

The Pursuit of Happiness

Discipleship Study Questions

Much of life is consumed with trying to attain, and maintain, happiness. We do this through our relationships, our possessions, our pastimes, and the goals we set. But does our desire for happiness line up with the joy and contentment God wants to lavish on us? During this series, we will examine the difference, and explore how we can reorient our human pursuit to a holy outpouring of happiness that is true and will last.

Hide God's Word in Your Heart:

Individual: Take a few days and do your best to memorize, or deeply familiarize yourself with, the scripture passage for the week.

Group: Choose one person from the group to commit the week's scripture passage to memory, or thoroughly summarize it in their own words, in order to present it to the group the following week.

Read the story:

Individual: After you've committed the passage, or the essence of the passage, to memory, read two different translations of the scripture for the week.

Group: At your next group meeting, have two different group members read the story using different Bible translations.

Tell the story:

Individual: Recite the story aloud from memory, or tell it to a friend or family member.

Group: Introduce the person who has learned the story for this week. Be ready to assist them if they get stuck at any point.

Rebuild the story:

Individual: Re-read the story to fact check yourself.

Group: Use questions to help the group highlight the main points of the story and correct any omissions or misrepresentations of the story. The point is not to point out the story teller's mistakes, but rather to point people to the Word to ensure everyone understands it accurately.

Dig into the Word:

Individual: Work through the questions and pray about what God reveals to you through His word. Discuss with a Christian friend or family member, if you choose.

Group: Work through the questions as a group, celebrating the work God is already doing in each person's life, and encouraging each other to trust Him in the places that need growth.

The Truly Blessed Life

Week 1: Read Matthew 5:3-11

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What is Jesus teaching His disciples?

What are you learning personally?

What is God calling you to do with what you've learned this week?

Life Application:

Can you think of a time when you followed the world's advice on how to be happy, but it ultimately left you feeling empty and unfulfilled?

What can we learn from this passage about where true happiness comes from, compared to what the world tells us about happiness?

What connection does Godly happiness, or blessing, have to external circumstances? How does this differ from what you may have thought or heard before?

Have you ever experienced unexplainable joy in the midst of undesirable circumstances? If you have, share with a friend or your small group to encourage them. If you haven't, pray for God to open your eyes to the joy that can be found in spite of the difficulties of life.

Prayer:

Father, thank you for providing us with a deeper happiness than what the world can offer. Thank you that the happiness that comes from a life with you is not dependent on our circumstances. Open our eyes to the countless blessings you offer us each and every day as we abide in you. In the name of Jesus, amen.

The Secret of Contentment

Week 2: Read Philippians 4:10-13

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What is Paul teaching the church at Philippi?

What are you learning personally?

What is God calling you to do with what you've learned this week?

Life Application:

What do you think are the roots of discontentment?

Read: Philippians 3:7-11

How does the world teach us how to deal with discontentment? How does that differ from how Paul dealt with discontentment?

Philippians 4:13 is widely known, and often taken out of context. In its proper context, what does this verse mean? What is the 'all this' Paul is talking about?

How has a relationship with Jesus changed your definition of contentment? If it hasn't changed, ask God to change your heart to match His in this area.

Prayer:

Father, thank you for being more than enough for us. Lord, open our eyes to see the real treasures found in you, that make the treasures of the world pale in comparison. Teach us how to be content in all circumstances, through the strength you provide. May our relationship with you give us the desires of our hearts, as you change our hearts to become more like yours. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Be Anxious for Nothing

Week 3: Read Philippians 4:4-9

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What is Paul teaching the church at Philippi?

What are you learning personally?

What is God calling you to do with what you've learned this week?

Life Application:

There is one small sentence in the middle of this passage that is easy to skim over without really considering its impact. "The Lord is near." How does this one phrase impact the rest of the passage and what is being asked of us?

In v.6, who does it imply should carry the weight of our cares and concerns? If we took this verse seriously, how would it impact how you think, how you live?

What is promised in v.7, if we follow v.6? When we receive this gift, how does it function in our lives, and how might that change us?

What does your mind naturally dwell on? How does it compare to the list in v8? How might you train your mind to dwell on these good things?

Prayer:

Father, thank you for always being near to us. Thank you for loving us, and being willing to carry everything that concerns us. Help us to trust you enough to let go of all of our worries, knowing that you are working for our good in all things. Fill our hearts and minds with the things of you, so that we can rise above our circumstances and receive the peace that only you can offer. In the name of Jesus, amen.

It's Better to Give than to Receive

Week 4: Read Matthew 5:13-16

Discovery Questions:

What do we learn about God in this passage?

What is Jesus teaching His disciples?

What are you learning personally?

What is God calling you to do with what you've learned this week?

Life Application:

In Matthew's day, salt was of high value. In the days prior to electric refrigeration, salt was used to prevent decay and to preserve, as well as to provide seasoning and enhance flavor. In the same way, light was also vitally important, as without electric light, in the deep darkness of night, a light put on display could be seen from a great distance.

How should a Christian's presence in the world be like salt?

Jesus called himself the light of the world in John 8:12. How is Jesus now calling those who follow Him the light of the world both a compliment and a responsibility?

Jesus does not say that His followers *become* the salt of the earth and the light of the world. He simply says that we *are*. If these are characteristics given to us as followers of Christ, what does that tell us about how we are intended to be useful in the world?

Can others taste Jesus in your life, your words, your work ethic, your relationships?
Is your light shining in such a way that others are drawn to it?

Prayer:

Father, thank you for giving us the ability to be salt and light in this world. Lord, give us the strength to pour out our lives in an effort to make you known and bring you glory. May others taste something different in us, something holy and sweet, that they don't taste in what the world has to offer. And may your light shining through our lives lead others to you.
In the name of Jesus, amen.