

Facts > Feelings = Happiness

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[0 : 00] And so we started last week the study on the Happy Christian, and it's based on the book by David Murray, called Happy Christian, Ten Ways to Be Joyful in a Gloomy World.

And today we're going to start with chapter one, which is called Happy Facts. Happy Facts. And with each chapter, Dr. Murray gives us an equation to think about.

And it's a greater than equation. So today's happiness equation, and you probably want to write this down, are facts are greater than.

You remember that math sign, the greater than? Greater than feelings. And so when facts are bigger in our hearts and in our minds, they weigh more, they carry more weight than our feelings. That tends to lead to greater happiness, to more positivity, to more joy. Now, there's going to be ten of these equations.

[1 : 04] And I want to point out, in every one of these equations, it's not facts and then feelings or just nothing. It's not that.

It's none of these equations. It's not one instead of the other, or the lesser one is just unimportant. That's not the point. The question is, what really carries more weight in your heart?

What carries more weight in your mind? And so facts are greater than feelings equals more happiness. Now, feelings have big muscles, don't they?

How you feel, your emotions, they have big muscles. And they can powerfully determine our happiness, our sadness, how things are going, how we think things are going.

So feelings have big muscles. I've shared with you, I think I have, that Monday mornings can be very difficult for me personally. They can tend to be hard for pastors after that whole week, and now Monday's their day off.

[2 : 13] I talked to Dave Merrick when he was last here, and he said, that's my problem too. Mondays are very difficult for me. And so just for me personally, I can wake up and I can feel very just bummed out.

And it really has no connection to how things are going or how yesterday went or anything like that. I'm just tired. I think I'm stretched out.

I'm like a rubber band that's just been pulled too hard, and now there I am on the ground. I feel like tomorrow is going to come too soon. You ever feel like that? Like, oh no, I have to start this all over again.

And Satan attacks, and I can feel really depressed and irritated and anxious and all the rest. But something that has helped me so much in the last year or two is realizing that that's the tendency I have.

And I shouldn't be surprised when I feel like that on Monday. And secondly, to realize that they're just feelings. And I know that sounds like I'm poo-pooing or diminishing them, but I'm really just putting them in their place.

[3 : 26] Feelings don't tell me how things are going out there. Did you know that? Feelings don't accurately portray what's going on in the external world. All feelings tell me is how I feel.

They just tell me how I feel. They don't tell me how things are. They only tell me how I feel. And really knowing that helps because, so I wake up and I'm in a bad mood.

And if I can just, and if I just remember, well, these are just feelings. And I can take a, I can do some things to change that. And just because I'm feeling something doesn't mean that has to define my life.

And just because I'm feeling that way doesn't mean I'm completely helpless to how I'm feeling at that moment. And so getting your feelings under control begins with how you think.

With how you think. And so let me ask you, What goes into our moods? What goes into how we feel?

[4 : 31] I mean, what are some of the things that contribute to however we feel on a certain day? Diane. The weather. Seasonal affective disorder.

Winter is harder for people. Because it's so cloudy for so long. So cold. It's cooped up. Weather. Sometimes it's easy to feel blue when it's blue outside.

Tiredness. Tiredness. Yeah, but anything. The world looks totally different on three hours of sleep, doesn't it?

Tiredness. What else? Food. Food. That's true, isn't it? Seriously. Yeah. I eat pancakes and I might as well just close up shop, right?

Anyway. What else? I've seen a lot of Mother Hent Susie. Health. Health. Very much. Health. How we're feeling.

[5 : 37] Our sickness. Yeah. What else? There. What we dwell on. We're going to think about that. What we think about. Mom.

Our perception. Our perception. What do you mean? Just our perception of something we see or something that somebody's saying, somebody's doing. It's our, it's how we're looking at it.

It's what we're seeing. Yeah. We're going to, we're going to get into that. We all have filters. Diane. Financial. Financial. Yeah, definitely. Mark. Positive or negative people in our lives. What's that?

Positive or negative people.

Yeah. We have to deal with. Yeah. The news. The news. We're going to have a whole chapter on called happy media. I filled out a list of things that make me feel good and fill a list of things out that make me feel bad.

[6 : 41] And one of the things that are on my drainer list is the news. The news drains me, even though sometimes I can get hooked on it. Michael. Work.

Work. Work. Our jobs. Our jobs. How they're going. How we think they're going. Scott. My to-do list. Your to-do list.

Whether you've accomplished it or whether it's 31 items and growing. That changes our mood. My motives. Things I want. Whether I get it, I don't get it.

Yeah. What we really want. So I've talked about, I guess that's all the weather, bank balance, sports results, sleep, our genes, our health, our body chemistry, health, sleep, what's been going on around me, what I've been eating.

I've never thought of that, but like that, what I've been eating. But the biggest, the most important influential factor is what I'm thinking. It's really what I'm thinking.

[7 : 49] And it's interesting, and I can already tell we're not going to get very far today, and that's fine. It's interesting how science and the Bible are really starting to come to, and science is starting to uncover what the Bible has always said is true and what people have always thought, well, that's probably not true.

But there's this whole new realm of scientific inquiry called positive psychology, and that sounds really cheesy and everything.

But it is very interesting and to some degree helpful field of study. And what they're really asking is, what are the things that people do that actually make them feel good?

Instead of like, how do we get sad people to feel normal? Well, what are the happy people doing? How do they think? How do they live? And exploring that. And it's interesting, to a great degree, they're starting to say exactly what the Bible has always said.

And so they've done a study on what helps people to thrive and flourish. And something that they've kind of uncovered is, just like generally in our moods, our temperaments, our how we feel about life.

[9 : 06] Happiness is about 50% genetic. And we're going to get to that. It's sort of a given. And well, like I said, we're going to talk about that. You really can't do anything about it.

The other 10% is life circumstances. So, life circumstances. So, rich, poor, have a lot of friends, don't have a lot of friends, beautiful muscles, whatever life circumstances that you want to feed in there.

But life circumstances, how life is going. And the other 40% is what they've said, you know what, is something we can change. So, 60% of our mood is really just we can't do much about.

But the other 40% we can do something about. And the biggest part of that 40% is what you think. So, the 50% is a given. And that, I think, is biblical. Or at least is an accurate picture.

Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, he wrote in his book called Spiritual Depression. He called it your temperament. Your temperament. And we're not all the same there.

[10:13] Some of you are never, ever going to be chipper, happy people. And some of you are never going to. You have an incredibly difficult time getting sad. You're just more upbeat generally.

It's your temperament. We're not all the same. If you haven't read that book, Spiritual Depression by Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, I would encourage you. I would especially encourage you to read the first chapter on just general considerations.

And listen to what he says there. First and foremost, I would not hesitate to put temperaments. There are, after all, certain different types of people.

For the fact of the matter is, is that though we are all Christians together, we are all different. And the problems and the difficulties and the perplexities and the trials that we are likely to meet are in a large measure determined by the difference of temperament and of type.

And like I said, some of you are never going to be chippy, chipper, outgoing, overflowing, boisterous people. It's just not in your genes.

[11:22] It's not in your temperament. It's not who you are. 10% of it is life circumstances. And that shoots most of what the world says right in the heart.

Because what the world says is, you know, if I have more, I will be happier. Or if things are going well, I will be happier. And what is really fascinating is these positive psychologists are saying, that is not true of really at all.

That's just not true. And that's exactly what the Apostle Paul lived out, isn't it? He's in a prison with Silas. And what were they doing? Singing.

Think about Peter. He is whipped. Peter and James. They're whipped. And they go away from that prison. What were they doing as they went away? Rejoicing that they were counted worthy.

Circumstances bad. But their perspective and what they were thinking made them happy. And so, yes, life circumstances obviously has an effect. But overall, it's not as big of an effect as what the world would have us think.

[12:36] And so that other 40%, the 40% is mostly to do with how we think and how we perceive. How we filter our world and what we are thinking about.

And that is so biblical. So, on Sunday afternoons, on the luncheons, we've been going through Psalm 42. Or we've been meditating on Psalm 42.

And that question of, why are you so downcast, O my soul? Put your hope in God. And what does the psalmist do? Well, he talks to himself.

He starts to change the way he thinks. He's getting his thinking in line. We've looked at Psalm 73 a lot. And Asaph has this change in feelings.

Does he have a change in circumstances? No. There's no change in circumstances. There's no change in Asaph's temperament either. Whatever kind of person Asaph was, that stayed the same.

[13:38] But his change came when he changed what he was thinking about. And so feelings are important. For how we are our general happiness.

But facts are more important. And so get your thinking in order and your feelings will follow. Again, listen to Dr. Jones. Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life, that is quite a statement.

Most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself. Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning.

You've not originated them, but there they are talking to you. They bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you?

Your self is talking to you. Now this man's treatment in Psalm 42 was this. Instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself.

[14:47] Why are you cast down, O my soul? He asks. His soul has been depressing him. Crushing him. And so he stands up and he says, Self, listen for a moment.

I will speak to you. So he's going to make, he's going to start to change the way he thinks. And so that's what today is about. Getting those thoughts in order.

Talking to yourself. Now, the way that we're going to do this is by first, and this is probably all we're going to get to today, is look at some of the damaging thought patterns that we have.

Some of the damaging, the thought patterns that lead us and that rob us of joy and happiness in the Lord.

And as we're going through this, I want you to look at yourself and I want you to evaluate yourself and say, Hmm, is this kind of the way I think?

[15 : 50] Is this the way I perceive things? And so number one, damaging thought pattern is black and white thinking or all or nothing thinking.

So Dr. Murray gives an example and here he's speaking probably for every pastor. And he says, My sermon goes so badly one Sunday that I conclude I was never called to the ministry.

You see, it's all or nothing. There's no in between. There's no, well, that was just a bad sermon or I need to try harder or whatever.

It's just, nope, no shades of gray. I'm not called to the ministry. Or your boss criticizes something you do at your work. And you say, I stink at my job.

I'm going to get fired. Well, that's all or nothing. That's like, it has to go all my way or I'm in big trouble.

[16 : 48] It's all or nothing. I have a bad day. And I say, nothing will ever get better. All or nothing, black or white. No nuance.

So let me ask you, how about you? Do any of you have some examples for that? What else? Are there any other examples? No. Well, look for that kind of thinking. Where something happens and all of a sudden you're 100 feet over.

Roger? Roger? You can have a failed relationship and say, well, I'm never going to get close to anybody. Let anybody get close to me ever again. Yeah. Or all people hurt me.

This person hurt me. Therefore, all people are dangerous. Well, can you imagine how powerful that way of thinking and how powerfully depressing and saddening that is?

[17 : 47] When now you're going through life and everyone's your enemy. Wow. Wow. Number two, damaging thought patterns. And this is really sort of related, but generalizing.

Generalizing. Going from one small sample to a general truth that covers everything. So, you ask a girl on a date and she says no.

Conclusion. Well, there's no point in ever asking anyone again. I will always get no for an answer. Well, you try to witness to someone and they blow you off.

So, you mope around for a week saying, I will never win anyone to Christ. I might as well give up. Again, this is related to what we've talked about. But you start with one sample and somehow that one sample gets blown up to cover everything.

All situations. That's really what Roger was talking about. It's always true or it will always be true.

That's sort of what Dara was talking about. And again, do you see how that can be so damaging?

[18 : 56] Well, that's just the way that you think. One small sample. And you extrapolate. You pull out from that. Well, that's how life is.

And generally, it's not a happy sample, is it? It's a sad thing. It's a bad thing. It's a hard thing that you get to stretch out over all your life. Number three, filtering.

Filtering. Who here can find the bad in everything? Anyone want to raise their hands for that? Like, just naturally, I'm pessimistic. I guess I won't make you raise your hand.

But can you find the gray cloud in every silver lining? Filtering. If you want to be happy in the Lord, you have to quit, you know, panning for failure, for misery, for sadness, for negatives.

You know, you're panning for gold and you're sifting out all the other things until just what negative is left. You're not going to be happy.

[20 : 06] You're not going to have the joy of the Lord if all you're looking at and looking for in every situation is the negative. And so your child comes home with a 90% on the test.

And you say, what happened to the other 10%? Wow. They got nine out of 10 problems right. And you're focused on the one out of 10 that they didn't.

It's a sad thing, but what homiletics professors, what preaching, professors that teach preaching say, people remember most about sermons.

What they remember most about sermons comes in this order. A statement they disagree with. If I say something that you disagree with, you will remember that statement.

An illustration they disagree with is number two. So you don't like that illustration, that will stick in your mind. And only three, only third, finally, is an illustration that someone likes.

[21 : 16] That will stick with you. That's what you'll remember. And I guess what I'm saying is we can be very good at filtering. And so there is a sermon with lots of good stuff.

And now you've panned it down to one statement that you don't like. And so filtering. Number four, mind reading. Mind reading.

I know. Like we, these all apply to us, but like mind reading. I'm really good at mind reading. You didn't know that, did you?

But I could tell what you're thinking. I really can. You walk by me and you don't say hi. I know it. You don't like me.

I know that. I can read your mind. Don't try to tell me differently either. I know. Anyone else here a proficient mind reader? My dad is.

[22 : 13] It's genetic. It's a relative. Yeah. Yeah. So husbands or wives, do your spouses ever read your mind?

Correctly or wrongly? Well, do you ever wrongly read your spouse's mind? I know I've done that. Why are you so miserable? What's wrong?

There's nothing wrong. I'm like, well, yeah, there is. I know there is. Number five, fortune telling. I not only can read minds, I can tell the future.

So I know how this is going to turn out. I know it's going to happen. I know this is the way it's going to be. And so you go into a job interview, certain you're going to fail.

And amazingly, you know the future, don't you? You go into some situation and you know how it's going to work out. Now, and isn't it interesting that when we prophesy doom and gloom, a lot of times it actually shapes what ends up happening.

[23 : 23] Doesn't it? We go into a situation and do a job interview, certain we're going to fail. And we're not comfortable. We're not ourselves.

We don't put our best selves forward. We're, you know, and it actually ends up happening. Fortune tellers or mind readers.

Like I see that sometimes when I sit down with people for shepherding visits. I've noticed this, and this is something I've learned to really deal with, is a lot of people, as soon as they hear, oh, can I meet with you?

They instantly think what? I'm in trouble. Like, no, you're not in trouble. They feel like they're in trouble. And so I've just started to say, you're not in trouble.

Don't worry about anything. I don't have some sort of terrible agenda. I go over the top to assure them that I am not, I'm not there to find some bad thing or because I have.

[24 : 20] And because people can be fortune tellers and mind readers, and it makes them miserable when it doesn't have to. And so number six, that's number five, fortune telling.

Number six is perfectionism. Perfectionism. So what are some words I want you to think about when we're talking to ourselves and we are being perfectionistic?

What are some of the words that go, that we tell ourselves? Can you think of one? How about I should have?

I should have. I could have. I ought have. I ought have done that. I should have. I could have. I ought have.

And it goes around and around. And there's this lengthening list of obligations and targets that we're missing. And a growing list of flaws.

[25 : 21] And places that we're not getting to. And so a perfect day. A perfect home. A perfect family. A perfect performance. A perfect project. A perfect report card.

A perfect employee evaluation. A perfectly completed to-do list. And it's never done.

And it's never realized. And we're never content or happy. Now, you don't have to be Sigmund Freud or somebody to realize that these kind of patterns of thinking are going to make you unhappy.

They're going to rob you of the joy of the Lord. And if we're always thinking about problems and negatives. And that's what we're always seeing in the future as hopeless. Or we're always seeing the past as all these missed opportunities.

And everyone hates us. Or we assume we've achieved nothing. Just because we didn't achieve everything. We're going to be pretty unhappy people.

[26 : 28] And it's going to be hard to know the joy of the Lord. And so if we want to be happier Christians, what we need to do is to quit thinking like that.

To reverse that way of thinking. To undo it. To get rid of those thought patterns. And so how do you get rid of those damaging thought patterns? And the first step is this.

Is to realize that you can. This is where we're going to end. To realize that you can. Romans chapter 12 verse 2 says, Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

You can change the way that you think. About the world. About God. About yourself. And so pessimists can become optimists.

Yes. And no, no, no men, no women can become yes. Yes. Yes, men and women. And obstacles can become challenges.

[27 : 25] Difficulties can become possibilities. And we can't usually change reality. We can't change what's going on out there.

Not to a very great degree. But we can change the way that we look at it. We can change our perceptions. And so you can be. By the power of the Holy Spirit, you can change and be renewed in your mind.

And we're going to kind of look at how we do that next week. We're going to keep on going with happy facts next week. And that's just really.

The first thing is to realize you can change. And here's the second. Is you focus on what God has said is true. You bring those feelings into order with what is true.

So that's where we're going to end. We're out of time and we're dismissed. We'll see. Yes. Yes.

[28 : 25] Thank you.