

SESSION 1

SESSION 1 WHAT DO YOU SEEK?

OPENING PRAYER

"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of my life. Lord Jesus, forgive me for the times I fail to see my life as a gift and live it generously. Holy Spirit, I ask for the grace to trust in the promise of a future and a hope. **All:** Glory be ...

INTRODUCTION

It seems that we are restless creatures. We have an appetite in our hearts that is difficult to satisfy, though not for a lack of trying. Many have looked to satisfy this appetite with things like power, money, influence, physical skill, emotional rush, mental stimulation, sheer pleasure, and personal acclaim. Unfulfilled, we keep searching to fill the longing. Is it possible that the longings of our hearts were not meant to be filled by anything in the world around us? Is there something more?

CONNECT

Think back to an experience or an event in your life where you felt truly happy. What happened?

Where do you find happiness in your life right now?

What hope do you have for the future that is sure to bring you happiness?



VIDEO SUMMARY

- There is a fundamental longing in our heart.
- We are all looking for happiness.
- Happiness leads to better health.
- The mantra of popular culture is that happiness is found in consumption.
- Fast-paced living often eliminates any time for introspection—a chance to ask ourselves: "Am I happy? What makes me truly happy?"
- "Destination addiction" is a failure to be grateful in the moment.
- Self-help programs tell us to be happy but don't give the reason why.
- Religion has traditionally tried to answer the question of how to be happy.
- Jesus is asking each of us: "What do you seek?" (John 1:38).

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DISCUSS

- 1. Socrates, an ancient Greek philosopher, said that "an unexamined life is not worth living." What do these words mean to you?
- There is a story often reported about the lives of the rich and famous. They achieve fame and fortune, live excessively, and subsequently experience failed relationships, and/or substance abuse problems, and some, tragically, take their own lives. Yet, many people still believe the sense of fame, or the accumulation of wealth, will bring them happiness. What is the allure of fame and fortune?
- **3.** Blaise Pascal wrote that happiness "is the motive of every action of every man ... the cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it" and "even of those who hang themselves." How can happiness be the motive of every action?
- **4.** The findings in an eighty-year-long Harvard study suggest that happiness leads to better health and longer living, and a key predictor is found in belonging to a loving community.³ How do the people in your life bring you happiness?
- **5.** According to counselor Jim Owens, we can suffer from "destination addiction," meaning that we don't believe we can be happy until our circumstances change. Can you think of an example of "destination addiction" in your life?
- **6.** Chris proposes a thought in the video: "What if we are throwing away religion because of what we think it is?" What does "religion" mean to you?
- **7.** Jesus' first words in the Gospel of John are simply a question: "What do you seek?" (1:38). If someone were to ask you, "What do you seek?", how might you respond?

¹ Plato, Apology 38a.

² Blase Pascal, Pensées 7.425.

³ Liz Mineo, "Good Genes Are Nice, But Joy Is Better," *The Harvard Gazette*, April 11, 2017.



CLOSING PRAYER

Dear Jesus, you demonstrate great care and attention by asking the question: "What do you seek?" You also exhort us to "seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). Help me to understand what that means in my present circumstances. Help me to let go of the things that shackle me from experiencing true happiness.

DIGGING DEEPER

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God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness, freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength.

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, 1



Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.

ARISTOTLE, NICOMACHEAN ETHICS



These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

JESUS CHRIST, QUOTED IN JOHN 15:11