

Small Group Guide: “How Happiness is Learned”

Opening Question: What is the most unusual or interesting thing that brings you joy in your daily life?

Opening Prayer: *Dear Heavenly Father, we come before You today with grateful hearts, seeking to learn more about the habits that bring true happiness in our lives. Help us to understand Your Word as we study together, and fill our hearts with the joy that only You can provide. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.*

Key Takeaways:

1. **Happiness and Circumstance** - True happiness, as described in the Bible, is not dependent on circumstances but is a deeper joy that is present regardless of situations.
2. **Selflessness** - Happiness is found by shifting focus away from oneself and serving others.
3. **Trustworthiness** - Being reliable and trustworthy is crucial for bringing joy into the lives of others and reflects our Christian walk.
4. **Commitment** - Identifying and committing to a cause “worth dying for” can bring deep fulfillment and joy.
5. **Biblical Examples** - Timothy and Epaphroditus exemplified traits of selflessness, reliability, and commitment, which brought joy to Paul and others.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Read Philippians 2:19-23.** What characteristics did Paul see in Timothy that made him unique among others? How can we apply these characteristics in our lives today?
2. **Read Philippians 2:25-30.** Discuss the qualities of Epaphroditus as described by Paul. Epaphroditus was willing to risk his life for the work of Christ. What are some things in your life that you consider worth “dying for”? How does this impact your daily decisions?
3. Based on Pastor Dan’s sermon, why is shifting focus away from oneself key to obtaining true joy in life? Can you share an instance where focusing on others brought joy to your life?
4. Reflect on a time when integrity and keeping promises positively affected your relationships. How does this align with Paul’s emphasis on reliability in his letter to the Philippians?
5. Pastor Dan used the analogy of “credit checks” in relationships. How do you think others would rate your dependability? Are there areas where you could improve?
6. Pastor Dan mentioned that we often give “first class allegiance” to “second class causes” in our lives. What are some “second-class” things that may be absorbing too much of your time and energy? How can we shift our focus from making “first-class allegiance to second-class things” to prioritizing what truly matters in God’s kingdom?
7. How does being intentional in relationships contribute to the collective joy and peace of your community? Give examples of how you’ve seen this play out.

8. Discuss why it is important to consider if the commitments we make align with what truly matters. How does this perspective change your daily choices?

Practical Applications:

1. This week, intentionally look for ways to shift your focus from yourself to others. Keep a journal of how this impacts your mood and relationships.
2. Identify one commitment you've made but haven't followed through on. Make a plan to honor that commitment, no matter the cost.
3. Reflect on your life's priorities. Are there any areas where you're investing too much in things that won't matter in eternity? Consider how you might reallocate your time and resources.
4. Practice being more reliable in small ways this week (e.g., arriving on time, following through on promises). Notice how this affects your relationships and self-perception.
5. Pray the "dangerous prayer" Pastor Dan mentioned: "Lord, use me to be Your servant." Be open to how God might answer this prayer in your life.

Closing Prayer: *Dear Lord, we thank You for this time together and for the lessons we've learned from Pastor Dan's sermon. Lord, help us to shift our focus away from ourselves and onto You and others. Make us trustworthy and reliable, bringing joy to those around us. Give us the courage to live for things that truly matter in Your kingdom. Use us as Your servants, and help us to find true happiness in following You. In Jesus' name, Amen.*