

**“HAPPY NEW YEAR!”
JANUARY 2008**

The crowd begins to gather in Times Square hours before midnight. Although the weather is cold and blustery, thousands of people are anxious to welcome in the New Year. At 11:59 p.m. the ball begins to descend on top of the One Times Square Building. Soon everyone is shouting, “Happy New Year!” This uniquely American tradition began exactly 100 years ago. It shows no sign of petering out.

All of us wish to experience a “happy” 2008. Who among us would wish to have a “sad” or “disappointing” New Year? Indeed, the “pursuit of happiness” is highly valued by Americans. In fact, the Declaration of Independence lists it as an “unalienable right” given to us by our Creator. It’s safe to say that we spend a great deal of time and money pursuing happiness.

Just what makes us happy? There are many advertisers who seek to offer us a instant source of happiness: a big house, a fast car, or a large investment portfolio. Can we do certain things that will indeed make 2008 a happy year for us? There are many researchers who are investigating these questions. Recently, Time magazine reported on their findings and published the results of its own survey. A sample of over 1,000 Americans was asked this question, “What one thing in your life has brought you the greatest happiness?” The top answers mentioned family, faith, and friends.

Research into happiness confirms that God has created us as “relational beings.” We long to connect with others and with our Maker. When both our horizontal and vertical relationships are healthy, then we feel happy. David puts it this way,

*“May our sons in their youth be like plants full grown,
our daughters like corner pillars, cut for the building of a palace ...
Happy are the people to whom such blessings fall;
happy are the people whose God is the Lord.”
(Psalm 144:12,15)*

David correctly notes the source of happiness: warm ties with those closest to us and a vital relationship with God.

Soon we will see the ball drop in Times Square and hear well-wishers say, “Happy New Year.” These three simple words express our hopes for 2008. Our deepest desire is to be happy in the coming New Year. Remember that there is a path to happiness. It is not found in things. It is found in deepening the bonds that unite us with our Creator and with our family and friends. Have a very Happy New Year!

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