

CHAPTER 11 HAPPINESS



This study guide offers a suite of resources for teachers, small group leaders, or parents to generate discussion and reflection. This guide is not intended to be a structured 'lesson plan', but aims to provide questions, discussion starters, Bible passages, videos, and challenge questions that can be shaped into a structured experience.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

You might use one or more of these to foster engagement in a discussion about happiness:

- > What sort of things make you happy?
- > What sort of things make you unhappy?
- > Can we make ourselves happy?
- > What happens if you place happiness up on a pedestal?
- > Is happiness more than feelings?
- > Where do purpose and hope fit within the happiness equation?
- > Is there an ultimate happiness and where can it be found?

BIBLE PASSAGES

This resource is not intended to be a Bible study. However, discussion and reflection on one or more of these passages, and how they might inform a view of the topic of the chapter, is encouraged. It would be good to direct questioning towards, “What was the original context?”, “What was the author’s purpose?”, and “How does the passage add to a big picture view of happiness?”:

Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? “Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to

give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. *Luke 12:22-34*

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. *Matthew 11:28-30*

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. *Revelation 21:4*

Do not make any idols. *Exodus 34:17*

▶ STIMULUS VIDEOS

You might use one or more of these videos to generate engagement. Or you might use one at the end of the discussion with the focus being to critique the assumptions within the video. You might follow the viewing with questions like “What feelings did that video give you?”, or “Would this video be helpful to show young children? Why or why not?”, or “What do we learn about our culture in this video?”:



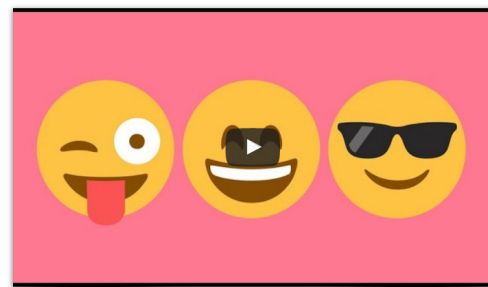
My father is a liar
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmHzsX01EZg>



What is happiness? INFOGRAPHIC
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIWQeMFncm8>



What makes you happy? | 0-100
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJ8xZtxXlc8>



What is happiness?
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDf2DidUayY>

All videos can be found at www.thefrogandthefish.com/videos

📖 EXTRACTS FROM THE BOOK

It might be that reading one, or both, of these extracts from *The Frog and the Fish* could be a helpful addition to your discussion time:

“Now, don’t hear me wrong. There is nothing bad about being happy, and nothing wrong with desiring to be happy. However, like all good things, when they become ultimate, we can end up serving them—and not the other way round. Have we perhaps come to this point in the last few decades with our pursuit of

happiness? I think of this as 'happiness hype', and we are swimming in it. How much has your expectation been shaped by the big picture storytelling of our culture? When you wake up each day, how strong is your expectation that you ought to have a happy day and that you basically deserve it?

The Frog and the Fish, Chapter 11, pg. 115

The reality for some people, however, is that for at least some part of their lives there will be a pattern of waking unhappy and staying that way all day and possibly every day for weeks or months. This then is more helpfully referred to as depression or anxiety. This long-term mental unwellness often has deeper causes like trauma, tragedy, or even a brain chemical imbalance. If this is your experience, it's important to know two things. Firstly, it's OK! It's actually quite common; you are not abnormal. Secondly, there is wonderful help available; it doesn't need to continue the way it is. All you need to do is talk to someone and they will help you get help. Don't hesitate any longer; it'll be worth it (I speak from experience)."

The Frog and the Fish, Chapter 11, pg. 115

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

Perhaps the aim of your discussion/reflection with your group is to present a biblical perspective on the topic of the chapter. It might be that challenging the culturally shaped assumptions currently held needs to complement this. You might use one or more of these questions to help achieve this:

1. Do you believe that being happy is good?

There is deep joy to be found during life in this good world. A world that God has created, in part, for us to enjoy.

2. Is unhappiness always bad?

Times in life when we are not bouncing with happiness are pretty normal. It's OK to feel this way from time to time.

3. Have you become aware of happiness hype?

Our culture tells the subtle story that we should always be happy—it is our right. If we are not happy, we should do whatever we need to do to fix the unhappiness—go shopping, have sex, promote ourselves, take drugs, etc.—all because we deserve to be happy.

4. Have you experienced that chasing happiness can make you unhappy?

When we believe the happiness hype and our life-goal is to be always happy, we can actually find ourselves less happy.

5. Have you explored the place of contentment in your happiness?

Ironically, when we find a contentment with circumstances of life that make us less happy, it's possible to experience a more authentic happiness.

6. Do you think it takes courage to seek hope as a source of happiness?

Happiness comes from hope. However, the happiness that comes from hope in ourselves brings shallow, temporary happiness that is not really happiness. Ultimate, authentic happiness only comes through resting from self-focused striving. True rest can only come through acknowledging the restlessness of Jesus on the cross on our behalf.