we say will be a good time, whether it's a vacation or an outing or a meal or something that we say that will relieve whatever it is that I feel.

And then he says, those who buy as if you haven't bought anything I think here he's talking about our economic concerns. And if you pay attention to the stock market or the price of gas or the way that the dollar that's been the reserve currency in the world may not continue to be the reserve currency of the world, there's some reason to have economic concerns.

And what Paul's doing here is he's saying, listen, there are a lot of legitimate things that you can be concerned about, but I want you to not let these things concern you. Now, what I don't think he's saying is that these things don't matter or that they don't

have a place in your life. But what he's doing is he's saying ultimately time is short and therefore you should not.

In fact, he says in verse 31, "those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them." And I think here what he's saying is that it's all encompassing. And here's something that I thought was interesting when I studied the original language of this. The word for engrossed means to be ground all the way into the dust.

And so, what he's in part saying is, here's what will happen if you spend all of your time worrying about your marriage, about avoiding grief, about recreational fun activities, all of your time thinking about what you buy, your security and what it will do for you. He says, you will grind these things, if you will, all the way into dust. They will not ultimately bring you the happiness or the security that you think they should or that you want them to.

Paul David Tripp writes about this in his book *Forever*. He says, "We have forever inside of us and it creates a natural disappointment with the brokenness of the here and now." When we have forever inside of us, what happens is that even if we have a good marriage or a bad marriage, there's a sense in which we say this isn't everything.

And even if our culture tells us, it should be everything, there's a piece of us that says I know that I was created for something more. And if you can avoid grief for a while or you can have the ultimate fun event, or if you have economic freedom and security, you realize that even when you're reaching for those things they don't entirely satisfy.

And here's what he does is he phrases something. He coined the phrase, at least I'd never seen it anywhere before called eternity amnesia. And what he says is that eternity amnesia or living without the sense of forever, living without a sense that we were created for more, creates unrealistic expectations of events and people. And so, it makes us forever dissatisfied. He says that at eternity amnesia causes us to focus way too much on ourselves so that everything in our lives is viewed through the lens of how does this impact me and my present?

It leads to fear and anxiety because we don't believe that if we don't have what we want here and now, we can be legitimately happy. So, we're constantly anxious. We're constantly fearful. And he says that it leads to us not seeing and savoring the goodness of God. And then here's what Paul says. He says, "For this world in its present form is passing away." So, in a sense, what he's saying is, I don't want you to make this world everything, because if you do, you will find that it leaves you dissatisfied.

Now, my guess is, just in saying this, is that there are a few different reactions some of us are saying, yeah, maybe, but I'm here now, and now's what counts. Some of us are maybe saying, yeah, I've already experienced this, so peace out on the world. So, let me just show you something that is in the pages of Scripture that I think addresses this tension between living in this world and yet being part of a future world. And this is really the hope of the cross of Christians.

And so, the idea here for Paul is now he's taking this idea of the cross that he introduced in chapters one and two, and he's driving this into how we pursue happiness on a day-to-day experiential level. And here's why I want to show you something. So, in the Bible, there's a place called Babylon, and it's a literal place, especially in the Old Testament, where the Jewish people were taken into exile. But it's also a figurative place because it stands for the world's system. And in the New Testament, Babylon is revisited. In the Book of Revelation, Babylon is evil, the kind of system of the world. In fact, in Revelations 17 and 18, we're told that Babylon will have this mighty fall, and the merchants of the world will cry.

Now, some people think that it again is a literal Babylon, and other people think that it represents a city or a nation or something like that. But it's fairly clear that Babylon, throughout the pages of Scripture, represents this world system. So, the world system is what this is about and all that it is. And there are two different postures toward this that people of faith are encouraged to have simultaneously in the pages of the Bible.

And this goes to how we live saying this world is passing away. And what Paul's saying here is when he says live if you're married as if you're not, if you're happy as if you're not, if you buy as if you don't own anything or you can't keep anything. And the first is the idea of investment. In Jeremiah 29, when the people went into exile, they were told basically to invest in the community.

They were told to take on spouses, build homes, and invest in the community in which they had been placed. So, these people have been taken from their homeland, put in literal Babylon, and the scriptures instruct them to say invest in the world that you're in. Don't live as if it's irrelevant. Don't live as if you just have a future when I'm going to restore you to your land.

Do you see the picture here that the Old Testament paints? But then at the same time, what we're told is that we're not to be part of this. And this is Revelations 17-18 that I was talking about, that if you are a person of faith, you are to be out of the world at the same time. So, the question, at least in part, is how do you invest in the world and not be part of the world system simultaneously?

And I think what Paul is driving at here addresses this in at least some ways, because he's talking about this idea of being compelled to live for something more than this world, but yet satisfied at the same time with it, because he says when you understand that this world is passing away, that this world is not everything, then you're free to enjoy it.

Because then there's a sense in which you say, if I know that I was created for another world and I have a relationship through Jesus Christ with the God of the universe because of the cross that says my sins have been taken care of, I can say that no matter how bad things get in this world, that my happiness is not dependent entirely on my marriage, my grief, the world economy, or politics.

It's not dependent on whether or not my child is happy. It's not dependent on whether or not I get a job, whether or not I'm acclaimed, or whether or not I do or achieve anything in this world. It's dependent on something other than that. Do you see how that creates freedom and if you don't have that, then what happens is you live saying that this thing is ultimate.

So, if your marriage crumbles, you're devastated. If your child is unhappy, you're devastated. If you don't have economic resources, you're devastated. If you're not well thought of in the arena in which you want to be well thought of, you're devastated. And as a result, what we do is we go through life trying to get our happiness from things that don't ultimately deliver happiness.

C.S. Lewis put it this way. He said, "In the truest sense, Christian pogroms have the best of both worlds. We have joy whenever this world reminds us of the next. And we take solace whenever it does not." I was thinking about this idea and trying to think about how do we invest yet not be part of or come out of the world that we're in. And I remembered an account that I had heard about when the United States was in its Civil War days. And the Confederacy was coming to an end, and most people knew that it was coming to an end, but they were living. If you were in the South at that time, in a time when you had mass Confederate money, you knew that very soon it would be no good.

So, what do you do if you have Confederate money and you know it's no good? What you would do is you would say, how can I take this and leverage it for the day that's ahead? And it doesn't mean that you simply say, I'm just going to try to send it over here. But what you would do is you would say, what can I buy? What can I do? How can I use this for good while I'm here? And now knowing that there's coming a day when it's no good now, clearly that's about money. But I think that principle exists in

every part of our lives. And that is when we say, what I'm going to do is I'm going to invest what I have into this world to bring the kingdom of God to be part of this world.

Then what I'm doing is, I'm in essence saying, I'm compelled for something. I'm living for something that's more than just the ending of something which would be my happiness for something greater. So, I'm compelled and I'm satisfied. And I think this text gives us a hint of how to do this as well. Verse 35, it says this, and we looked at this a little bit last week. He says I'm saying this for your own good. This was to the single person, saying you don't need to remarry. If that is odd to you, go back and listen to last week. He says, "I'm saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in the right way in undivided devotion to the Lord."

The phrase, undivided devotion, is a little phrase that has two words that only appear here in the Greek New Testament, undivided in devotion. But here's why that's significant is because to be undivided, this word had a unique idea, and it meant not having any other focus, and devotion was the picture of somebody sitting beside somebody and attending to them constantly.

So again, if you just think about parenting, what do you do when you're a parent? If your child's sick, you sit next to them with undivided devotion. And here's what Paul has ultimately said. He said, if you want to experience a life that isn't dependent on all of the ups and downs, then have undivided devotion to the Lord rather than devotion to what you think will bring you happiness.

Happiness is ultimately a byproduct of understanding and applying the message of Jesus Christ to our lives. Not that we're not made happy by a good marriage or a good vacation or a good run of luck or a good purchase. But rather than that short-lived happiness, our deeper, truer happiness comes from being able to say this thing just points to something greater in the future. And so, we want to live with an undivided devotion to God, to Jesus Christ, because that will create in us a happiness that's more transcendent than anything in our circumstances. And here's how this applies.

Maybe if you are a parent, you see what your kids need ultimately is not a cooler birthday party or a kind of project on Pinterest that's approved by all the other parents as much as to see you with a sense of undivided, undeterred devotion to something greater than just your own existence. What your kids need is not having more money or more shopping, but to see you take what you have and leverage it for something more. What your kids need ultimately is not greater vacations, greater recreation, or greater expectations put on them that they have success but instead to see that you live with a sense of being satisfied in something more than those things.

And if you and I don't do that as parents, what we'll do is raise self-indulged children who are always saying it's all about me.

And here's the challenge. If it's all about me, if I don't live with an undivided devotion to things that are bigger than me, to the things of God, then what will happen is I'll just naturally live with a life that's about me. That's what you'll do too because it is our default setting. This is the essence of sin, it's saying it's all about me, it's all about what I do. But the essence of the cross is saying Jesus died for us so that we are not to pay the penalty for our sin. And so, we're not slaves to that sin anymore, but instead can live with a sense of what God has done on our behalf.

See, if you live for your child's happiness, what will happen is your children will grow up, at least in part, to believe the whole world revolves around them. And then what they will do is they will make choices throughout all the days of their lives that say everything in this world is about how it impacts me. But if you live for the glory of God, then your children will be able to see that there's something greater and happiness is a byproduct if you want to be happier.

I believe that according to Scripture, the pathway is not set by saying let me address all of my relational concerns. Those of you who are married don't live as if you're married because time is short. All of our grief concerns, our emotional concerns, those of you who grieve as if you don't grieve. All of our recreational concerns, those of you who are happy, live as if you're not happy. All of our economic concerns, those of you who buy something as if you don't, because time is short. This world is passing away. So don't be engrossed in the things of this world, but instead live with an undivided devotion to something greater.

God, I thank you for all of the parents who are part of today's gathering, and for all of the people who are not parents who are part of the gathering today. And God, I pray for each one of us you would help us to see clearly where we are banking on happiness from things that cannot hold the weight of what we want to put in it and instead would gain our sense of well-being from the cross and your glory in our lives. And we pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Thanks for being here. Have a great week.