

Ignite: How to Stay Happy

Objective: By the end of the lesson the student will understand Christ is the way to contentment.

Bible Verses:

Philippians 4:10-13

Matthew 6:25-33

Matthew 7:12

James 1:22

Psalm 119:97-99

I Timothy 4:8

Hebrews 10:25

Philippians 4:13

Essential Question? How do you find happiness? *Teacher Note:* Get the students to address the questions and flip chart their responses.

Opening:

Read Philippians 4:10-13. How do you think Paul could find contentment whatever the circumstances he was in? (Answer: His relationship with Christ. It does not matter what happens to you if you know you will receive eternal life with Christ).

Teacher Note: Make sure all scriptures are read out loud in the class by student volunteers.

Content:

What are some ways that society tells us we can find happiness? (Answers: Relationships, food, drugs, alcohol, sex, possessions etc.) What is the negative side of all these things? (Answer: They don't last, and they can lead to other problems).

The ancient Greeks had a slightly different take on happiness than what our culture teaches. They said happiness is the joy we feel when we are striving for our potential. What is a Christian ultimately striving for (Answer: Kingdom of God). Read Matthew 6:25-33. When you have a relationship with Christ there is nothing to worry about.

In his book, *The Happiness Advantage*, Shawn Achor addresses a number of ways we can increase happiness in our lives. One of the ways is to perform acts of kindness. Putting the focus on others less fortunate than yourself can help you maintain a better, more positive, attitude (Read Matthew 7:12 and James 1:22).

Achor also addresses the importance of meditation in providing happy thoughts.

Neuroscientists have found monks who spend years meditating grow the prefrontal cortex of

the brain. The prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain most responsible for our happy feelings. The Bible tells us to meditate in a number of scriptures (Read Psalm 119:97-99).

Exercise is another way to increase your happiness quotient. When we exercise we can release endorphins into our body due to our exertion. Endorphins are hormones that can help us deal with stress. (Read I Timothy 4:8).

Another big thing you can do in life to maintain happiness is be socially connected. Research on happy people has found one thing they often have in common is strong social connection with others. It's important for us to reduce stress and anxiety by having someone to talk to and vent with. This is one of the reasons this can help. Those with positive social connections are more frequently releasing the pleasure inducing hormone oxytocin into their system (Read Hebrews 10:25).

Independent Practice:

Have the students break into groups and discuss things that make them upset or sad. Have them also discuss what they may do different from what they learned today to overcome their sadness and upset. Have the student's then share with the class as a whole.

Close/Reflect

After losing four of his children to a shipwreck in 1871 a Chicago lawyer named Horatio Spafford wrote these words: *When peace like a river attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll, Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, "It is well, it is well with my soul."* If you truly believe in Christ you will be able to say the same no matter what happens to you in life (Read Philippians 4:13).

Any final comments or questions?

Sources: The Zondervan 2000 Pastor's Annual, by T.T. Crabtree, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999).

The Happiness Advantage, by Shawn Achor, (New York: Currency, 2010).

