



The Sacrament of Happy: What a Smiling God Brings to a Wounded World

Lisa Harper , Christine Caine (Foreword)

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God is good, God does good, and oh, how He wants you to be happy.

In her new book, *The Sacrament of Happy: What a Smiling God Brings to a Wounded World*, Lisa Harper unveils that happiness is a gift from God that we can unashamedly enjoy. Happiness tends to be cast as a fluffy emotion without substance rather than a biblical concept, but this is not theologically accurate. Wearing the twin hats of both seminarian and belly-laughing adoptive mom, Lisa Harper dismantles the old-school idea that joy, not happiness, is the truly spiritual emotion, and asserts that Christ-followers are actually *called* to happiness.

We are called to happiness, and this happiness is not impacted by personal or global tumult. In fact, happiness is a sacrament. The general definition of *sacrament* is “a visible sign of inward grace.” In communities of faith, it most often refers to holy communion or the Eucharist. In the broadest understanding, however, a sacrament is a gift bestowed by God, and in that case, ‘happiness’ is absolutely a sacrament—a visible, sometimes even audible, sign of inward grace!

Lisa shares heart-wrenching difficult stories from her past, as well as some side-splitting hilarity along the way. Throughout the book, we see that happiness and sadness can coexist and ebb and flow like the tides.

Christine Caine, Founder of A21 & Propel Women, had this to say about Lisa’s new book: “*The Sacrament of Happy*—like all of Lisa’s messages and books—enriches my understanding of God and His Word—and His great love for us. As always, she unfolds biblical truth so clearly and calls me to action. Every. Single. Time.”

The Sacrament of Happy: What a Smiling God Brings to a Wounded World Details

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From Reader Review The Sacrament of Happy: What a Smiling God Brings to a Wounded World for online ebook

Jessie Young says

Ms Harper is hilarious. She is an amazing story teller. She had me laughing out loud so hard at some of her stories. I thoroughly enjoyed them. The issue I had with the book is that the stories distract from the main points. Ms Harper makes very good points but it's hard to connect everything through the stories. The stories take so long to tell that by the time I'm done with the story I've lost all focus on the points being made before the story and the points after (and how they all connect together). What I remember more from the book is the crazy stories (the airplane story was hilarious) and not the points about happiness. I had a hard time following the point of the book. It was an enjoyable read... but I feel like I didn't take much away. The best line of the book was: "Real, God-imbued happiness is not the absence of sadness or badness. Rather, it is hanging on to the truth of His sovereign goodness regardless of what's going on within or around us."

Ioana says

It is a liberating book, giving people permission to break away from the grumpy and gloomy attitude we think we must have in order to prove we are good Christians.

Lisa Harper makes a case for the happy God that changes a forlorn Christian into a happy one. Although I enjoyed reading this book, especially because there were a lot of Bible passages from various versions, as well as personal anecdotes, I still think that the happy the author talks about is deeply grounded in the joy we Christians hear a lot about. Despite these nuances, it was a good reminder that there is more to the Christian life, and that there is always the choice to approach each situation in two ways, one of them being the choice of happy.

This was the second book by Lisa Harper I read and I enjoy her writing style. It's not pretentious, but it comes from a good and happy heart who deeply loves God. She sounds like a genuine and relatable person, and this makes her books easy to read.

I received a free advanced e-book copy of this book from the publisher via Net Galley. All thoughts expressed here are my own.

Heather says

"While God doesn't need us to be happy, He chooses to include us in His joy." ~ Lisa Harper

Harper does a phenomenal job of showing us how happiness is Scriptural. She does so with her flair for storytelling. Every word touched my heart. But especially those of having an eternal life with a happy Heavenly Father. It's also a reminder for me to enjoy the happiness He gives me daily and make sure those around me see it.

Rachel B says

Throughout the first half of this book, my overarching opinion was that this was simply not memorable – not bad, not good – and I would have given it three stars at that point.

Then in the second half of the book, Harper started to get on my nerves.

For starters, she writes. Like. This. All. The. Time.

She tended to make herself either the hero or the victim in her stories, and she had a habit of projecting her own thoughts and feelings onto other people. She seemed to view anyone who thought differently than her as "bad." (I think she would benefit from studying the MBTI.)

I think what pushed me over the edge, though, was her account of Penninah and Hannah, whose story originates in 1 Samuel. The Biblical account states that Penninah "taunted" Hannah over her infertility. That's as much insight as we get into Penninah's character; yet Harper spends *three* paragraphs imagining Penninah as inept trailer trash (she has a "high, nasally voice," can't control her children, smokes two packs a day, etc.). I found it very petty, not to mention ironic, that Harper resorted to mocking Penninah for mocking Hannah.

Harper had some really funny stories in the book, but they did detract from her message a bit. That is, I can remember a couple of the stories, but not the "lessons" that supposedly correlated with them. There is some truth in this book, but it's overshadowed by humor and snark.

I received this book from the publisher via NetGalley.

Lynne Farrell says

I received an advance digital copy of the book from the publisher.

I just finished this book and read it all in one day. Having not read anything by Lisa Harper before, I was not sure what to expect, but I honestly loved the book. Lisa writes with humour and honesty, and it is all backed up with Scripture. As I read I had highlighter and Bible in hand, to make sure I recorded some of her pearls of wisdom. The truth is God is a happy God, who is happy with us. This quote from early in the book really struck a chord with me:

Here's the liberating truth about God being happy with us : it's not up to us! We don't have to work harder to make it into some elusive "I deserve to be happy" club. We can't instigate or impel divine happiness, nor can we lose or lessen divine happiness. God's joy is self-generated and sustained with and through His Spirit and His Son. So when we put our trust in Jesus and receive the accompanying infilling of the Holy Spirit, we become heirs of His divine delight. We are grafted in, so to speak, chosen to be the apple of God's eye and beneficiaries of His good pleasure."

Also: "Real, God-imbued happiness is not the absence of sadness or badness. Rather, it is hanging on to the truth of His sovereign goodness regardless of what's going on within or around us. "

I cannot recommend this book enough!

Paula Vince says

I enjoy reading and reviewing the occasional book about happiness theories, as there's always a lot to get out of them. This one's sound premise attracted me. In years gone by, happiness got a bad wrap from dour Christians who thought it was based on shallow, swinging emotions, but in reality, God actually wants us to be happy. It may even be one of his major purposes for us. Lisa Harper reminds us that there are thousands of direct or closely related references to happiness in the Bible, which suggests that it might be our calling.

However, her style of writing frequently caused me to lose her thread. She begins sections with interesting questions, such as, 'How do we cultivate happy?' or 'How can we recover our happy?' or 'Can happy change the world?' Then she launches into long, humorous personal anecdotes that tend to ramble off on tangents. Reading the book became an exercise of seeing how she could wind her stories back to the points she was trying to make. In fact sometimes they went on for so long that I had to keep flipping back to remind myself what the initial question even was.

Harper doesn't always make allowances for different temperaments either. 'How does happiness express itself?' is a good example. Her self-proclaimed temperament is different from mine. Harper is energetic, loud and sanguine, and some of her advice seems crafted for people who are similarly wired. Those of us who enjoy more low-key styles of happiness can find good points in the book too, though. And some advice is great across the board, such as regularly frisking our thoughts, making sure we keep moving, and exercising intentional gratitude.

I could imagine this author being a stand-up comedian and getting crowds laughing, which I'm sure she does. Overall, it's not a bad book, although you may find some parts more relevant than others for you.

Thanks to B&H Publishing Group and NetGalley for my review copy.

Kiersten says

I received a digital copy from the publisher to read and review before the release. And I am so glad I did! I have read a couple of Lisa's other books and knew that this one would be just as good. Lisa has an incredible talent for writing in a funny and inviting way and remaining true and honest to the teachings of Jesus in Scripture. You can see the love she has for Jesus, her daughter Missy and her life in general through her written words. In *The Sacrament of Happy* she dives into the idea that our God is a God who is happy and wants us to be happy as well. Not in a health and wealth gospel way. But in a truly happy and joyful in who God is, who He created us to be and the life He has given us way. And being the amazing Bible teacher she is, all of her lessons and stories have solid Biblical backing. It's a great read and one I will return to again and again.

Susan Finch says

I absolutely loved this book by Lisa Harper. I have to admit, it is the first book that I have read by this Christian author. I recently heard her speak at a conference and I left wanting to hear more from her. When

the opportunity arose to read her new book, I jumped at the chance and I was not disappointed. In the midst of a world that is full of troubles and strife, especially when watching the evening news, the topic of happiness is very relevant. Lisa discusses the answers to questions I've often heard about happiness. She tackles everything from "is happiness holy?" and "is God happy?" to "how do we cultivate happy?" and "what to do when happy takes a hike." Her answers throughout are clearly backed up by scripture and not just her own point of view. She also makes the book very interesting and personal by sharing examples and anecdotes from her own life. I loved exploring the ideas throughout the book, including the question as to whether happy and sad can coexist. (Spoiler alert-it can! And chapter six will give you biblical examples to prove it.)

I also really appreciated the reflective questions at the end of each chapter. This makes the book excellent for both personal and group study. I look forward to the chance to complete this book with my Bible study group or a book club.

Note: I received an advance reader's copy of this book in exchange for my honest review of the author's work.

Courtney Stuart says

Lisa Harper

The Sacrament of Happy – What a smiling God brings to a wounded world

The Sacrament of Happy is a sweet little book full of laugh out loud moments, deep insights and Biblical truth. It can be read in a couple of hours easily and you will not be bogged down with more questions than answers it offers.

****Happy.** The word itself conjures up idyllic images, doesn't it? Like a toddler in overalls splashing through puddles while gleefully chasing a frog.... The kind of word a middle school girl might doodle in her diary with big loopy p's and a flower woven into the tail of the y, right?*

Harper asks the question of what is our view of God. Is He a stern, gruff face full of authoritarian anger, or is God a smiling, joyful, happy being that we view with kindness? God is most often described by Christians as holy, but very rarely happy. And it's that very mindset that Harper wants to challenge and change. She explains through the exegesis of different passages in the Bible how the original words written in Greek meant the word happy, and how it changes the whole view of the passages to what we generally view it to mean.

There are actually thirty-seven references to 'happy' in the Old Testament and forty-eight in the New Testament. Randy Alcorn's book...notes more than 2,700 pages where terms related to happy – gladness, merriment, pleasure, celebration, cheer, laughter, delight, jubilation and feasting – are used.

Harper asks questions such as is God happy, is being happy even holy, is happiness an absence of sadness and can happiness change the world. She answers the questions with stories from her own life as a busy single mum of a little girl with HIV to looking at stories told in the Bible and how they related to the truth Harper is trying to teach.

Easy to read, full of things to explore further and learn, Harper shares stories from her own life to give

greater impact to what she is teaching, which are often hilarious. She asks questions such as if its possible to be happy even after horrible things have happened to us or to the ones we love and treats the topic with gentle tenderness. She gives examples and backs up things Biblically. This is a great book to read, ponder and then act upon.

****While God doesn't need us to be happy, He chooses to include us in His joy.****

Beth says

“If we will choose to love hard, even when it is hard, I’m willing to be all the hot bread and tortilla chips of my future on the fact that our planet will be a much better –much happier–place to live.” Lisa Harper *The Sacrament of Happy*

The Sacrament of Happy combines Scripture with Lisa Harper’s life experiences ranging from childhood through her present life with her adopted daughter Missy.

Life has not always been as joy-filled as her present circumstances might lead you to believe. And that is what make Lisa Harper one of many experts on the subject of God-given happiness.

Happiness is something I’ve been exploring lately, and it hasn’t been out of a need to find a way to be happy. Life has been going well for the most part, which has made this the perfect time to read about the subject.

Lisa Harper refers to other resources throughout this book and explains aspects of her personal study of happiness. Her relatable life examples of motherhood and heartbreak had me cackling and tearing up. Her insights into scripture were deep and thought-provoking.

Harper’s writing is refreshingly humorous and transparent without the layer of sarcasm that seems prevalent in other books I’ve read recently. That alone will has created a repeat customer. But Harper doesn’t stop there. After pointing to the Bible for teaching on why happiness is important she then reveals how to begin the process of understanding the happiness Scripture refers to.

Melanie Walenciak says

I had the opportunity to read an advanced copy of this book so that I could share my honest thoughts, and honestly, I loved this book.

I've always been an optimist, a Pollyanna even, and there are many times I have felt the need to apologize for it, or worse yet been ashamed of it as if being happy made me less "deep" or less intellectual, or more in denial when confronted with the woes of this world.

Lisa Harper does an amazing job of shedding a little perspective on my happiness. Presented as a sacrament or a "visible sign of inward grace" Lisa paints a picture of happiness being a gift from God in this life that foreshadows the unimaginable happiness we have waiting for us in eternity.

To be clear, she isn't suggesting that we deny all the terrible things in life. In fact, Lisa describes some pretty heart-wrenching scenarios and then suggests that even in the midst of that, we can still exercise happy. And she shows us this by example. In one particular chapter, i was crying and laughing at the same time, an emotion I haven't felt since watching that one scene in Steel Magnolias.

Lisa Harper's writing style makes for an easy read, and while it may seem like a light-hearted topic, if we could only latch on to the power of happiness, if we could take this gift from God, this happiness seriously, oh what lives we could lead!

Angela Sangalang says

*I received a digital copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for a review. All opinions are my own.

While reading "The Sacrament of Happy: What a smiling God brings to a wounded world" by Lisa Harper, I wrote a little note that turned out to be that thing this book made (is making) me wrestle with. I wrote: I've been grasping with the idea...the fact that God loves me no matter what. But, I guess, I still thought He loves me, but He's not always happy with me. Like when we love our family, but doesn't always like them. Not always happy with them. God will never stop loving me, but He must not always like me, like when I mess up. He must not always be happy with me, right? To think that God actually is always happy with me no matter what...well then!

In her new book, Lisa shares heartfelt stories from her own life about happiness and how it doesn't just fit in or belong in the Christian life, but that "we're quite literally called to be happy" (Lisa Harper). Lisa also lays down a Biblical foundation for happiness and challenges readers with question prompts to reflect and think through.

Like Lisa, I was also taught about JOY (Jesus, Others, Yourself) vs. happiness. I was taught that joy was eternal and happiness temporary. I was taught that we could never lose joy, but happiness is fleeting. Lisa turns that thinking upside its head in a way that I'm still mulling over.

"Here's the liberating truth about God being happy with us: it's not up to us!" – Lisa Harper, "The Sacrament of Happy"

Can we sit with that for just a few seconds? Happy is like Grace. Just as God's grace is given to us not because we're worthy or did anything to deserve it, God is happy with us not because we're worthy or did anything to deserve it. Is it just me that feels so very free to hear that?!?

"The Sacrament of Happy" is for anyone who's ever struggled with happy. What does it mean to be happy? How do we pursue happiness? What does God say about it? How does it fit into the Christian life and the serious Christian doctrines? How do we live in happiness when the world mourns?

I have so many favorite stories from those that Lisa shared in her book, but one of my favorites is when she found out that the Hokey Pokey is a universal favorite children's song. I won't spoil the story, but get ready to shed a few tears and then laugh out loud.

Part of the proceeds of this book will go towards building a sustainable garden in Neply, Haiti, where Lisa's oh-so-very-adorable daughter, Missy, was born.

Brandi (Rambles of a SAHM) says

In her newest book, *The Sacrament of Happy*, Lisa Harper reminds us that happiness isn't the absence of sadness. That thought is kind of mind boggling. How in the world can I be happy in the midst of great sorrow? It has the tendency to seem foreign to us, yet we've all met that rare person that seems to be happy and content in the midst of a great tragedy or an overwhelming sorrow.

As I read through the book and absorbed Lisa's thoughts that are backed up with Scripture it began to make sense. Not only did it make sense but it seemed achievable. Lisa goes on to tell us that happiness can be ours when we remember the fundamental truth that God is and does good. It's what He desires for us. It's what He gives us in the midst of tragedy if we will let Him.

This is a short book, only 10 chapters, but it will make a huge impact on how you think about happiness and where it originates from. We live in a society that tells us that happiness comes from things and experiences. The truth is it comes from the One who made us.

I think this would make a wonderful small group read. Each chapter ends with very thought provoking questions that relate to the chapter's topic. While most of the personal stories obviously have a female feel to them I still think the subject matter would go over well in a mixed small group.

I received a copy of this book to facilitate my review.

Michelle says

Is it ok for Christians to be happy and if so, is it ok for them to be outwardly happy in public? This is what author Lisa Harper discusses in her new book, *‘The Sacrament of Happy’*. Lisa was raised in a religion that didn't allow dancing, card playing, or apparently any public signs of happiness. She also experienced child abuse. Her book, *‘The Sacrament of Happy’* is written for all women. Lisa tells her book as if she were sitting with the reader face-face.

The very first chapter had me laughing as she explains an episode where she and a friend were to walk the red carpet. Instead, they wound up falling into a plot of mud with their high heels and fancy dresses on. What could they do but laugh?

Lisa referenced a couple of authors in her book; author Randy Alcorn and theologian John Piper. Randy Alcorn states there are 2,700 passages where terms related to happy (gladness, merriment, pleasure, etc.) are used in the Bible. God wants us to be happy. The reader will also notice that Lisa has done much research on the word *‘happy’*.

The take away from this book on how to be happy is to first focus on God, and then be kind, polite, generous, and respectful of others.

Each chapter begins with a quote and ends with reflection questions making this a great book study for book

clubs.

Disclaimer: "I was provided a free copy of this book. All opinions are my own."

Julie D. says

The Sacrament of Happy had me thinking in new ways about how God loves me. It's hard for me to believe that God loves me unconditionally, and the concept that He may actually be happy with me, is totally foreign to my mind and heart. This book has me re-thinking about God's love for us and how much He delights in us.

This book is written in such a way that Lisa makes you feel as though you're sitting across the table from her while she shares her stories. She is open, honest, and her writing is so touching. I found myself wiping away tears one minute and laughing out loud the next.

I really love that she is so faithful to the Word of God in sharing about the idea of happiness and the believer. She also shares ideas from Biblical teachers that I know and trust. The questions at the end of the chapters helped me to really dig deep into my own thoughts and feelings about how I feel about the idea of being happy as a Christian woman.

My biggest take away from this book is that it's really okay to be happy and that our joy and happiness are found in the Lord. Yes, our thoughts can make a huge difference in how we feel but these feelings need to be grounded in what is true from the Word of God. I enjoyed this book so much and will be re-reading it again because I know there are so many concepts I truly want to implement into my life. I highly recommend this book and give it 5 out of 5 stars.

*This book was provided to me for my honest review by B & H Publishers
