

Mastery of the Details of Life

I met Ethel at church in Kansas City, in 1952; we were 18. She was then already a master of the details of life.

Ethel had accepted Christ at 16, and had immediately begun studying the Bible, learning and absorbing the teachings of Bible doctrine, virtually memorizing epistles and other large portions of Scripture. We got married in 1955; from then until now, Ethel's life has been one of the continuous application of Bible doctrine to the details of life.

It's easy to "master" the details of life when one is prosperous. It is when hard times come, and details of life are lost, that a Christian's true mettle is seen. During those 60 years since I met Ethel, I have observed her spiritual responses in times of both privation and relative prosperity.

During hard times, Ethel has always trusted the Lord to provide. When she was hurt or offended, she did not fume and seethe, backbite, malign, or cast blame. Instead, she would grow quiet in order to pray, recall Bible promises, claim the promises (faith-rest), quickly recover a relaxed mental attitude, forgive the offenders (most often me), and be restored quickly to her usual condition of joy and cheerfulness. She never yelled at me or the children, she never asked for anything for herself, was always focused on the needs of others.

Ethel's testimony has always been one of occupation with Christ, faith-rest, a relaxed mental attitude, and the resulting joy of the Lord.

The Details of Life

For the purposes of our Bible studies, we use the term "details of life" to refer to everything that is a part of human life on earth.

Anything that affects our life, or on which our life is contingent, is a detail of life. An exhaustive list would be hard to create, but details of life include such things as:

- Your human body, which includes your health, physical fitness, age.

- Your mental capability, e.g. intelligence, education, mental stability.
- Necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter, transportation.
- Human love, marriage and sex, and family life.
- Social life, including your relationships with friends, fellow workers, church family.
- Finances, income, savings, and your financial future.
- Employment: satisfaction with job, sense of accomplishment, etc
- Environment: the country and community you live in, the weather, the comfort of your surroundings.

I know you could add many things to these, but this list is representative.

Human Happiness

Now the details of life can sometimes provide a measure of satisfaction and happiness, but only in the sense of human happiness.

When one has enough money, for example, there is a sense of relaxation and satisfaction. There is relief, at least for a while, of the fear of poverty, of not being able to pay bills, of being able to purchase things you want. We will call this good feeling "human happiness."

Good health also provides "human happiness"; if you feel well, if you aren't in pain, if you can exercise and work without physical problems, you may have a feeling of well-being and satisfaction with your life.

Likewise, when you have a good marriage and social life, with compatible friends, easy relationships with people, etc., you are happy with those situations.

If your employment also is providing you with satisfaction, and you feel you are contributing to society, that makes you feel good, too.

Human happiness depends upon one or more details of life to sustain it. Therefore, human happiness is *temporary* and *dependent*. It lasts only as long as it is supported by the details that provide the happiness.

Human happiness begins to be diminished, or disappears completely, when the details that support that happiness are no longer there.

The Loss of Human Happiness (Suffering)

One way of describing suffering is to say that it comes from the removal of some form of human happiness. Suffering is the loss of some of the details of life.

Suffering can occur several ways, both for Christians and unbelievers, including the following:

- Suffering by loss of health - physical pain, illness, accident, loss of function, etc.
- Suffering by privation - the lack of something necessary such as money, food, shelter, clothing, transportation.
- Suffering from the weather - freezing weather or hot, storms, tornadoes, hurricanes, blizzards, as well as earthquakes, volcanoes.
- Suffering from mental anguish - worry, sorrow, anguish, fears, phobias, bitterness, jealousy, not the least of which is “suffering by anticipation”.
- Suffering from justice, the long arm of the law, deserved or undeserved.
- Suffering caused by other people. As long as there are two people in the same location...well, you know what I mean.

Joy (Divine Happiness)

God’s happiness (joy) is *independent* of anything in this world. The Bible says that it is possible, “to be content in whatsoever state I am”, that is, to have a deep inner happiness and contentment that does not depend on other people, material possessions, or circumstances.

- Joy is not dependent on the details of life!

- You can see, then, that if a person possesses God’s joy (+H), the loss of human happiness is much more tolerable.
- When you are a master of the details of life, **your happiness does not depend on people, circumstances, or things.**
- You have the peace of God that passes understanding.
- You have learned to be content under any circumstances.
- You can wait for the Lord’s timing in providing the details you want; you can enjoy them when you have them.
- You can remain happy when the Lord sees fit not to provide some detail.

Mastery of the details of life means that you look to the Lord for every detail, that you accept with calm fortitude either the gain or loss of details of life.

We are all involved with details of life. Either we master them, or they master us! If you are a slave to one or more details of life, your thoughts are devoted to them, and they drive you. They dominate your thoughts, your conversation, your decisions. Slavery to the details of life leads to disillusion, disappointment, and depression.

Inner happiness is not possible for the believer who so occupied with himself and his needs or desires that he ignores God’s plan. Inner happiness is a state of rejoicing based on knowing that God is everything He claims to be and that He can do what He has promised. Inner happiness is the joy of living where every provision for physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being is being made by God in the life of a Christian who is walking in daily fellowship with Him.

There are many Bible teachings which contribute to a Christian’s being able to have mastery of the details of life.

The following is a list of many of the Bible doctrine topics that contribute to a person’s having mastery of the details of life. **Your mastery of the details of life depends on your learning and applying these principles of Bible doctrine.**

Doctrinal studies are available at the Grace Notes Topical Library site. Go there to download them.

http://www.gracenotes.info/GN_TopicsLibrary.shtml. **Mental Attitude**
Chastisement **The Much More Care of God**
Depression **Negative Volition**
Edification **Occupation with Christ**
The Faithfulness of God **Peace**
Faith Rest **Problem Solving Devices of Scripture**
Happiness **Promotion**
The Holy Spirit's Sustaining Ministry **Redeeming the Time**
Hope **Reversionism (Backsliding)**
The Importance of Bible Doctrine **Salvation Doctrines**
Jealousy **Separation**
Suffering