



## 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?*

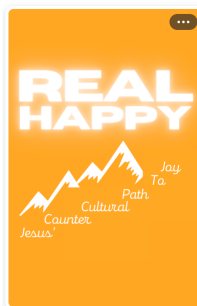
### This week: chapter 3

- 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



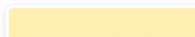
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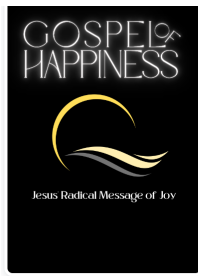


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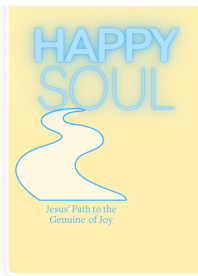




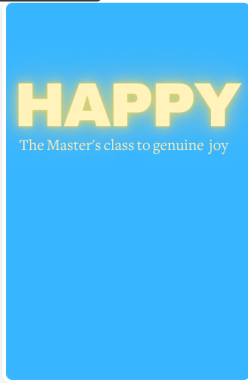
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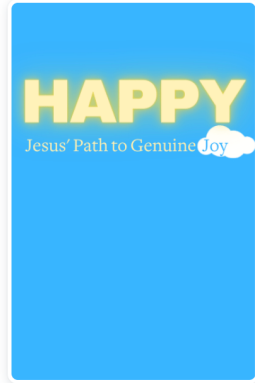
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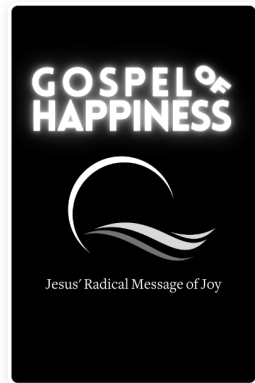
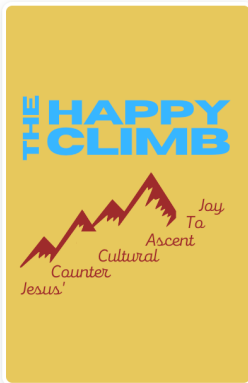
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# THE HAPPY BEGGAR

“Dear God,  
I am so afraid to open my clenched fists!  
Who will I be when I have nothing left to hold on to?  
Who will I be when I stand before you with empty hands? Please help me to gradually open my hands and to discover that I am not what I own, but what you want to give me.”

— Henri J.M. Nouwen

*Jeffrey Story (option I):*

*“You can find five-star meals, right here!” Dominic said as he pointed to the trash bin behind a Michelin star restaurant.*

*“And . . . it’s all free! We waste so much perfectly good stuff,” he opened the large trash bin, found a bread roll and handed it to me with gratitude.*

*Dominic’s red bandana made him look like a pirate, but when he smiled, which was most the time, the large, crooked smile spoiled the Captain Jack Sparrow look.*

*It was a little after midnight on a Friday evening, I traipsed along behind my City-life guide in the TL (short for Tenderloin). We plopped down on his curb, truly every curb was his curb, he was unhoused and really did see the world as his proverbial “oyster.” He pulled out his guitar and picked away. In another life he was a professional studio musician, but the stress and pressures of trying to keep up got to him.*

*“Seemed like everyone owned a piece of me, so I chose the better life, free from the demands of society.” He explained.*

*Dominic was a meth addict, brought about by the opioid crisis. He never gave me the backstory to that.*

*"I've been trying to shake this addiction for a long time," he explained.*

*We saw each other around several times a week and he really was happy, easy-going, super friendly, always on the lookout for how he could help a friend. One day he found a grand piano in an abandoned church half a mile away, and decided he was going to bring it to Lighthouse as a gift. I saw him shoving the piano up Van Ness, Highway 101, which runs through the gut of San Francisco. Cars honked, drivers cursed, and he didn't care or even notice. He found a piano and didn't want it to go to waste.*

*During the pandemic, I lost track of Dominic. I didn't see him anymore and wondered what became of him. I worried that his addiction had gotten the better of him.*

*A few months after things opened up, I hit the gym again. I had been there about three weeks when I heard this familiar voice but in a loud pitch, "God bless you! God bless you!"*

*I turned and saw Dominic. He was smiling, waving, and walking, around the second floor of the gym. He stopped at each exercise station, smiled and "God-blessed" each person. I think he had just got religion, as they used to say, and couldn't contain his joy. People ignored him, some distrusted the interruption to their already busy and noisy lives, others clearly thought he was deranged, and he did look pretty messed up. I overheard a guy say, "Only in San Francisco."*

*For the next four days he repeated the same circuit, same words, same crooked smile. He added another stop though on day four, coming down from the second floor and to save time, he leaned over the railing and bellowed out from the landing to the entire first floor, "Hey everybody God bless you! God bless you one and all!" Then turned around and walked out.. The next week as the Blessing of Dominic returned I noticed a shift in the mood of the gym. People appreciated it, felt endeared to him, welcomed the much-needed kindness and friendliness.*

*Dominic didn't have much of anything. His clothes were second, maybe third hand, the loss in his life was apparent. In the fifteen years I had known him he had aged about thirty years. The loss was etched in the wrinkles and cut to the bone. But his eyes were telling a different story. Amidst so much loss they sparkled with new life, happiness, and joy. He was listening and messaging a different voice, God's happiness to 'one-and-all.' The contrast to the fit and youthful exercisers, who were just embarking on their maiden voyage s of happiness was stark, their eyes were vacant and urban lives jam-packed, and his joy, as absurd as it sounds, was the envy of the gym.*

### **Full But Unfulfilled.**

Inside my experience with Dominic was a lesson on happiness. Dominic was totally empty. He had nothing but the clothes on his back and whatever he could carry in his arms. The contrast of his empty life, with my brimming to the rim life, suddenly made me aware of an internal default. In our quest for happiness we intuitively fill ourselves up.

We jam-pack our schedule, afraid that we will miss out on happiness if every minute isn't occupied. We multitask three to four activities into one moment—the more we do, we think, the happier we will be. We clutter our houses with debris from our failed quest to purchase happiness. When the house fills up, we begin storing stuff in the garage, and when the garage fills up we rent a self-storage space. Our space is littered with things that once made us happy.

The packed schedules and stuffed living space reflect what's going on in our hearts—a life in desperate need of ful-FILL-ment. As the pile of possessions mount, and the schedule fills, our cluttered little hearts begin to fill with anxiety. In other words, hoarding material and nickel and diming every second doesn't just occupy us but preoccupies our time with worry and never-ending to-do lists. In the end, the joy we so desperately seek, eludes us once again.

Yet, we are told that filling up equals a fulfilling life. And for those who cannot afford this lifestyle the fallacy and false is even more imprisoning because we strive or despair to the money and good fortune to bring us to happy. This thinking is so embedded in our hardwiring that when someone with experience announces that material wealth is a dead-end street, we shrug them off and say well maybe the Ferrari was a dead-end for you, but it will be the free-way for me.

The greatest philosophers in Western history—Socrates, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca—philosophized repeatedly that the good life, not material goods or physical pleasures, leads to happiness. And though they disagreed on many subjects on this they stood pat

This filling up (and never getting full) is a fine line that we easily slip past and before we know it, we are avoiding relationships, avoiding ourselves, and ultimately avoiding God. We begin thinking that WE are using the fun-times, and new things to fill our happy tank, but come to realize they use us and before long we are compulsively avoiding our own life, chasing out the emptiness, but never feeling full, only cluttered at best, or worst, empty and alone in the midst of the clutter.

Saint Augustine said that everything ends in boredom, and the great Christian philosopher Boethius added, finite things cannot sustain infinite joy. The truth is we are deathly afraid of emptiness. And that is why Dominics empty joy was so startling to me.

Before we hear Jesus FIRST happy oracle Matthew asks us to pause and observe “how we hear.” he knows that these oracles work their miracle-joy when accompanied by kavanah-listening.<sup>1</sup> Matthew offers an introduction to the first happy oracle, that cues us to first consider, “What filters am I listening through?”

### **How Are We Listening?**

*He opened his mouth, and taught them, saying . . .* Matthew 5:2-

Why does Matthew open Jesus happy oracles with the clunky redundancy? The three— verbs opened, taught, saying—are not verbosity but technical jargon flagging Jesus’s words as a King’s Decree. . “Opened his mouth” is king language, “taught them” is wisdom teacher language and “saying” is the equivalent of our quotations marks.<sup>2</sup>

The parlance of “opened his mouth” carries the same force as, “Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, my fellow Americans.” When U.S. citizens hear these words, they know the State of the Union Address will follow and thought the same words will ring in

millions of ears, not everyone will hear the same thing. Everyone listens with an agenda that shapes both the meaning of the message as well as how they will react. We don't realize we do this, but we all listen with a bias, or some kind of filter.

Consider the varied audience listening to a presidential address. Political pundits hear it critically. Wall Street hears it economically. The opposition party hears suspiciously while party faithfuls hear proudly. Foreign correspondents hear globally. And every socio-economic class hears through the filter of their finances, religion, moral compass, freedom or privilege. Everyone hears the same speech but with different ears, hearing the same words but different meanings.

Matthew's introduction of the Sermon on the mount, would have signaled to listeners to pay attention to how they were listening because how they heard the happy oracles would determine the efficacy of happiness in their lives. Jesus was about to give them a taste of happiness that they had always had an appetite for but had never encountered

Like the State of the Union Address, Jesus' State of the Kingdom of Heaven address shaped the future, drew a crowd of attentive listeners (and still does), and challenges all of us to ask, "How am I listening to this?"

When we hear Jesus words with that part of us that responds, we are listening (with a desire to follow), when we hear with filters we often react. So what agenda are we listening with? Academically and historically? Suspiciously and critically? Self-justifyingly and judgmentally? Or are we listening humbly and communally?

Matthew urges us to listen deeply and humbly; to listen as though we are about to be shown for the first time what we have always wanted deep down inside. The world's market has no inventory of what he offers. Jesus's words disclose what no one has explained to us about the entwined relationship of spirituality, happiness, God and humanity. How you listen determines what you hear. Take a moment and posture your listening heart.

A note before we hear the first oracle:

Jesus' FIRST happy oracle is a prerequisite, a container for the eightfold joy he is prepping us for. Though, I can't be sure, I like to believe there is a reason he selected this as his first. Jesus

understood a secret to happiness that we struggle to internalize, happiness is not something we collect, but rather something we make room for. All the emptiness we run from or chase away, is exactly that emptiness we need to engage.

### **What is Poor in Spirit?**

*Happy are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. --Jesus' first word on happiness*

Often when we read 'poor in spirit' we fixate on the word poor, as if Jesus in a passive aggressive manner is cursing the wealthy. Jesus, however, is not talking about materiality but about spirituality. The happiness of the kingdom is that it was for the poor. And for the rich too. The first followers of Jesus included both wealthy and poor. The good news is that just as God's kingdom is not segregated along ethnic lines so it's not segregated along economic lines either. The Kingdom never discriminates. There are poor 'happy' people and rich 'happy' people. Happiness is not about money. 3

That said, Jesus doesn't say, happy are the rich in spirit. While we might never put the word poor and happy in the same sentence he provocatively does. We are forced to think, to wrestle, to argue with a joy described with the word poor. His happiness is meant to be inclusive, non-discriminate, and non-prejudicial.

### **Happiness is a Spiritual Matter.**

Jesus makes it clear for the first happy oracle that happiness is a spiritual matter, an internal and not external reality. Happiness begins in the spirit. Real sustainable joy begins in the spiritual quest.

When Jesus says "poor in spirit" he is calling our attention to something we all, already possess—spirit. All of us, at ground zero of our heart, are spiritual creatures. The happiness we quest for is as imminent as our God-breathed existence, that blank canvas of consciousness and awareness. Yes, it's a spiritual matter buried beneath the externals of our name brand clothing, personal logos and professional statuses, and even our names (first and last). Victor Frankl described the spirit from the concentration camps of Auschwitz as the true-self that emerged once the clothes were stripped from bodies, gold pulled from teeth, hair shaved from head, and possession looted by the Nazis—"naked existence." All of us have



this eternalness existing under layer after layer of temporality. Thomas Merton called this the “le point vierge,” the center of nothingness, that soul property we occupy that God owns and holds title deed to.

There in that inner place we discover a holy part of us that belongs to God and is the ground upon which we meet God. Each of us has a blankness that we often stack meaningless pursuits in. And it’s in that place, where the blinking cursor of our personality flashes, that infinite joy fits. Why here? Because its made for God.

Jesus now qualifies the kind of spiritual container that happiness is well acclimated to. Jesus does not say, “happy are the spiritual” or “happy are the religious” or even, “happy are the Christians or Jews” Or happy are the “spiritually orthodox”. He qualifies the kind of spirit with the word, “poor.” You can be spiritual, religious, and be arrogant, prideful, feeling as though you are needed and not needy, powerful and not powerless, entitled and not grateful. All of us have spirits, but not all of us are happy. Jesus is saying the kind of spirit you possess is proportional to how much room you have for Divine joy. So what did this mean, what did it mean to be poor in spirit?

Two paths for emptying exist. One is involuntary and the other on purpose. At some point in life, most of us find, we have walked the involuntary path, even if just for a short stint. This can also be considered the path of loss. Some of us are born onto this path, some of take a wrong turn along the way, and others are re-routed via life happening. So let’s start here.

### **Poor Means Needy (the involuntary path).**

“God, forgive me a sinner.” The Happy Sinner

“God, I thank you that I am not like that man!” The Smug Saint

“God heard the sinner and ignored the saint.” Jesus

Jesus’s world is divided into two groups the upper class and the lower class. There was no ‘middle class’. When Jesus describes the kind poverty of spirit conducive to happiness, he has two options to draw from: *penés* and *ptōchoi*.

The first word refers to peasants and those who lived ‘paycheck-to-paycheck.’ The second word refers to the destitute —the indigent and disposables of society. This included criminals, beggars, the unemployed and unemployable, mentally ill, and lepers. The *ptōchoi* were perceived as bottom feeders, who depended on handouts, unable to contribute to society or add anything of value.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus does not say happy are the *penés* of spirit, but happy are the *ptōchoi* of spirit. The *ptōchoi* were for the most part in the situations in life because of some external situation—mental or physical health challenge—they had no other recourse but God.

*Ptochoi* is the experience of loss especially the kind of loss where we feel bankrupt and at rock bottom deep inside. The loss can be a loss of privilege, freedom, health, relationships, moral goodness, financial. Losses frequently turn into bitterness, anger, and depression when they don't bring us close to God. But for those who face God with the loss the result is a joyful awareness of God's merciful presence and a repurposed life.

This seems counter-intuitive, we tend to think the way to happiness is gain, but Jesus reverses this assumption and says, loss when it does a good work within the spirit creates a lasting happiness. The loss of a job, for example, may cause one to cry out to God and in the moment of despair and prayer sense the nearness of God's presence. As absurd as it may seem, even the loss of one's moral uprightness can turn to a desperate plea for God's forgiveness, and give them their first experience of God's grace. In other words, the experiences of loss are involuntary opportunities for becoming poor in spirit. These external situations open up to the embrace of internal truths.

### **Poor Means Empty (the voluntary path)**

*[Jesus] though he was in the form of God,  
did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,  
but emptied himself, by taking the form of  
a servant, being born in the likeness of men.  
And being found in human form,  
he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death... (Phil 2:6-8)*

At the theological heart of Christianity is the doctrine of the kenosis. In one of the richest and most celebrated first century hymns the early Christians celebrated what made Jesus so attractive and his life so contagious.

Kenosis (Greek, emptied) is the word for the attitude that precedes Jesus joy and happiness. This is the life Jesus chose, promoted, called his followers to enjoy, and shockingly declared to us as the way to happiness.

In many religious traditions the way to greater spirituality is pictured as ascending a mountain, climbing a ladder or the acquisition of more and more spiritual assets. Jesus, however, chose a different path. He descended down to earth, emptied himself of all his rights and privileges. The pagan gods scratched and clawed their way up through shrewdness, brute force, and coups. The pagans then came to see that the way to happiness was by moving up and filling up.

Jesus did just the opposite. He emptied himself of Divine rights by becoming human, and then again emptied himself of status by taking on the form of a servant, and then once more by forgoing comfort and ease by embracing suffering, and finally emptied himself of all dignity and legacy by dying a scandalous death on a cross. In all of this emptying he possessed joy, happiness, and grace. He possessed the life that all of us want, and more importantly, he showed us that it's a life that's not out of reach for any of us.

### **Poor means Available.**

In a zoomed out view, we can see that emptiness is and has always been, a secret to joy. In the previous chapter we talked about the miracle merriment and mirth. Jesus could have used anything to create this miracle of joy. He could have struck a rock like Moses and gurgled forth the purple goodness. He could have turned the well water to wine and pulled up pails of cabernet. He could have turned a nearby creek into a wading pool of chardonnay. Instead, he selects already empty jars and fills them. We see the same theme in the creation account where the Spirit of God hovers over the emptiness of the not yet-creation. The void. The deep. The emptyness are available for filling, and creation fills the emptyness

Poor means there is something empty in your life available to the miracle of happiness. There is available time, an available space, an available heart, an available life. But something has been intentionally emptied out and is available for happiness to come and occupy. So how do we make ourselves available and not just emptied. In a short: its all about what our emptiness is facing. When we face ourselves with our emptiness we may feel despair, when we face others we may feel envious, but when we face God with our emptiness we feel God, gracious, tender, and generous occupying our thoughts, communing with us, and filling the emptiness with himself.

In the emptiness is the miracle of joy and when we experience it, we soon discover that all our former and finite joys absurdly pale in comparison to the glorious happiness that fills every

nook and cranny of our heart. In the words of the Cana wedding coordinating, “the best has been saved til now.”

Empty spaces God fills. Nothingness God inhabits. We believe that those who are involuntarily empty, are available for the best joy of all. The richest, the most wonderful, and the most intimate, the most abiding, just because they are empty.

## **The Way to Empty**

As we noted in Jesus great act of kenosis, emptiness is a motif in the spiritual path Jesus offers. The emptier, the better. When Jesus was asked about the way, he often replied sell what you have (empty yourself), and follow me. When he invited the disciples to follow, they instinctively dropped nets (emptied themselves) and followed, and as we saw, Jesus himself practiced emptying. And now we hear Jesus speak of emptiness in the context of happiness. Jesus is driving home the point that emptiness creates the conditions to receive heavenly happiness, or the kingdom of heaven

Jesus offers three secrets to making room for happy.

Jesus’s entire lecture in typical rabbinical manner, gave practical everyday handles with which to grip the happy life. In one section he references Judaism’s three commonly practiced spiritual disciplines, generosity, prayer, fasting as the way to empty. He picks up each discipline, turns it over and examines it, talks about the heart of it all, and then before setting the discipline down and moving on to the next he says, “and the Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” We suggest that the open reward is the joy and happiness.

The spiritual disciplines make room in our mind, heart, and body for happiness. They are an intentional way to vacate clutter, anxiety and loneliness. Let’s briefly look at each spiritual discipline’s relationship with happiness.

### **Generosity**

*“When you give... your Father sees in secret and will reward you.”* Jesus.

God sees with an eye to reward. This is what is so novel and fresh with Jesus's words. He promises us something that makes us smile and relieves all the tension of striving to measure up to the standards of men. The Father is looking for ways to reward us, bless us, and delight in us. He waits for us in the secrecy of our generous works and surprises us with rewarding happiness. The act of giving, is both an act of blessing for the person receiving and an act of emptying for the person giving. When we give we empty ourselves of material and matter, and in this sense we get to see, literally, our space being freed of stuff and room. Our bandwidth for relationships expands as we prioritize people over stuff, as we open our hands in giving, our hands are open to receive happiness—the Father's reward to the generous.

Research has demonstrated that money can buy happiness on the condition that it is given away. **5**

### ***Prayer***

*“When you pray... your Father sees in secret and will reward you.”--Jesus.*

The daily discipline of prayer is what Jesus says is incredibly rewarding. We know Jesus has a daily rhythm in mind because he says when you pray say, “...give us this day our daily bread.” A daily rhythm of prayer brings with it a daily happiness erupting from conversations with a Father who eagerly listens and holds on to our every word. Prayer requires that we carve out time, empty out a schedule and simply wait on God. And Jesus says when we do this daily, in the closets of our life, we find our lives rewarded “on earth as it is in heaven.” This counterintuitive act of creating silence—the realm of God's voice— develops the attentiveness necessary for us to be present for the serendipitous encounters with God's Spirit—the Father's happy reward to the unbusied souls. God has placed a day of nothing, of no work, no frenzied activities into the creative order for this purpose precisely. We need emptiness in our day to recover our attentiveness, in our week to recalibrate our purpose and in periodic season—holy days—to reflect on God's goodness. Prayer and meditation are the happy place.

People who regularly worship, pray and meditate report higher levels of happiness and joy than those who don't. **6**

## ***Fasting***

*“When you fast... your Father sees in secret and will reward you.”* Jesus.

Jesus doesn't say “If you fast,” but “when you fast” and thus assumes that his audience understands the rhythm of disciplining our consumption habits to the degree that we don't consume for comfort and avoidance. Fasting is not just a food thing, although it is that as well. We can fast from electronic gadgets, media, entertainment, alcohol, pleasures, news . . . . The word fasting reminds us that we tend to overconsume things, to look for food and fantasy for comfort and escape and when we have avoided life or escaped through consumption we are unavailable for the joy of heaven. Fasting empties us in a very real and physical way. We feel lighter, we sense more focus, and the discipline drives home the point that God is all we really need to be happy. What Jesus suggests here again is counterintuitive, many people turn to food to make them happy when they are sad; Jesus says the real and inner reward is received from a generous father while we surrender our appetites.

Study after study continues to astound professionals on the healing power of fasting on moods, mental clarity and wellbeing. 7

## **The Gospel of Happiness in the first happy oracle . . .**

Theologians like Karl Barth, Juergen Moltmann and Marianne Meye Thompson have voiced the eschatological nature of the joy Jesus offers. What this means is Jesus' happiness is a Have-Your-Cake-and-Eat-It-Too. This happy blessing, and it's bookend, is a here-and-not-here, now and not yet, ours and God's, heaven-on-earth. Happy “are” (present tense) means you can be happy right now, in this VERY moment, while your eyes fall on the letter “s” in words. Yes, joy is that close. You don't need more time, more stuff or more consumptions. Jesus emphasizes the nowness of his reward with “for theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven.” He does not say shall be, if, or when, he says right now theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of heaven is available immediately, the “gateway to heaven is everywhere” as Thomas Merton said.

*What is the kingdom of heaven?* It's a way of seeing and experiencing heaven all over the world. Seeing Christ in a smile, experiencing God with the incarcerated in a prison, its watching the happiness of water-to-wine happen in giving water to the thirsty and a coat to the shivering. Its sisters in compassionate prayer for a neighborhood, brothers bearing one

another's burdens, it's the joy of serving the marginalized, the awareness that you are beloved, the sense of your playful inner-child being watched over by Our Abba, the overflowing joy of recovering addicts honoring and caring for each other. It's that sense that the unimaginable heaven has invaded the hell on earth through the portal of our impoverished hearts. The world sees a reflection of the world-to-come on our faces, feels it in our touch, hears it in our voices and experiences it in our kindness and compassion. This is real happiness—unentitled, inescapable, and unavoidable. The miracle of an impoverished soul displaying an exhibit of the treasures of heaven's joy for all the world to see.

Saint Francis, "God's Fool" considered the most joyful, jolly and happy of saints took a vow of poverty and service to others and claimed he discovered unspeakable joy in this emptying out. St. Bernardine of Siena said, 'When he pronounced the word 'Jesus' or heard someone say it, he was filled with joy and he seemed to be completely transformed, as if he had suddenly tasted something marvelous or caught the strain of a beautiful harmony.'

David would urge us to respond to such a wonderful invitation with prayer, so why not pause for a moment and breathe these words.

You know the deepest parts of me.

I'm not even sure who I am sometimes.

You know the path I take.

I change my mind often and have walked so many different paths.

You authored the experiences I was made for

I am no authority even on my own experiences and self-reports!

Before a word is formed on my tongue you know it. I usually speak before I think.

You formed my inner being and know the shape I'm meant to take. I've spent a lifetime trying to get my soul in shape.

Search me, O God, show me what I am really longing for.

Awaken me to the reality I was created for.

And see if there be any shallow paths I am walking Then, lead me in the merry way everlasting!

(a personal prayer inspired by Psalm 139)

In the next chapter we will take up the case of The Sad, But Happy Mother as we reflect on how Jesus' happiness doesn't mean we won't experience sadness and sorrow. His happiness isn't artificial or chemically induced its real and the first test of its authenticity is how it handles sadness and loss, grief and sorrow.

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1. Kavanah is the Hebrew word for intentionality. The rabbis taught that on Yom Kippur the Torah required that the people hear the blowing of the shofar. They said they had to be observing how they were listening, were they listening for it when it blew or were they preoccupied and simply alarmed by it. If you were listening for it you were in a condition of waiting and anticipating, if it blew and then you heard it, you were in a condition of being preoccupied with the temporal.
  2. Wisdom Teaching was a stream of Jewish thought on the "happy" life. This is traced in the Psalms, Proverbs, and the other Ketuvim books. We will point out in the next chapter Jesus' link to these books and their teachings in his happy life sayings.
  3. Rodney Stark dispels the myth of Christianity being a movement of only poor and impoverished by pointing to how wealthy politicians, small business owners, members of Caesar's family and Herod's court, wealthy merchants, land magnates, and several tax collectors, to name a few identified and devoted themselves to Christ, both before his resurrection and after. Jesus funded much of his own ministry early on, having come from a wealthy family, "he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." A. E. Judge pointed out through Paul's letters how over 40 different "persons of substance, members of a cultivated social elite" were devoted to Jesus and the mission of the church. Stark concludes, "...early Christians were not a bunch of miserable underdogs. This always should have been obvious, not only from reading the Gospels, but from asking why and how a bunch of illiterate ignoramus came to produce sophisticated written scriptures."
  4. That upper class had four groups: the Rulers, which were people like Herod and Caesar, who controlled and accessed almost half of the gross national product. The governing class—nobles, family members, and officials received almost a quarter of the gross national product. These two upper classes controlled 50-75% of the gross national product. The lower class made up about 80% of the population and had four groups as well.

Those in this lower class were referred to as poor, but with the Greek word *penés*. They were poor because they lived hand to mouth, working whatever manual labor they could find. The first group of *penés* was the Peasants. We typically think of Peasants as being the poorest of the poor, but that was not the case in ancient agrarian societies. They're the farmers, they're the ones with a little piece of land, or as was the case in Jesus's day, many were simply tenant farmers. In most cases 2/3 of their product went to taxes, tolls, and rents. They constitute about 60% of ancient agrarian society.

Below the peasants, surprisingly, are the Artisans, the bricklayers and the carpenters. The artisans who had to work with their hands did not have a plot of land that they could use to support themselves. They depended on a patron, a benefactor to favor them with work.

Below the Artisans are the Unclean, the people whose lack of skill and resources is such that they are left with the jobs that no one else wants to do—pig farmers, undertakers, trash collectors, and all minorities.



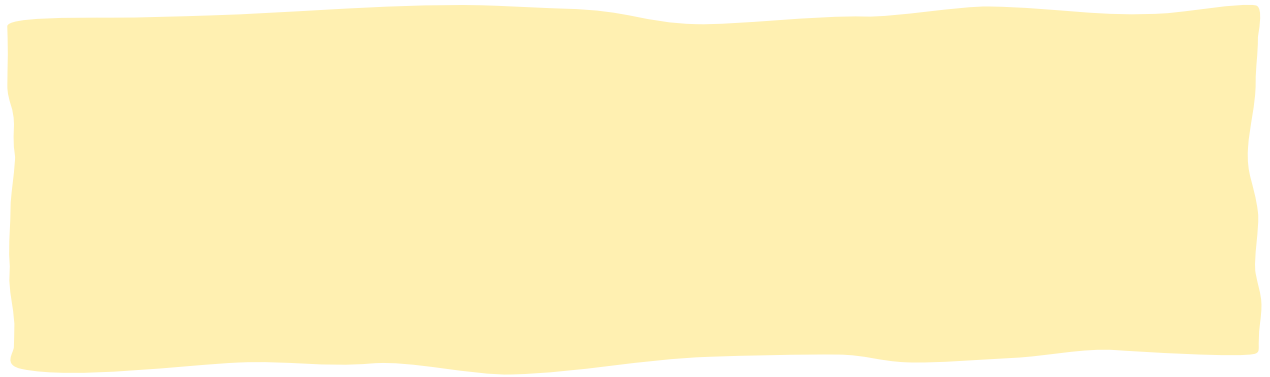
The last class of people in this eight-tiered system was the Destitute (ptōchoi), making up 5-10% of all the lower class. The second Greek word for poor, ptōchoi, referred to the very bottom class of people

5. One recent study on the relationship between generosity and happiness illustrates giving is more rewarding than keeping or spending on yourself. Michael Norton, Professor of Business Administration, Harvard, in a TED talk called How to Buy Happiness demonstrated with study after study how giving away money and possessions results again and again in deeper happiness. He concluded the talk by saying, “Spending on other people has a bigger return for you than spending on yourself. If you think money cannot buy happiness it’s because you are not spending it right. Stop thinking about what to buy for yourself and think of giving it away instead.”
6. TED Talk on meditation and prayer and the power and the power to bring about well-being.
7. Studies have shown the powerful effect of fasting on our moods, mental clarity and wellbeing. A study by Michaelson in 2009 showed that fasting alleviates symptoms of depression and improves anxiety scores in 80% of chronic pain patients after just a few days. People often report that fasting improves moods, alertness and gives way to feelings of tranquility. A USC research project done in tandem with two other European Universities documented through twenty-one day, water only fasts, mental health healing.



## Workbook 3 Following the path to unlimited joy

## My Happy Quote



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

## Happy Paradoxes

- Emptiness creates spaces for God to fill us, therefore emptiness can bring a divine kind of happiness
- Emptying ourselves is a shortcut for connecting with God because it puts us in connection with our need for God
- Emptying is an earthy spiritual practice; one we can engage intentionally in order to experience a divine kind of happiness
- Gratitude is most profoundly experienced in the context of emptiness. In this way, less becomes viscerally more.

## My Happiness Inventory

Read and answer

1. Fill in this sentence. "If only I had more \_\_\_\_\_ then I would be happy."
2. What or who are you using to get you happiness?
3. What are the ptochoi spaces in your life where you feel completely empty, absolutely impoverished and in need of God?
4. What areas of your life feel cluttered? (This could be your physical space, relational spaces, thought life, emotional spaces, etc.)
5. How frequently do you practice self-emptying through anonymous and secret generosity?

6. How often do you empty out margin to pray?
7. How frequently do gather together with others to worship God?
8. Do you have a regular or seasonal self-emptying rhythm of fasting?

## **Imagine as a Spiritual Practice**

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

1. Imagine those empty spaces and bankrupt realities of your life as rooms and accounts that God is filling. What would it look like if the Presence of God took up residence in your places of destitution?
2. Imagine your generosity being awakened. What does it look like having this secret mission of giving something away?
3. Imagine a daily rhythm of prayer. Where are you praying? When are you praying? What are you saying? How are you feeling?
4. Imagine a seasonal rhythm of fasting. What does it look like? What is happening within you?
5. Close your eyes and imagine yourself praying tomorrow morning or evening. You are looking at a gratitude list. You have written down one material possession you are thankful for, one spiritual blessing you are thankful for, and one relational gift you are thankful for. Now imagine what it would be like to empty out these gifts, creating even more space for God.

## **Walk in The Way**

*Look at these words one more time,*

Happy are the Poor in Spirit

Hear Jesus prophesying this over you:

Happy are the poor in spirit for yours is the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus whispers to you,

“Follow me.”

You look and see he is showing you, living out before you, the Way to empty. You take one step in following him. You trust him.

## **Affirm Aloud**

### **Choose one “get happy with” to work with this week**

#### *1. Get happy with generosity!*

*Jesus encouraged the kind of giving that seeks only to be seen by our heavenly Father. Go out and give. And do it secretly. Giving is the way to empty out your selfishness and self-centeredness.*

#### *2. Get happy with meditation and prayer*

*Prayer is a way to empty ourselves out mentally, emotionally, psychologically. Meditation is a time to sit in the emptiness and stillness before God. Build in a rhythm of prayer for the duration of this book reading. When and how often will you do it?*

#### *3. Get happy with fasting.*

*Come up with a fasting rhythm for the duration of this book. It can be one day per week, one meal per day, or a number of hours, or a number of days. Choose one that will cause you to feel the “pinch of the fast” so you can face God in your moments of hunger.*

## **Affirm Aloud:**

I am blessed especially in the empty and impoverished spaces of my life. I am happy, the kingdom of heaven is mine. My emptiness blesses the world.

## **Smile Wide:**

Smile at yourself in the mirror because you are needy and God is entering your neediness today. As you lay your head down on the pillow tonight, clasp your fingers together behind

your head, give a heavenward smile. You are in the company of a 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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