

## Happiness Is a Choice

BY MICHAEL JOSEPHSON

In a "Peanuts" cartoon, Lucy asks Charlie Brown, "Why do you think we were put on earth?" Charlie answers, "To make others happy."

"I don't think I'm making anyone happy," Lucy replies, "but nobody's making me very happy either. Somebody's not doing his job!"

Charlie talked about life in terms of giving, while Lucy only thought about getting. I know a lot of people like Lucy. Preoccupied with getting and having, they are so aware of what they don't have that they never enjoy what they do. They live in an "if only" world, always at least one step away from happiness. "If only I could get this raise, make this sale, pay off my debts, win this game, I'd be happy."

Dennis Prager, in his book *Happiness Is a Serious Problem*, argues that human nature itself impedes our ability to be happy. He claims that children learn to demand "more" as soon as they begin to communicate, and that the desire for more can never be satisfied because the more we have, the more we want.

Abraham Lincoln, who was prone toward depression, said, "A person is generally about as happy as he's willing to be." He understood that happiness is a way of looking at your life. It's about choosing good feelings over bad, positive attitudes over negative ones, and gratitude over greed. Thus, people who are poor, ugly, and in ill health can be considerably happier than people who are rich, beautiful, and healthy—because they choose to be.

Happiness is not getting what we want; it's learning to want what we get.

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