

HALF TRUTHS

“Happiness is the most important thing”

1-7 August 2021

All men seek happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end. The cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it, is the same desire in both, attended with different views. The will never takes the least step but to this object. This is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.

Blaise Pascal (French Philosopher) in Pensées, Loc. 2049

1. As a group, come up with a list of things that bring you happiness. These can be big things or small things, serious things, and silly things!



Investigate

Read Psalm 37...

1. Now, divide the Psalm into equal parts and, in groups of two or three, write down your answers to the following questions from your allotted section:
 - a) What do the wicked do?
 - b) What are the results of these actions?
 - c) What instructions are given to the reader by the Psalmist?
 - d) What are the promised results of following these instructions?

Compare your answers as a group.

2. What is characteristic of the way ‘the wicked’ pursue their personal happiness?
3. To what extent do they achieve their desired happiness?
(Compare **Ecclesiastes 2:24-26.**)

4. Reflect on the instructions given by the Psalmist – what do these instructions all concern?
5. What are the promised results of following these instructions? How does this compare with the list of things that bring your group happiness in question one?

Read Matthew 6:31-33...

6. How do Jesus' words echo and affirm the logic of the Psalmist in Psalm 37?

Read Philippians 4:4-7...

7. Why does Paul argue that happiness is the appropriate response for the Philippians? What does he trace as the source of their joy and peace?



Think & Live

The woman who makes a dog the centre of her life loses, in the end, not only her human usefulness and dignity but even the proper pleasure of dog-keeping.

The man who makes alcohol his chief good loses not only his job but his palate and all power of enjoying the earlier (and only pleasurable) levels of intoxication...

...Of course, this law has been discovered before.... You can't get second things by putting them first. You get second things only by putting first things first.

- C.S. Lewis (Oxford Don and Author) in 'God in the Dock: Essays on Theology & Ethics'

1. Read the C.S. Lewis quote above, and consider Psalm 37: What is the secret to finding an enduring happiness?
2. Do you think Christians are more known for their joy or grumpiness? What about St Peters? What would the answer 'grumpiness' indicate about our spiritual lives?

3. Revisit the list of things that make you happy from question one. Are any of these at risk of overtaking the priority of God in your life? How might that affect the happiness you derive from that thing?
4. Revisit the list of commands from the Psalm. Pick one that will be especially helpful for you to work on this week. Discuss with your group some practical ideas on how to implement this.

What is it then that this desire and this inability [to realize the good we long for] proclaim to us, but that there was once in man a true happiness of which there now remain to him only the mark and empty trace, which he in vain tries to fill from all his surroundings, seeking from things absent the help he does not obtain in things present? But these are all inadequate, because the infinite abyss can only be filled by an infinite and immutable object, that is to say, only by God himself.

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*Take delight in the Lord,
And He will give you the desires of your heart.*

Psalm 37:4

Points to Pray (now and during the week)

1. Pray that we would all learn to pursue our happiness through a delight, trust, and commitment in the LORD (Psalm 37:3-5).
2. Pray that, when our happiness is threatened, we may be comforted by God's nearness and peace (Philippians 4:4-7).
3. Pray that God will, by Christ's Spirit, enable us to seek His kingdom first, and there find everything we need for a perfect and lasting happiness (Matthew 6:31-33).
4. Pray for our 'Half-Truths' series. Pray for many visitors, both online and in-person! Pray that God would use this teaching series to draw us all closer to Him, and some, ultimately, to a saving faith in our Lord Jesus.