

SERMON SERIES | SEPT 17- OCT 29

WHAT MAKES US

HAPPY



### Week 1: What Makes Us Happy?

Read Matthew 22:35-40

1. What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think about what makes you happy? Why do you think that comes to mind?
2. How would you define the word happiness? What words, feelings, or images come to mind when you think about being happy?
3. Describe a time in your life when you were happy. What made this a happy time?
4. Describe a time in your life when you were unhappy. What made this an unhappy time?
5. Assess your current happiness level. Do you feel happy most days? Some days? Or hardly ever?
6. Rob said happiness has more to do with WHO than WHAT? Is that true for you? What are some of the relationships that make you happy?
7. Read Matthew 22:35–40. Respond to Jesus' statement. Does it sound too easy? Why or why not?
8. Do you have right relationships with yourself, others, and God? If not, what's getting in the way of your peace in those relationships?
9. Have you ever felt that God got in the way of your happiness?
10. What is one thing you can do this week to turn your attention to Jesus as your source of happiness? What can this group do to support you?

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## Week 2: What Makes Us Happy?

Read Psalm 1

1. What kind of music do you prefer: Current music, or older music? Why? What are some of your favourite bands/albums/songs?
2. Do you think new ideas of science and technology have made us happier? With all our modern advancements, do you think we are happier than our ancestors were? Why or why not?
3. How familiar are you with the book of Psalms? Did you ever think of the psalms as an album of songs? How does hearing them as songs change how you: Read them? Experience them? Remember/Memorize them?
4. Psalm 1 starts with these words: “Happy is the one who...” How would most people in our culture complete this sentence? How would you complete it?
5. What can we learn about happiness from the analogy of the tree found in Psalm 1:3?
6. Compare and contrast the image of the tree (1:3) and the chaff (1:4).
7. What kind of things rob us of our happiness? How can we keep happy even in difficult circumstances?
8. Psalm 1:1 indicates that the way to happiness involves “walking, standing, and sitting” in a certain way. What does it mean to “walk in step with the wicked?” What does it mean to “stand in the way of sinners?” What does it mean to “sit in the company of mockers?”
9. What does it mean to “delight in the law of the Lord?” (1:2) How is this a path to happiness?
10. What kind of spiritual practices would help us to “meditate on his law day and night?”

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### Week 3: What Makes Us Happy?

Read John 2:11

1. When you picture Jesus do you picture him smiling? Frowning? Something else?
2. Who is the happiest person you know? What is it about them that makes them so joyful?
3. Read John 2:11. Is there anything about this story that surprises you? Confuses you? Challenges you?
4. Rob suggested that God is the happiest being in the universe. Do you see any evidence of this?
5. Rob suggested that God is the source of all our happiness. What was one of the happiest times in your life? Do you (or did you) have a sense that God was in that moment with you?
6. How would you describe the phrase: "Kingdom of God?" Rob suggested that the Kingdom of God is a party. What are some of the defining characteristics God's Kingdom?
7. Do you see signs that God's joyous kingdom is already arriving? Where?
8. Do people associate the church with joy and happiness? Why or why not?
9. What did you think of Tony Campolo's story about throwing a birthday party for a prostitute? What can the church learn from a story like this?
10. How could Trinity better reflect the joy and celebration at the heart of the gospel? What kind of parties could we throw?

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#### Week 4: Go with the Flow

Read Philippians 4:4-8

1. Do you have a green thumb for gardening? Or do you kill every plant you touch? What are the secrets for growing healthy plants?
2. What is the connection between gratitude and happiness? Have you found it to be true that thankful people are happy people? Can you think of some people you know who fit this description?
3. Rob talked about how cynicism can block the flow of gratitude in our lives. With all the “bad news” in the world today, how do we keep ourselves from becoming cynical. (Reflect on Romans 12:21 and Philippians 4:8)
4. Theodore Roosevelt said “Comparison is the thief of joy.” Do you find it hard not to compare your life to others? What are some ways you combat the “comparison kink?”
5. Rob said, “When others are doing worse than us, we feel better. When others are doing better than us, we feel worse.” How does Romans 12:15 offer a corrective to this attitude?
6. Rob also spoke about how pride and conceit stop the flow of gratitude in our lives. In Deuteronomy 8:17-18 the Israelites were at risk of taking credit for God’s goodness. Do you ever find yourself doing the same?
7. Take a moment and consider some of the things God has done for you that you could never have done for yourself, or some of the things God has given you that you could never have achieved by yourself. Actually, is there anything you can take full credit for?
8. Which of the three “kinks” Rob spoke about is the biggest challenge in your life? (Cynicism, Comparison, Conceit?)
9. Meister Eckhart wrote: “If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, ‘thank you,’ that would suffice.” Spend some time as a group praying a prayer of thanksgiving to God for all your many blessings.

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### Week 5: Can't Buy Happiness?

Read Luke 16:10-13

1. Talk about a time when you thought a certain purchase would make you happier (It's happened to us all folks!). Did you end up buying the thing you wanted? If so, how long did your happiness last?
2. Have you ever met somebody who was happy even though they didn't have much money? If so, what stood out about that person?
3. Who taught you about managing your money? On a scale of 1-10, how well would you say you manage your money?
4. Read Luke 16:10-13. What are some reasons it's so tempting for us to serve money instead of God?
5. Rob mentioned three "*uns*" that can ruin our happiness: *unchecked* desires; which can lead to *uncontrolled* spending; which can lead to *unmanageable* debt. Have you experienced these *uns*? What can you do about it?
6. In contrast Rob suggested three ways to manage our money that can lead to financial happiness: *give* first, *save* second, *live* on the rest. Do you agree with this approach? Why or why not?
7. How does it make you feel to give money away? How does it make you feel save money for the future? How does it make you feel to spend within your budget?
8. Is it most difficult for you to give, save, or live within your means? Why do you think that area of your finances is a struggle? What can you do this week to begin to re-prioritize your finances? How can this group support you?

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### Week 6: You Call this Happy?

Read Matthew 5:1-12

1. The purpose of the show *Myth Busters* is to determine whether common myths are true or not. Has there ever been a myth that you have wanted to challenge or you were surprised was true/not true?
2. Have you ever heard the myth “The people in impoverished countries seem happier than those in wealthy countries.” Have you been someone who has said this before? What was the basis for this thought?
3. Read Matthew 5:1-12. Mike suggests that in some ways, this passage could be considered a recipe for happiness. What is your initial response to hearing these verses? Do you think this passage is difficult? If so, which of ‘blessed/happy are...’ beatitudes in particular are the most challenging?
4. Mike explains that the Greek meaning of *poor* translates to being *in the position of a beggar*, and like a beggar, we need to admit we are *dependent* and *desperate* for God in order to have God’s happiness. How does using the imagery of a beggar help you to better understand how Jesus wants us to be dependent and desperate for God and his Kingdom?
5. Mike said that any place poverty shows up there is spiritual poverty at its core. Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. We are all called to be totally dependent on God. Where do you find yourself struggling to depend on God? What is keeping you from this dependence? What might life look like if you handed this over to God?
7. Mike mentioned that we are both *citizens* and *ambassadors* of God’s Kingdom. What does it mean to be a citizen of the Kingdom? What about an ambassador? How might you be better able to remember and live out these important roles?
8. Mike shared a video of children in an IDP camp from the city of Shire in the Tigre Region of Northern Ethiopia. He said that World Vision’s continued prayer for these children is Courage, Care, and Compassion. Who is on your heart that you can pray these three things for right now?