

# How King David Teaches Us to Find Happiness after Personal Loss

[Frank Santora](#) | Pastor

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When I look around the world today there seems to be a *happiness vacuum*. There are more hurting people, hating people and hopeless people than there are happy people. For many, it's because of the grinding stress of broken routines in a world turned upside down, and the endless waiting for life to return to normal. But sadly, for others there has been a personal loss so great that life will never be the same. They may search for happiness, but seem powerless to ever find it.

And we want to be happy. One source I read reported that Americans consider happiness more important to them than money, moral goodness and even going to Heaven. Many people think money can buy them happiness. Yet 37% of Forbes' list of The World's Wealthiest People are less happy than the average American. Americans have seen their personal incomes increase by more than 2½ times over the last fifty years, but their happiness level (according to Google) has remained the same. And Americans earning more than \$10 million annually are only slightly happier than average American earners. Whether or not those stats are true, clearly, most people want to be happy, but don't know how.

Here is the good news – God *also* wants us to be not just happy, but full of joy! Look at what the Bible says:

“Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24).

“For You, O Lord, have made me glad by what You have done. I will sing for joy at the works of Your hands” (Psalm 92:4).

“Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

“...happy is that people, whose God is the Lord” (Psalm 144:15).

So I think I’m on solid, biblical ground when I say, God wants us to be happy! But unhappiness caused by deep personal loss is much different than unhappiness caused by broken routines and a general dissatisfaction with life, career, or relationships. Thankfully, the Bible gives us encouragement and direction through the life of King David to recover and move on.



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## **King David's Example of Overcoming Painful Loss**

In [2 Samuel 11-12](#), we find an account of tragedy and loss which occurred later in King David's life. David was no longer the charismatic boy who killed [Goliath](#) and rallied the nation for God. He was King over Israel – a king whom power had corrupted. David, the man after God's own heart, had become selfish, cunning, and capable of deceit.

You probably know the full story. Instead of being with his troops during wartime, David was taking it easy in the palace. One day, David caught sight of a woman bathing. It was Bathsheba, the wife of his friend Uriah, and David had an affair with her. After she became pregnant, David ordered Uriah to be placed in harm's way during battle, causing his death. David then married Bathsheba to cover up their sinful actions.

David probably thought he was in the clear, but we can imagine the inner turmoil David was probably experiencing. A conscience living under the weight of a cover-up eventually manifests itself in an unhappy countenance. So what does God do? He sends the prophet Nathan to have a little talk with David, revealing to him that the sin had been exposed, and that the baby to be born was not going to survive.

David's carefully constructed world was rocked. He began [fasting](#), praying and interceding for the life of the child. His plan to cover up his sin created a much greater problem and left him in emotional upheaval. He was depressed, devastated and full of regrets, and he was launched into that happiness vacuum that so many find themselves in.

Everyone has a story behind their sadness – events and circumstances that have led them into a happiness vacuum.

An affair. An unplanned pregnancy. An ongoing, secret sin or addiction. An ungodly, toxic relationship. An unexpected tragedy, or death of a loved one.

Yes, every single person in a happiness vacuum has a story behind their sorrow. If this is you, know that there is hope – you can be happy again! You can experience wholeness and move beyond the hurt. There is hope to heal the pain and bind up the brokenness. Let's look closer at the example set by King David.



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## **Realize that Happiness Is a Choice**

“David noticed that his attendants were whispering among themselves and he realized the child was dead. ‘Is the child dead?’ he asked. ‘Yes,’ they replied, ‘he is dead.’ Then David got up from the ground. After he had washed, put on lotions and changed his clothes, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped. Then he went to his own house, and at his request they served him food, and he ate. His attendants asked him, ‘Why are you acting this way? While the child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!’ He answered, ‘While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, ‘Who knows? The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.’ But now that he is dead, why should I go on [fasting](#)? Can I bring him back again? I will go to him, but he will not return to me’” ([2 Samuel 12:19-23](#)).

In the most basic terms, you could say that David made a choice to move on. We too can choose to live in the pain of the loss, or constantly relive the tragedy in our minds for

the rest of our lives, or we can choose to move on and embrace the joy of the Lord for today and the future.

One of the most inspirational people I know of is Viktor Frankl, a Nazi camp survivor who became a famous neurologist, psychiatrist, philosopher, and author. He spent 3 years in a German concentration camp, where people were slave laborers, underfed, and deprived of sleep. Many people died in those camps, from both the direct attacks at the hands of Nazi soldiers and also from the simple loss of hope.

But Viktor Frankl made it out alive and well. He would later reveal the reason in his book *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning*: "The last of the human freedoms: to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

No, it's not easy, and some things are harder to move on from than others. But in order to escape from the happiness vacuum, you have to first make a choice to do so.

Remember, there is nothing more powerful in all the earth than our power to choose. "I call [heaven](#) and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live" ([Deuteronomy 30:19](#)).

Choose life. Choose to get up and get back in the game. Choose to move on from the pain of the past.



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## Repent and Confess

Not only did David make a choice to move on, but that choice was facilitated and even made possible because David had repented. When the prophet Nathan confronted David about all he had done, David came back to his senses:

"So David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' And Nathan said to David, 'The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die'" ([2 Samuel 12:13](#)).

Why is repentance a key to happiness? Because you cannot be happy and constantly do what you know is wrong. A guilty conscience will affect your inner core and show up on your countenance, but repentance clears the heart and invites the help of God. David's repentance caused the breaks to be placed on the full consequences of his actions.

But sometimes our need for repentance is subtle, especially when facing the tragedy of a personal loss we had no control over. We may not even realize that anger and bitterness have crept into our hearts, making us cold and hard toward God and others. We might be holding on to unforgiveness, or be offended and angry at God for allowing such pain to happen to us. Repentance cleans out our clogged hearts and roots out much of the cause of unhappiness.

### **Rely on the [Healing Presence of the Holy Spirit](#)**

David chose to focus on the promise of eternal life, on the fact that one day, he will see the child again. Jesus has not left us comfortless in the midst of our sorrows. He has given us His precious Holy Spirit to remind us of eternal promises in the midst of temporary pain.

If you want to escape the happiness vacuum, don't focus on the pain of the situation or the loss. Where your focus goes, God's power flows! Focus on who He is: He is Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals our physical, emotional and spiritual wounds. There is no pain that God hasn't already prepared a scriptural promise for our benefit. Focus on these promises in His Word, and rely on the healing presence of the Holy Spirit reminding you of those promises. Choose to move on in His grace.



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### **Re-Write Your Story**

What I mean by "story" is that running dialogue you have with yourself, and what you tell others about yourself. Too many times in life we tell our story from an inferior perspective, and not from God's perspective.

Our story is about what happened:

- I was used, undervalued, marginalized
- I was abused, victimized, wounded
- I was betrayed, cheated, lied to, stolen from
- I was ignored, neglected, abandoned

And then we define ourselves based on what happened: I am broken, hurt, useless, unworthy, stupid, alone, lost.

But David shows us something powerful about escaping the happiness vacuum. While reflecting on his Bathsheba blunder, David wrote:

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your [Holy Spirit](#) from me” ([Psalm 51:10-11](#)).

Watch how he owns his story, and then rewrites it according to a God perspective:

“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You” ([Psalm 51:12-13](#)).

He flipped his focus from an adulterer and a murderer, to a restored person who once again has the joy of salvation. David choose to adopt the identity of one forgiven, healed and beloved by God, whose destiny is to use what he’s gone through as a testimony for God’s glory.

Stop the internal dialogue that glorifies the inferior victim or guilt laden perspective. After you choose to move on, identify any sin hidden in your heart. Confess and repent from it and receive the [healing](#) of the Holy Spirit. Then agree with God’s word about His promises and drop anything in your story that doesn’t line up. Stop seeing yourself in the light of sin or victimhood, and see yourself in the light of what Christ has done for you.

Re-write your story from the perspective that God can take even the bad things of life and turn them around for good. You are not the broken, but the blessed; you are not the hurting, but the healed. You are not the overlooked, you are an over-comer. You are not a victim, but a victor.

Re-write your story – not based on where you’ve been, but on God’s promise for what you’ll become.