

The truth about happiness

By Arielle Ford

Michael Bernard Beckwith shares the truth about happiness and discusses the new film *Living Luminaries (On the Serious Business of Happiness)*



Foto: ImageDJ Corporation

At the heart of the desire for money, fame, and power is a deep longing for happiness. While Amazon.com boasts more than 200,000 titles on the subject of happiness, it appears that Americans are still searching for it. In the new film *Living Luminaries* (On the Serious Business of Happiness), filmmakers Michael Lasky and Larry Kurnarsky illuminate the path to human happiness by presenting concepts about living in the now, as well as providing thought provoking ideas about consciously choosing love, gratitude, honesty, forgiveness, patience, and kindness. The film follows a young seeker as he interviews an A-list of swamis, shamans, rabbis, ministers, Tibetan monks, contemporary thinkers, and best-selling authors such as Marianne Williamson, don Miguel Ruiz, Eckhart Tolle and Michael Bernard Beckwith, founder of the Agape International Spiritual Center in Los Angeles. Beckwith, also one of the stars of *The Secret*, has had a busy year with appearances on Oprah, Larry King Live, and many other national TV shows. Recently, we caught up with him to discuss his thoughts on *Living Luminaries* and the subject of happiness.

AF: What is your definition of happiness?

MBB: Happiness and joy are qualities that are intrinsic to us as unique expressions of the Universe and of God. Happiness is not based upon conditions based upon the feeling tone of happiness that we generate from within our being – a transcendent spiritual quality that becomes imminent as we progress.



AF: What is the message you hope *Living Luminaries* will convey to those who see it?

MBB: That we are here as powerful beings to bring joy and happiness and creativity and beauty to the world but that we are not here to extract that from the world. That would be the tail wagging the dog, which is how a lot of people live their life, hoping that the world or something outside of themselves will make them happy. Happiness is something we bring to the world as we become conscious of ourselves. That point was brought home poignantly in the film with the Geronimo Pratt interview. With him, we see that during the time he was in jail he was able to develop the capacity for awakening and harmony.

AF: If we as individuals are focused on our own happiness, does that become incongruent with wanting to live our lives like Jesus, Gandhi, or Mother Teresa?

MBB: Once we understand that happiness is an inside job, that it is a spiritual quality, then focusing on (personal) happiness is not selfish, it's not self aggrandizement. It is waking up to what's in you; once you wake up to what's in you, now you can be of service. You cannot give from an empty cup. If you are bitter, unhappy, or depressed, then you have nothing to give to the world. But, if you have tapped into the source of that inner enthusiasm, that inner generosity, that inner light, that inner happiness... now you have something to give so that you can live the life that Jesus emulated.

AF: You are someone who is actively participating in creating more peace in the world with anti-war demonstrations. How do you balance that with wanting to remain happy and peaceful within yourself?

MBB: First of all I don't participate in anti-war demonstrations, but I do participate in pro-peace and pro-love and pro-harmony programs, conferences, etc., because I don't believe in being "anti" anything. If you are "anti" something, you actually give more energy to that which you are against. So, I teach people to take a stand for something. When I think about the stand that I take, whether it's for peace, or for every boy and girl to have enough to eat on the planet, or for everyone to have proper medical care, or shelter, or access to education, I am actually describing a vision of what I see is a world that works for everyone. The world changes as individuals are able to describe a vision and walk in that direction.

AF: What is the single most important piece of advice you can give to an aspiring spiritual seeker?

MBB: Spiritual practice leads to insight and revelation. So many spiritual seekers are “constipated” because they have so much information now from so many books out there. With a film such as *Living Luminaries*, my advice is to take something from the movie that they can actually practice. When you watch the film, bring a notepad. When one of the teachers says something that resonates or something or anything hits you, write it down, and then ask this question, “How can I practice this in my life?”

The law states “ask and you shall receive.” When you ask that question, the Universe will begin to tell you how to practice that. You will have a revelation inside. You will have new ideas flowing to you with inspiration, enthusiasm, and high thoughts; your life will change. So, we don’t want to espouse that people look at this kind of movie and just passively absorb that information and do nothing with it. We want people to look at the movie, be inspired, and then take some kind of action corresponding to the new information.

AF: What is one of your personal daily practices you’d be willing to share?

MBB: Each day I write in my “Impossibility Journal.” In Lewis Carroll’s “Alice in Wonderland” there is a line where the Queen says, “You have to believe at least six impossible things before breakfast.” So, I will write down six impossible things before I leave the house. I may write something such as “In our lifetime, we will see the end of AIDS.” Or, it might be “In our lifetime, there will be peace on the planet, and every boy and girl will have enough to eat.” I’ll do large ideas like these; sometimes I repeat them or write things for my own life. What happens is that the mind begins to become trained to think outside of what the world calls normal and what the world calls possible. As you get used to thinking like that, new insights can come that will help you in your life and even help you to become an instrument in creating some impossible things for someone else. Most people only go for what they think they can achieve, which is not at all creative.

AF: Why do you think *The Secret* has become such a phenomenon?

MBB: For a couple of reasons: One is because of the intention of the people who actually produced the film and the intention of the people who are in it. They all really wanted

to get out the word about the spiritual principles. Another is that post 9/11, people are ready to hear a message that their destiny is in their own hands. They have been flooded with terror alerts and safety issues and I think *The Secret* offers a message of empowerment.

AF: Do you think that *Living Luminaries* will be a natural progression for those who have seen *The Secret*?

MBB: Yes. For those who are ready to make the leap, it’s a natural segue into the idea that joy and happiness is not condition based but is internally based. If you watch *The Secret* and then you watch *Living Luminaries* and some of the other films that will emerge, they all give you a bit of the missing piece. I know that everyone who watches *Living Luminaries* will find that their lives are going to be changed, touched and inspired. I would like to offer the readers of this interview a gift. Please visit my Website www.agapelive.com. Click on “free gift,” and you will receive a free download of one of my talks and a free download of a musical piece that my wife Rickie has done.



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