

You Find What You Are Looking For?

Considering 5 psychological and neurological **claims**:

1. Claim: “The Happiest People Do Four Things Every Day”

Habit 1: They (regularly) **practice their faith.**

“Happy are the people whose God is the LORD” (Psalm 144:15).

“In Your presence there is fullness of joy” (Psalm 16:11).

“Blessed (happy) are those who hear the word of God and obey it” (Luke 11:28).

Discussion/Application Questions: *What does “practicing your faith” look like for you on a daily basis? How do you feel when you neglect time with God versus when you prioritize it? What is one faith habit (morning prayer, a devotional time, listening to worship music, etc.) you could implement or strengthen to invite more joy into your day?*

2. Claim: You Find What You Focus On. We interpret the world through the lens of our thoughts, beliefs, and past experiences. “The story you tell yourself is your reality.”

Phil 4:8 *“...Fix your thoughts on, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or worthy of praise --think about such things.*

Isa 26:3 *“You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.*

Luke 11:34 *“If our eye (perspective) is healthy, our whole being is full of light, but if it’s bad, we’ll be full of darkness”*

Psalm 19:14 *“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord”*

Prov 4:23 *“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”*

Discussion/Application Questions: *In what ways have you seen your mindset affect your feelings or faith? Can you think of a time when your personal biases or past experiences caused you to misinterpret a situation or another person’s words? What steps can you take to “fix your thoughts” on things above when negative thoughts arise? What steps can you take begin seeing people and circumstances more as God sees them?*

3. Claim: Notice your thoughts (you do not have to believe *all* of them). **Name your emotions** (they lose power when they’re seen and acknowledged).

#1 Thoughts:

1 John 4:1 *“Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God.”*

2 Cor 10:5 *“We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”*

(Rom 12:2) *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”*

Discussion/Application Questions: *When an anxious or negative thought pops up, how can you “take it captive” and examine it? Are there specific Scriptures you can use to challenge false thoughts (e.g. countering “I’m all alone” with “God will never leave me,” Hebrews 13:5)?*

#2 Emotions:

Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God!" (Psalm 42:5). [c.f. Ps 73:21; Eph 4:26, ESV]
"O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge." to Him (Psalm 62:8).

Discussion/Application Questions: *Do you tend to suppress your feelings, or are you willing to admit "I'm feeling anxious / jealous / sad"? How might prayer or journaling help you express and process those emotions in God's presence? Consider the difference between owning an emotion versus it owning you.*

4. Claim: Focusing on what you have (gratitude) brings joy, while focusing on what's missing breeds discontent.

"Trade your expectations for appreciation and you have a whole new life"

1 Thess 5:18 *"Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus."*

Heb 13:5 *"Keep your lives free from love of money and be content with what you have" (see 1 Tim 6:7-10; Phil 4:12-13)*

Ps 103:2 *"Let all that I am praise the LORD; may I never forget the good things He does for me."*

Ps 16:11 *"In Your presence there is fullness of joy."*

Psalms 100:4 *Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.*

Discussion/Application Questions: *Recall a time when gratitude or worship shifted your mood during a hard time. What is one thing you can thank God for today, even if you're "not feeling it"? How might cultivating daily thankfulness act as an antidote to self-pity or worry? How does remembering those blessings change your attitude in moments of discontent, complaint or envy?*

5. Claim: Neuroscience reveals that complaining, judging, or criticizing others can actually change your brain to make you less focused and productive and decrease your problem-solving skills.

"Fun Facts" 1) Hebb's Law, (neuroplasticity) neurons that fire together, wire together. You are wiring your brain to see more problems. 2) Negative thinking can actually shrink your prefrontal cortex. 3) research shows that complaining and criticizing actually makes you less attractive. 4) complaining and criticizing puts you in a victim mindset. But the opposite is also true. Thinking positively and expressing gratitude strengthens the prefrontal cortex, makes you more focused, productive and increases problem-solving skills.

Rom 1:21 *For although they knew God, they neither glorified (worship) him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

I Cor 4:7 *What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?*

James 1:17 *Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,*

Psalms 118:24 *This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.*