

Small Group Study

Our Vision

To know God and enjoy Him forever.

Our Mission

To build a Christian community by making fully devoted disciples of non-religious and nominally religious people

Discussion

Emotional Freedom: Finding Joy



Scripture

Have volunteers read the following scriptures:

Matthew 18:1-4 (NLT)

1 About that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" 2 Jesus called a little child to him and put the child among them. 3 Then he said, "I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. 4 So anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

John 20:11-20 (NLT)

11 Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. 12 She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. 13 "Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her. "Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

14 She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. 15 "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?" She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

16 "Mary!" Jesus said. She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

17 "Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them that I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

18 Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.

Ice Breaker

Use ONE of the questions to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. What are/were your plans for Easter this year?
2. What are three activities you do that give you a lot of joy?
3. What was something you believed as a child that you later learned wasn't true?

19 That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. 20 As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord!

Discussion Questions

The first key to finding joy is childlike faith.

What is childlike faith? It is trust in God. It is reflecting His love. It is waking up in the morning and being delighted at a sunrise and knowing it was sent by your loving Father to delight you. It is saying out loud, “Thank you Father!” It is knowing that when you suffer, He suffers with you, and that when you cry, He will find ways to comfort you if you let Him. It is feeling confident enough to enter the day knowing that His steps are matching yours, and feeling loved enough to know that when you lay your head down at night, He watches over you. It is allowing yourself to be delighted with all of the beauty He creates and to recognize beauty in all the people around you, even those who may not live up to the world’s standard of physical beauty. A childlike faith allows us to see God at work in the world and to be amazed at life’s simple pleasures.

1. How does a lack of confidence in Christ impact childlike faith? What is the cost to others (God, family, friends, neighbors, church family, co-workers, etc.) when you are a person who is focused on your fears?
2. What happens to your relationship with God, with others, and with the opportunities God gives you when you fail to seize the opportunities Christ has for you?
3. When have you been filled with childlike faith the most?

Philippians 4:8: *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

After having childlike faith, the next step to having a joy-filled existence is to become aware of our thought lives. Most people are daily swept up in the turbulent current of reactive thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Unaware of the connection between their thought-life and their circumstances, they passively live out a frustratingly repetitive life script that eventually causes them to settle for far less than God's purpose for their lives.

The happiness which brings enduring worth to life is not the superficial happiness that is dependent on circumstances. It is the happiness and contentment that fills the soul even in the midst of the most distressing circumstances and the most bitter environment. It is the kind of happiness that grins when things go wrong and smiles through the tears. The happiness for which our souls ache is one undisturbed by success or failure, one which will root deeply inside us and give inward relaxation, peace, and contentment, no matter what the surface problems may be. That kind of happiness stands in need of no outward stimulus.

– Billy Graham

In Romans 12:2, we are taught that transformation is the result of a renewed mind. The apostle Paul writes, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will” (NIV). In 1 Thessalonians, Paul writes, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (5:16-18, NIV). Joy is the infectious and uncontainable fruit of sustained right thinking and dwelling on the nature and character of God. Joy is an outward sign of the inward faith in the promises of God.

Keep your thoughts fixed on God! When you keep your thoughts fixed on God, the things of God will naturally permeate your life, and thus your goals will be in line with his will and his Kingdom.

4. Up to this point, have you been a faithful steward of your mental life? Have you ever thought about how your thinking (your inner monologue) affects your capacity for joy?

5. What would you have to give up to start thinking more consistently with Philippians 4:8?

6. Can you name some improvements in your life that do not first involve changed thinking?

7. How is it possible to see opportunities where there were previously only problems?

8. Are you maximizing each moment with the interest, wonder, and excitement of a young child?

9. Do you affirm God more often than you affirm your adversity?

10. Let's practice renewed thinking by giving thanks in all circumstances. Finish your meeting by going around the circle and having each person answer the following questions:

- a. What are three things I am thankful for right now?
- b. What are three of my strengths or positive traits?
- c. What are three of my best achievements so far?
- d. Who are the three people who love me the most?
- e. What three things am I looking forward to in the next week?

God bless,

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