

## Happiness Is a State of Mind

By Marilyn Reeves

How do you define happiness?

For some it is the accumulation of wealth. They dream of winning the lottery or finding that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. "If only I could be a millionaire," they say, "then I could have all the things I want and I could be truly happy." Yet some of the happiest people in the world have little in the way of money – barely enough to scrape by. They may find joy in serving others, or in the secure love of friends and family. The pursuit of wealth isn't even part of their consciousness.

Some wish to attain fame. "If only I were famous, then the whole world would know my name. They would thrill at the very sight of me, ask me for my autograph, shout my name to the highest heavens. I could be happy if I were famous."

Others seek power. "If I were in a position of power, I could have my way in all things. People would grovel at my feet, acknowledge my superiority. I could be king of the world! That would be the ultimate happiness."

Many dream of falling in love. The agony and ecstasy of falling in love is a state of temporary insanity that we should all be allowed to experience at least once. Many of us fall in love with a new person several times over the course of a lifetime. Yet falling in love isn't the same as *remaining* in love, or simply being a loving person. The happiest people I know have the ability to love others without expectation of their affection being returned.

Happiness is different from joy. Joy is a temporary feeling of euphoria at having attained a goal long sought after. Whether it's winning a prize, being asked on a date by that special someone, or attaining recognition for something you've accomplished, joy is a fleeting sensation. Where do you go from there?

For me, happiness is losing myself in something that absorbs my full attention, whether it's listening to great music, reading a good book, observing the beauty of nature, or working on a project that I enjoy.

For me, happiness amounts to accepting myself as I am. Recognizing my faults and shortcomings and striving to do better – to *be* better – but learning to love myself for who I am, at this moment, warts and all.

For me, happiness is also accepting others as *they* are, without feeling the need to change them, even if we may disagree.

For me, happiness is a state of mind.