

Rules for Happy Living

On a recent Saturday, Lola and I had just entered the local Panera Bread restaurant for an early breakfast when we encountered Jane and Hannah, two 70-something widows we've known for a long time. In fact, Lola had worked with the husbands of both ladies for years at Hardwick Stove Co.

Jane and Hannah were lively and upbeat – their customary enthusiastic outlook on the world – eager to discover what the day held in store for them.

Jane and her late husband, Jack, were faithful fans of the Tennessee football Volunteers; they believed the team couldn't play if they were not in their seats. Even after Jack's death several years ago, Jane maintains her season tickets and loyally makes the drive to Knoxville on game day.

She was excited, and showed it, about the upcoming season.

"What I like about you two ladies," I said, "is how you embrace life and enjoy its moments."

"Well," Jane replied, "if you sit still too long, someone will throw dirt in over you!" We all laughed at that comment.

Having served as an elder in the local Presbyterian congregation, Jane is a devout Christian, and reflects the joy of her faith in her lifestyle.

As I reflected on this meeting and her words, here are some of what I believe are God's rules for happy living:

1. **Count your blessings, not your troubles.** Even the poorest American is rich in comparison to the rest of the world. We all have our problems, but our blessings outweigh our burdens.
2. **Live life one day at a time.** Most of our fears for tomorrow never materialize. We often miss the roses around our feet because we are looking for thorns down the path.
3. **Learn to be a giver and not a getter.** If we are not getting out of life what we expect, it may be that we are expecting to always receive and never give.



(more)

4. **Pray every day.** Every Christian should reserve time during the day to thank God for His many blessings and to ask for His guidance. Prayer is a vital ingredient in God's recipe for happiness.
5. **Learn to count.** (Does that sound strange?) All things have a place in life, and some things are more important than others. We must learn to keep important things in first place. Spiritual matters must take priority over material things.
6. **Let nothing bother you.** So often, we allow little things – which are often imaginary – rob us of happiness. We as Christians, who have peace with God, have every reason to be at peace with ourselves.
7. **Fill your life with good.** As God's children, we should fill our minds with good thoughts and ideas. There should be no room for trashy, evil thoughts in our minds.
8. **Learn to practice the happiness habit.** Smile and the world will smile with you.
9. **Learn to laugh and learn to cry.** It has been estimated that more than 70 percent of all physical ills could be overcome if we could learn to laugh and cry. Proverbs 17:22 declares: *A merry heart doeth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones.* And Romans 12:15 states: *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.* In so doing, we bear one another's burdens.
10. **Learn to fear nothing or no one.** We are weak but our Father is strong. With God on our side, what, or who, do we have to fear?
11. **Let go and let God take over.** Too many people want to run their own lives after obeying the gospel. But we must let God have full control of our lives. This is the only way to find true peace and happiness. There can be only one person in the driver's seat.

I see these qualities in Jane and Hannah, and they prove that joyful living is possible.

Solomon writes: *I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live* (Ecclesiastes 3:12 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter