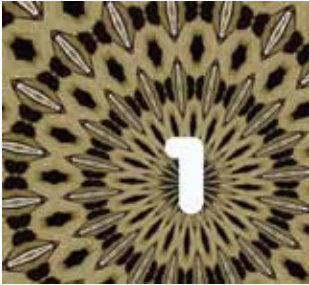




July 2010



WEEK ONE

WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?

According to *Merriam Webster's Dictionary*, happiness is a state of well-being and contentment. It is a pleasurable or satisfying experience.

What makes you happy? List some things that make you happy and talk about them with your group.

We all have different things that make us smile or lift our moods. For some people, it's shopping. Some people listen to music. Others play a sport or go for a run. Then there are people that get a rush of happiness when they see a plan come together or reach a goal.

While these things can make us feel happy for a moment, do any of them bring us lasting happiness or joy? _____

Why do you think the kind of happiness we get from worldly things only lasts for a little while? _____

We can't get happiness from someone or something—at least not lasting happiness. People will fail us. Things can be destroyed. True happiness starts on the inside and only comes from Jesus Christ.



WEEK TWO

WHAT HAPPY GIRLS DON'T DO

"Blessed is the [girl] that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But [her] delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth [she] meditate day and night. And [she] shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth [her] fruit in [her] season; [her] leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever [she] doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:1-3).

In Psalm 1:1, "blessed" can be translated into "how happy". Now, put that into the verse:

"How happy is the [girl] that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful..."

This first verse tells us three things that a happy girl does not do:

1. A HAPPY GIRL DOES NOT TAKE THE ADVICE OF UNBELIEVERS. When you are going through a hard time, where do you go for advice? Circle the people and places that you go to for advice when you need help:

FRIENDS AT CHURCH

YOUTH PASTOR

FRIENDS AT SCHOOL

THE BIBLE

MOM AND DAD

TEEN MAGAZINES

OLDER SIBLINGS/OTHER FAMILY

GOOGLE

TEACHERS AT SCHOOL

FACEBOOK FRIENDS

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER

FRIENDS ON TWITTER

How do you decide where to go when you need help? _____

Sometimes, we can be tempted to go to worldly sources for advice because we want to hear a worldly answer. We want to hear that we are okay and that what we are doing or want to do is good and acceptable. But things that seem good and acceptable to the world are not always good and acceptable to God.

In Proverbs 3:13, Solomon said, "Happy is the [girl] that findeth wisdom, and the [girl] that getteth understanding."

Our wisdom should come from God. We should go to His word and His people for advice and guidance.

2. A HAPPY GIRL DOES NOT FOLLOW THE SAME PATH AS AN UNBELIEVER. Who do you follow?

We all have heard that we're supposed to be separate from the world and that we're supposed to follow the "road less traveled," but how exactly are we supposed to do that?

In 2 Corinthians 6:14, Paul warned, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?"

This doesn't mean that you can't have unsaved friends. I think it's good for us to have some unsaved friends in our lives (because how can we be salt and light [Matthew 5:13-16] in the world if we hide away from the people of the world?). But we need to make sure we are a bigger influence on our unsaved friends than they are on us.

When I was in high school, my youth pastor had one student from our group stand on a chair. He picked another student and had him stand on the floor next to the chair. The student in the chair represented a believer and the student on the floor represented an unbeliever. My youth pastor told the student in the chair to try to pull the other student up. At the same time, the student on the floor was trying to pull the other student down. Every time, the student on the floor succeeded in pulling the other student off the chair.

Because we are not perfect and because we all struggle with sins, it is easier for unbelievers to pull us down than it is for us to pull them up.

Our unsaved friends need us. We need to be good witnesses to them. We need to show them the love of Christ. But we can't spend so much time with them that we are pulled back down into a sinful life.

Solomon warned us about this in Proverbs 1:10 - 16, "My [daughter], if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us...my [daughter], walk not in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood."

So who should we spend time with? Our brothers and sisters in Christ. Matthew 18:20 says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." God blesses us when we spend time with other believers to praise and worship Him. He wants us to have fellowship with each other so we can encourage each other and lift each other up.

3. A HAPPY GIRL DOES NOT THINK ABOUT NEGATIVE THINGS. Do you see your glass as half-empty or half-full? I have to admit, sometimes I see my glass as half-empty. There are days when I catch myself being negative and sarcastic.

But does putting other people down make me happier? No. Does it help the Kingdom of God? Absolutely not.

Is it hard for you to be positive sometimes? _____

Why do you think it's hard for you to be positive? _____

How do negative thoughts make you unhappy? _____

My Sunday school teacher, Bro. Mike, reminds my class to be positive every week. He often talks about the 80/20 rule (made popular by T.D. Jakes and in Tyler Perry's movie "Why Did I Get Married?"). The theory of the 80/20 rule is that most of the time, 80% of things are good. But we tend to focus on the 20% that's going wrong. We all tend to dwell on the negative, even when the good outweighs it.

So what's the best way to focus on the positive instead? Look at the promises in God's word! Look up these verses and write down the good things that God has promised us:

Romans 8:28: _____

Proverbs 16:3: _____

1 Corinthians 15:58: _____

What other verses do you know that tell about the good things God gives to us? Share these with your group. _____

When you look at all the good things that God gives to us, you have to be positive! Battle negativity with thankfulness – a friend of mine has challenged herself to only post thankful statuses on Facebook for one month. Would it be hard for you to think of a status about how thankful you are every day for a month? Why or why not? _____



WEEK THREE

THREE SECRETS OF HAPPY GIRLS

Now we know what a happy girl doesn't do, but what does a happy girl do that makes her so... happy?

"But [her] delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth [she] meditate day and night. And [she] shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth [her] fruit in [her] season; [her] leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever [she] doeth shall prosper" (Psalm 1:2-3).

1. A HAPPY GIRL DESIRES THE THINGS OF THE LORD. What are the desires of your heart?

What do you want more than anything in the world? _____

Psalm 37:4-5 says, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass."

Those verses don't give us a free pass with God's signature on it that says we can be successful at whatever we want, whenever we want, however we want. They say to "commit thy way unto the Lord."

What do you think it means to commit your ways unto the Lord? _____

If you commit your ways to God, that doesn't necessarily mean you will end up being a missionary or pastor's wife. Maybe you dream of being a huge women's soccer star. How could you commit that dream to God and use your talent to serve Him?

When we are in God's presence and in His will, we will desire good things. As we get closer to Him, He will place desires in our hearts. As we continue to commit to His timing and His plan, He will bring those desires and dreams to life.

A girl that wants godly things is a happy girl!

2. A HAPPY GIRL THINKS ON THE THINGS OF GOD - When you hear the word "meditate" what do you think about? Do you picture a little guy in a robe sitting on the floor with his legs crossed and humming "Ummmmm"?

Psalm 1:2 says, "...in his law doth [she] meditate day and night." A happy girl studies God's word and thinks about what it says, means, and how it can effect her life. That's meditation.

When was the last time you "meditated" on the Word of God? Do you just read it like it is just empty words on the page? Or do you really let it speak to you?

Remember Proverbs 3:13 - "Happy is the [girl] that findeth wisdom, and the [girl] that getteth understanding."

Flip your Bible to one of your favorite passages and meditate on what God is saying to you for a few minutes. What does this passage say to you? Why is it one of your favorites? How can this Scripture be used in your life every day? _____

3. A HAPPY GIRL WILL BEAR SPIRITUAL FRUIT. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance..." (Galatians 5:22-23).

Take a moment to think about one of your heroes of the faith—a pastor, parent, Sunday school teacher, or friend that you admire. Why do you look up to this person? _____

What spiritual fruit do you see in his or her life? _____

Do you think other people see spiritual fruit in your life? _____

If you are in a group, write each girl's name on an index card and pass the cards out randomly. Think about the person whose card you have and write down a fruit of the Spirit that she makes you think of (For example, my friend Ginny smiles all the time and is always laughing, so she makes me think of being joyful. I can see that she has joy in her life. If I had her card, I would write "JOY" on her card.). Pass the cards around two or three times and let different girls write on each card, then pass them back to the girl whose name is on the card.

Look at your card. Are the fruits listed the ones you thought they would be? Is there a spiritual fruit missing that you thought would be there? _____

When we can share spiritual fruits (love, joy, peace, etc.) with other people, it makes us happy. Are you sharing fruit as you should or would like to be sharing? _____



WEEK FOUR

HAPPY FOR REAL

What does happiness mean to you? Do you think of a happy girl as popular? Or pretty? Or smart?

Imagine yourself the happiest you could ever be and write down what your life would look like at that happiest moment: _____

In that image, where does your happiness come from? Are you relying on people or circumstances to make you happy?

Are you “borrowing” your happiness from things that can only make you happy for a moment, or is your happiness flowing out of a spirit filled with God’s joy?

If you’re depending on your circumstances to make you happy, I hate to burst your balloon, but it’s not going to work for long. Things are going to happen that you don’t like. Things are not always going to go like you want them to.

People are not always going to like you. The boy you like isn’t always going to like you back. The things you want aren’t always going to be under the Christmas tree. People you love will disappoint you. Things will get destroyed. Your brother will “accidentally” flush your cell phone down the toilet every now and then. But can you have joy even in those bad situations?

If anyone in history knew what it is like to have a bad day, it was Job. But even when nothing in Job’s world was going right, he was able to say, “the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1:21) Somewhere in the deepest part of Job’s heart, he was joyful enough to say, “blessed be the name of the Lord.”

A happy girl can always say “blessed be the name of the Lord!” She knows that true happiness comes from God and that He is the only one who will never let her down. She has faith in His plan and trusts in His timing. She knows she is beautiful because she was created in His image. She knows hard times will come, because He told her they would, but she can be happy anyway because He told her this: ***“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world, ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)***

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Christina Hopper is 23 years old and attends Sulphur Springs FWB Church in Northport, Alabama. She loves reading and spending time with friends and family. She would like to thank her pastor, Bro. Rick Taylor, for his help with this study, most of which was based on one of his sermons. Check out her Facebook page or email her at cmhopper.warrior@gmail.com. She would love to hear from you!