

Resisting Happiness by Matthew Kelly

Section 1: Something is Missing – Book Highlights

1. Resistance

I have been battling resistance my whole life.

What is resistance? It's that sluggish feeling of not wanting to do something that you know is good for you, it's the inclination to do something that you unabashedly know is not good for you, and it's everything in between. It's the desire and tendency to delay something you should be doing right now.

It helps to call it by its name.

The hardest war to win is one you don't even realize you are fighting, and the hardest enemy to defeat is the one you don't know exists. Every day you are at war with resistance.

You have to slay it like a dragon, and you have to slay it anew each day. It wears a thousand masks, many of which are so effective we don't even recognize resistance is behind them.

Laziness, procrastination, fear, doubt, instant gratification, self-loathing, indecision, escapism, pride, self-deception, friction, tension, and self-sabotage are just some of the ways resistance manifests its ugly self in our lives and causes us to settle for so much less than God has imagined for us.

You have to break through resistance in order to accomplish even the smallest tasks. I catch myself in a battle with resistance several times a day.

Looking back on today, where did you encounter resistance?

We all battle resistance daily:

The first goal of this book is simply to give resistance a name.

Simply naming, defining, and learning to recognize resistance in the moments of our days causes it to lose most of its power over us. It is no longer a mystery because we have named it.

The first lesson is that you never defeat resistance once and for all. It is a daily battle.

KEY POINT Resistance stands between you and happiness.

ACTION STEP Write down every time you encounter resistance for a week.

2. Your Quest for Happiness

We resist happiness. We tend to see these patterns in other people's lives with much more clarity than we see them in our own.

These are the patterns that we see in people's lives, patterns that make us wonder why.

People do stupid things because they mistakenly believe those stupid things will make them happy. This is the paradox that surrounds our quest for happiness: We know the things that will make us happy, but we don't always do them.

We know how to unleash happiness in our lives, but we don't. Why? Resistance. We are all on a quest for happiness, but resistance gets the better of us. I know the people, things, behaviors, and experiences that make me happy.

Sitting down for a few minutes of prayer and reflection at the beginning of the day makes me happy. Tempted to put it off until later or skip it altogether. Why? the temptation to believe that going somewhere or doing something is urgent.

What makes you happy? Do you know? Before we jump into that question, a better place to start might be with this question: Are you happy?

Three months

What's your happiness score? Let's increase your happiness score.

It's time to stop resisting happiness. It's time to stop destroying our own happiness.

- Do you worry about things you have no control over? Worry destroys happiness.
- Do you compare yourself with others in an unhealthy way? Comparison is a destroyer of happiness.
- Do you cling to bad relationships? Bad relationships destroy our happiness.
- Do you have a lot of self-doubt, or even self-loathing? They are destroyers of happiness.
- Do you buy things you can't afford and don't need? Debt is a destroyer of happiness and a creator of stress.
- Gossip, laziness, fear, excuses, negative thinking, ingratitude, and jealousy are all destroyers of happiness.

KEY POINT Find out what really makes you happy.

ACTION STEP Identify three activities that increase your happiness. Write them down.

3. Making Sense of Everything

Do you know anyone who doesn't want to be happy?

As we get a little older and social interactions become more important we tend to attach our hope for happiness to friendship.

No one person can satisfy our immense desire for happiness.

In our adolescent years we tend to turn our attention toward pleasure. "If I have this pleasure or that pleasure, or all the pleasures at the same time, then I will be happy."

If I accomplish something great, I will stop feeling empty and dissatisfied, and I will be happy forever." Nothing on earth can satisfy your desire for happiness.

You have a God-size hole. You cannot fill it with things, money, status, power, sex, drugs, alcohol, other people, experiences, or accomplishments. Only God can fill the hole.

The hole is bigger than anything this life has to offer, but allowing God to fill it will make everything this life has to offer better. We yearn for happiness because we are created for happiness.

“The desire for God is written in the human heart because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for (CCC, 27).”

This is the opening point of the first chapter of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

What does this mean for you?

- The desire for God is written on your heart. It cannot be erased;
- You are created by God and for God;
- God never ceases to draw you to him; and
- You will only find the truth and happiness you are looking for in God.

Wow! There it is. Too often we are more interested in something other than Jesus, something other than the happiness that God wants to freely give us. Who or what is at the center of your life? It is only by placing God at the center of everything that we can make sense of life. When we place something or someone else at the center of our lives we set ourselves up for a gnawing dissatisfaction.

We often see this more clearly in other people’s lives than we do in our own. If you want to make sense of everything, place God at the center of your life. Have you ever really tried it? What do you have to lose? Add a note

KEY POINT It is only by placing God at the center of everything that we can make sense of life.

ACTION STEP Place God at the center of the next decision you make by choosing not what you want or what is most advantageous to you, but what you honestly feel God wants you to do.

4. Resisting God

When we resist happiness, we are really resisting God. God is happiness.

Definition of resist is “to withstand, strive against, or oppose.”

Reflect on the insanity of trying to resist God.

God wants us to be happy even more than we want to be happy ourselves. Have you ever wanted something good for someone more than he wanted it for himself?

We cannot always help them to see those possibilities for themselves.

“You are going to be tempted to judge yourself as a coach by how well your participants perform.

Your participants' successes and failures are their own. You cannot take credit for their successes, and you cannot take the blame for their failures.

Coach them well by faithfully following the coaching program.

You will find yourself in a place where you want it for them more than they want it for themselves.

You will do something for them that they should be doing for themselves. You will think you are helping them, but it is a lie and you know it. Your job is to empower those you coach; when you do for them what they should be doing for themselves, you create entitlement and dependency rather than empowerment.

God wants you to be happy even more than you want it yourself. Imagine how frustrated God is with us, seeing all that is possible and knowing how we squander so much. But he will not cross the line. He will not step over your free will. God wants to empower you for mission. He has put you in this world for a specific mission, but first he has to prepare you. God wants heaven for you even more than you want it for yourself. When we resist happiness, we resist God and the-very-best-version-of-ourselves.

Resist our very truest selves.

Place a barrier between ourselves and God, a barrier between ourselves and the incredible people God created us to be, a barrier between ourselves and the wonderful life God dreamed for us before we were in our mothers' wombs. It's time to stop resisting happiness. It's time to slay resistance.

KEY POINT When we resist God we resist happiness.

ACTION STEP Learn to recognize when you want something for others more than they want it for themselves.

5. Life Is Messy

In those early years, I had no idea that life was so messy.

Perhaps that is why God only reveals our journey to us one step at a time.

In order to speak deep into people's lives, you have to have a sense of their heartache, of what keeps them awake at night.

Mercy is simply being with people in their pain and suffering, holding them physically or spiritually, even if there is nothing else you can do for them.

When I was first diagnosed with cancer, They had no idea what was happening inside me. The lesson I learned was that someone can look perfectly fine, but you never know what is going on inside—and everyone has something going on inside.

"Everyone you'll ever meet is fighting a hard battle." What hard battle are you fighting?

What hard battle are the people who live under the same roof as you wrestling with? What hard battle are the people you work with fighting? When we

recognize that someone else is fighting a hard battle, we tend to rise to the occasion. It brings the best out in us, and compassion and generosity begin to flow.

So, next time somebody is upsetting you, frustrating, annoying, or ignoring you, take a deep breath and remember that she is fighting her own hard battle. Allow the greatness of your humanity to rise up within you, and act with compassion. Smile, be warm, pray for her, and move on quietly. Add a note

Jesus gave us the perfect example "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Life is messy. Birth and death, fear and pain, disease and suffering, hunger and abuse, addiction and betrayal, corruption and exploitation, disappointment and failure, injustice and broken dreams—there is no question, life can be very messy indeed. Often, we are quite good at avoiding the mess.

As children of God we are called to go looking for the mess and make a difference in some way—large or small—according to the gifts that have been entrusted to us.

It is amazing what ordinary people are carrying around with them each day.

We receive thousands of prayer requests. Adopt a family for Christmas that year. Part of our Christmas tradition as a family,

Life is messy, and it is not enough just to talk about the mess. We are each called to do something about it.

It's time to confront our own mess, how it affects us, and how our mess affects others. But it is also time to reach out to others who have a mess greater or smaller than our own and be with them in their mess.

Reflect on Christmas, the fact that God decided to put himself right in the middle of our mess.

The world was a mess. It was our mess, not his mess. He didn't need to come and be with us, among us. He could have redeemed us in an infinite number of other ways. But he chose to put himself in our midst, in the middle of our mess. He didn't say, "This is your mess; clean it up yourself." Rather, in an infinite expression of divine mercy he came to be with us in our mess. Life is messy and we are called to put ourselves in the middle of the mess and work to make a difference, however small.

We are all carrying a heavy load, fighting a hard battle, but so is every person we encounter in this mystery we call life. Jesus invites us to "take up [our] cross daily" (Matthew 16:24).

And some days we are called to take up someone else's cross also, so he can catch his breath, have a short rest, or simply have his faith in the goodness of humanity restored.

Resistance will tell you that the problems are too many and that you will never make a difference. Ignore it. Resistance is a liar.

Don't let it make you feel helpless in the face of life's mess. Don't listen to resistance when it comes wearing the mask of discouragement. Never give in to discouragement. You are not alone. You are not helpless. Take some small action. Resistance hates action. Turn to God in prayer. Resistance hates it when we turn to God and trust in him. Reach out to somebody and say, "I am discouraged," and just by saying the words you will begin to cast out that discouragement and regain your hope.

Let's decide together, right here and right now, to do something about the mess in our own lives, and whenever possible the mess in other people's lives.

We have to learn how to break through resistance. Resistance is like a wall that we have to break through in order to begin anything. Resistance loves inaction. That's why as soon as you decide to act, it raises its ugly head in a dozen ways to distract you.

Think about some part of your life that is messy. What positive step can you take this week, however small, to improve that mess? Resistance hates action. It wants you to sit around feeling helpless and getting discouraged. Take action and you will feel yourself begin to fill with hope again.

Resistance hates, it is hope. Hold on to your hope no matter how messy life gets, and share it with everyone who crosses your path.

I am going to share with you some of the key moments in my life when I resisted happiness and resisted God, and how even though it often seems I am taking three steps forward and two steps back, God has patiently waited for me to overcome resistance.

Let them deep into my own life and my own struggles.

As you read my story, reflect on your own. Take note of the moments in your life when you were challenged to grow. Be mindful also of any decisions you have made that leave you in need of healing now. What's most important here is not my story, but yours. Reflect on the times when you have met or failed to overcome it, and the times God has called you subtly or not so subtly to become the-best-version-of-yourself.

KEY POINT Everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle and carrying a heavy load.

ACTION STEP Be gentle with the people who cross your path. If someone is grumpy or rude, if someone makes a mistake or does something wrong, give her the benefit of the doubt. You never know what she is carrying around inside.

6. Something Is Missing

Do you ever have the sense that something is missing in your life?

We really should pay a little more attention to our dissatisfaction.

We have all watched a friend who needs to make a decision but refuses to confront the situation. He pretends that all is well, but everyone around him can see he is becoming more and more restless.

It's okay to be dissatisfied. Being dissatisfied and pretending that we are not is the kind of lie that leads to spiritual and physical illness. Our dissatisfaction is trying to lead us to something better, or something different altogether.

It is time to start listening to what God is saying to us through our dissatisfaction.

I want to encourage you to pay a little more attention to that sense that something is missing in your life. This quiet discontent is creating restlessness in you for a reason.

Restlessness drives my creativity and gives birth to ideas. But each day the restlessness needs to be tamed so that I can actually do something.

My heart was restless. I knew something was missing, but I didn't know what to do about it.

If you sense that something is missing in your life, stop ignoring it. Start paying attention to it. God is trying to tell you something.

KEY POINT It's time to start listening to what God is saying to us through our dissatisfaction.

ACTION STEP Don't pretend to be happy and satisfied when you are not.