

Praise for *How Happiness Happens*

“For me and my family, I’ve always said that the farm isn’t what made us happy. Instead, I believe it was everything that happened on our way to the farm . . . and it’s because of that journey that we are the people we are today. I love Max Lucado, I love his family, and I love the perspective he shares in *How Happiness Happens*. If you’re looking for a wake-up call or a dose of modern-day wisdom, read this book. In fact, read all of his books—you’ll be glad you did.”

—CHIP GAINES, MAGNOLIA COFOUNDER

“In a world where happiness has become fickle and fleeting, Max takes us back to Jesus’ path to happiness that is rooted in true joy and loving others. *How Happiness Happens* will challenge you to focus less on yourself and your circumstances, and more on our good God—the true source of our joy.”

—CHRISTINE CAINE, BESTSELLING AUTHOR;
FOUNDER, A2I AND PROPEL WOMEN

“In a generation wrestling with comparison and desperately searching for joy, Max beautifully communicates the simplicity of happiness in his new book *How Happiness Happens*. The call to kindness and thoughtful intention is extended to us all. This is a timely message that we all need!”

—KIM WALKER-SMITH, JESUS CULTURE

“Max has done it again! This book is packed with simple reminders of how small acts of kindness can pay massive dividends in our own happiness and then impact the lives of those we come into contact with on a daily basis.”

—DAVID GREEN, CEO, HOBBY LOBBY STORES, INC.

“There’s a reason my friend Max Lucado is one of the bestselling Christian authors of all time! His words touch our hearts with a gentle whisper that in time becomes a roaring waterfall of the Father’s freedom and love. *How Happiness Happens* will delight and awaken you, leading you to a greater peace and purpose than you’ve ever known before.”

—LOUIE GIGLIO, PASSION CITY CHURCH, PASSION CONFERENCES,
AUTHOR OF *NOT FORSAKEN* AND *GOLIATH MUST FALL*

“Max Lucado’s books always look into our hearts, our souls, and our behavior toward one another. His latest book *How Happiness Happens* is no different as he teaches that doing for others makes our hearts feel good and brings us happiness. He uses Scripture in teaching how to bring joy and happiness to those around us. In one of the chapters, Max mentions that ‘doing good does good for the doer’ and I could not agree more.”

—DELILAH, RADIO PERSONALITY AND AUTHOR

“Max Lucado, one of the leading Christian writers of our time, has written a wonderful book about one of life’s most important subjects: happiness. I have long argued that the happy make the world better and the unhappy make it worse. Therefore, this book can make the world better. I hope millions read it. And while it is written from a Christian’s perspective, anyone of any faith—or of no faith—will greatly benefit from it. I am a Jew, and I loved it.”

—DENNIS PRAGER, NATIONALLY SYNDICATED RADIO TALK SHOW HOST AND *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

“I was a college student home from school for the summer and working part-time at my church. My dad, the pastor, encouraged me to begin my mornings by having a daily quiet time. In addition to my Bible, he handed me a stack of books by Max Lucado. I read them one by one, cover to cover. Max’s gifted storytelling and powerful teachings ministered to me then, and his books are still accompanying my daily quiet times today. I’ve been challenged greatly by *How Happiness Happens* and its powerful chapter by chapter reminder that the way we love others just might cause a much needed ‘quiet revolution of joy.’ Thanks Max, you keep speaking to me!”

—MATTHEW WEST, DOVE AWARD WINNER AND
FOUR-TIME GRAMMY NOMINEE

“As a leader who coaches others to fully embrace their calling, I have learned firsthand how elusive happiness can be if separated from a servant’s heart and a generous spirit. In typical Max Lucado brilliance, *How Happiness Happens* sets our assumptions on end and lovingly invites us to live more fully like Jesus. In the process, we will find what we’ve been searching for all along—true happiness.”

—KADI COLE, LEADERSHIP CONSULTANT AND AUTHOR
OF *DEVELOPING FEMALE LEADERS*, KADICOLE.COM

“The genius of Max is his ability to use God’s Word in an expository way, so we can easily apply it to our lives. The book *How Happiness Happens* is another example of how God speaks through Max.”

—LANCE BARROW, COORDINATING PRODUCER, *GOLF CBS SPORTS*

“My friend Max Lucado is one of the most respected and admired champions of faith in this generation. His knowledge of the Bible is well established, and he is a prolific author and highly sought-after speaker. Max is a leader, a mentor, and an inspiration to millions of believers around the world.”

—JOEL OSTEEN, SENIOR PASTOR, LAKEWOOD CHURCH

“Wow, the world is searching for something: contentment, happiness, joy, or whatever. Max Lucado reminds us that where we look shapes what we find. As Max always does, he explains what we need to know about happiness and then points us in the right direction. You will be blessed as you understand happiness better!”

—ED STETZER, BILLY GRAHAM CENTER, WHEATON COLLEGE

HOW
Happiness
Happens

ALSO BY MAX LUCADO

INSPIRATIONAL

3:16
A Gentle Thunder
A Love Worth Giving
And the Angels Were Silent
Anxious for Nothing
Because of Bethlehem
Before Amen
Come Thirsty
Cure for the Common Life
Facing Your Giants
Fearless
Glory Days
God Came Near
Grace
Great Day Every Day
He Chose the Nails
He Still Moves Stones
In the Eye of the Storm
In the Grip of Grace
It's Not About Me
Just Like Jesus
Max on Life
More to Your Story
Next Door Savior
No Wonder They Call Him the Savior
On the Anvil
Outlive Your Life
Six Hours One Friday
The Applause of Heaven
The Great House of God
Traveling Light
Unshakable Hope
When Christ Comes
When God Whispers Your Name
You'll Get Through This

FICTION

Christmas Stories
Miracle at the Higher Grounds Café
The Christmas Candle

BIBLES (GENERAL EDITOR)

Children's Daily Devotional Bible
Grace for the Moment Daily Bible
The Lucado Life Lessons Study Bible

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

A Max Lucado Children's Treasury
Do You Know I Love You, God?
God Always Keeps His Promises
God Forgives Me, and I Forgive You
God Listens When I Pray
Grace for the Moment: 365 Devotions for Kids
Hermie, a Common Caterpillar
I'm Not a Scaredy Cat
Itsy Bitsy Christmas
Just in Case You Ever Wonder
Lucado Treasury of Bedtime Prayers
One Hand, Two Hands
Thank You, God, for Blessing Me
Thank You, God, for Loving Me
The Boy and the Ocean
The Crippled Lamb
The Oak Inside the Acorn
The Tallest of Smalls
You Are Mine
You Are Special

YOUNG ADULT BOOKS

3:16
It's Not About Me
Make Every Day Count
Wild Grace
You Were Made to Make a Difference

GIFT BOOKS

Fear Not Promise Book
For the Tough Times
God Thinks You're Wonderful
Grace for the Moment
Grace Happens Here
His Name Is Jesus
Let the Journey Begin
Live Loved
Mocha with Max
Safe in the Shepherd's Arms
This Is Love
You Changed My Life

HOW *Happiness* Happens

FINDING LASTING JOY IN A WORLD OF COMPARISON,
DISAPPOINTMENT, AND UNMET EXPECTATIONS

MAX LUCADO



THOMAS NELSON
Since 1798

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For Jim Barker

For twenty-five years you've taught me, pastored
me, and attempted to fix my golf swing.

Two out of three ain't bad.

Thank you, friend.

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And Denalyn, my dear wife. How does happiness happen? Simple. Marry Denalyn. It sure worked for me. I love you.

1

The Unexpected Door to Joy

It's 6:00 a.m. in Hamilton, Bermuda. Ninety-two-year-old Johnny Barnes stands on the edge of a roundabout and waves at people as they drive past. He's been here since before 4:00 a.m. He'll be here until 10:00 a.m. He's not asking for money or begging for food. He's not protesting, complaining, picketing, or loitering.

He's making people happy.

He wears a straw hat and a salty beard. His eyes are bright, teeth white, and skin leathery and dark. The years have bent his back and slowed his step. But they haven't siphoned his joy. He waves with both hands extended in front of him. His wrists turn from side to side as if he were adjusting the volume on a soundboard.

He pulls back his right hand to retrieve a kiss and blow it in the direction of a taxi driver or commuter.

"I love you!" he shouts. "I'll love you forever!" "Hello, there, darlin'. I love you!"

And they love him! Bermudans call him Mr. Happy Man. They route their morning commute to see him. If Johnny's not standing in his spot, people call the radio station to check on him. If he happens to miss acknowledging some commuters, they often circle the roundabout until he waves at them. One morning a cranky woman determined not

to make eye contact with him. She wanted to wallow in her bad mood. But she ended up looking his way. When he smiled, she smiled.

Another sour attitude bit the dust.

Johnny's philosophy is simple. "We human beings gotta learn how to love one another. One of the greatest joys that can come to an individual is when you're doing something and helping others."¹

Wouldn't you love to meet a person like him?

Better still, wouldn't you like to be like him?

How long has it been since you felt a level of contagious, infectious, unflappable, unstoppable happiness? Maybe your answer is "I feel that way all the time." If so, God bless you. (And consider passing on this book to someone who needs it.) For many, perhaps most of us, the answer is "Well, it's been a while. I used to be happy, but then life took its toll."

"The disease took my health."

"The economy took my job."

"The jerk took my heart."

And as a result something pilfered our happiness. It can seem such a fragile thing, this joy. Here one day. Tomorrow scattered by the winds of a storm.

Still we keep searching for it, longing for it, this sense of contentment and well-being. Worldwide, people profess that happiness is their most cherished goal.² The most popular class in the three-century history of Yale University is on happiness.³ Magazine covers promise everything from sexual happiness to financial contentment. I googled "happy hour," and in one second seventy-five million options invited my click.

Marketing companies get this. Television commercials make grand promises: Want to be happy? Buy our hand cream. Want some joy? Sleep

on this mattress. Desire a dose of delight? Eat at this restaurant, drive this car, wear this dress. Nearly every advertising strategy portrays the image of a joy-filled person, even the advertisement for Preparation H. Before using the product the guy scowls as he sits. Afterward he is the image of joy. Perhaps the *H* stands for *happy*?

Happiness. Everyone craves it.

And everyone benefits from it. Happy people enjoy higher odds of a strong marriage, lower odds of divorce, and superior work performance. They are also healthier, resulting from a bolstered immune system.⁴ In one study researchers found a correlation between happiness and fatter pocketbooks.⁵ An analysis of twenty-five studies indicated that happy people are more effective leaders than Debbie Downers.⁶ Happiness, it turns out, helps everyone.

But fewer people are finding it. Only one-third of Americans surveyed said they were happy. In the nine-year history of the Harris Poll Survey of American Happiness, the highest index was 35 percent. This means a cloud of perpetual grayness overshadows two out of three people.⁷ Smiles are in short supply. By some estimates clinical depression is ten times more rampant now than it was a century ago.⁸ The World Health Organization forecasts that by the year 2020 “depression will become the second leading cause of disease worldwide.”⁹

It used to be that older people were happier. People in their sixties and seventies generally scored higher in the areas of contentment and appreciation of life. That has changed. Age does not seem to bring the satisfaction it once did.¹⁰

How can this be? Education is accessible to most. We’ve made advancements in everything from medicine to technology, yet 66 percent of us can’t find an adequate reason to check the yes box on the happiness questionnaire.

Are genetics to blame? Not to the degree one might think. Heredity may influence as much as 50 percent of our disposition. Even if this number is accurate, that leaves the other 50 percent under our purview.¹¹

What's up? How do we explain the gloom? While the answers are varied and complex, among them must be this idea: we are using the wrong door.

The oft-used front door to happiness is the one described by the advertising companies: acquire, retire, and aspire to drive faster, dress trendier, and drink more. Happiness depends on what you hang in your closet, park in your garage, mount on your trophy wall, deposit in your bank account, experience in your bedroom, wear on your wedding finger, or serve at your dining table. Happiness happens when you lose the weight, get the date, find the mate, or discover your fate. It's wide, this front door to happiness.

Yet for all its promise it fails to deliver.

In a classic study psychologists determined that recent winners of the Illinois State Lottery were no happier than recent accident victims who were consequently disabled. The two groups were asked to "rate the amount of pleasure they got from everyday activities: small but enjoyable things like chatting with a friend, watching TV, eating breakfast, laughing at a joke, or receiving a compliment. When the researchers analyzed their results, they found that the recent accident victims reported gaining more happiness from these everyday pleasures than the lottery winners."¹²

Even the thrill of winning the lottery wears off.

More money makes truly poor people happier insofar as it relieves pressure from everyday life—getting enough to eat, having a place to live, affording medical care. But once people reach the middle-class income level, even big financial gains don't yield much, if any, increase in happiness.¹³ Americans who earn more than \$10 million annually report a

happiness level only slightly higher than the blue-collar workers they employ.¹⁴ As one Harvard professor said, “We think money will bring lots of happiness for a long time, and actually it brings a little happiness for a short time.”¹⁵

We’ve all seen happy peasants and miserable millionaires, right?

There is another option. It requires no credit card, monthly mortgage, or stroke of fortune. It demands no airline tickets or hotel reservations. It stipulates no PhD, MD, or blue-blood pedigree. Age, ethnicity, and gender are not factors. Balmy climates, blue skies, and Botox are not mandated. No resources for psychoanalysis, plastic surgery, or hormone therapy? No problem. You don’t have to change jobs, change cities, change looks, or change neighborhoods.

But you might need to change doors.

The motto on the front door says “Happiness happens when you get.” The sign on the lesser-used back door counters “Happiness happens when you give.”

Doing good does good for the doer.

Research bears this out.

When volunteers were put in a functional MRI scanner and were told they would be giving some of their money to charity, the areas of their brains associated with pleasure—like food and sex—lit up like Christmas trees. Giving to help others triggers dopamine.¹⁶ (New fundraising slogan perhaps?)

In another study a team of social psychologists distilled happiness factors into eight common denominators. Two of the first three involve helping others. Happy, contented people “devote a great amount of time to their family and friends, nurturing and enjoying those relationships.” And “they are often the first to offer a helping hand to co-workers and passers-by.”¹⁷

HOW HAPPINESS HAPPENS

Seeking joy? Do good for someone else. A tender example of this truth came my way just today. I met with a husband and daughter to plan the funeral of the wife and mother. Patty was the picture of unselfishness. We tried to imagine how many kids she had hugged, diapers she had changed, children she had taught, and hearts she had encouraged. To see her smile was to see springtime thaw the winter ice.

Three months ago a brain condition had left her unable to speak, partially paralyzed, and living in a rehabilitation center. Her spirits sank so low she did not want to eat and had trouble sleeping. One evening her daughter had an idea. She placed her mother in a wheelchair and rolled her from room to room, looking for people who needed encouragement. It didn't take long.

Though unable to speak, Patty could touch and pray. So she did both. She patted other patients and then placed her hand on their hearts and bowed her head. For the better part of the evening, she touched and prayed her way through the rehab center. That night her appetite returned, and she slept peacefully.

The words of Jesus are spot-on: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Because when you do, it has a boomerang effect. Happiness happens when we give it away.

This is such great news. You can't control your genetics. You aren't in charge of the weather, the traffic, or the occupant of the White House. But you can always increase the number of smiles on our planet. You can lower the anger level in your city. You—yes, you—can help people to sleep better, laugh more, hum instead of grumble, walk instead of stumble. You can lighten the load and brighten the day of other human beings. And don't be surprised when you begin to sense a newfound joy yourself. That's what this book is about: the unexpected door to joy.

And standing at the entryway to welcome you is Jesus of Nazareth.

THE UNEXPECTED DOOR TO JOY

Jesus was accused of much, but he was never ever described as a grump, sourpuss, or self-centered jerk. People didn't groan when he appeared. They didn't duck for cover when he entered the room.

He called them by name.

He listened to their stories.

He answered their questions.

He visited their sick relatives and helped their sick friends.

He fished with fishermen and ate lunch with the little guy and spoke words of resounding affirmation. He went to weddings. He was even placed in charge of the wine list at a wedding. He went to so many parties that he was criticized for hanging out with rowdy people and questionable crowds. Thousands came to hear him. Hundreds chose to follow him. They shut down their businesses and walked away from careers to be with him. His purpose statement read "I came to give life with joy and abundance" (John 10:10 THE VOICE). Jesus was happy and wants us to be the same.

When the angels announced the arrival of the Messiah, they proclaimed "good news of a great joy" (Luke 2:10 RSV), not "bad news of a great duty." Scripture has more than twenty-seven hundred passages that contain words like *joy, happiness, gladness, merriment, pleasure, celebration, cheer, laughter, delight, jubilation, feasting, blessing, and exultation*.¹⁸ Our joy level matters to God.

This is no call to naivete or superficial happy talk. Jesus spoke candidly about sin, death, and the needs of the human heart. Yet he did so with hope. He brought joy to the people of first-century Palestine. And he wants to bring joy to the people of this generation, and he has enlisted some special agents of happiness to do the job. You and me.

Not an easy task. The people in our world can be moody, fickle, and stubborn. And that just describes my wife's husband. If we are going to

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find the joy that comes through giving joy away, we need a plan. We need instruction. No wonder the Bible has so much to say about finding joy in the act of sharing it. The New Testament contains more than fifty “one another” statements, practical principles for making happiness happen. I’ve condensed them into a list of ten.

1. Encourage one another (1 Thess. 5:11).
2. Bear with one another (Eph. 4:2).
3. Regard one another as more important (Phil. 2:4).
4. Greet one another (Rom. 16:16).
5. Pray for one another (James 5:16).
6. Serve one another (Gal. 5:13).
7. Accept one another (Rom. 15:7).
8. Admonish one another (Col. 3:16).
9. Forgive one another (Eph. 4:32).
10. Love one another (1 John 3:11).

Let’s open the door to each of these “one another” passages and embark on a happiness project. I’m thinking you will discover what the Bible teaches and research affirms: doing good does good for the doer.

You and I indwell a lonely planet. Broken hearts populate every office building. Discouragement mummifies countless lives. The world is desperate, yes, desperate, for a cavalry of kindness. We cannot solve every problem in society, but we can bring smiles to a few faces. And who knows? If you brighten your corner of the world and I do the same in mine, a quiet revolution of joy might break out.