



THE
SEARCH
WOMEN'S PARTICIPANT GUIDE



AUGUSTINE INSTITUTE

SESSION 1

WHAT
DO YOU
SEEK?



OPENING PRAYER

We will begin each session by raising our hearts and minds to God. You are welcome to join us. If this isn't comfortable for you, that's okay! Feel free to listen, reflect, or meditate, as we begin each session.

“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).

God, I thank you for the gift of my life. Forgive me for the times I fail to see my life as a gift. Holy Spirit, I ask for the grace to trust in the promise of a future and a hope. **All:** Glory be ...

INTRODUCTION

We are restless creatures. We have an appetite in our hearts that is difficult to satisfy, and not for lack of trying. Many have looked to satisfy this appetite with things like power, money, influence, physical skill, emotional rush, mental stimulation, pleasure, or personal acclaim. But the satisfaction doesn't last forever, and we are left with a longing for more. 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?



Find the
MEANING
of Life

CONNECT

Think back to an experience or an event in your life where you felt truly happy. Reflect upon all of the details of that experience. What were the circumstances? Were other people present? What was your outlook on life at that moment? Consider other similar experiences in your life. What elements did they have in common? Share this with the group and discuss the common threads among your experience.

Now take a few minutes to reflect on times when your heart has been restless and unfulfilled. In those moments, what have you done to try to settle this restlessness? Share your reflections with the group.

VIDEO SUMMARY

- There is a fundamental longing in our hearts.
- 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).



DISCUSS

1. “Life is totally amazing,” and also very unlikely. Chris begins this episode by explaining how remarkable and big the “margin of error” is for the existence of the world, and the existence of you. What are your thoughts and feelings on this reality? Have you ever reflected on this? Do you feel big or small (or both) in this world?
2. Our culture reveres the rich and famous. Yet, many people, despite their fame and fortune, experience failed relationships and/or substance abuse problems. Some, tragically, even take their own lives. Why do you think so many people are attracted to the rich and famous? What is it about wealth and fame that is so captivating, despite the problems that they often cause?
3. Blaise Pascal wrote that happiness is “the cause of some going to war, and of others avoiding it” and it “is the motive of every action of every man, even of those who hang themselves.”¹ This statement is provocative. What do you think he meant? Share with the group if you have witnessed someone who has sought happiness at an extreme cost. Are there any particular pressures in your life that you uniquely experience as a woman?

¹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* 7.425, in “Morality and Doctrine,” trans. W.F. Trotter (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2018).

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4. The findings in an eighty-year-long Harvard study suggest that happiness leads to better health and longer living; a key predictor is found in belonging to a loving community.² Consider your own community—your family, your friends, your neighbors, even your co-workers. Has this been your experience? Does it surprise you that a predictor of your own happiness can be found there?
5. According to counselor Jim Owens, many suffer from “destination addiction,” the belief that happiness will arrive when a particular circumstance changes. Has there been a time in your life when you thought that if or when something changed, you would be happy? Based on your experience, what do you think of his perspective on “destination addiction”?
6. Jesus’ first words in the Gospel of John are simply a question: “What do you seek?” If someone were to ask you, “What do you seek?”, how might you respond? Close your eyes for a moment and imagine yourself having this honest exchange. Share your reflections with the group.
7. Chris Stefanick 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?

COMMIT

Your gravestone will include your date of birth and your date of death. But it is the dash between those two dates that makes up the majority of your life; you are living in “your dash” right now. Take some time this week to pray or reflect upon how you want to be remembered by your family and friends. What are the attributes that might be said about you in your eulogy? Write these things down. How does it compare with how you would describe yourself? Are you the woman you want to be? Are you happy? What more do you seek?

² Liz Mineo, “Good Genes Are Nice, But Joy Is Better,” *The Harvard Gazette*, April 11, 2017.



CLOSING PRAYER

Life is a journey. Where am I going? What happens when I die? What really matters in life? God, help me to let go of the things that are a barrier to me experiencing true happiness. Guide me and give me grace, especially as I begin this journey of seeking. Please watch over these prayer intentions in a special way [name them], and help me to be open to what you have in store for me on this journey. I ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

DIGGING DEEPER



We seven billion human beings—emotionally, mentally physically—are the same. Everyone wants a joyful life.

DALAI LAMA, AS QUOTED IN *THE SEARCH*



Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.³

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

³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).