



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.

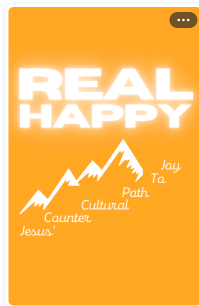
This week: chapter 2

- 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**

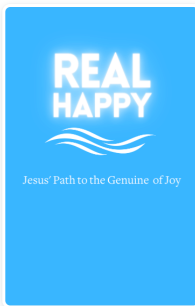
THE [BOOK TITLE]

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



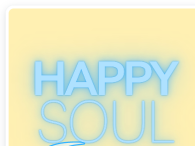
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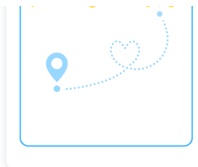


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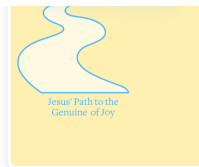




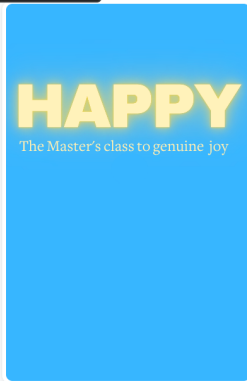
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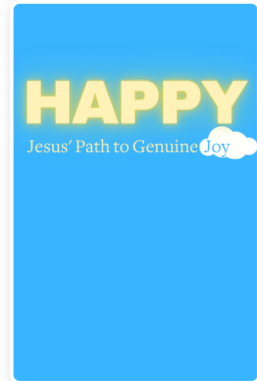
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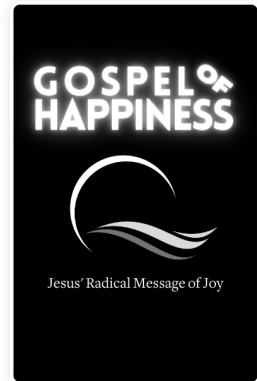
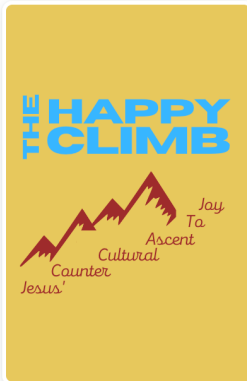
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Jeffrey's Story: Every author has their own writing process. For me, I am blessed to pastor a small, neighborhood church in San Francisco. Our church is filled with diversity and belovedness. Because of our communal context, we are a perfect petri dish for testing content. When I told everyone about "The Happy Project", they were enthused to participate and amused at the probability of finding their stories or suggestions in the manuscripts. We decided to turn The Happy Project into a Sunday discussion project so they could help craft the content. On Mondays, I disseminated the corresponding book chapter for beta reading and feedback. The chapter you are reading now was the one with which I opened the sermon series. The teaching followed very closely with the sections in this chapter, the main idea being that God is very interested in our happiness.

As I shared how Jesus experienced and formed his theology of joy, Jeff M, one of our community members, gets up and walks out. I noticed, but kept speaking. Eventually, he made his way back in, his face a little flushed. Afterward, Jeff M pulled me aside. He apologized for walking out abruptly, and explained that he needed to compose himself. Jeff was raised in a hyper-religious community that focused on fearing God and pleasing God. His life was centered on assuring his eternal salvation. Fear and rule-following were the under-pinnings of his religious context where salvation was a precarious reality. Spiritual insecurity and paranoia were part of the collective consciousness that kept him on well-behaved toes. Choked up and short of breath, Jeff shared his church hurt with me. We stood there for a moment, hugged and cried together. Then he said to me, "All my life I strove to make God happy, that moment I rushed out I was overcome with the awareness that all my life God has wanted to make me happy!"

Lost in Translation: Blessed vs. Happy

Pick up just about any Bible today, turn to Matthew 5 and instead of reading the word "happy" as we just laid out in the last chapter, you will find the word "blessed"

Blessed are the poor in spirit...

Blessed are those who mourn...

Blessed are the meek ...

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice

Blessed are the merciful...

Blessed are the pure in heart...

Blessed are the peacemakers...

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness...

Blessed are you when others revile you and utter falsehoods against you...

Rejoice and be glad...

We find this same 'lost in translation' quandary in the Old Testament as well with *ashrei*, the Hebrew word for 'happy' gets translated into English as 'blessed.' Interestingly, there is a dedicated Greek and Hebrew word for 'blessed.'¹ Why have translators opted for a different word? Is it blessed or happy?

Well we don't want to nitpick here, but an alternative translation might relay a better sense of God's enjoyment in your life. The simple answer is both work, but here's a little backstory on why we think the time is right to recover happy.² When the word *makarios* is translated into English as blessed, it loses its happy nuance. English translators opted for the word blessed in

lieu of happy because “happy” transmutes too easily as shallow, frivolous, and fleeting. Well-intended translators didn’t want to trivialize *makarios* so they chose a secondary word, ‘blessed’ for inclusion in the English Bible. They rightly recognized that Jesus was giving us more than warm and fuzzy feelings; he declared blessing over our life, a blessing that would result in happiness. But by un-happifying the translation, we lost the radical paradox Jesus is setting up as well as the delightful gist of God’s joy for his children. Perhaps we even lost the notion that God is truly interested in our outright happiness.

For the very same reason translators chose the word blessed, we will recover the word happy. Today, blessed is the word getting lost in translation, or flattened by overuse while humans are starved for heaven’s happiness. Therefore, we will unpack *makarios* in its native habitat with happiness as the theme, message and aim of Jesus' desire toward us.

The miracle of merriment and mirth.

There is no dichotomy between the happiness of man and the designs of God.

-- Abraham Joshua Heschel

Whether you are religious or irreligious we all must confront a false narrative spun by our culture. The fiction says God doesn’t care if you’re happy, he just cares about justice and rules, sacredness and seriousness, or maybe he doesn’t care at all.

In the story of His first miracle, Jesus provides us with some constructive feedback on this false-narrative, as he draws attention to the lengths God goes to in restoring laughter and happiness.

A Middle Eastern wedding festival was underway at a local vineyard. Three days into the weeklong celebration the unthinkable happens—the wine runs dry. Families have journeyed more than a hundred miles away to toast and laugh and celebrate.. Whether it was a lack of planning or really thirsty guests we aren’t told, but we do know there are empty wine jugs littering the wedding reception. The foreboding sight threatens to kill the party and send people home unhappy.

In the first century, wine was the first ingredient in a celebration. In fact, Dionysus, the Greek god of merriment and mirth, responsible for ecstasy and celebration was the god of wine. This wasn't just a Greco-Roman thing either; in Jewish culture every celebration and festival involved drinking wine. Passover involved four glasses of wine, Sabbath and all festivals

involved wine. Jewish observers of the Torah frequently remind themselves that “wine brings joy to God and man.”³ Wine was the forerunner to laughter and joyousness.

Aware of the tipping point, Jesus' mother instructs him to perform his first miracle, and her behest saves the day. He pours ordinary water into the empty, stone jars and “muah!” (lips kissing fingers), one hundred and eighty gallons of oak-aged purple joy is shelved and ready for pouring. The party goes on!

Isn't this a radical choice for a first miracle? Why not heal a child? Or raise someone from the dead? Or pay off the Synagogue's mortgage? Water to wine? We overlook how important our merriment and mirth are to God and in this story we read that Jesus obediently moved up the timing of his missional debut to bring us happiness. Whether we recognize him to be the Christ or not, this story is a sign that Jesus acts on behalf of the God of Happiness, He just splurges on spreading the Father's joy.

Fatherly Joy

Where does Jesus get this idea that God is happy or that God cares about our happiness? Did Jesus experience this kind of joy and goodness of God himself?

Several months before his happy hillside pronouncements a grassroots movement gathered in Galilee in hopes of relief from the darkness and difficulty of their world. The oppression could be felt in religion, politics, and economics. A prophet, named John, gave voice to this sentiment by protesting the urban corruption in a wilderness, outside the jurisdiction of the politicians and religious elites. Crowds gathered around a river to refresh their spirits and reconnect with God. John encouraged the people to be baptized in the Jordan River, a spiritual ritual expressing repentance and sorrow for the corruption. The people collectively longed to please God, to ready themselves for His presence. They turned their backs on the newly built temple mikvahs and opted for the dirty Jordan river.

Jesus, an unknown young man from a faraway hamlet, joined in this social expression and something gloriously unexpected happened.

In Jewish lore the Divine power and message was prefaced with a booming, “Fear not!” to the trembling recipient. When Jesus came up out of the waters however, a radically different emotion is expressed– the heavens parted, a dove descended, and these delightful words took everyone by joyful surprise, “This is my son, I love him, he brings me great joy!”

This was not something people were anticipating! John's intense preaching had them

oriented in holy sincerity and sacredness, no one was expecting the joyful outburst of a proud Father.

As of this moment, Jesus hadn't done anything noteworthy. He had not turned water to wine or given a profound speech, he's just one in a crowd. Yet he hears and believes that God is a doting Father who is happy with him. This experience voices Jesus' theology of happiness. One of the first recorded entries we have of Jesus' experience with God takes place in a context of happiness and joy. Jesus experiences himself as someone who makes God happy simply by breathing, by existing. Jesus experiences God as a happy Father and one that shares happiness with us. Jesus believes that God wants us to experience this happiness and live in the glow of heaven's joy. He preaches Good News, not Doom and Gloom! Jesus understands God in the context of happiness because of the words spoken over him, and he goes on to offer the same Good News to us—God is invested in your happiness.

The Happy Climb (or The Happy City_ depending on the Title we Choose)

Before we dive into the Eight Happy Attitudes, we need to lay a final contextual foundation.

The Happy Attitudes are found in Matthew 5, but we draw your attention to the end of Matthew 4 where Jesus calls four disciples—Peter, Andrew, James and John. Just four. Matthew isn't called until chapter nine and the Twelve aren't appointed until chapter ten. Something interesting happens between the end of chapter 4 and the close of chapter 7, where the Sermon on the Mount ends. At the start of chapter five, crowds are following Jesus, but at this point there are only four committed students.

Now when Jesus saw the crowds,
he went up on a mountainside
and sat down.

His disciples came to him,
and he began to teach them.

[Sermon on the Mount]

When Jesus had finished saying these things,
the crowds were amazed at his teaching

When Jesus sees the crowds, he summits to a place where he can teach without the distraction of crowds. Jesus' intent is not to exclude anyone, but rather to create a community, a city on a hill. This is a frequent pattern of Jesus and his closest students. His disciples, apparently the four he just called, come to him in the mountainside. His move to

the mountain signals two things, (a) an invitation to the hungriest followers to join him (b) in the establishing of a happy city.

Up on a mountainside would have been immediately recognizable to the first century readers as an echo of Mount Sinai, the mountain of God.

Mountaintops and high places played significant roles in the formation of ancient cities. The ziggurats of Mesopotamia and the pyramids of Egypt were the city centers of their day because people wanted to be near the gods and available for their blessing. People centered their lives around a mountain, a ziggurat, a hill, so that their life was safely close to the Divine.

Even when God delivered Israel out of Pharaoh's hand he brought Israel to the foot of a mountain. It was no mystery to the Exodus generation why they came to Mount Sinai. They knew when they pounded tent pegs into the desert sands, pitched fires, and rolled out carpets around this Mountain what was going on—a city was being chartered. The only question for them was, “What kind of city will this be?”

They agreed to be God's City on earth.

Jesus's ascent up a mountain echoes Moses ascending mount Sinai. Just as Moses ascended onto a Mountain and initiated Israel into a covenant with God, so here Jesus in a familiar manner ascends the mountain and issues an edict for God's Society. The similarities echo forth—mountains, ascending, call to heavenly citizenship, how-to instructions, and in the end crowds looking on in utter amazement.

There are however subtle yet striking differences. Moses begins with Ten To-Dos and To-Don'ts. Jesus begins with Eight Happy Attitudes. Moses directs us to what humans should be doing. Jesus frees us to be human beings. Moses is focused on right living. Jesus is focused on a right heart. Moses's commands end with a warning. Jesus' blessings end with promise. Perhaps the most striking difference is Moses is alone on the Mountain while Israel looks on from afar, but Jesus' mountain moments starts with four and ends with a whole crowd up on the mountain (see Matthew 7:28). The people are not relegated to stay at the base of the mountain, but are allowed to follow Jesus and join his climb to the happy city he is building. What we first may read as exclusion is really a high invitation meant to elevate us to be the kind of humans we were created to be—happy and holy with God.

The moment that joy was offered the crowds began their ascent into the presence of someone who could model this life for them and what started as four ended in a crowd of people hungry for happiness

The More the Merrier. When Jesus says, “Happy are” he doesn’t use the singular form of the adjective, as in ‘you individually’ are happy. He happyifies them in the plural. Another way of translating this would be to say, “Happy are all of you ...” Or if you’re from the south, “Y’all are happy.”

Jesus addresses the individuals insofar as they are in the community. In other words, he makes happy the communal life. Jesus knows we are not merely searching for our smile, but for a community to share our smile with. We were made for the kind of happiness that happens in community. Jesus knew this. Jesus addressed this. Jesus blessed this.

Every study on happiness that we have looked at touches on this. After reading the Good Life, Harvard’s 84-year study on happiness, the longest study ever conducted, researchers identify community and relationships as the only consistent reality in happiness!⁴ Gallup polls on life satisfaction and happiness have shown that being outside a community of trust to being inside of one has the same effect on life satisfaction as a tripling of income. Ed Diener, Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois said, “we studied some of the happiest people in the world and we found, without exception, that all of them had close supportive family and friends.”⁵

In addition, a couple professors in UCSD and Harvard, concluded in a 20-year study that “people’s happiness depends on the happiness of others with whom they are connected. This provides further justification for seeing happiness, like health, as a collective phenomenon.”⁶

Jesus’s vision is to bring God’s Society to earth. When he paints a picture of that for us we see a smiling city. In other words, happiness in its fullness is communal and familial. God’s happiness is something that is shared collectively and in community; God’s happiness is expansive, contagious, and generous, it’s likened to a city, a city that smiles. “You (all) are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”

For those of you reading this that feel isolated, confined and alone, you are not excluded from Jesus’ happy city. This communal happiness is for you too. Jesus’ happy attitudes bring you into the “city set on a hill.” Even if you are a person who cannot get physically connected to a community in your present circumstance, you can begin right now to join in a cloud of witnesses linked together by these happy attitudes from one generation to the next.

Moreover, you are already in the company of God through his spirit that lives in your heart. I would invite you to pray this prayer:

Dear God, I feel alone. Would you please bring the joy of your Presence into my heart right now? And would you guide me into a community of people that live out your happy attitudes. Thank you.

And in return I bless you with this one:

Father, you see this child, alone, confined, isolated. Send them your comfort, your presence. Because they cannot climb the moment, bring to them your community in unexpected ways so they may experience the joy of being part of the city of God. Help them to feel, sense, and recognize moments of communion with you and community with your creation. Thank you for Jesus who shows us what true communal joy is like. In Jesus name, Amen.

So far we have seen Jesus and happiness go hand-in-hand. His first miracle is about happiness, his first teaching is about happiness, even his first proclamation is called “Good News.” We see his first spiritual experience is full of joy and delight and not fear and trembling. All our life God has pursued us with happy sunsets, awe-inspiring sky galleries, and abounding nature-scapes. God has pursued all his children with new opportunities in each breath, hope in every morning, and grace to close out each day. The question now becomes how do we engage and make ourselves available for the happiness God intends for us?

In the next chapter we turn our attention to the first happy attitude and ask why is it a prerequisite for getting as much heavenly joy into your little soul as you possibly can?

1. For example, if Matthew wanted to use the word blessed, he could have used *eulogotos/eulogia*. The same is true for the Hebrew. If Isaiah or David wanted to use the word "blessed" they could have used *baruch*, A few examples of this are Psalm 84:4-5; Isaiah 56:2.

2. *Beatitudo*, the Latin word for happy, translated from the Greek word, *makarios* was coined by Cicero several centuries before Christ in his works on the Happy Life. Jerome several centuries after Jesus will use this word in his Latin translation of the Bible to talk about Jesus' Happy Life promises

3. Judges 9:13

4. The Good Life: Lessons from the World's Longest Scientific Study of Happiness Robert Waldinger MD, Marc Schulz PhD

5.XXXX

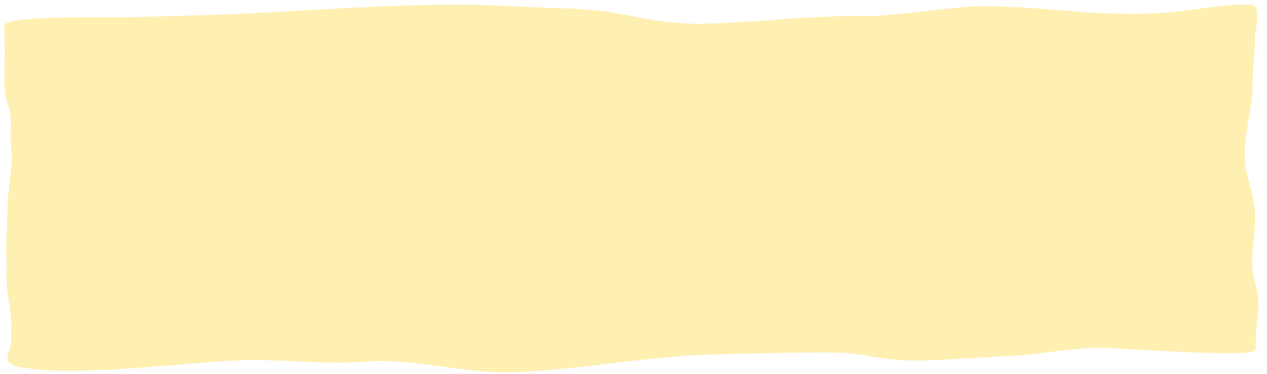
6. Fowler and Christakis, 2008.



Workbook 2 Following the path to unlimited joy

due to 3 days of podcast recording, 2 days of travel this week AND the fact that this chapter is new we did not have time to create a "mock" workbook. Please feel free to help us with this chapters workbook.

My Happy Quote



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

Happy Paradoxes

My Happiness Inventory

Walk in The Way

Look at these words one more time

Happy are the poor in spirit...

Happy are those who mourn...

Happy are the meek ...

Happy are those who hunger and thirst for justice Happy are the merciful...

Happy are the pure in heart...

Happy are the peacemakers...

Happy are those who are persecuted for righteousness...

Happy are you when others revile you and utter falsehoods against you...

Rejoice and be glad...

Affirm Aloud

Smile Wide:

Take the next few days and practice smiling. Smile to yourself in the mirror when you start the day, give an unsolicited smile to your coworkers, smile to friends and family before you disagree, smile toward heaven when you lay your head down on the pillow tonight. You are part of the City that Smiles.

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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