



Week Three

Opening Praying

God, thank you for meeting us here today. Help us to hear how you are inviting us to grow. Amen.

Talk It Over

This week's talk was all about happiness and joy.

- Would you call yourself a happy person? Why or why not?
- Describe someone you know and like who shines happiness and joy. We aren't talking about someone who is fake or phony here, but rather someone who genuinely seems to know happiness and joy.

Read Jeremiah 31:13 (HCSB)

Through various verses in the Bible we can see that God desires for us to experience joy and happiness in life. And while our genetic makeup and circumstances do carry weight on this topic, science tells us that a large determining factor of our felt happiness is rooted in our habits and choices.

- Without sharing the person's name, tell us about someone you know who seems to pick being unhappy or maybe even likes being unhappy. What sort of negative choices or habits does this person practice?
- Have you ever consciously chosen to respond to a situation, circumstance, or person in a way that you knew would only leave you more unhappy? Tell us about that.
- Have you ever chosen to implement a choice or habit so you could walk in happiness? Tell us about that experience.

Read Luke 1:26-38 (NASB) and Luke 1:46-47 (NASB)

Mary was a young, unmarried, teenage girl when she learned that she'd become pregnant outside of marriage through God's spirit with God's son. To say the least, the task was daunting, it would ostracize her from society, and put her in a very vulnerable position. But still, Mary managed to rejoice. In the midst of all her stress, a serious challenge, and this incredible burden, Mary chose to celebrate.

Mary's posture models five helpful habits that contribute to a joy filled life in the Bible:

H. Hopeful: God invites us to put our hope in him. Despite her challenging circumstances, Mary was able to experience hope that comes from God.

- What does it mean to put your hope in God?
- Have you ever put too much hope in someone or something and been deeply hurt? Tell us about that experience.
- How do feel you are doing at putting your hope in God? (*Continued on next page.*)

A. Adaptable: Like Mary modeled, a life of genuine joy is often marked by knowing how to respond to the surprises of life, the curve balls we cannot control, and being willing to be flexible with those variables.

- When are you slowest to adopt an adaptable posture? Why do you think that is the case?
- Do you know someone who is good at being driven, having a backbone, being their own person while being adaptable and flexible? What sorts of observations can you make about that person?

P. Positive: Mary chose to look for the good in her circumstances. We can do the same or we can live as fault finders.

- When are you most guilty of being a fault finder or quickest to complain? Why do you think that is the case?
- How would you describe the difference between someone open to sharing about the challenges of life versus someone who likes complaining?

P. Purposeful: Mary knew she was living for a purpose bigger than her comfort, desires, and life.

- Do you know someone who lives on purpose? Tell us what you observe about their life.
- Do you feel like you have purpose in your life?
 - If so, tell us about that purpose and how it came about.
 - If not, tell us what you feel is missing and what sorts of steps you might want to take to find purpose.

Y. Yielded: Mary didn't resist God's will even when it felt hard.

- Tell us about a time you made the conscious decision to yield to God.
- How do you feel you are doing at yielding to God this season?

Read Habakkuk 3:17-18 (NIV)

As we each explore this idea of happiness and joy, it's important we remember the Bible does not invite us to deny the difficulty we are facing.

- All in all, how do you feel you are doing at walking out habits of joy and happiness?
- In what ways would you like to grow in this area? What specific next steps can you take in this area?

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for wanting us to experience joy and happiness. Help us to grow in this area of life; help us to make choices and to implement habits that will empower us to experience more joy and happiness. Amen.