

Weekly Wisdom
~Stephen Sarchet

It's been a couple of weeks since I last wrote. In that time we've moved from Bouillon Hall to Mitchell and my role has changed within the department. As I sit here writing, I'm as tired as I've been in some time having spent a sleepless night with thoughts of things I need to do or remember to check on at work. Besides work, I have an endless number of things running through my mind about family, home, plans, wishes, dreams, ills, wrongs I wish I could right, things I would do differently if only, and on and on.

It can be hard to bear up to all that weighs on my mind and there are days that it would be so easy to give up and slip into despair. To feel as though I'll never be able to get anything done, at least not anything that matters. The negative voices in my mind are quick to pick up on those feelings and to feed them until without even noticing, it begins to feel like no matter how hard I try, I'll never be able to do the things I want to do.

But in that crowd, a little voice speaks up. Sometimes it's a little hard to hear. Sometimes I don't hear it right away. But it's persistent and when I do finally hear that voice, it reminds me I do have a choice, and that I can choose to be happy. I don't mean that in a sappy, prime-time comedy way where everything turns out hunky dory in half-hour segments. What I mean is that I can choose to be happy; I can choose to "count my blessings" rather than despair over my failings. The little voice is good at reminding me this is a choice I have to make every day.

Happiness must be, for most men and women, an achievement rather than a gift of the gods, and in this achievement, effort, both inward and outward, must play a great part.

~Bertrand Russell

What does that even mean? In a March, 2010 WebMD article called [Choosing to Be Happy](#), Tom Valeo offers seven steps. I've hinted at one – cultivating gratitude. Another is fostering forgiveness. Being angry or holding a grudge against someone takes a lot of emotional effort, but it's so easy to hold on to

I am determined to be cheerful and happy in whatever situation I may find myself. For I have learned that the greater part of our misery or unhappiness is determined not by our circumstance but by our disposition.

~Martha Washington

those things that someone else said about us or did to us. The voices in our minds love to build cases against those who've slighted us in some way or another. In a similar article, Javy Galindo writes in [Time Magazine](#) that rather than looking outwardly for things to make us happy, we should be looking at ourselves. He says we shouldn't be our own worst enemies, but that we should exercise optimism. When thinking about what may come, we should choose to imagine what could go right and "anticipate positive occurrences since we can often miss them if we aren't open to seeing them." Sherrie Bourg Carter cautions us against our own leanings toward negativity in [Do We Choose Happiness or Does Happiness Choose Us?](#)

There a lot of articles like these out there about how to be happy, but in the end the choices we make do matter.