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magazine

September '20

He
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DOES GOD WANT US TO BE HAPPY?

By: GotQuestions.org

Happiness is an emotion arising from an inner conviction that all is right with our world. It is a sense of well-being, joy, or contentment. Everyone wants to be happy, but happiness, as our ultimate goal, can be elusive. People may make decisions based on what they think will make them happy, then experience despair when happiness never comes. People who assume that God wants them to be happy may justify activities clearly prohibited in the Bible by arguing that such choices are necessary for happiness. But is our personal happiness God's ultimate goal for us? Does He even want us to be happy?

We were created by God in His image, and it is His design that creates our innate desire to be happy. We know happiness is possible because God is happy, and we are like Him. When God created the first man and woman, He placed them in a garden and filled it with everything they needed to be happy (Genesis 1:29–30; 2:8–9). But they fell for the lie that happiness is contingent upon having everything they wanted (Genesis 3:1–6). Their failure to acknowledge God as their Source of happiness led to sin and banishment from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23–24). From that day on, humanity has struggled to regain the sense of happiness that Adam and Eve experienced in the presence of God.

God wants us to be happy but not at any cost. His goals for us are higher, broader, and more lasting than fleeting happiness (Isaiah 55:9). In fact, the pursuit of happiness is not a theme of the New Testament. Instead, we find repeated commands to deny self (Mark 8:34), take up a cross (Luke 9:23), and consider oneself dead to sin (Romans 6:6–7). These instructions may appear contradictory to the idea that God wants us to be happy. How can we be happy when we must choose the opposite of what we desire?

Spiritual laws are as real as physical laws, and there is a spiritual law governing happiness. God's path to happiness goes a different direction from the path we would naturally choose. Sinful actions can usually be traced to one foundational lie: that we will be happier if we do this thing. But God says, "How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers!" (Psalm 1:1, CSB). God delights in confounding the wise by using foolish things to accomplish His purposes, weak things to shame the strong, and lowly and despised things to magnify His glory (1 Corinthians 1:27–28). The psalmist says that we are happiest when we are delighting in God's promises and commandments (Psalm 112:1).

God wants us to be happy, but the temporary thrill sin provides is not true happiness. Sin can produce feelings of happiness as long as we are getting what we want. Losing our temper produces a brief feeling of happiness because we get to let off steam. But the consequences—broken relationships and wounded loved ones—are not happy (Proverbs 29:22). Sexual immorality produces brief feelings of happiness but its end—shame, hurt, unwanted pregnancy, alienation from God—is not happy (1 Corinthians 6:18). The pursuit of money can produce feelings of happiness as long as the stock market is up and thieves stay away (Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 6:19; 1 Timothy 6:10)—but many who sit enthroned on piles of money attest to a sense of emptiness. The world is full of people who pursued their own dreams but are not happy.

Augustine of Hippo rightly stated in his fourth-century book *Confessions*, "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee." The truth is there is a "God-shaped vacuum" in the heart of every person, and that void can only be filled by God through Christ, not by any created thing. Happiness is a gift from God that can be fully known only in proper relationship with Him.

God does want us to be happy, and He has provided all we need for life and godliness through Christ Jesus (2 Peter 1:2). He has designed the human heart to experience its greatest ecstasy in worship, its deepest satisfaction in serving, and its greatest love through the power of the Holy Spirit. When we are living in fellowship with Him, we can expect to be happy regardless of our temporary circumstances (Philippians 4:11–13). Our goal is the prize awaiting us in eternity, so we can endure earthly difficulties while remaining full of hope (2 Corinthians 4:17). When our joy and hope are based on that which cannot be taken away, we have found true happiness, and God is pleased.

He
Can Do
Impossible
Things

By: Andrew Roebert

As you read the story of the exodus (of the Israelites) from bondage and slavery in Egypt, to their eventual arrival in the Promised Land, we see a series of miracles, performed by the Lord on their behalf. Often, they would find themselves in situations where there was no possible solution but for God to intervene. We are living at a time in the world where many people find themselves in a similar situation. People find themselves facing challenges that need divine intervention. They have tried everything they can try; they have used up all their resources, and they are up against a wall, needing God to make a way. Well, I am here to encourage you and to remind you that HE (the Lord) can do impossible things. It was the great preacher, Billy Graham who said: 'When we come to the end of ourselves, we come to the beginning of God.' If you find yourself at that place where only a miracle from God will be an answer, then these notes are something that will encourage you. Read on!

God is fighting for you

There is a great song that we regularly sing at our church. It is called: 'God is fighting for us!' The song reaches a crescendo and then this refrain is sung:

*'God is fighting for us
Pushing back the darkness
Lighting up the Kingdom
That cannot be shaken
In the Name of Jesus
Enemy's defeated
And we will shout it out
Shout it out!'*

I believe that God is fight for us and He is fighting for you. In the story of the exodus, then the people of God where caught between a rock and hard place with no where to turn, HE stepped in and starting fighting for them.

Exodus 14:25 He twisted their chariot wheels, making their chariots difficult to drive. "Let's get out of here—away from these Israelites!" the Egyptians shouted. "The LORD is fighting for them against Egypt!"

Eventually even their enemies had to realise that the Lord was fighting for His people and they realised that they stood no chance of success and they turned and fled. You do not need to be shaken and you do not need to be moved, because your God is with you. The Lord is on your side and He wants to bring you into a place of victory.

He does impossible things

Doing impossible things is just what God specializes in. Another song we sing at church is a song entitled: 'IMPOSSIBLE THINGS'. Here are the words:

*'One Word, and the walls start falling
One Word, and the blind will see
One Word, and the sinner's forgiven
Because You do impossible, impossible things!'*

We need to start to look and believe for impossible things. When the nation of Israel had reached the end of the road and the enemy was about to pounce and destroy them, God stepped in and did the most impossible thing.



This is what happened:

The cloud that had been in front of them began to move... (Can you even imagine seeing this?) It moved from in front of them to behind them and blocked the enemy from getting access to them.

Then it even went to another level. It caused light to shine on the one side, for the people of God, and darkness to surround the enemy. The enemy was kept at bay and no one disturbed the other all night.

Exodus 14:19-20 'Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel's army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long.'

It was like the Lord moved heaven and earth to protect and make a way for His people! We should do the possible and let God do the impossible for us. If you are facing an impossible situation, then turn to the Lord and ask Him to move in your situation and bring about the impossible for you.

He can turn things around

Turning things around is also the Lord's specialty. Just think how humanity was lost in sin, He sent His Son so that things could be turned around and humanity could be reconciled to God and know eternal life. It is in the very character of God to step into our world and turn things around for good.

In the exodus story this kind of thing happened in a very practical way. The nation arrived at an oasis and the water was bitter. The water was so bitter that it could not be used for human consumption. But God stepped into the situation, performed a miracle, and turned things around. He took bitter, useless water and turned it into sweet, usable water and everyone, including the animals were blessed and provided for.

Exodus 15:23 + 25 'When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter. Then Moses cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink.'

It is interesting to note that it did not happen all by itself, but it was in response to the actions and obedience of Moses.

1. Moses cried out to the Lord. He called out in desperation and He turned to God for help, because there was nothing that he could do about the situation, and yet the Lord had brought them to the point.
2. The Lord showed Moses a piece of wood and told him to throw it in the water. The Lord may well show you something, something you need to do. It may even seem like a stupid thing, but if God is in it, it can be the source of the miracle.
3. Moses obeyed. He took the piece of wood that God had showed him and did what the Lord had told him to do. He threw it in the water. That must have been a real act of faith because Moses must have known for certain that that action would not, in itself, make any difference. But he did it.

God did the rest and turned the situation around, turning bitter water into sweet water. He can do the same for you.

What can we do?

If you are facing impossible circumstances and you have run out of solutions, what can you do?

Exodus 14:13 Moses told the people, "Don't be afraid. Just stand still and watch the LORD rescue you today. The Egyptians you see today will never be seen again."

1. DON'T BE AFRAID.

Again, and again, in the Bible we are advised to not be afraid. You see Moses told the people to not be afraid. The Lord wants to tell you the same thing today: 'Don't be afraid!'

Matthew 28:20 'And be sure of this: I am with you always!'

2. STAND FIRM.

If you are facing impossible obstacles, then its time to stand firm in our faith and confidence in the Lord. Do the possible and leave the impossible to God.

3. WATCH AND PRAY.

Be alert! Do not become complacent, anxious, or discouraged, be on the lookout for a breakthrough.

4. LET THE LORD FIGHT FOR YOU.

Do not try and do everything in your own strength. There are some things that only He can do.

5. DO WHAT HE TELLS YOU TO DO.

Exodus 15:25 '...the LORD showed him a piece of wood. He threw it into the water, and the water became fit to drink.'

Obey what the Lord tells you to do. It maybe a simple as making a phone call He prompts you to make, or submitting your CV just one more time...

6. HE WILL BRING YOU TO A GOOD PLACE

Exodus 15:27 'Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there near the water.'

In the end He brought them through all the challenges and troubles, and they end up at a place with 12 springs. Just one spring may have been enough, but there were 12. He did not just provide one with perhaps one extra one as a backup... Now He provide them with 12. In addition there were 70 Palm trees. Not just one, or just a few, but seventy. It a picture of provision and plenty. Let us pass the tests and trust the Lord to do the impossible things and bring us to place of provision and protection. Years ago, we used to sing a song entitled 'HE GIVETH MORE GRACE'. Here are the words: 'When we have exhausted our store of endurance when our strength has failed ere the day is half done. When we reach the end of our hoarded resources Our Father's full giving is only begun!' No matter how difficult or hopeless things may look, remember, that His giving is only just beginning, and He can do impossible things. Take heart and trust Him to do just that.

Ephesians 3:20 'Now all glory to God, who is able, through His mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.'

Only Be Careful

By: Ellel Ministries

“Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them.”

Deuteronomy 4:9 (NIV)

There are so many valuable lessons for us to learn from the Israelite's journey from slavery to freedom, as recorded in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 4:9 Moses was warning the Israelites to make sure they do not forget the things they have seen God do for them on their journey to the Promised land – the wonders and miracles they saw Him perform on their behalf. In fact, Moses warned them saying, “only be careful, and watch yourselves closely...” It was something that needed to be carefully guarded against.

How often do we take the time to look back at the wonderful things God has done in our lives? There may have been many occasions in our lives when our family needed a miracle or breakthrough in an area, and we saw the hand of God move on our behalf. We may have seen God heal, provide, and even just bless us in wonderful ways - all of this, evidence of God's faithfulness and goodness towards us.

However, when things are difficult, it is easy to become discouraged and grumble against the Lord, just as the Israelites did on several occasions, and to forget what He has done for us in the past. The last while many of us have been faced with challenges, not only on a personal level, but also in the lives of those we love and care about. As a result, one needed to be intentional about guarding one's heart in the midst of this season. It is possible for us to become so focussed on the things going on around us, or on our own difficulties, that we run the danger of letting the many testimonies of His faithfulness and goodness “slip from our hearts.”

This verse in Deuteronomy is a reminder for us to regularly take stock of the good things God has done for us throughout our lives, and to express our gratitude to the Lord as often as we do so. A heart of thanksgiving and praise is pleasing to the Lord, and a great way to keep the memories of His goodness alive within us, and from slipping from our hearts. Gratitude and praise shift our attention from the problems to His promises and to the God Who knows the end from the beginning – the One Who has good plans for us! *“Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live.”*

HOW CAN I KNOW THE *Heart* OF GOD?

By: GotQuestions.org

The heart refers to the central part of a person. The heart is the nature of a person, and to know the heart of someone is to know that person's innermost character, feelings, or inclinations (see Proverbs 4:23 and 16:1). The heart of God is the essence of who He is, what He desires, His will, and His purposes. By reading the Bible, knowing Jesus, and spending time in prayer, a person can know the heart of God.

The Word of God reveals the heart of God. To know the heart of God, a person must read His Word, for that is God's revelation of Himself and His message to all. People read autobiographies about celebrities to get an idea of who they "really are." Historians read journals and letters from people in history to understand what their life was like and what influenced and motivated them. In a more profound way, the Lord has given us His Word so that we can know Him. By reading the Bible, a person can know the heart of God because Scripture was divinely breathed out by Him (2 Timothy 3:16). From Genesis to Revelation, the entire Bible speaks of God and reveals who He is and what He is like. Reading the Bible merely to gain facts about God will not bring a person any closer to the heart of God (see John 5:39). Instead, reading Scripture should cause a person to worship and love Him.

Studying Jesus reveals the heart of God. Anyone who has seen Jesus has seen the Father (John 14:9). No one can truly know the heart of God without knowing and trusting in Jesus for salvation. Jesus Christ revealed the Father, for “He is the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15, ESV). Since Jesus and the Father are one, Christ visually represents the heart of God, the essence of who He is (John 10:30). Jesus dying for the sins of the world and being resurrected to bring life to those who believe in Him vividly presents the love, judgment, and mercy of God (John 3:16). In Christ we see God as the Savior of mankind who desires all to come to know Him and experience the salvation He offers (2 Peter 3:19).



Prayer reveals the heart of God. Spending time with the Lord in prayer assists in knowing His heart. Just as a child must spend time with his father to know him personally, so we also must spend time with God in prayer to know Him more deeply. The first part of James 4:8 says, “Come near to God and he will come near to you.” Spending time alone with God in prayer will encourage a deeper relationship and create a greater intimacy between us and God, in which our desires will become more aligned with His.

Seeking to know the heart of God is a serious endeavor, as knowing Him will change a person’s entire life. The more a person learns and knows about the Lord, the more he or she will long for Him and declare with the psalmist, “As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1, NLT).



HOW CAN I STOP BEING A GRUMPY CHRISTIAN?

By: GotQuestions.org

Grumpiness characterizes some personality types more than it does others. Some people are born with sunny dispositions and always see the glass half full. Others seem to be grumpy from birth, seeing every glass nearly empty—and who drank it anyway? Unfortunately, even after some grumpy people become Christians, they bring their grumpiness with them. Since they have always been this way, they often believe grumpiness is an integral part of who they are rather than a flaw that needs to be changed. Other Christians may have been happy earlier in life but find themselves being grumpier as they get older. Reasons for grumpiness vary, but life does take its toll. For those who recognize that perpetual grumpiness is at odds with the joy of the Lord (Acts 13:52; Galatians 5:22; Romans 14:17), there are some practical steps to change their attitude:

1. Recognize that continual grumpiness is sin. Consider negative personality traits to be like barnacles on the hull of a boat. Barnacles are the bane of boat owners because the little crustaceans cluster by the thousands, increasing drag and decreasing a boat's fuel efficiency. Barnacles are also notoriously difficult to remove. Sins of the personality, such as grumpiness, are like that. They attach themselves to our lives, weighing us down and keeping us from experiencing all that it means to "walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16, 25). The grumpy Christian needs to resist shrugging off the problem by saying things like, "That's how I've always been" or "It's too difficult to change." Jesus paid too high a price to free us from our old ways for us to choose to remain enslaved (Romans 6:1–4).
2. Confess grumpiness as sin every time it manifests itself (1 John 1:9). Grumpiness becomes a habit that others see more readily than we do; many grumpy Christians don't even realize when they're being grumpy. In order to overcome a grumpy mood, we must agree with God about it. Jesus was never grumpy or cross, despite all that He faced and the cross that He bore (see Luke 10:21). Neither does grumpiness belong in the life of His followers (Romans 8:29). When we begin taking note of the way we respond to certain situations, we can become aware of how we come across to others. If we develop the habit of confessing grumpiness as sin every time we notice it, we become even more sensitive to it, and we can ask God for help in changing our old ways.
3. Thank the Lord for every good gift He has given (James 1:17). A grateful heart is a happy heart. Grumpiness and thanksgiving cannot co-exist. Choose to "give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Perpetually grumpy people are so focused on what is not right that they overlook what is right. A grumpy Christian may be helped by starting a thankfulness journal. In the journal, record one thing each day that you can be grateful for. Then, when grumpiness sets in, change your focus by reading the journal and reminding yourself of God's unending goodness.
4. Take a breather. When you find yourself getting grumpy, take a break. Even if it's just for a few seconds, giving yourself time to step back and reevaluate things is helpful. If you have the time, spend your break praying, reading the Bible, or listening to worshipful music that uplifts Christ. Eat a healthy snack. Find a mirror and check your facial expression. Smile.
5. Identify the areas that contribute to grumpiness. Find the source of the grumpiness, and you can more directly deal with it. Often, grumpy people are attracted to information and people who encourage their grumpiness. They feast on negative news, seek the company of negative people, and listen to discouraging music. Overcoming an attitude of negativity requires that we stop feeding it. We have the responsibility to guard our hearts (Proverbs 4:23). It helps to filter all entertainment and outside information through this sentence: "Does this lift up my heart in praise to God or pull it down into anger and depression?"

A Christian prone to grumpiness can handle it in the same way we overcome any negative trait. We recognize it as sin, ask God's help in changing, and take action to create a new normal. The reward is a happier outlook, a closer relationship with God, and spiritual growth that will benefit everyone around us.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT JOY COMES IN THE MORNING?

By: GotQuestions.org



"FOR HIS ANGER IS BUT FOR A MOMENT, HIS FAVOR IS FOR LIFE; WEeping MAY ENDURE FOR A NIGHT, BUT JOY COMES IN THE MORNING" (PSALM 30:5 NKJV)

Speaking of God's discipline, the psalmist reminds us that the sorrows we face in this life are temporary. As painful as a season may be, it is only a season. Life has twists, turns, ups, and downs, and, although we may suffer through dark nights, morning will come. Verses 11 and 12 shed more light on this idea: "You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing your praises and not be silent. Lord my God, I will praise you forever."

We are to sing to God and worship and praise Him (Psalm 30:4; 63:4; 104:33; 146:2). When we are silent and our hearts turn away from worship, we are not living up to our full potential. This sin-riddled world gives us many reasons to despair (John 16:33). Our own sin often brings God's discipline (Hebrews 12:7–8; Revelation 3:19). Heartaches, disappointments, and betrayals can leave us feeling shattered, and we may wonder if hope will never come again. So God reminds us that joy comes in the morning. Dark nights can last a long time, but they are never permanent for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Instead of hopelessness, we have His promise that He will make all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). Only God can take the very bad and transform it into something very good. Even when walking through "the valley of the shadow of death," we need fear no evil (Psalm 23:4). Our Good Shepherd never abandons us, and our suffering is always purposeful (Psalm 56:8). The Lord can take the broken places in our lives and create a mosaic that blesses the world. It is often our darkest pain that becomes our brightest light when we entrust it to Him. Joy comes in the morning when we awaken to our purpose and see that even our mistakes, sorrows, and confusion have become the foundation upon which God builds a ministry.

David understood that. He was anointed king as a teenager (1 Samuel 16:13) but spent many years on the run from the reigning King Saul. But those years were not wasted. Hard as they were, it was during those years that David penned many of the psalms that now comfort millions. The apostle Paul heard the prison doors slam behind him, and for two long years, he sat in a jail cell for preaching the gospel. Those years may have seemed wasted, yet it was during his imprisonment that he wrote at least four books of the New Testament.

God allows pain and struggle into our lives to refine us like gold (1 Peter 1:6–7). Jesus was God in the flesh, yet He suffered terribly while on earth so that we would know He understands our pain (Hebrews 4:15; 5:7–8). As bad as it was in the moment, "For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2). We are told to "consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (verse 3). So Jesus models for us what it means that joy comes in the morning.



WHY BELIEVE

IN

BY: GOTQUESTIONS.ORG

JESUS?

There are countless reasons to believe in Jesus. Many of us start on our journey of faith because we need something that Jesus can give us. We need help, hope, healing, or joy. Our lives are falling apart, and we want answers, solutions. But there's one critical reason to believe in Jesus that underlies all others, and that is to bring us into right relationship with God. Reconciliation with God is the remedy for all that's wrong with us and the resolution for everything we need.

Why did Jesus come to earth? Why did He die on the cross? He came and did all that He did to bring us into a relationship with God the Father: "For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:19, NLT).

Mending our broken relationship with God is the primary point of Christian salvation. The Bible says that all of us have a problem—it's called sin (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). Because we are born into this world as sinners (Psalm 51:5), we are separated from God and on a path that leads to eternal destruction.

But God loves us and wants to be in relationship with us. He wants to save us from destruction and give us everlasting life: "God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him" (1 John 4:9, NLT).

Jesus' death on the cross paid the full price for our sin: "He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world" (1 John 2:2). Jesus satisfied the debt we owed and took the punishment we deserved (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 1:18–19; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; Romans 6:23). When Christ rose from the dead, He conquered death for us (Revelation 1:18; Hebrews 2:14; John 3:16). We don't have to die, because Christ died for us.

The only way to be forgiven of sin and restored to God is to repent and believe in Jesus (Acts 2:38; 17:30; Mark 1:4; Luke 13:3). Jesus is the only way to the Father (1 Timothy 2:5). In John 14:6–7, Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well."

God longs to connect with us in an intimate friendship. When we believe in Jesus, we become children of God: "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12, ESV). When we believe in Jesus, we receive access to God's holy presence to comfort, protect, lead, and guide us (Ephesians 2: 13, 18; 3:11–12; Hebrews 4:16). He teaches us and speaks to us through His Word (Psalm 119:105) and enables us to live for Him by the power of His Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 2:10–13; John 14:26).

When we believe in Jesus, we receive the greatest gift of all—the salvation of our soul (1 Peter 1:8–9). And this gift is free. We can't do anything to earn it. We don't deserve it, but He gives it to us anyway: "God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it" (Ephesians 2:8–9, NLT).

Believing in Jesus opens up our hearts to experience a love like no other—the kind of love that is willing to sacrifice and die for us (John 10:11; Romans 5:8). God's love is the strongest and most profound love ever known, and nothing will ever separate us from it (Romans 8:35–39).

Believing in Jesus and having a relationship with God sets us free from our old life of guilt, shame, and sin (John 8:36; Romans 8:2). Only through Christ can we experience the satisfaction our souls long for: "For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things" (Psalm 107:9, ESV).

When we enter into a right relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, we learn who we were created to be and discover the true purpose of our lives: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, ESV; see also Philippians 3:8–10)

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