The Problem with the Pursuit of Happiness
The Declaration of Independence

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men...”
What is happiness?

Definition of happiness

1. good fortune: prosperity
2. a: a state of well-being and contentment: joy
   b: a pleasurable or satisfying experience
The Problem with the Pursuit of Happiness

• There are too many shortcuts
Shortcuts to Happiness

- Electrically-stimulated happiness
Shortcuts to Happiness

- Electrically-stimulated happiness
- Chemically-provided happiness

Certain Drugs Press the Brain’s “Happiness” Buttons
Proverbs 31:4–7 (NKJV)

It is not for kings, O Lemuel, It is not for kings to drink wine, Nor for princes intoxicating drink; 5 Lest they drink and forget the law, And pervert the justice of all the afflicted. 6 Give strong drink to him who is perishing, And wine to those who are bitter of heart. 7 Let him drink and forget his poverty, And remember his misery no more.
Shortcuts to Happiness

- Electrically-stimulated happiness
- Chemically-provided happiness
- Technology-induced happiness
Shortcuts to Happiness

• Electrically-stimulated happiness
• Chemically-provided happiness
• Technology-induced happiness
• Many others
The Problem with the Pursuit of Happiness

• There are too many shortcuts
• Happiness is not our purpose in life
Happiness in the New Testament

Acts 26:2 - “I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews,

Romans 14:22 - Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

1 Corinthians 7:39–40 - A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment
If the ladder is not leaning against the right wall, every step we take just gets us to the wrong place faster.

Stephen R. Covey
What should we pursue?

• What God wants for us
For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.
2 Timothy 2:22 (NKJV)

Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.
What should we pursue?

- What God wants for us
- Meaning that makes suffering worthwhile
Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. In all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign you; but they will give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.
What should we pursue?

• What God wants for us
• Meaning that makes suffering worthwhile
• The joy of the Lord
For “He who would love life And see good days, Let him refrain his tongue from evil, And his lips from speaking deceit. 11 Let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it. 12 For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”
The True Pursuit of Happiness

Instead of asking,

“What can I do today that will make me happy?”

ask,

“What can I do today that will make my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ happy?”

Nehemiah 8:10 – “...this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”