

Week One

The Pursuit of Happierness | John 10:1-10

There is an innate desire in every human to find happiness. We often associate happiness with feelings of joy, contentment and fulfilment, among other things. Happiness, we get. But have you heard of the term “happier-ness”? This term is coined by Arthur Brooks, a Harvard professor teaching on the science of happiness. He says, “happiness is not a destination, it is a direction.”

For instance, no matter how successful you are, there will always be someone more successful than you. So, if success is your source of happiness, it will always be fleeting. However, if one were to choose to be happy no matter their success, they may find life to be fuller and richer. Hence the goal of life is not a state of happiness, but rather being happier on the journey no matter what life throws at you.

Choosing happiness requires different character traits depending on the person or circumstance. If you find yourself striving for success frequently, learning to be content may help you find happiness. If you find yourself in a season of walking with people through hardship, learning to empathise may contribute to happiness. If you are experiencing a new transition, developing greater self-awareness may generate happiness. Each situation demands a different characteristic as one pursues “happier-ness” on the journey of life.

This study dives deeper into the traits of self-awareness, empathy, shame, contentment, and the work of personal regulation as we discover what it means to pursue happiness in a life built on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

Opening Questions

- 1 / What was one moment this week that brought you great joy?
- 2 / Think about your past, what was a source of happiness for you?

Bible Study & Questions

Read John 10:1-10, and discuss the following questions:

1 / Jesus says his sheep “will not follow a stranger” but will only follow their shepherd’s voice (v. 5). What are some examples of false voices in our lives that can lead us away from God?

Note: The Christian life does not promise to be one without temptation and conflicting “voices”.

2 / How might you cultivate a greater familiarity with Jesus’ voice? Especially in difficult times?

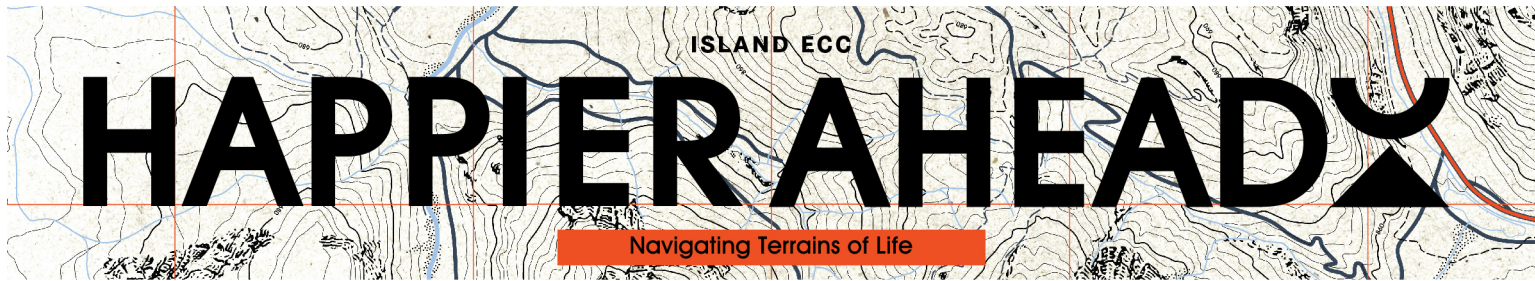
3 / In verse 10, Jesus says that He has come so that his sheep “may have life, and have it to the full”. What does it mean to have “a full life” according to this passage?

Note: Fullness in life isn’t to have a long life, nor is it to have an easy or comfortable life. Abundant life is a life of satisfaction and contentment in Jesus.

4 / This passage contrasts the good shepherd with those who come to “steal, kill, and destroy (v. 10). How have you experienced this in your life?

Note: While there are many external circumstances that can rob us of our happiness, our own selfish desires can often be the greatest culprit. As a followup question, you can ask: how have your own selfish desires robbed you of your happiness?

5 / Jesus says that He is “the door” through which we must enter to be saved. How does finding salvation in Jesus serve as the foundation for deep and enduring happiness?



Prayer Activity

A 17th century monk named Brother Lawrence, is most famous for coining the phrase: “practice the presence of God.” Essentially it is the skill of inviting God into our daily mundane activities, so that we might cultivate a continuous awareness of God’s presence.

One of the biggest takeaways from this parable in John 10, is how important it is to be able to hear God’s voice. Having a greater awareness of His presence and voice can lead to enduring happiness. Thus the following activity aims to help with that:

Challenge yourself to invite God into your everyday tasks. Before you write an email, say a little prayer asking for the right words to write. Before you wash the dishes, praise Him for His provision. When you do your laundry, thank Him for cleansing your sin. Get creative. This is how we can begin to practise being in the presence of God.

- **Group idea:** have each person reflect back on the mundane tasks of their day. After a few minutes of reflection, go around the group and have each person utter a short prayer of thanksgiving.

Helpful Tips

- These do not have to be long prayers. You can simply say: “thank you God for _____.” Make sure that the prayer is related to your activity.
- Look for God’s presence in your surroundings. Notice the beauty of nature, or the smile of a friend. See these as reminders of God’s presence in your life.