Chapter titled "Discipleship" (from the 1991 book: THE WAY TO LOVE - The Last Meditations of Late Father Anthony De Mello) - commenting on “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” - Luke 14:26 (on the WEB at http://www.godsdirectcontact.org.tw/eng/news/73/m-1.htm)

Take a look at the world and see the unhappiness around you and in you. Do you know what causes this unhappiness? You will probably say loneliness or oppression or war or hatred or atheism. And you will be wrong. There is only one cause of unhappiness: the false beliefs you have in your head, beliefs so widespread, so commonly held, that it never occurs to you to question them. Because of these false beliefs you see the world and yourself in a distorted way. Your programming is so strong and the pressure of society so intense that you are literally trapped into perceiving the world in this distorted kind of way. There is no way out, because you do not even have a suspicion that your perception is distorted, your thinking is wrong, and your beliefs are false.

Look around and see if you can find a single genuinely happy person - fearless, free from insecurities, anxieties, tensions, worries. You would be lucky if you found one in a hundred thousand. This should lead you to be suspicious of the programming and the beliefs that you and they hold in common. But you have also been programmed not to suspect, not to doubt, just to trust the assumptions that have been put into you by your tradition, your culture, your society, your religion. And if you are not happy, you have been trained to blame yourself, not your programming, not your cultural and inherited ideas and beliefs. What makes it even worse is the fact that most people are so brainwashed that they do not even realize how unhappy they are - like the man in a dream who has no idea he is dreaming.

What are these false beliefs that block you from happiness? Here are some examples. First: You cannot be happy without the things that you are attached to and that you consider so precious. False. There is not a single moment in your life when you do not have everything that you need to be happy. Think of that for a minute. The reason why you are unhappy is because you are focusing on what you do not have rather than on what you have right now. Another belief: Happiness is in the future. Not true. Right here and now you are happy and you do not know it because your false beliefs and your distorted perceptions have got you caught up in fears, anxieties, attachments, conflicts, guilt and a host of games that you are programmed to play. If you would see through this you would realize that you are happy and do not know it.

Yet another belief. Happiness will come if you manage to change the situation you are in and the people around you. Not true. You stupidly squander so much energy trying to rearrange the world. If changing the world is your vocation in life, go right ahead and change it, but do not harbor the illusion that this is going to make you happy. What makes you happy or unhappy is not the world and the people around you, but the thinking in your head. As well search for an eagle's nest on the bed of an ocean, as search for happiness in the world outside of you. So if it is happiness that you seek you can stop wasting your energy trying to cure your baldness or build up an attractive body or
change your residence or job or community or lifestyle or even your personality. Do you realize that you could change every one of these things, you could have the finest looks and the most charming personality and the most pleasant of surroundings and still be unhappy? And deep down you know this is true but still you waste your effort and energy trying to get what you know cannot make you happy.

Another false belief: If all your desires are fulfilled you will be happy. Not true. In fact it is these very desires and attachments that make you tense, frustrated, nervous, insecure and fearful. Make a list of all your attachments and desires and to each of them say these words: "Deep down in my heart I know that even after I have got you I will not get happiness." And ponder on the truth of those words. The fulfillment of desire can, at the most, bring flashes of pleasure and excitement. Don't mistake that for happiness.

What then is happiness? Very few people know and no one can tell you, because happiness cannot be described. Can you describe light to people who have been sitting in darkness all their lives? Can you describe reality to someone in a dream? Understand your darkness and it will vanish; then you will know what light is. Understand your nightmare for what it is and it will stop; then you will wake up to reality. Understand your false beliefs and they will drop; then you will know the taste of happiness.

If people want happiness so badly, why don't they attempt to understand their false beliefs? First, because it never occurs to them to see them as false or even as beliefs. They see them as facts and reality, so deeply have they been programmed. Second, because they are scared to lose the only world they know: the world of desires, attachments, fears, social pressures, tensions, ambitions, worries, guilt, with flashes of the pleasure and relief and excitement which these things bring. Think of someone who is afraid to let go of a nightmare because, after all, that is the only world he knows. There you have a picture of yourself and of other people.

If you wish to attain to lasting happiness you must be ready to hate father, mother, even your own life and to take leave of all your possessions. How? Not by renouncing them or giving them up because what you give up violently you are forever bound to. But rather by seeing them for the nightmare they are; and then, whether you keep them or not, they will have lost their grip over you, their power to hurt you, and you will be out of your dream at last, out of your darkness, your fear, your unhappiness.

So spend some time seeing each of the things you cling to for what it really is, a nightmare that causes you excitement and pleasure on the one hand but also worry, insecurity, tension, anxiety, fear, unhappiness on the other. Father and mother: nightmare. Wife and children, brothers and sisters: nightmare. All your possessions: nightmare. Your life as it is now: nightmare. Every single thing you cling to and have convinced yourself you cannot be happy without: nightmare. Then you will hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters and even your own life. And you will so easily take leave of all your possessions, that is, you will stop clinging and thus have destroyed their capacity to hurt you. Then at last you will experience that mysterious state that cannot be described or uttered - the state of abiding happiness and peace. And you will understand how true it is that everyone who stops clinging to brothers or sisters, father, mother or children, land or houses is repaid a hundred times over and gains eternal life.