

Facts > Feelings = Happiness (part 2)

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Date: 20 May 2018

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[0 : 00] Well, we are studying the happy Christian, ten ways to be a joyful believer in a gloomy world. And we're going to finish up chapter one, which is called Happy Facts.

And I pointed out last week that every chapter has an equation that leads to happiness for us. And so what was the overarching equation that we saw last week?

Facts greater than feelings equals happiness. When we're able to prioritize the facts over exactly how we're feeling at that moment, that's going to lead to happiness.

We talked about some of the damaging thought patterns that can lead to unhappiness, that don't help us, that actually steal our joy away from us.

These ways of thinking that actually hurt us. And we looked at as a person thinks in his heart, so he is.

[1 : 08] As a person thinks goes a great deal to a great degree to what they are, determining how we feel. And so two people can be in identical situations and have very different feelings about that situation.

And it's all determined on how they're thinking about it. What's their attitude? What are they bringing up? What are they considering important or not important? So our real hope for living positive, happy lives depends largely on our thoughts, getting our thoughts right and getting the facts right. Most unhappy people are not unhappy because of the circumstances or the situation they're in, but it's their interpretation of that situation that's created this unhappiness in their life.

And so we can think about things in a wrong way, in a damaging way. And we looked at some of those ways last week. What were some of those damaging thought patterns?

And maybe you can give me some examples. So what was the first damaging or what was any of the damaging thought patterns that we looked at last week? All or nothing thinking.

[2 : 29] All or nothing thinking. Black or white thinking. All or nothing. So can anyone give me an example of that? Maybe an example in your own life where you're tempted to be all or nothing.

Will? Will? Well, when I feel, when I'm tired and when I feel down, I just say this is the worst possible thing that can happen.

And it's very wrong because I have a community. I have a soul in my hand. I have so many things that I take for granted. Yes.

Yes. Yeah, that's good. That reminds me of, remember when Joseph was taken away from Jacob? And what did Jacob say in response to his situation as he saw it?

What was his interpretation of all the events? Everything is against me. Well, we can understand Mr. Jacob's feelings, right?

[3 : 32] That we probably have been there, but he wasn't accurate. Any other examples? Will gave us an example. Any other example where we struggle or you struggle with black or white?

It's all or nothing. She said, I lost my temper with my children, and that means I'm a bad mother. So it's either all or nothing.

What was the next one? What was the next damaging thought pattern? Sort of related to it.

Generalization. Generalization. So what does that mean, Dan?

So one small thing that may be accurate is just attributed to the entire situation or choice. Yeah. So again, does anyone have any examples? Or maybe where they fell into it this week.

Of where one small sample, maybe one little thing that's true, gets applied to everything. Mark.

[4 : 33] Well, I hear it a lot at work. Something can go wrong with ordering a part or something. People will say, that's the way this company has always been.

It's never been any different. You know, they're always messing things up. Yeah. Yeah. That's good. Does that sound familiar? That's, I never thought of that, but that is exactly how.

We forget the 99.9% of the parts that come in, right? Every week. And yet, oh man, that supply company is complete garbage.

Wow, that's not very nice. And you're not going to be happy when you're thinking that. What was the next one? Filtering.

What's filtering? What's that? Stop looking for the negative. Stop trying to filter out what you should be. Right.

[5 : 30] Filtering is when we're actually just all we see is the negative. Right? Like, we can find the bad in everything. You look past the good.

I guess that's sort of related to this generalization. These are all sort of this constellation of ideas where we don't think clearly. So we pick out the bad.

We pick out the worst possible way that this is going to finish up. Steve. Most mainstream media seems to be that way. Yeah. Yeah. Again, we're going to talk about media because our media diet goes to a great degree in deciding how we feel about how our world is going.

I saw this. Well, I'm going to save that for later. So filtering. Looking for the bad. Looking for the bad. What was the next one? Mind reading. What's a good example of mind reading? Or does anyone want to admit that they're good at mind reading?

[6 : 45] They had mind read this week. So what is mind reading? Deciding what somebody has thought. Yeah.

Negative. Yeah. Yeah. You know what other people are thinking. You figured them out. Does anyone have an example of that? Or anyone want to confess to that?

No one wants to confess. We have a neighbor. One of the apartment complexes we lived in. She purported to be hearing voices out of cabinets and things like that.

And she also had this way of looking at somebody walking toward her or looking into their eyes. She could swear that she could tell what kind of person they were or what they were thinking.

That seems a bit extreme. Yeah. Yeah. That's an extreme example. So you don't have to be hearing voices out of your kitchen cabinets.

[7 : 53] You could just... I mean, there's a hundred other more innocent versions of that, isn't there? Where, like, when someone says something, and I know what they meant by that.

Where I understand why they said that. And maybe you really don't. So that's mind reading. The next one's related, too. It's also a feature of being a clairvoyant.

It's fortune telling. So what's fortune telling? Sam, you have an example? Sam Hart? You told me a good example. I'm putting you on the spot.

I'm not mentioning it. Yeah, I can have a bad style to call or a bad phone call. And then I can take the rest of my life off that sometimes.

Not all the time. But if it's particularly valid, you make well. I'll take a big house with a customer. And then, oh, I'll leave my job.

[9 : 02] And then I'll leave my house. And then I'll get sent back to England. It's funny, but it's not funny when you're in that.

My wife is very helpful. It's funny, but I kind of manage your feet. Yeah. We're going to get to how Natalie helps Sam.

Because that is something that wives and husbands, we need to be helping each other with this. Steve? Well, kind of maybe a little bit more common.

Like if I'm trying to make stuff at work and it's just not going good, I can easily have the attitude of, oh, it's going to be one of those weeks. Or one of those.

And I'm just projecting the rest of, I might as well just go home because the rest of the week is just going to go terrible. Yeah. Anyone else say that?

[10 : 02] It's just going to be one of those weeks. Isn't it funny how it ends up turning out to be like one of those weeks? And why is that? It probably goes back to that filtering idea, isn't it?

Once we've decided that this week's going to be bad, we start to see all the bad things happening. And they get magnified and blown up. But the next one is perfecting or being a perfectionist.

I gave you like three little very short phrases that the perfectionist is always telling himself or herself. Do you remember what they were? I should have.

I could have. I ought to. I ought to. Yeah. I should have. It's not making it. Yeah. I should have. I could have. I ought to.

So you drive away from a situation. And I should have. I could have. I am not. And there is a good degree of self-evaluation there.

[11:09] But the problem is when that becomes so predominant that now you're not happy because you didn't do a perfect job.

Here's one that we didn't mention, but I thought we should. And actually, our sister Sheila put me onto this one.

And it's the idea of thinking that at some point in the future, I'll get around to being happy. Some point in the future when something happens, I'll be happy then.

Until then, I just can't be happy. So it's the idea. I'll be happy when. So when what? When what? What are some examples? When I retire, I don't have to deal with this job. Who said that? Andrew? That wasn't you?

[12:10] Oh. I was like, you are awfully young. Yeah. When I retire, I'll be happy.

Isn't it funny that? Yeah. Never mind. That's not funny. Karen? Really, every stage of life to go through. When I get married. When I buy a house.

When I have children. When my children leave the house. Amen. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Every stage of our life. I'll be happy when. Maybe you remember, I don't even know, seven, six, seven, eight years ago, we did that series on Ecclesiastes.

And let me ask you, if you remember that series, if you were there on Sunday evenings, what do you think Koalath, the author of Ecclesiastes, would say about that idea of, I'll be happy when?

[13:14] What do you think he would say? Does anyone remember? It's Hevel. It's Hevel. It's Hevel. It's Hevel.

Well, it's Hevel to think that I'll be happy. It's a meaningless way of thinking. Would he say that that's a good way of thinking, a helpful way of thinking, a happy way of thinking?

What do you think Ecclesiastes would say to us? Maybe you need to read it again. Enjoy your life now. Listen to Ecclesiastes 11.

Light is sweet, and it pleases the eyes to see the sun. However many years a man may live, let him enjoy them all.

But let him remember the days of darkness, for they will be many. Everything to come is Hevel.

That means meaningless, painful, frustration.

[14:12] Everything to come is this frustration. Be happy, young man, while you are young, and let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. He actually says, is it easier or more difficult to be happier later on?

It's more difficult. And especially as you come to those ends, end of your life, it becomes increasingly more difficult. Things become more frustrating.

So that's another damaging way of thinking. It's thinking, I'll be happy when. And there's always going to be something. And we'll never get around to actually being happy. Now, the real question is, how do we get out of that way of thinking?

How do we get out of it? And I guess the first step is to realize, and this is what we ended with last week, that realize you can change the way that you think. A pessimist can actually be an optimist.

A person that always sees the bad side of things can always start to see the good side of things.

Romans 12.2 says, be transformed by the renewing of your mind. The way you think is going to transform your life.

[15:31] And your mind can change. That's true spiritually. It's true spiritually. It's also true physically. Our brains can change.

They used to think, up until like the 70s, that pretty much after puberty, your brain was just static. It didn't change anymore after that.

And what they've discovered is that's just not true at all. The two elderly people sitting next to each other on the bench saying, I love you and holding each other's hands and patting each other's hands, their brains are actually changing there.

They're firing new neurons. They're changing. Our minds, our way of thinking can be made new.

And so this week we want to look at how we change the way we think.

And how we need to bring our feelings under the control of the facts. And so how do you reinterpret those facts and turn them into something that's God-honoring, that produces joy in your life?

[16:42] Now, we're going to break it down to six steps. And so I'm going to repeat these six steps two times here. And then I'm going to give you some examples. Because really, this is where the

work gets done.

Step one, what are the facts? Step two, what are my thoughts about the facts? Step three, what are my feelings? Step four, can I change the facts?

Step five, can I change my thoughts about the facts? Step six, what am I feeling now? So let me give that to you again. Step one, what are the facts?

Step two, what are my thoughts about the facts? Step three, what are my feelings? Step four, can I change the facts? facts? Step five, can I change my thoughts about the facts? And step six, what am I feeling now?

Well, what's that mean? Well, I'm going to give you an example. I'm going to show you how this works. And David Murray in his book gives us an example of himself. And so we're going to walk through this example and then we're going to kind of do a couple other examples and work it out for ourselves. So step one, what are the facts? And David Murray says, I started the day with 30 things on my to-do list. And I worked really hard and I completed 15 tasks, but I added 20 more to the list as I went along. I think it was Scott who mentioned the to-do list. So here's the situation.

[18:20] He started with 30. He worked really hard all day and he got half of them done, but he added 20 in the process. Step two, what are my thoughts about the facts? So what would you be thinking if that was you? Failure. I'm sinking. It's getting worse. I'll never get through this. So those are the thoughts about the facts. You know, he says this, Oh no, I've got more to do than what I started out this morning. I've gone backwards rather than forward. If it keeps going like this, I'm going to, I'm going to be completely stressed out and I'll never manage a day off with my family this week.

So we have, that's what he's thinking about this. This is the facts. The facts is just the to-do list. Now he's thinking about the facts. Scott, did you have some? Okay. Step three, what are my feelings?

Now, how are you going to be feeling? We kind of got into that. I'm sinking. So what are the feeling words that go along with that? How does a person feel? How's that person feeling? Overwhelmed, anxious, tense, stressed out, maybe guilty, fear, sadness.

Now, step number four, can I change the facts? What do you think? Not really. We're going to talk about how, what you can change. Maybe you can change the facts.

What's the, what's something that, I mean, if you have a really big, long to-do list, what's one way that you could change the fact? Yeah, you get someone to help. You can offload, delegate. You could just say no.

[20:13] No. That's one way of dealing with it. But let's suppose that you've offloaded, you've said no to everything that you can, but this is your real, your list is your list. And even if you burn the list, you still got the things to do. Right? So there's really not a good way to, to, to change the facts, or at least a final freeing way of changing the facts. Now, step number five, can I change my thoughts about the facts? Can I change my thoughts about the facts? Well, this is what he says, and this is what Sam was saying. Not without help, but my wife is an expert at this. She sees my furrowed brow, my stiff shoulders. You know what that's like where your shoulders are all the way up into your ears?

And comes alongside me with coffee and a cookie and asks, what's wrong, darling? And I show her my to-do list and she begins to laugh. Well, what are you laughing at? Well, you don't think you accomplished anything today, did you? Or do you? No, look, I started out with a list this long and despite everything I've done, now it's longer. Okay, honey. Now look at the 20 check marks on the pages that weren't there this morning. You got, look at those check marks. You did do something. And, and look at half the tasks you added. Half can be done by your assistant. So this is what we're, you know, you can give this to half of them, you can give to him or her.

This one will only take two minutes. And you know, you should be really glad that you have such meaningful work to do. Do you see what she's doing? She's helping, she's helping him to do what Dr.

Martin Lloyd-Jones said last week when he said, you know, we, we got to stop listening to ourselves and we got to talk to self. And we say, now self, listen to me a minute for a minute. Listen to me for a minute. And that's what she's saying. She's saying, listen up. She's changing the way he's thinking about the facts and she's helping them to look at them differently, to emphasize some and to, to sort of fade away, fade out some of the others to interpret them more positively.

[22 : 41] Now that's step five. Can I change my thoughts about the facts that that's really the longest? That's the hardest one. That's where the work gets done and you have to get all the rest in order.

But this step where you change the way that you're thinking about the facts is where you do the work. Now, step number six, what are you feeling now? This is what he says. The furrow is, is now replaced with a smile. The shoulders are relaxing. A sense of satisfaction is growing. Now, did the facts change?

His thoughts about the facts are different, but everything on his to-do list still has to be done. But his feelings are changed for the better. Now, a day off looks more doable. And you know what? Maybe I can just call it quits right now.

Well, that's an example. We're going to go through some more. But just sort of a tip before we move on. You know, I give you these six steps here.

And I just want to say it's really helpful if you write things down. Write down the steps. And I'm not talking necessarily right now here where you're taking notes. I'm saying when you're out there in the world and you're running into a situation, to just jot down the steps really quick. Brain scans show that putting words to feelings almost immediately diminishes the power of the negative emotions.

[24 : 29] And it helps you decide. It improves your sense of well-being just by writing it down. And the way I do that, I have a little notebook, a journal. And it's my gratitude journal. And I write down everything I'm thankful for.

I try to write down some things every day. We're going to get to that in a few weeks. But I write down the things I'm thankful for. It's really good. But it's also, from time to time, this book becomes my list of things I'm stressed out about.

Because I'm probably just like you. Sometimes things just get piled up and there's like maybe eight or nine or ten or eleven things all running around chasing in my brain.

Things I'm worried about. And I can go from one to the other to the other and the other. And I feel overwhelmed and stressed out. Well, just getting them out of my head and onto the paper where I can now look at them and just pray about them individually has helped immensely.

So just verbalizing. Either with writing or with your own words, the stress and the feelings of helplessness and praying over them helps you to rethink your life.

[25 : 49] It helps you get control of your thoughts. So let's go through another example. And this time I want you to really help me. Let's just say you have a doctor's appointment.

And you show up on time. You show up on time. You show up five minutes early. And you end up waiting and waiting and waiting.

Way, way past your appointment time. And you have a busy day in front of you. It wasn't on your, in your planning to be here for this long.

And to make things worse, you know there are people there who are getting in before you. Now you're there. So, you didn't want to spend the whole morning or the whole afternoon reading People magazine or whatever.

Step one. So what are the facts? I kind of already gave them to you, but what are they? Yeah. I'm there on time.

[27 : 05] They're not taking me right now. What else? Someone say. You got to wait. You have to have this. There's people in front of me.

This is going to be a while. That's just the facts. Step number two. What are you, what am I thinking about these facts? So what do you normally think if you're in a situation like that?

Have they forgotten me? You knew I shouldn't have come to the doctor. I knew. I knew I shouldn't have come to the doctor. Just leave. Okay.

Maybe I should just leave. Charge him for your time. Yeah. I'm going to charge him for my time.

What can I get done while I'm sitting there? Okay. What can I get done? That's a positive thing.

He's gone.

I want to know why my blood pressure. Normally it's so low, but it's 220 over 140.

[28 : 07] Yeah. You're feeling stressed out. What are you thinking about? What am I missing? Right? I'm going to be late. This isn't fair.

This isn't right. So what are you feeling? Frustration. Frustration. Angry. Frazzled.

Helpless. That's how I feel. Like if I'm stuck in a situation, especially with like a doctor. Like I think Will said, if I leave, I'm obviously here for a reason.

If I leave, it's I'm not helping myself. Scott said, charging for my time. That's really, I don't know if that's ever worked. Yes. Yes.

So I'm helpless. So step four, can you change the facts? I don't know, not unless you have a medical degree and you're going to visit yourself.

[29 : 14] I don't know. You can't change the facts. I guess you could say, hey, did you forget me? Maybe they did forget you. But barring that, there's really not much you can do.

Now, step five, can I change my thoughts about the facts? Can I change my thoughts about the facts? So what are some new facts that we can emphasize, that we can think about, that will not leave us so frustrated and angry?

What are some truth? What's some facts? What's some things that we need to bring into our thinking? In this situation, I specifically had something like that happen.

The doctor had to be with somebody who was having an emergency. The nurse came and said, he needs more time with that patient. So I just automatically started thinking about those things.

Maybe he has to help somebody. Yeah. I'd be glad if he did that for me. Yeah. That's probably really good to think, you know what? He's a doctor. He's probably helping someone who's in a really bad situation.

[30 : 22] And I should be happy I'm just sitting here in the room. Someone else had something. Mickey. I always think God is sovereign. And so he's keeping me here.

Maybe I would have been in an accident if I took off and left right now. Anger. Yeah. God is sovereign. For some reason. I mean, not to be so, I don't know, maybe crass, but, you know, there were people on September 11th that were stuck in traffic.

They didn't make it to work. Karen. Oh, this sounds silly, but I'm like, wow, I have an hour. Let's brainstorm and brain dump my grocery list, the things I'm supposed to do this week.

Praying. Hopefully I have my cell phone as charged. I can be responding to my emails or sending out emails that I've meant to do. And I'm actually thankful for that time.

Yeah. Sometimes the only time a week that I have a few minutes to myself to think and sort things out. Yeah. Yeah. So you could look at this either as one.

[31 : 33] God is like giving me a time out. Giving me like a breather from my busy schedule. So that I can work on some other things.

That's what Dan was talking about. There's alternative things I could be doing now. And so instead of a setback, this is an opportunity. An opportunity.

What else can we do? How else can we change the way we're thinking? Yeah, dear. This goes along with what Karen says, but Mike and I are learning to take a World magazine or a book or something so we're prepared.

Because it can always happen. Yeah. So then we have the opportunity to sit there quietly and read, which otherwise would be a waste of time. Yeah. Or thought about the grocery list like Karen said.

Yeah. Well, I think sometimes we think we're the most supportive person that often. And we need to look at other people, you know, have needs too.

[32 : 34] And that it kind of goes along with what she was saying about real needs. But, yeah, just not thinking like everybody should bow down to you.

Yeah. Just be patient and humble. Be patient, be humble. Realize that your schedule is not the most important thing in the whole wide world.

Sam. In fact, we do have professionals that we can't see. And then you move off. And then you have them completely get as a schedule. Yeah. I'm glad I have a chance to go to a doctor.

The doctor might be dealing with a person who keeps asking questions. Or the doctor, you know, is patient and hears them all. But it takes more time than a typical appointment should take.

So he gets it on that. Yeah. There could be real legitimate. If we were in that room, we would be okay with him taking longer. Roger. I start thinking, what do I want so badly that when I'm not getting it, I'm starting to act and respond simply in my thinking.

[33 : 45] Mm-hmm. Maybe it might help with acting more. Yeah. So what are some positive thoughts that we could put on that? So you've identified something. Let's reverse it and do some kung fu on it.

Yeah. Yeah. Well, sometimes it could be the fact that, okay, now I do see how much I want control of the things that are going on around me. But I don't get it. Now I'm starting to get frustrated and upset.

And eventually that's going to lead to words. And so we start to need to go back to the other thinking. Ultimately, God's in control. Could we have me in this situation and bring that out in me so that I would repent of that and start living under his kind of spiritual and being more thoughtful of what's happening in the lives of other people rather than just myself.

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I'm just thinking of Hebrews where it says no discipline is pleasant at the time. That word discipline is where we get our word gymnasium.

God could have you in that doctor's office and really where you're at is the gym. And he's giving your spiritual graces opportunity to exercise themselves and to maybe sweat off some of that spiritual fat, so to speak.

[35 : 03] Some of that sin. Again, we're changing what we think. Like, okay, God has. It's not just me and the doctor's office. It's just not me and the doctor.

God has an agenda here. And it's an agenda to do me good. So what is that good? Sorry, go ahead. Yeah. Yeah. And this has happened before.

If I know he's running behind or she's running behind, I can come up with a plan on my own sitting, waiting. But it's the not knowing when you're sitting there, you know, and when minutes goes by, I think we need to find out what's going on.

Do they need to reschedule it? You know, instead of sitting there, you know, shredding Kleenex or something. Yeah. Yeah. If you know in your mind that if you're going to get in, then you can come up with another plan and say thank you guys for helping me get through it.

And maybe that's just what you need to change your way of thinking is there is something for me to do. So maybe I need to talk to him. Maybe I need to find out something. I actually do have your smart phone.

[36 : 10] Yeah. Definitely. So step five, change the way you're thinking. Now, step six, what are my facts or what am I feeling now?

I'm content. I'm satisfied. I'm calmed down. I'm happy. Now, we've gone through it a couple times, but did you notice that there's these two sets of three?

So how did I get into this mood? Well, there's facts, thoughts, and feelings about that. And then how do I get out of this mood? Well, there's facts, thoughts, and feelings. I was going to go through a biblical example of Psalm 77.

And I guess what I'm going to have to have you do is go home and read Psalm 77. Because what you see in Psalm 77 is Asaph doing this exact thing.

Asaph is in distress. The first nine verses, Asaph is in the dumps. He's in distress.

[37 : 15] He is really questioning God's character. He says, I'm too troubled to even sleep.

He says, will the Lord reject me forever? Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? So he's like saying, has God changed?

It's that bad. And has God forgotten to be merciful? And then in verse 10, he says, then I thought, then I thought, to this I will appeal, the years of the right hand of the Most High.

Which is just to say, I'm going to think about those years when God showed his great power. I'm going to start thinking about that instead of my present circumstances.

And he goes through it. He changes what he's thinking about. And by the end, what Asaph is doing is now he is just exalting in God's power.

[38 : 26] His feelings have totally changed. He's worshiping this God who cut a line right through the Red Sea. That's what he's doing.

He changes his feelings by changing his thoughts. Now, I think that's where we're going to end.

I would just encourage you, Psalm 77, the first nine verses, we see him in his bad mood. Let's put it lightly.

But then we see the rest of the psalm. Him thinking. And as he thinks, his feelings begin to follow and change. And he comes out on the other side, exalting God.

Well, that's all the time we have this morning. Yes.