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CHAPTER ONE



The Nearness of the Good Life



The gaze is direct. The posture is straight. The face is serious, even stern. In his portraits, Jonathan Edwards stares back at the viewer. To a person unfamiliar with the theologian, he looks like any other stereotypical colonial parson, severe and austere, brooking no foolishness, itching to declaim the evils of everyday life. Wearing a powdered wig of tight white curls, staring alertly back at the observer, Jonathan Edwards as portrayed on canvas seems to substantiate the image of Edwards cultivated for generations in high-school classrooms. Here is the man who unleashed the thunder of “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” Small wonder that such a gloomy person would bore into us from his portrait.

But appearances are often deceiving. In reality, Jonathan Edwards was not an angry man. He was one of the happiest men around. He loved to play and talk with his children, and he enjoyed much cheer and laughter in his marriage to his wife, Sarah. He cherished his time in his study. Jonathan's happiness, however, transcended the joys of home and work, significant as they are. Unlike many people, Jonathan Edwards knew happiness at the very core of his being. In a way that many of us don't even think about, Edwards possessed a holistic intellectual and spiritual happiness. He strove to know God with his mind, to experience the goodness of God with his heart, and to lead others to do the same. Though his temperament was calm, he lived with zest and vigor, modeling the happy way of life he taught his people.

Many people today do not know such peace and happiness. They live with constant tension, often acting contrary to what their mind and their conscience tell them is right. They rebel against their Creator and His design for their life. Though they may know satisfaction for a brief period, lasting happiness evades them. This results in a broken, frustrating, ultimately pointless life.

Though his era differed from ours, Jonathan identified the same problem in his day. Gifted from his youth with great passion for God and His Word, Jonathan discovered early on in his life that true and lasting happiness in this life was attainable. All that the human heart desired it could have, and far more besides. The riches of God's Word could satisfy the intellectual hunger of the human mind for a balanced, co-

hesive, meaningful worldview and the spiritual hunger of the human heart for a joyful, hopeful, transformative existence.

In sum, Jonathan discovered a simple but vitalizing truth: God had not made mankind to be miserable. Being a Christian did not mean the absence of pleasure. Much to the contrary, God had made mankind to experience unending delight and joy in Him, to be happier and happier as knowledge of God increased, and to constantly soak up the sweetest pleasure the world affords in the life of faith—all of which flow together to constitute “the good life.” In a world filled with people who lived in the gloom of darkness, Jonathan Edwards preached to set his hearers’ hearts on fire, to alter forever the way they understood themselves and their lives. He knew that any life created by the majestic, undomesticated, loving God of the Bible could not be mundane or boring. He preached in such a way as to altogether change the way we think about our faith and the way we practice it.

In this chapter, we will explore the initial, pre-fall design of God for human life through interaction with a number of noteworthy Edwardsean texts: *The Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created the World*, the *Dissertation Concerning the Nature of True Virtue*, the sermon “Charity Contrary to a Selfish Spirit,” and the homily “The Pleasantness of Religion.” By careful study of these sources, we will develop an understanding of the original intention of the Creator for mankind and clear our minds of false and unbiblical conceptions of the good, Christian life. God, we shall see in this chapter, has not made people to be grimly obedient.

Rather, He desires that we find transcendent, unassailable, undimmed satisfaction in Him.

God the Foundation

The foundation of the good life is God. In Edwards's world, God reigned over all as the emblem of majesty, authority, and goodness. The sum of His perfections rendered God beautiful, or more accurately, Beauty itself. As covered in *Jonathan Edwards on Beauty*, also in this series, God created the world to display and reflect His glory. All that the eye can see exists to “remanate,” or send back, God's original glory to Himself. God alone is worthy of such a system, for He alone is God. All of creation participates in this “cycle of beauty” that begins with God and returns to God.

But while all things in some way display and reflect the beauty of God, only humans may do so with awareness. Only mankind can participate consciously in the cycle of beauty. It was for this very purpose that God created the race. He desired a special sort of being to commune with Him and to joyfully image His goodness in the world. Edwards discussed this in his foundational text *The End for Which God Created the World*:

IT SEEMS TO BE A THING in itself fit and desirable, that the glorious perfections of God should be known, and the operations and expressions of them seen by other beings besides himself. . . . As God's perfections are things in them-

selves excellent, so the expression of them in their proper acts and fruits is excellent, and the knowledge of these excellent perfections, and of these glorious expressions of them, is an excellent thing, the existence of which is in itself valuable and desirable.

Because God was so excellent, it was only right that His excellence be enjoyed by others:

'TIS A THING INFINITELY GOOD in itself that God's glory should be known by a glorious society of created beings. And that there should be in them an increasing knowledge of God to all eternity is an existence, a reality infinitely worthy to be, and worthy to be valued and regarded by him, to whom it belongs in order that it be, which, of all things possible, is fittest and best. If existence is more worthy than defect and nonentity, and if any created existence is in itself worthy to be, then knowledge or understanding is a thing worthy to be; and if any knowledge, then the most excellent sort of knowledge, viz. that of God and his glory. The existence of the created universe consists as much in it as in anything: yea, this knowledge is one of the highest, most real and substantial parts, of all created existence most remote from nonentity and defect. (*Works* 8, 450–52)

The passage touches on numerous ideas, but the key sentence for our purposes is this: "'Tis a thing infinitely good in itself that God's glory should be known by a glorious society of created beings." Edwards believed that mankind was made for an "increasing knowledge of God," a knowledge of "the most excellent sort" that would satisfy and fill the mind and heart as nothing else can. Adam and Eve, and the race they produced, were not mere chess pawns in the hands of the Grandmaster, but possessed a supremely noble purpose that would make for a life of the most exhilarating kind.

The Good Life Does Not Squash Happiness

In giving his picture of the good life, Edwards had to overcome two specific objections. First, he had to show how a universe that existed to glorify God did not squash or prohibit the happiness of mankind. Central to the following passage is the idea that God "emanates" or sends His beauty (or glory) out, and the creature receives and delights in it. Edwards teaches us here that the happiness of God and the happiness of humanity are not, as some have suggested, at odds. Instead, God and man ideally work in harmony, with God "emanating" glory that is received and reflected by mankind, who grows happy in performing this divine duty:

GOD IN SEEKING HIS GLORY, therein seeks the good of his creatures: because the emanation of his glory (which he seeks and delights in, as he delights in himself and his own

eternal glory) implies the communicated excellency and happiness of his creature. And that in communicating his fullness for them, he does it for himself: because their good, which he seeks, is so much in union and communion with himself. God is their good. Their excellency and happiness is nothing but the emanation and expression of God's glory: God in seeking their glory and happiness, seeks himself: and in seeking himself, i.e. himself diffused and expressed (which he delights in, as he delights in his own beauty and fullness), he seeks their glory and happiness.

Edwards continued the argument by putting it in grander terms:

IN THIS VIEW IT APPEARS that God's respect to the creature, in the whole, unites with his respect to himself. Both regards are like two lines which seem at the beginning to be separate, but aim finally to meet in one, both being directed to the same center. And as to the good of the creature itself, if viewed in its whole duration, and infinite progression, it must be viewed as infinite; and so not only being some communication of God's glory, but as coming nearer and nearer to the same thing in its infinite fullness. The nearer anything comes to infinite, the nearer it comes to an identity with God. And if any good, as viewed by God, is beheld as infinite, it can't be viewed as a distinct thing from God's own infinite glory. (*Works* 8, 459)

In this passage, Edwards refutes the charge that God's glory and man's happiness are mutually exclusive. His central point is that "God in seeking his glory, therein seeks the good of his creatures." As some mistakenly believed, if God is going to be happy, then He will create a world that pleases only Himself and that yields little or no happiness to the people placed in the world to do His bidding. Humanity functions as little more than a race of slaves forced to execute the tyrannical will of a cruel king. Edwards, however, shows that this line of thought fails miserably. God, if He is God, is not a tyrant. As God, He is the embodiment of goodness. "[T]he emanation of his glory (which he seeks and delights in, as he delights in himself and his own eternal glory)," then, "implies the communicated excellency and happiness of his creature." Life as this kind and awesome God created it to be cannot be slavish or sad; it is filled with "excellency and happiness" that flows from the divine fountain.

All of the God-centered life is calibrated to bless the people of God as they glorify the Lord in all they do (1 Corinthians 10:31). Those who seek the Lord and live to magnify Him will know His "communicated excellency and happiness" even as they participate in the great work of glorifying Him. God's glory and man's happiness are not at odds with one another—far from it. The two ideally work hand in hand.

Thus we see Edwards's brilliant and transformative doctrine of the good life. At its deepest, most profound level, the good life is the life lived for the glory of God. Those who live to display and image the beauty of God will, in whatever cir-

cumstance they find themselves, experience happiness that comes directly from God Himself. Happiness, then, is not a state outside of ourselves that we must strive for. It does not ebb and flow with our life situation. Happiness is doing the will of God, for the will of God always yields the glory of God. What is the will of God? It is God's revealed purposes and desires in the Bible. In short, the good life is the existence that takes shape according to the teachings and commands of Scripture. When one obeys God by loving His Son and following His Word, one glorifies the Lord and tastes the sweetest, richest happiness known to man. This and no other substitute is the good life. It is what God has always intended for mankind.

The Good Life Does Not Destroy Self-Love

In unfurling his vision of the good life, Edwards had to overcome a second objection. He had to show how the God-centered life corresponded with the natural human instinct to love and preserve oneself, which he defined as follows: "Self-love, I think, is generally defined: a man's love of his own happiness" (*Works* 8, 575). Did living for God, in other words, mean that one had to sacrifice concern for oneself and adopt a pattern of living that impeded happiness for the sake of obeying God?

Edwards had a ready answer to this question. He refused, at the start, to separate love for God and love for oneself. One best loved oneself by loving God. Loving oneself without God

meant that one strayed from the source of all wisdom and truth, and thus consigned oneself to destruction. On the contrary, loving oneself through loving God meant that one experienced the joys of the virtuous life. Instead of living selfishly, mankind could live for God and experience His boundless goodness. In doing so, they would actually care for themselves far better than if they ignored the Lord and went their own way.

Edwards, we see, also refused to separate happiness from obedience. He argued that exercising virtue in service to God actually enabled a person to love themselves best. "True virtue," he argued in *Dissertation Concerning the Nature of True Virtue*, "most essentially consists in benevolence to Being in general. Or perhaps to speak more accurately, it is that consent, propensity and union of heart to Being in general, that is immediately exercised in a general good will" (*Works* 8, 540). The "Being" of which Edwards spoke was God and the system of creaturely being He had created. Living a life of "benevolence" (or loving goodwill) toward God and His creatures meant that one possessed "true virtue." Virtue and happiness actually went hand in hand. When one acted virtuously to others out of a desire to love God and preserve his soul, he found true happiness. Happiness did not come from gratification of one's selfish instincts, but rather from one's desire to bless others and please the Lord.

In the final analysis, Edwards revealed that virtue and self-preservation did not naturally conflict. God designed man to be good. When a person acts on these instincts and lives a life of "benevolence" to God and, accordingly, to his fellow

man, he preserves his soul and, as a result, loves himself more than the person who lives without virtue and who operates out of selfishness. Christianity, the life of Spirit-empowered virtue, does not require that one sacrifice happiness. As a believer in Christ lives the good life of obedience to the Lord, he tastes true and lasting happiness, blesses God and mankind, and ultimately preserves his soul. Edwards's doctrine expresses on a theological level the simple truth taught by Christ centuries before in Matthew 16:25: "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

A Deeply Ironic Doctrine

The Edwardsean doctrine of happiness is rich with irony. To save one's soul and experience deepest delight one must abandon the instinct to selfishly pursue one's well-being. True self-interest involves turning one's life over to God and accepting His plan for life over against anything the human mind can conceive. One cannot win salvation and happiness for oneself by selfish cunning or slick plans. If one desires to know happiness in this life and the next, one must hand one's life over to the Lord. A Christian is a person who hands the keys over to Jesus. The believer trusts Him to lead and guide, knowing that whatever way He directs will be best.

It may not always appear this way, of course. One may trust Christ and find that the going soon gets rough. This is no indication that Christ has failed and that happiness is lost.

While God often allows His children to feel happy because of favorable circumstances, His fundamental gift to believers is not the promise of a life without challenges, but a state of deep happiness rooted in Himself that transcends all situations, good or ill. This is the kind of happiness that lasts beyond a mood or an emotional high. It is a persevering, bold happiness that is rooted in faith in God and love for God.

Some people who know this Edwardsean kind of happiness, this rich brand of spiritual joy, express it with great emotion. Edwards himself regularly experienced a sort of rapturous communion with God. Others, however, express their joy in quieter form, their deep satisfaction in Him manifesting itself in a quiet, contented way of life. Neither mode is best; both are valid and good. The challenge for most of us is to find the happiness common to both groups of happy believers. Too many Christians fail to taste the profound satisfaction offered them in the gospel. They have a sense of their salvation, but they have little awareness of the greatness of the gospel and its ability to altogether transform their existence. They know that God wants them to be happy, but they have not realized that joy comes not primarily from having one's desires met by God, but by serving God and doing what He desires.

Life in Uncomfortable Tension

Too many of us live in a strenuous push-and-pull relationship with the Lord. We obey Him, to some extent, but we also push for the accomplishment of our plans, the fulfillment

of our desires, not realizing that He has a better plan and better desires for us. The happiest Christians are not those who manage to accomplish all of their personal goals. Rather, the happiest Christians are those who embrace what God wants for their lives. Thus the irony of faith reveals itself once again. One does not become happy by liberating oneself from duty; one becomes happy by obeying and following the plans of the Lord, who in turn provides the happiness one naturally desires. In duty, in serving the Lord, we find true happiness.

In his sermon "Charity Contrary to a Selfish Spirit," Edwards highlighted this theme as he exhorted his Northampton congregation to live charitably, or lovingly, with their fellow men. He taught them that their performance of charity would not diminish their own happiness, but would increase it to a depth that they had never thought possible. Fundamentally, said the pastor:

A CHRISTIAN SPIRIT SEEKS to please and glorify God. The things which are well pleasing to God and Christ, and tend to the glory of Christ, are called the things of Jesus Christ in opposition to our own things. Philippians 2:21, "For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." Christianity requires that we should make God and Christ our main end. Christians, so far as they live like Christians, live so that for them to live is Christ [Philippians 1:21]. Christians are required to live so as to please God. Romans 12:2, "That ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and

perfect will of God." We should be such servants of Christ as do in all things seek to please our Master. Ephesians 6:6, "Not with eye-service as men-pleasers: but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." So we are required to seek the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." And this is the Christian spirit. (*Works* 8, 259)

Having defined "the Christian spirit" as that which "seeks to please and glorify God," Edwards discussed how divine love far exceeds natural "self-love":

BUT DIVINE LOVE or that Christian charity which is spoken of in the text is something above self-love, as it is supernatural or above and beyond all that is natural. It is no branch which springs out of that root of self-love as natural affection and civil friendship, and the love which wicked men may have one to another. It is something of a higher and more noble kind. Self-love is the sum of natural principles, as divine love is of supernatural principles. This divine love is no plant which grows naturally in such a soil as the heart of man. But it is a plant transplanted into the soul out of heaven; it is something divine, something from the holy and blessed Spirit of God, and so has its foundation in God, and not in self. (*Works* 8, 263-4)

Edwards provides a memorable image to describe the source of charity. The love in a Christian's heart "is a plant transplanted into the soul out of heaven." This plant, a gift from "the holy and blessed Spirit of God," causes the believer to live for God with God squarely in one's line of sight. As one matures, one's love for God and His creation spills over into the lives of others, just as a maturing plant or tree stretches across an ever-widening distance and shelters it. The believer who seeks to live for God ultimately cannot avoid blessing others.

Edwards next sketched how believers could embody this spirit:

A CHRISTIAN SPIRIT DISPOSES them in many cases to forego and part with their own things for the sake of the things of others. It disposes them to part with their own private temporal interest, and totally and finally to renounce it, for the sake of the honor of God and the advancement of the kingdom of Christ. Such was the spirit of the Apostle. Acts 21:13, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus." And they have a spirit to forego and part with their own private interest for the good of their neighbors in many instances; ready to help bear others' burdens, to part with a less good of their own for the sake of a greater of their neighbors'; and as the case may be, to lay down their lives for the brethren [1 John 3:16]. (*Works* 8, 259)

The pastor closed with a stirring summation of the nature and power of Christian charity:

AND THEREFORE DIVINE and Christian love, above all love in the world, is contrary to a selfish spirit. Though other-love, a moral love, may in some respects be contrary to selfishness, as it may move men to a moral liberality and generosity, yet in other respects it agrees with a selfish spirit; because if we follow it up to its original, it arises from the same root, viz. a principle of self-love. But divine love has its spring elsewhere; its root is in Christ Jesus, and so is heavenly. It is not anything of this world, and it tends thither whence it comes. As it does not spring out of self, so neither does it tend to self. It delights in the honor and glory of God for his own sake, and not merely for their sakes. And it seeks and delights in the good of men for their sakes, and for God's sake. How Christian love in a peculiar manner above and contrary to a selfish spirit appears by this, viz. it goes out even to enemies. There is that in the nature and tendency of it to go out to the unthankful and evil, and to those that injure and hate us, which is directly contrary to the tendency of a selfish principle, and quite above nature. (*Works* 8, 264)

In these sections, Edwards captured the special nature of Christian happiness. Rooted in “divine love,” Christians act out of an “other-love” that simultaneously blesses their fellow man and cares for their own soul. In doing so, they find true and lasting happiness. This brand of existence counters sharply the thinking of sinful natural man, which is driven by a selfish and deeply proud mind-set. The Christian life, the good life, is driven by a selfless and humble mindset. Though it might seem natural to devote all kinds of attention to one’s own needs, the Christian goes the opposite way and humbly seeks to serve even his enemies. Here is love that turns the thinking of the natural mind on its head. Love of this kind is both deeply ironic and unquestionably divine.

The Happiest Person Who Ever Lived

Edwards’s doctrine of happiness and the good life helps us to see how Jesus Christ, despite all the injustices thrust upon Him, was the happiest person who ever lived. Christ devoted every second of His life to serving God and blessing His people. Though He often faced great trials, Jesus knew a satisfaction that no human hand could diminish. Even in His agonizing crucifixion, Jesus rested firmly in the will of God, and endured the agonies of Calvary “for the joy set before Him” (Hebrews 12:2). Though the cross itself produced no happiness in Jesus, submission to God’s will did. Christ’s example brings home how important it is to understand that happiness is not simply an emotional state. It is both emotion

and commitment, both outward exultation and inner satisfaction. As we follow Jesus and obey the Father, serving our fellow man with love in our hearts, we make ourselves happy in the most profound sense, just like Jesus Himself.

We should emphasize that we are not constructing a merely intellectual argument here. There is delight of the most intense and lasting kind in vibrant Christian faith. At one point in his sermon corpus, Edwards went so far as to say that the goodness of Christianity is such that even if Christianity is not true, it still provides the best way to live. It is such a pleasant way to live that it would be the best lifestyle even if the Bible were not true. "Seeing it is so," the pastor concluded in his sermon entitled "The Pleasantness of Religion," "that 'tis worth the while to be religious if it were only for the delight and pleasantness of it, then hence we may learn that sinners are left without any manner of objection against religion" (Kinnach, 23). Edwards believed firmly that Christianity offered humanity the deepest pleasure possible. Even the most apparently happy worldly life could not compare to biblical faith:

[H]OW EXCEEDING GREAT is the reward of the godly. What a reward have they in the world to come; what joys [in another life]. But yet this is not all; no, they have a reward in this life. In the very keeping of God's commands, there is great reward (Ps. 19:11). The reward they have in hand, besides that which is promised, is well worth all the pains

they take, all the troubles they endure. God has not only promised them a great reward, and exceeding great beyond conception; but he has given them a foretaste in this world. And this taste is better than all the pleasure and riches of the wicked. (Kimnach, 24)

The Christian faith was true, according to Edwards. He made this very clear in countless sermons and writings. It yielded both a joyful earthly life and an endlessly happy existence in heaven. In comparison to the richest sinner, even the poorest Christian possessed wealth beyond belief. While the “wicked” courted temporal pleasure, the Christian experienced in the good life a “foretaste” of heaven that nothing could ruin or spoil.

The Northampton pastor’s preaching illuminated the divine nature of earthly Christian life. All who would follow Christ would find that it not only satisfied the soul on earth, but placed them on the trajectory of heaven. Though this world dealt “pains” and “troubles” to the people of God, Edwards knew that these things would soon pass, and the church would reach its destination, tasting sumptuous delights not even the richest pleasure-seeker could imagine.

The Happiness of the Good Life

All of the preceding material shapes and perhaps alters our understanding of Jonathan Edwards. The man who wears the slightest of smiles in his portrait may not be the vindictive,

pleasure-squashing parson some imagine him to be. Edwards's conception of the good life suggests that Edwards was much happier than we might initially think. Certainly, life as he pictured it in its ideal form reflected an existence of the most satisfied kind. This life, as we have seen, was no exercise in sinful hedonism, but was instead a lifelong walk of faith on the biblical path. This life glorified God and made men happy. It did not conflict with self-interest, it included continual service to God and man, and it required humility and sacrifice. The good life included noteworthy irony that turned conventional human wisdom on its head. It was demanding, challenging, and deeply involved, yet it offered humanity the opportunity to taste the very goodness and love and peace of God.

Such was life as God created it to be.



Living the Good Life

We Are Made to Be Happy

It is imperative that we realize that God has not designed us for a somber, miserable subsistence of a life. He has made us to be unshakably happy. Our first order of business in processing Edwards's illumination of this biblical teaching is to enter the thought stream of our minds, so to speak, and to banish any thinking that undermines the idea that God wants

us to be happy in Him. He does not want to squelch our pleasure, and He does not parse out a crumb of blessing at a time for us to sample. God intends to pour a flood of happiness into our lives, and He will do so if we only recognize that this is so (Psalm 128; Jeremiah 32:36–41).

This means on a practical level that we must reorient our thoughts, our words, and our actions. We must not doubt our Lord and His good plan for our lives. We should not speak against the Lord and complain to other people about our circumstances. Romans 8:31–39 teaches us that every single thing that occurs in our lives is placed before us to sanctify us and to glorify God. How, then, can we doubt the Lord? We must accept whatever comes from His hand and remember that He has our happiness in mind, not our misery. This reorientation of thinking and acting will help us to switch from a glum, self-defeated way of life into a courageous, defiantly joyful existence that smacks of another world.

Obedience Is Joy

Edwards shows us that the happiest people on earth are not those who do whatever they naturally, sinfully want to do, but those who do what God desires. God, being all-wise and all-good, has designed the ideal way of life. This way of life involves obedience, or submission, to the divine will (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Obedience, then, is joy; following God is happiness (see 1 John 3 for a similar theme). Knowing and applying this truth to our lives will free us from thinking that,

though saved, we're missing out on the really good stuff of life that the unredeemed around us get to enjoy every day. If we understand that we're heaven bound, and that all our obedience brings both blessing on earth and an eternal reward in the afterlife, we'll avoid much of the doleful thinking of misled Christians. The good stuff, and the good life, is not to be had in the world of sin, but in the world of faith.

Obedience doesn't always *seem* happy. Sometimes, it's very difficult. But the fact that sin is easy and obedience can be difficult does not mean that sin is right and obedience is wrong. We must guard ourselves against an emotionally driven Christianity that operates out of the satisfaction of whatever momentary desire presents itself. The most robust faith will both engage one's emotions, ensuring that we live a genuinely happy life, and motivate us to obey the Word of God, allowing us to avoid the constant ups and downs of a weak-willed Christianity. God, we must remember, desires to pour happiness into our lives. As the accounts of numerous biblical figures show us, when we follow our Savior and live for His glory, shunning worldly temptations that snap at our feet to trap and destroy us, we set ourselves up to receive in this life and the next the blessings of God (see, for example, Genesis 39–47 and Daniel 1–7). Obedience, then, is not a death to vitality, but a means to happiness.

Be Happy in Serving Others

As we orient our lives around obedience to God's Word, we will find that we cannot help but care for God's handiwork in creation. We'll have an increased desire to steward the earth well, but we'll primarily desire to bless the apex of God's creative work, the human race. As those who have been made deeply happy by God, we'll want others to know that same happiness, and to turn away from the sinful patterns of living that promise so much but deliver so little. We'll seek to care for all people by meeting their earthly needs as best we can with wisdom and discernment, and we'll try to tell them about the source of all happiness, God, as He has revealed Himself in His Word (see Luke 10:25–37, for example, and Galatians 6:10). The ways in which Christians share the good life and the good news will vary according to place and situation, but all Christians who desire to be truly happy will channel their love for God into evangelistic service to their fellow man. This is not some kind of programmatic requirement that believers fulfill, but is a natural overflow of the love for God and His creation that the Spirit of God creates in a believer's heart. Christians should seek opportunities for evangelism and action in their local church, using it as a base from which to work.