



**Thank you for collaborating with us on this book project.**

- Book: think through Jesus' ideas on happiness.
- Workbook: act on Jesus' ideas on happiness.
- Devotional: pray and transform through Jesus' ideas on happiness.

*Please share your ideas on the Happy Project and all the suite of products you think may go well with this. What would make a devotional helpful and transformational? What about the workbook?*

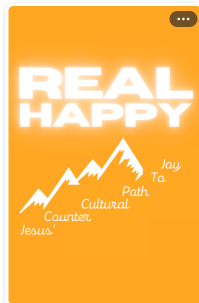
**This week: chapter 4**

- what really resonates? maybe take notes and bring back with you to Worship Cafe for discussion.
- What area drags or is difficult to follow? This can be helpful as we clean it up. If you had to cut something to make it shorter what would you cut?
- What questions do you have?
- What are your favorite quotes?
- reply with your comments to [admin@sflighthouse.org](mailto:admin@sflighthouse.org)**

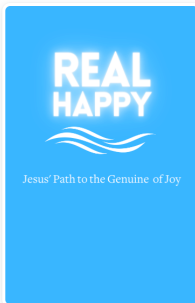
**THE [BOOK TITLE]**

*We don't have a title yet. After reading Prologue, Introduction and Chapter 1 what would you suggest? Same goes for the byline. Here is what you (and some others have come up with so far)*

BY: MIKE HAYES AND JEFFREY GARNER



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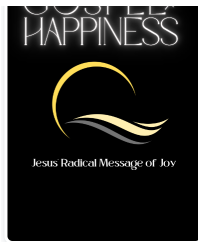


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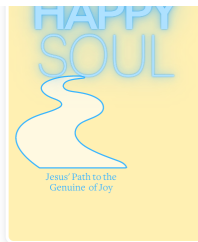




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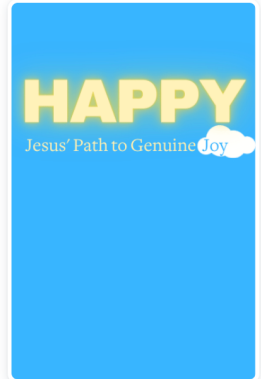
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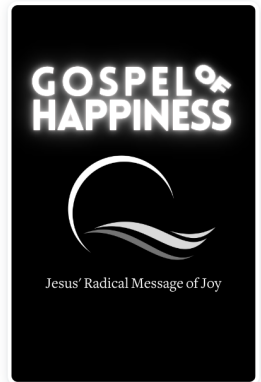
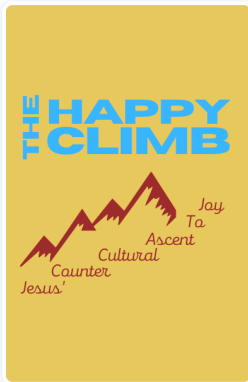
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[Help me with chapter Title]

## BACK AGAIN TO WEEP, FINALLY A WAY FORWARD

“Whenever you find tears in your eyes, especially unexpected tears, it is well to pay the closest attention. They are not only telling you something about the secret of who you are, but more often than not God is speaking to you through them of the mystery of where you have come from and is summoning you to where, if your soul is to be saved, you should go next.”— Frederick Buechner

*Jeffrey Story (option I):*

*Crying while on an elliptical machine in a gym isn't very becoming, but there was no way to avoid the gush of emotions.*

*I was wrapping up the final moments of Meister Eckhart's Indestructible Joy, the story of Germany's thirteenth century Christian theologian and mystic.[1]*

*James Finley, a clinical psychologist, was telling the story of a father whose daughter was diagnosed with terminal cancer. The little girl got to where she would take his shoes while he was at work, put them on and trapse around the house and then absentmindedly leave his shoes scattered. Upon returning home, and stumbling over the shoes he would get frustrated and scold her.*

*One day he came home, and his shoes were out in the rain and filled with water. He was frustrated because she wasn't listening to him or considering him.*

*"You know you can't do that you've ruined my nice dress shoes!"*

*One morning several months after the diagnosis he finds her on the floor of her room dead. Heartbroken they called the funeral home. When the funeral director arrived, he headed down the stairs to let him in and saw one of her shoes laying there on the landing. The grief and anguish overwhelmed him, even at times to the point of despair. For*

*weeks he left the shoe untouched and unmoved from the stairs. The shoe reminded him of her and was a symbol of the preciousness of the simple things of life. He didn't know how to get through the grief, so he daily looked at it and stepped over it.*

*The tears I felt in that moment, even from someone else's sorrow were therapeutic, I had some shoes-on-stairs that I stepped over and avoided, fearing I did not have the capacity to face the reality of what they symbolized.*

### **Sadness authenticates and doesn't hinder happiness.**

The kind of sadness the bereaved father feels is anguish and may be the most excruciating kind of sadness. Neuroscientist and psychologist categorize all emotions into four arenas—fear, anger, sadness and happiness-- and within each there is a full spectrum of highly nuanced emotions. Sadness has well over sixteen different scales ranging from anguish to mildly disappointed.[2] Whether it's the sadness of abandonment or guilt or boredom, these all are presumed to be the thieves of our happiness.

Our survival instincts mean we have a predisposition to avoidance of pain, sorrow, and sadness. Most of us will do anything to avoid pain. In fact, our culture's presentation of constant-smiles and filtered picture-perfect moments means we are left feeling like something is wrong if we are sad. We've talked with students at universities that lament the toxic positivity culture, feeling, as though there was no room for sadness or anger. The pressure to overcome boredom-sadness and inferior-sadness by propping up an artificial happiness with drugs like molly or unprescribed Prozac leaves many students feeling like something is wrong with them for being sad. Charlie Chaplin's *Smile* exposes us to this cultural tendency to "hide every trace of sadness."

We don't need to read the scouting report on repressed sadness to know the physical ailments and emotional toll this kind of avoidance does to our well-being.[3] Anything we repress into the unknown recesses of our psyche will pop up in health issues, emotional breakdowns, and addiction cycles. Unaccepted sadness morphs into rage, bitterness, anxiety, and a myriad of disorders.

Jesus' second word on happiness confronts the question of "what about all of us sad people? Can we have happiness too?" He doesn't take the easy path of avoiding those who are sad, he

compassionately begins with them, truly with all of us who find ourselves in the unfortunate valley of sorrow.

### **Happy are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.**

*--Jesus second word on happiness*

Jesus' inclusivity is remarkable. Happiness is for sad people too. Astonishingly he begins his eightfold path to happy, not with dos and don'ts, but with a condition we all find ourselves in from time to time--states of sadness. Now that we have already made room for happy, his words give us permission to welcome the sadness. Jesus doesn't avoid or skirt the unwanted sadness, but graciously comforts our fears by placing our sorrows at front and center of the happy oracles.

Tucked away in the Greek word behind mourning is one more clue that assists in solving the paradox behind this happy promise. Jesus uses the participle form of the word mourn (ongoing action) to describe the state of mourning. This could be translated as, happy are those who are mourning. This participle suggests that there is an ongoing condition of mourning within the heart of all of us. We are born crying and we die crying and in-between we unconsciously mourn our separation from God's presence, a silent exile weeping within our soul.[4] Perhaps this is why some of us don't even know why we are depressed or sad or why we cry so easily; it's as if there is so much more loss within us.

### **Happiness Includes Sadness**

As shocking as it sounds happiness needs sadness; the emotion of happiness exists because of the contrast of sadness. "We cannot selectively numb emotions, when we numb the painful emotions, we also numb the positive emotions." [5] Jesus redeems our sorrow by witnessing and acknowledging it as real, which in turn allows us to accept and appreciate it. Jesus says, "Happy are those who mourn," and with that paradoxical statement he motions us to bring our sorrow and come sit with him, he is promising something, something only he can deliver on, that our mourning makes us present for his comfort.

Where does he get the insight to make this leap of connecting happiness with mourning?

### **Ashrei and Pilgrimage.**

The Jewish stream of wisdom teachers talked frequently about the “Happy Life” from the Wisdom Literature—Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs--a section of books found in the Hebrew Bible. [6] Of particular interest in the Happy Life musings was the Happy Prayer, Psalm 84. [7] Jesus as a boy pilgrimaging to Jerusalem for Passover would have sung these notes of happiness, mourning, and comfort as he made his way up to the Temple.

Psalm 84:4-7, 12

Happy the folk who dwell in your house;

and praise you continually. (Selah)

Happy the folk whose strength is in you,

whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

As they pass through the Valley of Tears,

they make it a place of springs;

the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

They go from strength to strength,

till each appears before God in Zion.

O Lord of armies,

Happy the man who trusts in you.

The exile of Jews from Jerusalem, God’s City and House, during the Babylonian wars, led to an entire nation being scattered around the world. Those in exile longed to return to God’s house and happiness. And although many were never able to make the trek several psalms were written to reflect on this longing, inspire pilgrimage, and encourage the pilgrim during the arduous trek back to God. These pilgrim songs were sung in exile, while on pilgrimage and upon final arrival.

Psalm eighty-four, one such song, reflects on a pilgrim, one presumably scattered afar off, who envies the “Happy Folk” and yearns for the happy life in God’s house. Between the lines

we sense the question, “Is there any happiness for those in exile?”[8]

The song gives hope when it choruses, "Happy the Folk whose hearts are set on pilgrimage." The notion here is that the turning of the heart toward home, the planning and prepping for the return fills the heart with happiness. Again between the lines another problem surfaces, “What if sadness and sorrow are encountered on the journey, how will we make it?”

Pilgrimage was long and costly—a once in a lifetime event. Along the road bandits and thieves lurked, sickness and sadness and sorrow were experienced. The songwriter, knows there will be heartbreak; the happy pilgrimage will “pass through the valley of tears.” The irony here is that the pilgrim’s tears of sorrow are transformed into a comforting spring because they are facing toward Jerusalem.

Jesus seems to have this image in mind when he talks about happy are those who mourn. He plots this notion of ‘return’ again and again—prodigals, lost sheep, lost coins—all returning to the happy celebrations and banquets. He also knows there will be mourning and sadness along the way, but this will not diminish the joy.

Exile is a living metaphor of our separation from God, and as pilgrims we are on the journey toward God’s home. Yes, sorrow and sadness will be encountered, however with this caveat, the tears will refresh our resolve to carry on. How so? The sadness strips away the veneer of insensitivity and invulnerability. In those moments we get real as we contemplate what’s behind us and what’s before us. In these reflective moments our tears become the source of our greatest resolve to continue the pilgrimage to God’s joy. Happiness is a pilgrimage.

The paradigm of our lives “on pilgrimage” to a home we have never known, gives both a landscape and a context for our sadness. Instead of becoming myopic in our present suffering, we can grasp the bigger narrative at play in our lives. Pilgrimage makes it easier to understand the inevitability of sadness in every human journey, and also offers the hope of an eventual arrival which lets us know the sadness cannot be forever

### **Three Kinds of Mourning.**

One reality is evident to all sojourners of life—tears are the only adequate expression of the human dilemma. We may argue because we know something's not right, but we cry because we feel something's not right. This capacity to discern with our feelings is not a weak thing, it's a God-thing giving voice to the unsayable.

Not all mourning is the same, but all mourning is welcomed and redeemed. Layered atop the unconscious sorrow we bear of our Common Father, Jesus ministers to three kinds of conscious tears—affliction (personal sorrow), repentance (spiritual sorrow) and compassion (communal sorrow).

*Affliction.* East of Eden the human story unfolds in an exile of sorrow. If we trace the steps, we hear the first muffled cries of human sorrow just a few feet outside of Eden. Sorrow and sadness is human. We hear it in the homicide of Abel, while his blood drips from his older brother's hands.

The God of the Scriptures responds, "Your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground." Only a couple sentences into our anthropology and we are introduced to suffering, violence, ache and mourning. Several cursory observations give us reason for pause: one, the human condition is tearful, even for good people; two, God hears and sees our cries, and responds; three, not even death can muffle the sound of our mourning, the earth cries with us. Mourning is human, and it too is good, for mourning is the language of the Spirit.

Affliction is the kind of mourning brought on by great personal suffering—a divorce, the death of a loved one, chronic physical pain, estrangement or abandonment from a friend or family member. The sacred human witness of Job encountering God through the affliction of the death of his children and the loss of his health. Joseph experiences God's presence through his brother's betrayal, enslavement, and imprisonment. Hannah's affliction gives her audience with God. Israel's affliction as slaves in Egypt sparks compassion from the Burning Bush, "I have heard the cry." Affliction descends down into the interior of our being and wails into the vastness of God, and if Scripture teaches us anything it teaches us that God hears the cry of the afflicted.[9]

But what about those of us whose tears are self-inflicted wounds to the soul? Spiritual tears from mistakes, sin, and a hard life? Can these be redeemed for happiness?



*Repentance.* Repentance and the tears that flow from the contrite heart are brought about by deep anguish of guilt or shame for behaviors or attitudes that have hurt others and God. And the Scriptural witness abounds with examples of God's presence with those who have failed, when they cry out for help. Jacob laments to God for lying and cheating his way to success, for ruining his relationship with every male family-figure in his life. God responds with blessing. David weeps and mourns for his adultery and murder and God restores him. The sobbing of the woman whose life was marred by one indiscretion after another is met with Jesus' fierce defense and grace over her life. [10]

Paul says, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." [11] When we take our sorrow and face God with it, it becomes godly sorrow. Paul calls us to situate our regrets, sadness, and any loathsome emotions around God. He challenges us not to run from these feelings or disown these feelings but to use them as a means of making our prayers more heartfelt, our yearning for God more pure. The thing is when we face God with these feelings, we sense that they are really being seen and not ignored, and that we are heard and not merely patronized.

Worldly sorrow means clinging to our sorrow. It's like doing the psychological work of understanding it, processing it, but then never letting it go. C.S. Lewis says that sorrow is not a state but a process. Meaning, we eventually move beyond it, we become more than our sorrow. Will we continue to a place of comfort? Or will we refuse the comfort for fear of losing a deep part of what we have become in the sorrow? Some of us do not know who we are without our pain. Shifting into Godly sorrow means we acknowledge God as the blessing we seek, the happiness we long for, the honor and nobility we crave.

*Compassion.* The tears of affliction and repentance do a gradual work of bringing about what some consider to be the deepest forms of happiness—compassion. [12] Compassion is that gift of "weeping with those who weep." We feel the pain of others and our emotions gurgle forth. Jesus most pronounced emotion during his life was that of compassion. [13] He is moved with compassion to heal, to forgive, to teach, to give. Mary Magdalene stands at the cross weeping tears of compassion and then again alone outside the tomb; she's been there once and cried and now she returns. She refuses to be consoled by disciples, angels, and even at the last the garden-caretaker; in the anguish of her tears, she is miraculously comforted with Jesus' first resurrection appearance. Paul blends this idea of compassion, suffering and comfort to the Corinthians with the words, "The Father of compassion and God of all comfort, comforts us so that we can comfort [others]. . . if we are afflicted it is for your comfort." [14]

*Jeffrey's story cont'd: As I headed home from the gym I reflected on the shoes-on-stairs I had ignored. There was the grieving of my divorce and the ongoing decimation of our church community during the pandemic.*

*I continued listening to Meister Eckhart as I walked back. The dad after a year of mourning said a shift happened as he walked by a playground where little girls were playing with their dads. For the first time he was present with the sacredness of the preciousness of all children. Their laughs and giggles and squealing delights filled him with an awareness of their preciousness. It was as if his deceased daughter had left a gift for him in her death, and his mourning had opened him to receive sacred preciousness. That wasn't all, he observed another gift she left him with. Whenever he heard of a parent losing a child, on the news or from a friend, whether he knew them or not, he was filled with empathy and compassion and mourning. She had given him the gift of empathy, something he never had before, but his mourning had opened him up to this beautiful gift. Finally, he said, his mourning had resulted in one final gift, the awakening that her preciousness to him was deathless. Until the day he died, she would remain precious to him.*

*The scars of our sadness are a source of internal and infinite joy, a gift that gives the best part of us away to others and to God. And in that giving we are often left with three gifts—something precious, empathy, and something deathless.*

When we face God with our mourning, not a single tear is wasted. Many who have suffered are the ones who change the world in beautiful ways, who find a meaningful purpose, and become healers themselves. After all Jesus was the wounded-healer.

Whether your sadness is rooted in affliction, repentance or compassion Jesus offers the tearful the promise of comfort.

## **The Way to Comfort**

Archbishop Desmond Tutu tells the story of the assassination of one of his close friends in South Africa just before Easter. His emotions ranged from anger, to despair, to sadness, to fatigue. He says, "I broke down and [my wife] held me, like I was a baby." People called him and asked for spiritual counsel and answers. He walked into his little chapel, looked up toward heaven and shouted out his anger at God, like Jeremiah. Later he says he learned that

shouting out and naming the emotion, like “I HURT! I’M SAD!” releases these emotions from festering into wounds and he attributes this to helping him guide his people into forgiveness and stopping cycles of violence.

***Get real with and accept the sadness.*** Perhaps its shouting it out, naming the emotion, or simply writing out in a journal what kind of sadness you feel and why you feel it, and then telling yourself, “it’s ok that I feel this way.” Find your voice here allow yourself the freedom of expressing as authentically as you can what you really feel.

***Face God with our sadness.*** We face God with our sadness by simply bringing him and the sadness into the same sentence. By acknowledging him and the sadness with something as simple as, “God, I am sad!” Then we can pray to God about it, find a scripture that talks about the kind of sadness and then meditate on that Scripture.

***Receive the Paraclete.*** The comfort Jesus describes in the happy attitude is *paraclete*, something we look further into in the Gospel of Happiness section below. At some point during our acceptance of the sadness and bringing it to God we sense a peace, an awareness that all will be ok. When Cynthia was twelve, her best friend's father was diagnosed with a terminal disease. Cynthia cried out to God in a Quaker meeting and she heard a voice whisper to her, "Shhhh . . . Dan will die and all will be well." [15] We have heard people report an inner-knowing that defies rationale. Often there is a hush that comes over the chaos; it doesn’t make sense, and we cannot articulate it, but we know everything is going to be ok and we feel ok both with the sadness and at peace with the Presence of God.

## **The Gospel of Happiness**

*Sadness + Happiness = Comfort (a nuanced form of happiness)*

Jesus wept on more than one occasion. It’s as if he’s telling us something with his tears. Its ok to cry and grieve. His final cry in Gethsemane, sweaty and tearful, filled him with extraordinary courage and comfort to complete his final mission. These tears tell us that God feels us, suffers like us, suffers with us, and suffers for us. The tears speak to us that we are infinitely precious.

We tend to describe our emotions in binary ways. When asked we say we are happy or sad, but we find it difficult if not impossible to articulate our emotions in nuanced language. This black-or-white way of thinking, given to us at childhood, tags along into adulthood. Although

our emotions are much more complex than an either-or description we struggle to recognize the elaborate map of our emotions. By offering us a sad-happiness Jesus shows us a way to be both sad and happy at the same time, which permits us to accept the tears and grow from their message and lessons.

Jesus' weepy happiness, gives voice and permission to be both happy and sad. Just as sadness has a spectrum of at least sixteen shades of sad, so also happiness has been nuanced into at least twenty-four complexities. When the blues of sadness are mixed with the yellows of happiness we get the greenery of comfort. Without the sadness our happiness is not fully orb'd, the sadness adds to, it doesn't take away from, and our happiness mature into intimacy, understanding, and compassion.

We often gloss over the promise as if to say, "What's the big deal with being comforted?" The obvious response, albeit not the only one, is: can you imagine what it would be like to bear your tears with no comfort? The gravity of hopelessness of what it's like to be without a witness to our pain, a confessor to our sin, and a companion to our compassion. But this only scratches the surface of what it means to be comforted.

The comfort Jesus offers is a big deal, it's a not a patty-cake, "you got this," "I believe in you," "this too shall pass," but rather a "I am with you," "we will walk through this together and our joy will become otherworldly through this." The comfort Jesus provides is not there to "move you along" or get you past the sadness, but a holy elixir that allows you to be present to mourning and sense that all is well, even when it's not.

The theology of comfort is rooted in a rich theological term—paraclete, 'One Called-to-Come-Alongside.' The ancient Jewish courts were composed of a body of judges, two or three accusers, and the defendant. The defendant could call someone to 'come-alongside' them, a paraclete.

The story of Susanna, found in the apocrypha, tells us about a beautiful wife, living in Babylon during the exile, two renowned elders lustily covet her so they scheme up a false accusation.[16] They claim to have seen her in a garden with a young lover. They strip her and gawk at her then take her to be executed. Susanna, who is a righteous woman, cries out to God to help her. The Holy Spirit (paraclete) stirs up Daniel, a young boy at the time, and he comes to her defense, demanding the elders state separately the kind of tree under which the transgression occurred. Their scheme is exposed. Susanna lives and the elders are executed

for bearing false witness. In her distress and tears God sends the comforter, who stirs up Daniel to be her witness, her come-along-side.

Over time Paraclete became a technical term for the one the defendant called to give witness to their pain, comfort to their dilemma, and voice to their defense. Jesus uses this word paraclete when talking about the kind of comfort those in mourning get from heaven. The promise that our tears are accompanied by God's presence.

At his final meal with his closest companions Jesus speaks of his imminent death and how God will send them the Paraclete after his death, "you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices, but your grief will turn to joy."

The paraclete is a special quality and expression of God's Spirit, reserved for those who are mourning. We can feel it at times in another human, in a beautiful moment with nature, or directly in a moment of silence where our souls are especially in tune and available for Presence. The comfort we get is a capital C comfort, a divine comfort and accompanies us in our sadness. We do not get happiness in the absence of sadness, in the circumvention of sadness, or in spite of the sadness, but we get happiness because and through the paraclete's presence in the sadness.

In his final weepy moments, God did not save Jesus from the cross. There are times in life that we are saved from our sadness, we are rescued from trouble. Then there are times that nothing changes, except us, we change. Jesus had an experience of Divine comfort in Gethsemane, a comfort that while "passing through the Valley of Tears [in-couraged him to go] from strength to strength." Jesus gives us an imagination for this otherworldly kind of sad-happiness.

Father,

I am sad.

I am not sure I have ever experienced this kind of Comfort, but I know I need it.

I want to trust in you.

I want my sorrow to have meaning to be redeemed, just as Jesus' sorrow was.

I want my situation to change, but beyond that, I want to be changed, by you.

Please, send me your Comfort.

I know that I cannot make it without your Comfort.

I open my heart to you, I make myself available to the Comforter.

I am waiting.

In the next chapter we will consider how our anxieties and anger are be harnessed for the purposes of happiness as we look at several characters who tamed their rage and worry and recovered an earthy joy.

1. Meister Eckhart's Living Wisdom: Indestructible Joy and the Path of Letting Go (Section 14). This was an audio reflection by James Finley, a spiritual director and clinical psychologist. I had listened to this long before writing this chapter and the story and what happened to me was so impactful that I
2. University of Glasgow categorizes the four distinct emotions. Psychologists and researchers like Brene Brown, Maps of the Heart, differentiates eighty-seven different emotions.
3. [references needed on heart disease, eating disorders, anger and rage, addiction . . . dementia ]
4. We have in mind here C.S. Lewis' use of the German word Sehnsucht (from The Weight of Glory), that sense of deep, inconsolable longing, yearning, the feeling of intensely missing something when we don't even know what it is. It's the longing for a home that we have never been to before. This mournful longing that Saint Augustine calls a restlessness we never overcome until we find our rest in God.
5. Brene Brown.
6. Psalm 1 begins with "Happy (Hebrew, ashrei) is the one who . . . delights himself in the instructions of the Lord." The Ashrei Prayer or Happy Prayer is prayed by Jews at least three times a day, its called such because it begins with the word happy.
7. The Babylonian Talmud completed 500 c.e. promises life in the Age to Come to those who pray the Happy Prayer three times a day.
8. Psalm 137 poetically captures this with the image of unplayed harps hanging on poplars and captives refusing to sing an songs of merriment.
9. Psalm 9, 10 and 72 are just a couple examples of God's heart toward the afflicted.
10. Luke 7:36-50.
11. 2 Corinthians 7:10.
12. The Book of Joy with Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu talk about compassion as the source of true and pure happiness.
13. B.B. Warfield the Emotional Life of Our Lord studied every emotion of Jesus and concluded that compassion was the emotion that motivated his life and mission.
14. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7
15. Cynthia Bourgault, The Wisdom Jesus.
16. Daniel 13 (Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition)

# THE HAPPY WORKBOOK



## Workbook 3 Following the path to unlimited joy

### My Happy Quote

A large, horizontal, yellow rectangular area with wavy, torn-paper-style edges, intended for writing a quote.

Write in the quote from the Chapter that most resonated with you.

## Happy Paradoxes

- Divine happiness does not alchemize in the absence of sadness, not even in spite of sadness but through sadness.
- Facing God with our sadness, exposes us to divine comfort, which brings us great joy.
- God draws near to our sadness, so sadness is a pathway to connection with God.
- Acknowledging our sadness to safe people invites comfort from friends, family and community and those moments of genuine connection bring the happiness of comfort
- The happiness we experience in sadness is an experience of truth— that happiness can be an abiding state within us when we perceive the presence of God in our lives, and connect to it again and again.
- In sadness, we experience the difference between a happy emotion and a happy soul, where a happy emotion is fleeting, but a happy soul is abiding.

## My Happiness Inventory

Read and answer

1. How well do you process and express loss or grief?
2. How frequently do you cry?
3. In moments of sadness and sorrow who or what is your heart facing? The following exercise will help in determining who/what your heart is facing.
  - a. As you become more mindful about your own thoughts and feelings, are they hidden in relation with others or before God?
  - b. Do they see a persona or a person?
4. “When I experience feelings of loss or sadness...
  - a. I catastrophize the sorrow. “Oh no, the sky will fall if I allow myself to feel this!”
  - b. I completely deny it, and see it as a sign of weakness or flaw. “I am too strong to be sad!”
  - c. I sulk in self-pity. “Everything always goes wrong and bad for me.”



d. I repress the feelings. “No worries. Tomorrow’s a brand-new day!”

e. I give myself permission to sit in my sorrow and grieve the losses, looking to myself to get through it. “This too shall pass.”

f. I bring myself to God with the loss alive inside of me. I trust and am willing to experience God.

### **Imagine as a Spiritual Practice**

Choose one Imagination to work with today. Visualize it using all your senses. Afterwards, journal your experience.

1. Imagine a recent loss in your life, see yourself grieving and mourning this loss. And like a child running to her mother with an injury and the mother embracing her daughter, imagine running to your Father and being held in his embrace. What does it look like for you to let go and grieve with God?

2. Imagine your true self, even if you don’t fully understand who you are. Imagine that you are not hiding your real emotions, pretending to be someone else, or covering up your fears and hurts. Imagine having the courage to speak your truth before God. What would it feel like to be fully seen and known by your name? How does it feel to be courageous with your tears?

3. Imagine being emotionally healthy. What would that look like in your daily life?

4. Close your eyes and imagine you are praying tomorrow morning. You are looking at a gratitude list. You have written down three emotions that you are thankful for having? What are those emotions?

### **Walk in The Way**

*Look at these words one more time,*

Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Jesus whispers to you,

“Follow me.”

Jesus shows you how to mourn with those who mourn at the graveside of Lazarus, he shows you how to mourn in Gethsemane's place of prayer, and he shows you outside of Jerusalem how to mourn the rejection of others.

You accept that it's ok to cry.

You take a step in following him.

You trust him.

### **Affirm Aloud:**

I am blessed when I cry. I am and I will be comforted by God. He desires to comfort me. My tears bless the world.

### **Smile Wide:**

Give yourself permission to feel your emotions— the tears, the smiles, the anger, the sadness, the abiding happiness. Smile to yourself because you don't have to pretend or be fake to be loved by God. As you lay your head down on the pillow tonight, exhale fully and rest. You are in the company of a City that is free to smile and free to cry.

### **Community Questions:**

If you were putting together a study group what questions would you ask?

## **About Us**

Jeffrey Garner has his Master's in Exegetical Theology from Western Seminary. He earned his doctorate from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. His thesis and dissertation were on the Fourth Gospel and the Beloved Disciple.

Mike Hayes is a reconciler. His life and ministry is characterized by connecting people in life-giving relationship with God and each other. He is a uniter – catalyzing racial reconciliation and healing for more than 40 years. As the Founding Pastor of Covenant Church, he pioneered a ministry that exemplifies covenant relationships. Flourishing in diversity, with

more than 100 nations represented, Covenant Church has become a leading voice for unity and a model for transcultural, multigenerational, and multiethnic ministry.

Dr. Mike Hayes currently serves as President of Churches In Covenant, a global network of churches and ministries united to bless the nations.

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