

Sunday morning
teaching plan

Date:
26th April
2026

TITLE:	Happiness
THEME:	Life's Big Issues
AIM:	To explore the theme of happiness, what it is and where we find it.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

We live in a world where happiness is often seen as the ultimate goal. Social media, advertising, and culture constantly tell us that if we have the right look, success, relationships, or possessions, we will finally feel happy. But at the same time, many people—especially young people—report feeling more anxious, pressured, and dissatisfied than ever before.

People chase feelings that don't always last, which can lead to disappointment or a sense that something is missing. The Bible offers a different perspective. Rather than promising constant happiness, it acknowledges the reality of difficult emotions and a broken world. At the same time, it points to a deeper, more lasting foundation for life—one rooted in relationship with God.

WARM UP

Capture the Cone

Divide players into **two teams**. Place one cone in the centre of the garden. Teams line up on opposite sides. Assign each player a number (1, 2, 3, etc.) on their team.

Leader calls out a number. The corresponding player from each team runs to the centre. The goal is to grab the cone and return to your team's side without being tagged.

MAIN TEACHING

What do people want?

When people around the world are asked "what do you want in life?" there is one response that is most popular. What do you think it is?

1. I want to be famous
2. I want to be rich

3. I want to be happy
4. I want to be healthy
5. I want to live a long life

The most popular answer is "I want to be happy". Interestingly, when parents are asked what they want for their children a majority of them say the same. They want their children to be happy.

Questions:

- Do you agree that most people want to be happy?
- Do you think that most people know how to be happy?
- Why should we bother trying to be happy?

The point: To introduce the theme of happiness

Happy All the Time?

Can we expect to be happy all the time?

Whilst it is natural to want to avoid pain and sadness, it is probably impossible to go through life and never experience difficult times. Whether we want it or not, life is made up of both ups and downs. If you expect to be happy all the time you will soon become unhappy because it is an impossible target. Life can't always be filled with total happiness. Even though most people want to be happy, it is impossible to be happy all of the time.

Ask:

What things in life can make us unhappy?

Sometimes our personal circumstances can make us unhappy.

- The death of someone close to us,
- being a victim of bullying
- falling out with a friend
- we can feel lonely,
- stressed
- worried and not always know why.

Read Psalm 46:1, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."

The Bible doesn't tell us that if we believe in God, we'll never have anything bad happen to us, but that because we live in a broken world (not Heaven) God will be with us in the tough times - we will not have to face them alone.

The point: To learn that happiness is one emotion, but to live a full life we need to experience all the emotions.

Changing my Happiness

Ask: The group to come up with five things in life that we can change and five things we can't.

Suggestions: Things you could change could be a lightbulb, clothes, jobs, friends etc. Things you can't change could be your DNA, the weather, when it gets dark, the past etc.

There are some things in life we cannot change, but lots of things in life we can.

Questions:

- Do you think it is possible to change our levels of happiness? (Can we make ourselves happier?)
- Can we sit around and expect happiness to come to us or do we need to do something to make us happy?
- Do you ever think you were made for more than a life of 'eat, sleep, work, repeat'?
- Would it make any difference to your levels of happiness to think you were deliberately created by a loving God, or as a result of biology?

Why or why not?

Read Genesis 1:27&31. Psalm 139:13-14

Happiness that actually Lasts

Let's introduce Joy:

Ask: what is the difference between Joy and Happiness?

Happiness/Contentment: Delight, bliss, pleasure, gladness, enjoyment, euphoria, glee, elation.

Joy is a deep, abiding emotion of intense happiness, contentment, or satisfaction, often stemming from a sense of well-being, success, or good fortune.

The world often says happiness depends on what happens to you. The Bible often talks about something deeper called *joy*—something that can exist even when life isn't perfect.

- Happiness = based on circumstances
- Joy (biblical) = rooted in God

Read Psalm 16:11

God is described as the source of "fullness of joy."

Question:

Why might knowing God bring deeper joy than things like success or popularity?

Read Philippians 4:4

"Rejoice in the Lord always..." When Paul wrote this he was in prison.

Question:

How can someone still have joy in a hard situation?

Joy is anchored in something stable, not circumstances.

Read John 10:10

Question: What does God want for our lives? What do you think Jesus means here by life to the full?

God wants us to be full of joy!

Jesus isn't just talking about being physically alive or having lots of things. In the context, He's describing a deeper, richer kind of life. A restored relationship with God. Full life starts with being connected to God again. Inner life, not just outer success. It includes things like peace, purpose, joy that isn't dependent on circumstances. So it's not the same as wealth or an easy life.

Happiness vs Joy Map

On a piece of paper draw 2 circles.

Circle 1: Temporary Happiness

Ask what brings temporary happiness?

- Likes on social media
- New phone
- Winning a game
- Popularity

Circle 2: Lasting Joy

Ask what brings lasting joy?

- Being known by God
- Forgiveness
- Purpose
- Friendship
- Helping others
- Peace in hard times

Ask:

- Which circle lasts longer?
- Are there things we can control and things we can't?

- Where do you usually look for happiness?
- What's something that drains your joy?
- What's one thing you think God might want to shift in your focus?

Read Ecclesiastes 2:10-11 and 12:13

Solomon was one of the world's most successful and wealthiest people of all time. He denied himself no pleasure. Reading 12:13 what was his conclusion about the meaning of life?

You don't find lasting happiness by chasing everything you want. The Bible suggests you find it by building your life on something stronger than circumstances.

The Point: To help identify how a life with God can help with providing joy despite circumstances.

TAKEAWAY

This week:

1. **Gratitude check:** write down 3 good things each day
2. **Less comparison:** reduce time comparing yourself online
3. **One joy act:** do something kind for someone else

EXTRA INFORMATION