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of a Series of Seven

THE SEVEN QUESTS OF MAN

(THE QUEST FOR HAPPINESS)

Beloved Companion:

We believe this to be an important monograph for you, because it deals with that for which you have long quested, ... the Gift of True Happiness.

An inquiring reporter interviewed many people asking what they wanted most out of life. A great many answered that they wanted wealth. Some named their desire to own a new car, a home, or other material things. Some asked only for good health, and so on. Only a few named their want of happiness as their supreme desire in life.

Mayan thinkers know that those who named wealth as what they most wanted chose it because they thought wealth would bring them happiness. The new car or home seeker believed those things would mean happiness, but it is obvious that they had not thought deeply about it or their expressed desires too would have been for Happiness.

Moo-lu Ah-kin asked a group of boys one day which of the birds or beasts seemed to have best learned the secret of being happy. One of them said, "the deer is the happiest of beasts because he is so graceful and so free", - but thinking further, said, "perhaps I am in error, for the deer must constantly flee from the hunter's hulche*." (*Throwing stick. The Maya did not use bow and arrows, but the throwing stick and arrows, or spears).

Another boy said, "Ac (the turtle) is the happiest because he lived so long and because he is so armored that few things could hurt him." Then he thought again and pondered on the slow motion of Ac the turtle and his slow mind.

A third boy named the Chakalaka bird as surely a most happy creature. Then he wondered because the Chakalaka is so named because he is so noisy.

Others named other beasts, - they suggested Ax and Ahmax (the monkey), Ochcan (the great constrictor snake), and Thul (the rabbit), and Toh, a bird who says, toh, toh, toh, which means "be careful", and Zinac-che, the anteater who is never short of food.

Moo-lu Ah-kin told them they should think about the answers they had first made, and to think about their second thoughts. For to find happiness one must not make mistakes and accept something less for true happiness. Further, their first thoughts were reflections of their inner natures and they would likely be drawn in life to seek the things they thought made happiness for the various birds or beasts they had named.

"The boy who named the deer", Moo-lu Ah-kin said, "loves freedom and grace. The boy who suggested the turtle, loved security and long life." And the third boy who liked the Chakalaka, Moo-lu Ah-kin thought, might become an orator, a priest, or a singer, or more likely a Batab (a political chief). And, pointing out the natures of the other beasts the boys had suggested, he asked them to meditate similarly on their choices and to draw therefrom lessons about themselves. "Happiness is a state of mind, it is within, and can be impervious to outer conditions. It is simply an inner harmony so perfect that peace of mind abounds within oneself", Moo-lu Ah-kin said, as he went on to the College of Mayan Philosophers.

The boys were as thoughtful as young boys can be and, after a period of discussion, decided that the monkeys were fun-lovers and clowns, that Ochcan indicated a love of physical power (and perhaps laziness) and Thul represented a life of pleasure, hopping around and begetting large families even though one could not properly protect them. And Toh was a warrior and one attracted to Zinac-che was simply too fond of food. They also considered Am (the spider) and compared him with Ahchuy (the tailor in the community), and they discussed Becetchok the bird of a hundred songs and many other creatures until they were tired and went home, and most of them promptly forgot all about their truly important psychological discoveries of that day.

When all the questing of man is reduced to its simplest terms, the quest for happiness is about what it boils down to, for everything man seeks he seeks because he thinks it will make him happy. About us we see people seeking all kinds of things, some of them very strange. Some of these things seem only remotely related to happiness, and some seem to be actually antagonistic to it, but all these people are trying to find happiness.

Different people seek happiness so differently because there are so many and such varied ideas as to what it is and what roads lead to it, and also because so many people simply do not deal with the problem intelligently. Unless one knows what happiness is he can hardly know which is the right road. If he finds it at all it will be by accident and that is not a very likely thing on which to depend.

Happiness is, of course, satisfied and satisfactory living. We may say that it takes different things to please different people, and on the surface it does. Yet, when we get down to the deeper levels of satisfaction there is not much difference. All want the fundamental longings of life satisfied and its fundamental interests rightly integrated and related, and those longings and interests are much the same.

Those fundamental interests and longings are right when one gets down to them and examines them. They are the normal needs and interests of life. The libertine and the wastrel may scoff at them and insist that he wants nothing to do with them, yet, they are the very things his heart is really longing for and without which

he will never be quite satisfied. Some people make quite a show of not being right at heart, but it is seldom anything more than a pretense.

On the road to satisfied living there is a half-way station called contentment. It is a very desirable place at which to arrive, but it is only a part of the way to the goal. Contentment comes from two words meaning "to hold together", while satisfaction comes from two other words meaning "to have enough". Between the two there is quite a difference.

St. Paul, who had some experience with this quest, said he had learned in whatsoever state he was, therewith to be content. He had a hard time of it, but he never let it upset his spirit or change his purpose. He mastered his troubles well enough to hold together. Perhaps he completed his quest for happiness, but it was in the midst of much earthly trial and conflict. That, of course, need not stand in the way, for happiness is not merely having everything easy; it is being satisfied with the general life situation.

It is only human to think that if one had a great deal of money and property and occupied a very high position, and wielded a very great influence, and were widely known and praised, he would be happy, but not necessarily so. Such things are hard to get, uncertain, and disquieting. They do not reach to the deeper longings of life, and therefore they do not satisfy.

A man who knew the elder John D. Rockefeller rather well once remarked to him that his wealth must bring him very great satisfaction. The rich man replied that it had its advantages, but it also had its limitations. For instance, he did not have enough money to buy what he particularly wanted at that moment - to have back the stomach that would permit him to eat a green apple without disagreeable after-effects.

What are the things we all want down deep inside? One of them is good, dependable friends. One is a peaceful place where loved ones dwell and which the heart calls home. One of them is the feeling that one is living a just life and that his heart is at peace with others, all others. One is the feeling that he is doing something worthwhile in the world, that he is rendering a service and that his work is something needing to be done and worth doing well, the feeling that in the doing of his work he is expressing his better self. One is that life is not bounded by the narrow world of sense experience nor by the short little span between the cradle and the grave. One is that he is gaining ever more of that UNDERSTANDING which is freedom. One is that he goes FORWARD under the guidance of One greater than himself.

These are the things that satisfy, and continue to do so. No thief can steal them, the years cannot destroy them, and they cost nothing but the effort to acquire them. Many are even now planning long time campaigns for getting the things they think will make them happy. If they only knew, those things, the real things, are at their fingertips, awaiting only to be received and used. "Not practical", you say. Very well, are the superficial things you have been depending on practical?

Rid yourself of any idea that happiness is a forbidden thing. It would be a strange Providence that would create us to be miserable, and a strange religious

viewpoint that would place a premium on gloom. Those who find in Jesus of Nazareth their chosen revelation of the Divine should restudy His life and teachings, and discover that He was as much a Man of Joy as of Sorrows. His daily contacts and relationships were entirely normal, and His viewpoints were wholesome. They would have to be if He were the revelation of the Father. He who created the sunshine would hardly want His children to shun it, and He who made beauty and cheer would hardly ban them in His family.

Any good father wants his children happy, but any wise father wants the happiness of his children to be of the true and enduring kind. Since God is the Perfect Father, He naturally desires His children to have perfect happiness. So, never entertain the idea that happiness is not for you; it IS. And do not entertain the idea that you can find real and lasting happiness in being anything other than your better self.

Of course there have always been religious people who had the ascetic point of view, even to the extent of seeking spiritual progress in the neglect and torturing of the body. We should remember, however, that even they are seeking happiness. They think they find a certain satisfaction in what they do. Whether they are on the right road or the wrong one, they, like the rest of us, are trying to find the adjustment to life, things, and people that will give them the largest measure of satisfaction. Even St. Paul found a certain inner peace in knowing that he had mastered the flesh instead of letting it master him.

The thing we are seeking when we go on the quest of happiness, then, is not treasure or position, but adjustment. The adjustment may lead to blessings of possessions and place, but whether it does or not the one who finds it is happy because he knows he is in the place life made just for him. One could not possibly be satisfied anywhere else, no matter what he might have in the way of this world's gifts.

That simplifies the problem. You only have to be fit to receive the blessing, or to make yourself so. From that privilege no one can bar you and its rewarding consequences no one can deny you or take from you. There is no red tape in the way, and you can make your beginning any time. That is not saying you can decide this moment to be happy and simply be so. You may do that if you are READY, but otherwise you will have to make your approach. The length and difficulty of that quest will depend on how far you are from the goal when you start.

You may have traits or habits that interfere with your happiness. You will have to overcome them. You may lack understanding of the way to your goal. You will have to learn the nature and method of your quest. You may see the goal from afar, but lack the strength to make the climb. You will have to cultivate the strength and acquire the courage. Even after you start you may make mistakes and failures that will set you back. You will have to retrace your journey patiently. Never give up. The objective is well worth the quest, but the quest you must make, if you have not already done so.

What, then, are some of the things one can do to come nearer to happiness? The methods of approach will vary according to individuals and what they have already done or failed to do in this quest. Some may have done everything except the ONE thing that would provide the key and open the gate. At any rate, here are some methods that have helped many, and some or all of them may help you.

Let us start out with this very important instruction. If you think happiness is far up the road somewhere, running on and escaping you, and if you are feverishly running on and on trying to catch up with it, DON'T. You are wasting your time and strength, and you are not catching up with happiness at all. In fact, you are getting farther away from it all the time, because it is NOT ahead trying to escape you. It is behind, trying to catch up with you. Stop and wait. Give it a chance to come to you.

This mistake grows out of that old negative notion that happiness is not for you. It is! You were born to be happy, and happiness has been following you all of your life. If you didn't see it, that was because you were always looking some other way, and if you didn't acquire it that was because you searched for it so hard that it could never catch up with you. You see, you haven't quite attained your purpose in living till you HAVE found happiness; but then, happiness hasn't quite attained its purpose in living till it has found you. Thousands of people at this moment are not happy for only one reason - they have never let themselves be happy.

Study yourself at this moment. Do you not feel tensions of body and spirit? You are running with all your nerves and muscles strained to the limit.

How CAN happiness and peace ever get into your life through all that tenseness? Stop and RELAX. Sit down by the wayside and REST. Look at the BEAUTY of the earth and sky. Think about the WONDER of things. LOOK into the heart of a flower. Let the vibration of LOVE flow into you and through you. That is the touch of the finger of God upon your heart. It is to remind you that YOU ARE ENFOLDED IN THE INFINITE HEART, THAT ALL IS WELL, AND NOTHING CAN HURT YOU. Now, are you not happier? SEIZE UPON THAT HAPPINESS. Plant it in your heart and LET IT GROW.

Did you ever see someone trying to thread a needle and not succeeding because he was trying too hard? When he stops fidgeting about, twisting the face and squinting the eyes; when he relaxes and lets his eyes and fingers be at ease, the thread slips into place without effort. Many people are failing to do things because they are trying too hard, and many people are missing happiness because their search for it is too agonized for them to be happy even if they found it. Flowers will grow only in softened soil, and happiness can be at home only in a relaxed spirit.

It is hard to imagine anyone actually wanting to be unhappy, but if you want to be, here is a sure way. Sit down and meditate on what you do not have. Rest assured that there will be plenty of it, and dwelling on it will make you thoroughly miserable.

Many things in this long list of what you HAVE NOT will look very desirable to you, and you can start feeling very ill-used because you do not have them. Why should you not? Why is it that others have these things when they have never come to you? After all, doesn't the world owe you these things? That is a train of thought that has proved a detour for a great many people who might have been getting a great deal of satisfaction out of life. One might call it the process of counting our lack of blessings.

Now try it the OTHER way. Meditate on what you HAVE. Count your blessings and name them over one by one. Are you not surprised that the list is so long? You

never realized, did you, how kind God has been to you? Here are blessings lying like neglected bric-a-brac on a shelf, gathering dust. Just the thought of them would give you pleasure, but you never think of them.

By the time you get through with this inventory you should be feeling pretty RICH. No, don't let the thought of lack come in. You have finished counting up what you have not. Leave that aside for now. No need to make comparisons. After all, it isn't what you have not but what you HAVE that is important. That is ALL you can lay your hands on. No one keeps books to list what he has not. Books are to keep records of what one HAS. It is the SAME with the mind.

You have discovered by now that you have a great deal MORE to be glad about than you thought you had. You have also discovered a great law of happiness. Think on WHAT YOU HAVE instead of what you have not. Keep your eye on your assets. They are all that make one rich. What you have not may total a great deal more than what you have, of course, but that is not important. WHAT YOU HAVE is probably much nearer what you NEED, and what is the use of being burdened and bothered with excess baggage?

Now let us consider another important thing. When you count your blessings don't be too casual about it. A man said it never occurred to him to give thanks for the rain till he went through a long drouth. Another did not put much feeling into his thanks for his daily bread till he lost his job in a time of depression, and for months it was a question every day where that bread was coming from. Too many people never realize how RICH they are in having their loved ones about them till something changes that condition permanently or temporarily. Then they spend long years regretting that they did not know how rich and fortunate they were at the time when it would have done most good. It is a tragic pity that we do not miss the water till the well runs dry.

So here is something that should give you a thrill. When you count your blessings, visualize the lack of them and try to feel what it would be like without them. You may get started on a train of imagination that will take you into some very somber pathways. Then when you realize that these blessings are STILL YOURS, you will feel like SHOUTING your gratitude to high heaven that it is so.

It is unfortunate that we often think so little of the blessings of everyday life and let God's uncommon gifts slip into the place of mere routine matters of course. Friends, loved ones, laughter, work, income, sunshine, air, rain, the passing of the seasons, calm nights of rest, and a thousand other things had to be thought of and provided for us. We could never get on without them. Think of being without them. Then remember that you have them, and see how rich you feel.

This suggests an important LAW OF WELL BEING. It is that one is unlikely to get anything better till he learns to be TRULY grateful for what he HAS. If you take a resentful attitude toward your lot the condition is not likely to change. But realize its goodness and worth, and be radiantly grateful for it, and you are very likely to see it grow better and better. There is something about ingratitude that seems to bar the way to improved conditions.

So when you count your blessings, and it should be OFTEN, think how good they are; GIVE THANKS for them, and ask that nothing may cause them to slip from you. If you knew that tomorrow you would be without them, you would take great pains to make the most of them tonight. Do so ANYWAY. It will pay you RICHLY.

Here is another important law of happiness - HE MOST RICHLY HAS IT WHO GIVES IT TO OTHERS. There are a few things that increase by being given away, and happiness is one of them.



A certain good physician remarked to a friend that he had been blessed with happiness, but he did not know why. He said he had many blessings, and found life good to live, yet he had always been too busy to think much about trying to be happy.

"I think that is the reason", said the friend. "You haven't had much time to think about seeking happiness for yourself because you have been so busy bringing it to others."

"How do you mean?" asked the physician.

"When you retire at night", said the friend, "don't you realize that this whole community is happier because you have lived that day. Ailing people are better; some are living who would have passed away; and hearts are happy that would have been bereaved and broken but for you? Don't you ever think about that at the end of the day?"

"No", answered the physician. "I guess I'm too sleepy."

Just the same, one of the surest ways to be happy is to make life easier and sweeter for others, especially for those who need it most. After a good deed the change in the appearance of things is no less than magic.

Abraham Lincoln once said that he wanted it said of him that he never failed to pluck a thorn or plant a rose where he thought a rose would grow. Let us here and now add an afterthought to that. It is that a rose will grow anywhere that a thorn will grow. Pluck a few thorns and plant a few roses, and see how much better you feel. The habit of doing it the other way - plucking roses and planting thorns - is the one and only reason why some of us find life hard and bitter.

It was said of Jesus that He went about doing good. That was no matter of chance. He was observing a great law, and giving others an object lesson in it. We may have many secondary missions, but the one great mission of a human being in this world is to make the world a better, lovelier, happier place, and to make life richer and sweeter for as many people as possible. The more tears you can stop flowing, the more trouble you can prevent, the more strength and courage you can give, the more people you can help find the way to happier living, the more successful YOU are. That is the ultimate measure. All others are of secondary importance.

No one is anything but a failure who does not go about doing good.

If you do not sleep well at night leave off the sedative and try the memory of a pair of grateful eyes, the note of courage in the voice of someone you helped today, the thought of some place of sadness you have turned into a place of joy and peace. That is the best of all cures for insomnia.

Perhaps you have missed some goal of satisfaction for which you strived at first. The dream is in ruins, and you have spent much time and strength in arriving at a place of disappointment. There is a cure for that, too. Some of life's remodeled jobs are really better than the original plans would have been. Don't lose heart. Give Destiny another chance and see if she doesn't do BETTER than she promised you in the first place.

One of the Hebrew prophets once used the imagery of a potter working with the clay on his whirling wheel. Of course even an expert potter would now and then spoil a piece of work. But should he throw it away and lose it? Never. The wise potter takes a vessel he has marred on the wheel and makes it into something else - possibly something lovelier and more useful than what was originally planned.

If what you expected would be your happiness has been marred on the wheel of destiny, do not throw it away. Use it as the foundation for something else. It may turn out better and lovelier than the creation originally planned could ever have been.

In God's perfect providence nothing is ever lost. As a sharer in the wisdom of the Infinite, do not let anything be lost in your world, least of all any element of happiness. Save the pieces. You can make something of them.

Now let us go back through the centuries and take our places with many Galilean people on a green hillside and listen with them to an explanation of the laws of happiness from the lips of Jesus of Nazareth, who knew more about it than any other wise man who ever lived.

He is delivering what is called the Sermon on the Mount. It is a discourse on the kind of living that will make the world into the kind of place it ought to be. He covers the questions of happiness, prosperity, rightness, prayer, justice in dealing with others, and how to keep the law. He BEGINS with the laws of happiness. No other such formula was ever given. It may seem surprising at first thought, but it is the perfect plan. The word used in the English versions is BLESSED, but what it means is HAPPY.

He lists eight kinds of people who find happiness, thus pointing out eight paths to the goal of our quest. These, He says, are the happy people - the poor in spirit, they that mourn, the meek, they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. It would seem that these trails could hardly be more plainly marked.

Now in closing, let us consider the ultimate destination on the path to happiness. One who travels the road part of the way, and acquires a measure of the reward, may never know that his quest and its results were incomplete, but they are incomplete if they stop short of actual fellowship with God.

In His presence there is fullness of joy, and peace of mind, sang the Hebrew psalmist, and at His right hand there are pleasures forevermore. That is probably the highest word that can be said on the subject of happiness. That is really the end of the road the questor takes.

Do not simply say this is a mystic matter and give it no more attention. No one ever knows just what this CAN mean till he tries it, and that is done simply by opening the heart to the sense of God. He is not far away, but He might as well be so long as we fail to recognize His presence. God is like happiness itself in that we do not have to go in search of Him, for He is always in search of us. We only have to pause and know He is with us.

The only difference between the fellowship of the Divine and that of some human friend is that the fellowship of the Divine is closer. Realize it, and you will walk no more alone.

This Happiness in Fellowship is the real Companionship of The Mayans, both ancient and modern.

May your Path be Richly Blessed with Happiness, and Companionship.

Vade Mecum, Volventibus Annis,

Your Class Instructor
in Beloved Mayanry.