

I'll Be Happy When ...



“Are we there, yet?”

We think of this as the quintessential question whiny kids always ask in the car. The truth, though, is that many of us spend our lives with this question rattling around in our brains:

Am I there, yet?

Where, exactly, is *there*? It's a mythical place somewhere in the future when the Next Big Thing will make me feel good. I'll be happy when Friday comes ... when I can go on vacation ... when Christmas gets here ... when the holidays are over, and the kids go back to school.

The problem lies in always expecting to be happy – sometime in the future. We steal the joy from the present, by constantly looking ahead. Anticipation is great, but

[It's a soul-sucking mistake when we think only epic \(and](#)

usually expensive) moments can refresh our spirits.



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we make a soul-sucking mistake when we suppose that only epic (and usually expensive) moments can refresh our spirits.

The key to preventing (or fighting) “I’ll Be Happy When Syndrome” is a simple change of attitude.

“Happiness is not a state to arrive at, but a manner of traveling.” I saw this message on a card, and bought it as a reminder to myself, struck by how it illustrates the substance of Philippians 4:11b. *I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.* So how do we learn this skill?

There is a new catchword in our culture – mindfulness – that means “the state of being conscious of something; focusing one’s awareness on the present moment.” A good concept. I think of mindfulness as a 30-second vacation because it doesn’t have to take any longer than that.

How does a 30-second vacation work? By sinking into the experience.



I have a favorite mug that one of my daughters gave me. I love my mug! Every time I use it, I feel loved because my daughter chose a celadon green glaze she knew would please my eye. It's heavy pottery; I enjoy it's weight in my hands and its smooth texture. Its heat warms me. I enjoy the taste and smell of my drink. Then I rinse my mug, put it in the dishwasher, and go on with my day.

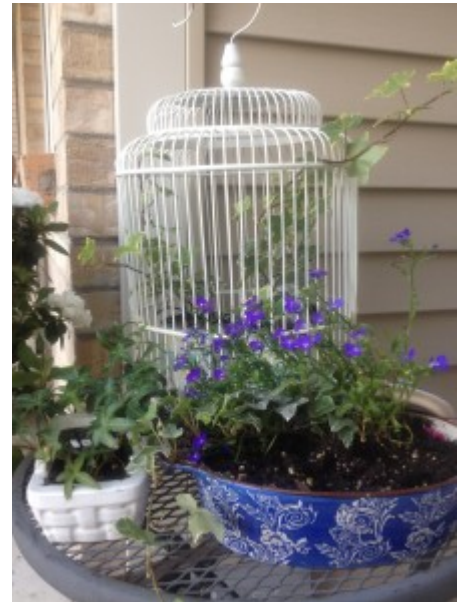


The hospital where I work has a beautiful campus. On my way in from the parking lot, I pass plants that change with the seasons. In the spring, I pause under a pear tree, look at the blossoms and inhale the fragrance, then head into the lab to work. This morning, the heather was in bloom. In the autumn, I stop for a close look at a burning bush. Winter comes, and I notice that the frost on the drain cover looks like a spider web.

And the list goes on.

I soak in a spectacular sunset. Peruse the stalls at my local farmers market. Read the Sunday funny papers on my front porch. Savor a Fannie May milk chocolate vanilla butter cream melting on my tongue. Sit entranced by the sizzle and flash of

lightning during a thunderstorm. Afterward, I stand in my yard inhaling the freshness, trying not to step on the worms.



Living in the moment takes nothing away from the big events of life. They will still be yours to enjoy. But instead of packing all of your fun into a few limited experiences, look for the 30-second vacations God puts in your path on a regular basis. You'll be more refreshed, and when you do take an extended vacation, you won't be so desperate for everything to go perfectly, or so devastated when it doesn't.

Where to start?

The next time you find yourself enjoying something, stop and give yourself fully to it for 30 seconds. Then, start actively looking around you for things to relish. Concerned that people will think you are crazy? Just tell them that you are "practicing mindfulness," and you will impress the socks off of them!

God's ideal for us includes joy, both now, and in the future. Psalm 23 reminds us that God not only walks with us through the shadows, but that he restores our souls on a daily basis. *"Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me **all the days of my life.**"*

Have you taken a 30-second vacation yet? I can't wait to hear what it is. Please share below, and know that you finally have

an answer to the question:

Are we there, yet? Yes!



Guest poster Laura Hulce (sister to Mary and Jane) lives in Western Michigan, a few miles from “The Big Lake” (aka Lake Michigan) which is the scene of many of her 30-second vacations. She and her husband Andy have three grown daughters, two sons-in-law, and one grand-dog – all currently living in the U.S., which was not the case for a number of years! Laura works full-time as a clinical laboratory scientist, a profession which a co-worker once described as hours of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror when a patient goes south. Actually, Laura likes her job very much – most days.

Leading a discipleship group is Laura’s primary ministry. She is convinced that she learns as much from the terrific and wise women in her group as they learn from her. Free time? Reading, hiking, bike-riding, resale shopping, and geocaching.