



VOLUME 17.09

**THE BIGGEST SECRET TO HAPPINESS
INSTAGRAM OR INSTA-FAKE?**

source

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THE BIGGEST SECRET TO HAPPINESS INSTAGRAM OR INSTA-FAKE?

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THE BIGGEST SECRET TO HAPPINESS INSTAGRAM OR INSTA-FAKE?

A. INTRODUCTION

1. What kind of questions do people ask you?
 - a. The kind of questions people ask you will tell you how you are perceived by other people.
 - How long does it take you to curl your hair?
 - How many people did you date?
 - How did you come to know Jesus in a real way?
 - Why are you always so happy? Why do you choose joy no matter what circumstances you are in?

B. What are the biggest secrets to happiness?

1. The secret conversations you hold in the privacy of your own mind are shaping your destiny, little by little. (Learning how to control your thoughts and bringing them into alignment with the Word of God.)
 - a. With every thought that you allow to race through your own mind, you are continually REINVENTING and RESHAPING YOURSELF and YOUR FUTURE.
 - There's no such thing as a neutral thought. That's why the Word of God talks so much about your thought life.
 - b. Research shows that the average person thinks approximately 50,000 thoughts per day.
 - This is either GOOD NEWS or BAD NEWS...because every thought you allow moves you closer to your God-given potential or away from it.
 - NO THOUGHTS ARE NEUTRAL.
2. Thinking, talking, and worrying about what you DON'T WANT can never bring you what you DO WANT.
 - a. Proverbs 23:7, "*For as a person THINKS in his own heart and mind, he eventually BECOMES.*"

INSTAGRAM OR INSTA-FAKE? SCENARIO #1: Mental voices of INSECURITY
(<https://vimeo.com/231950240>)

balled hard today! This year NOBODY will be able to see me on the court...this season I'm trying to average a triple double... #YungLONZOball #CantSeeME #StepUrGameUp

3. Instead of a “To Do List,” make a “To Think List.”
 - a. Philippians 4:8 (Amplified Bible), *“If there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise...then think on, weigh, and take account of these things. (Fix your mind on them).”*
 - b. Life is never completely GOOD or completely BAD. There will always be some junk and there will always be some greatness.
 - You will always have stuff to GRIPE about and simultaneously, always have stuff to be GRATEFUL about.
 - YOU CHOOSE WHERE YOUR FOCUS GOES.
 - o Example of game in the car where you count the cars of a certain color or the Alphabet Game.
 - But choose wisely because whatever you CHOOSE will always be MULTIPLIED.
 - c. Whether you CHOOSE to count your BLESSINGS or CHOOSE to count your CHALLENGES...you will ALWAYS HAVE A CHOICE.
 - d. Some Junk-Producing Thoughts:
 - That’s just the way I’ve always been.
 - This probably won’t work.
 - I’m really stupid.
 - I could never do that.
 - If such and such happens, I’m going to be super upset.
 - It’s not my fault.
 - I’m never going to overcome this area of weakness in my life.
 - Nothing permanently changes.
 - Nobody really likes me...ETC.
 - e. Some Happiness-Producing Thoughts:
 - I expect the best, and it shows!
 - I trust that Jesus will make everything in my life work together for my good. (Romans 8:28)
 - I am RESPONSIBLE.

- I'll get through whatever life throws at me and with the Lord's help I'll end up on top.
 - Jesus is filling up my insecure places and making me safer and secure inside of myself.
 - I have great Christian friends; and this time next year, I'll have even more.
 - Dating is great, but I'm not going to CHEAPEN myself out by dating someone who isn't good enough for me.
 - I like who I am BECOMING.
 - Whatever comes at me, Jesus and I will figure out a way THROUGH it!...ETC.
- f. When you own your thoughts you have power over them.
4. My emotions don't reveal the QUALITY OF MY LIFE. Instead, they only reveal the QUALITY OF MY THINKING at any particular moment.
- a. Nehemiah 8:10, *"The JOY of the Lord is my STRENGTH."*

STORY: THE JOY OF THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH

A small boy had just learned how to walk. One day, he was sitting in his highchair eating raisins. He took one of his raisins, crawled down from the highchair and toddled across the room to his dad and put the raisin in his dad's mouth. Being a good parent, the dad began to clap and praise the little boy, because his son, who had just learned how to walk, had toddled all the way across the room to put the raisin in his mouth...a big accomplishment for the little boy.

Because the dad was so joyful, the little boy got back up in the highchair, got another raisin, got down and toddled back across the room to his dad and put another raisin in his mouth. Again, the dad began to clap and praise the little boy.

So, the little boy went back to get another raisin...

The little boy kept going to all the hard work of delivering the raisins because his dad was joyful and proud of him. It will make a huge difference in your life when you CHOOSE JOY and that JOY will give you STRENGTH.

- b. Far from being an objective and accurate indicator of the QUALITY OF YOUR LIFE your emotions only reveal the QUALITY OF YOUR THINKING.
- c. To make wise decisions, let your GOALS, not your EMOTIONS, guide you.

- d. The more **MATURE** you are, the **LESS** you consult your feelings to determine how your life is **REALLY GOING**.

INSTAGRAM OR INSTA-FAKE? SCENARIO #2: Mental voices of being a **SPIRITUAL FAKE/HYPOCRITE** (<https://vimeo.com/231948056>)

I had an **INCREDIBLE** quiet time this morning! God's Word just came super alive to me. And so I did devo's with JV this morning and shared what God showed through His Word. #superlit #freshmanna #revelations

If the Enemy can't mess you up spiritually by getting you not to care about sin and compromise, he'll get you to care too much so you'll beat yourself up because you'll never keep doing for a long time what you keep feeling you're a failure at.

5. The WORDS I use today will create the WORLDS I experience tomorrow. So SPEAK what you SEEK.
 - a. Matthew 15:11, *"It's not what goes into your mouth that defiles you; you are defiled by the words that come out of your mouth."*
 - b. Proverbs 18:21, *"Life and death are held in the power of the tongue."*
 - c. You have decide what you want more of in life...VICTORY or someone's SYMPATHY.
6. Make a daily morning ritual of asking yourself what we call the "4:8 Questions" (*Taken from Philippians 4:8 (Amplified Bible), "If there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise...then think on, weigh, and take account of these things. (Fix your mind on them)."*)
 - a. Create your own 3-4 questions that most "resonate" and help YOU. If you write 6 "personal 4:8 questions," ROTATE using 3 every other morning.
 - b. Here are some of mine and some other possible examples to get you started. Again, I wouldn't have more than 3-4 each day or you won't do it consistently. KEEP YOUR SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES SIMPLE and you'll find yourself much more likely to follow through.
 - #1 = What are 3-4 specific things I am thankful for right now?
 - o Don't allow yourself to just repeat same things over and over again...and look for SMALL things that can occasionally be included in this list...like "I'm grateful yesterday was sunny outside"...OR "I'm grateful that I had a fun time recently with Alex."

- o Besides including some “little things” like mentioned above, ALSO include some “big things” (like “I feel myself growing in my walk with Christ” OR “I really like who I’m BECOMING” OR “Things at home are becoming a little better.”)
 - o I usually include 2 “little things” and 2 “big things” on my gratitude list.
 - #2 = What are three personal strengths or positive traits in my own life right now?
 - o Again, use VARIETY. And let yourself say some of the “big ones”...like “I’m a genuinely loving and caring person”...as well as some of the “smaller ones”... like “I am keeping my room at home decently clean these days.”
 - #3 = Who are three people in my life right now who genuinely care about me?
 - o (Variety again...and you’re not looking for just “best friends” or people who always treat you amazingly. Just people who are showing you some aspect of care, concern, and/or love.
 - o No fair to repeatedly include on this list your romantic interests...i.e. boyfriend/girlfriend.
 - o And Jesus is a “Given” here. So He can “make your list”...but add 3 more people.
 - #4 = What’s one thing I’m genuinely looking forward to in the next few days?
 - #5 = Though I’m sure not perfect, what’s one area (or pattern) of weakness (or sin) that I’m growing in (or gaining at least a small area of victory)?
7. Don’t ever unconsciously build your happiness around another person or obtaining a certain goal. That’s a set-up for an “emotional earthquake.”
- a. Proverbs 4:23, *“Above all else, guard your heart and affections. For out of it flows out the issues of life.”*

INSTAGRAM OR INSTA-FAKE? SCENARIO #3: Mental voices of LONELINESS and RELATIONAL EMPTINESS (<https://vimeo.com/231944641>)

Another great day!...hungout with the crew and Damien’s party was super lit!... but had to break a few more ladies’ hearts. #BossedUp

C. I’m going to wrap up tonight with two stories about BALLOONS.

1. Why? Because as our conclusion tonight (after we briefly pray together) we’re going to give everyone a balloon to symbolically release as a PRAYER TOKEN tonight outside on the parking lot. So here’s my 2 closing stories about balloons.

2. Remember as I tell you the first one, tonight's message is called, "THE BIGGEST SECRET TO HAPPINESS." I honestly believe controlling your THOUGHTS is one of the biggest keys to true and lasting happiness.

STORY: LOOKING FOR HAPPINESS

The first story took place in a college psychology classroom. The teacher stopped talking pretty abruptly mid-lecture and announced to the class that they were going to do a "group activity" together. He gave everyone a flat, uninflated white balloon and a felt marker. Each of the 50 college students was told to write their name on the outside of the balloon. Then all the balloons, still not inflated, were collected and taken into another classroom nearby.

About an hour later, the professor stopped abruptly again. He told the students that all of their balloons had been inflated with helium, each had a string attached, and were hanging from a low ceiling in the next room. The 50 college students were given only 3 minutes to find the specific balloon with their name on it, grab it, and meet back together in the lobby.

People frantically started looking for their name, pushing each other in the crowded room, causing a bunch of confusion. By the time the 3-minute signal was given, only about 8 people had located their own specific balloons and reassembled in the lobby. Over 40 of the college kids were still pushing people around, trying to find the balloon with THEIR NAME ON IT.

So then the teacher had NEW INSTRUCTIONS. He told each of the 40+ remaining students to randomly collect a balloon and give it to the person whose name was written on it. Within just a couple of minutes, everyone had received their own balloon back.

The college gang laughed not getting what the instructor was trying to tell them. Finally the professor spoke up:

"Exactly what you just experienced is a pretty accurate picture of what is happening in a lot of people's lives today. Everyone is frantically looking for HAPPINESS all around, not knowing what it really is or where to get it. But you see, our true happiness often comes from helping OTHER PEOPLE find THEIR own happiness. Help to GIVE happiness to someone else and you will invariably RECEIVE HAPPINESS FOR YOURSELF.

STORY: IT'S WHAT YOU PUT INSIDE

A young 5-year-old kid named Ryan lived in a quiet, country town. There wasn't a lot of excitement in the small country town, especially to keep the young boys entertained during the summer months when school was out. As a matter of fact, one of the highlights of the week was on Tuesday afternoon when an old man selling popsicles and helium balloons would come through the country neighborhood.

The popsicles were 50¢, but the balloons were only a dime. So, they made up a simple game. They each bought one balloon and met together at a large, deserted field. Then they released the balloons at the same time and had a competition to see whose balloon went the HIGHEST.

The first week, Ryan chose a BLUE BALLOON...the color of the sky itself. "That one will probably win!" he said to himself. But he was disappointed as he watched all different colors of balloons pass by his in the sky...and win the contest.

So, the next week on Tuesday, Ryan bought a RED balloon. "After all," he thought. "Red was the color of the balloon that flew the highest last week." But sadly enough, the balloons were released and once again, Ryan's balloon did not fly very high at all.

On the third Tuesday of the competition, Ryan decided to secretly try another approach before the other boys showed up. He went early and caught the wise old balloon seller before he came into the neighborhood. Ryan asked him respectfully, "Sir, please tell me WHAT COLOR balloon will go the HIGHEST IN THE SKY?"

The old guy grinned a knowing smile, "Son, it's not what's on the OUTSIDE of the balloon that you SEE that ever determines how high a balloon goes. IT'S ALWAYS HOW MUCH OF THE 'INVISIBLE RIGHT STUFF' YOU PUT ON THE INSIDE THAT DETERMINES HOW HIGH A BALLOON WILL BE ABLE TO FLY."

3. And so, it is with all of us. If you want to fly at some pretty high altitudes...in your walk with Christ, in your dreams, and in your relationships...JUST CONTROL THE INVISIBLE THOUGHTS YOU LET FILL YOU UP ON THE INSIDE. Those "invisible thoughts" will determine how far you go in life...or how quickly you crash back down to the sidewalk.

D. CLOSING:

1. So as you leave the auditorium tonight, receive one of the white balloons we've inflated that several of the leaders are holding along the two sides of our building.
2. Take any belongings with you as well as your notes and 4:8 bookmark.
3. I'm going to ask you not to talk to anyone...but create a respectful, prayerful environment as you go outside with your balloon. Thus, this would NOT be the time to run or joke around, please.
4. I'm asking you to just talk to the Lord about PUTTING THE RIGHT KIND OF THOUGHTS INSIDE YOUR OWN MIND that will allow your life to go as high as He wants it to. Maybe even take another minute to answer even a couple of the 4:8 Questions off the back of your bookmark.

5. Then RELEASE YOUR BALLOON into the sky symbolic of owning your thought life and using 4:8 thinking to GO TO A HIGHER PLACE IN HIM.
6. After you're through, you're welcome to come back into the café to hang out with each other, have fun, or wait for your ride on the sidewalk. Please just don't scatter around the property.

THE BIGGEST SECRET TO HAPPINESS INSTAGRAM OR INSTA-FAKE?

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 - o And Jesus is a “Given” here. So He can “make your list”...but add 3 more people.
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The first story took place in a college psychology classroom. The teacher stopped talking pretty abruptly mid-lecture and announced to the class that they were going to do a “group activity” together. He gave everyone a flat, uninflated white balloon and a felt marker. Each of the 50 college students was told to write their name on the outside of the balloon. Then all the balloons, still not inflated, were collected and taken into another classroom nearby.

About an hour later, the professor stopped abruptly again. He told the students that all of their balloons had been inflated with helium, each had a string attached, and were hanging from a low ceiling in the next room. The 50 college students were given only 3 minutes to find the specific balloon with their name on it, grab it, and meet back together in the lobby.

People frantically started looking for their name, pushing each other in the crowded room, causing a bunch of confusion. By the time the 3-minute signal was given, only about 8 people had located their own specific balloons and reassembled in the lobby.

Over 40 of the college kids were still pushing people around, trying to find the balloon with THEIR NAME ON IT.

So then the teacher had NEW INSTRUCTIONS. He told each of the 40+ remaining students to randomly collect a balloon and give it to the person whose name was written on it. Within just a couple of minutes, everyone had received their own balloon back.

The college gang laughed not getting what the instructor was trying to tell them. Finally the professor spoke up:

“Exactly what you just experienced is a pretty accurate picture of what is happening in a lot of people’s lives today. Everyone is frantically looking for HAPPINESS all around, not knowing what it really is or where to get it. But you see, our true happiness often comes from helping OTHER PEOPLE find THEIR own happiness. Help to GIVE happiness to someone else and you will invariably RECEIVE HAPPINESS FOR YOURSELF.

My Closing Story On Balloons:

A young 5-year-old kid named Ryan lived in a quiet, country town. There wasn’t a lot of excitement in the small country town, especially to keep the young boys entertained during the summer months when school was out. As a matter of fact, one of the highlights of the week was on Tuesday afternoon when an old man selling popsicles and helium balloons would come through the country neighborhood.

The popsicles were 50¢, but the balloons were only a dime. So, they made up a simple game. They each bought one balloon and met together at a large, deserted field. Then they released the balloons at the same time and had a competition to see whose balloon went the HIGHEST.

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On the third Tuesday of the competition, Ryan decided to secretly try another approach before the other boys showed up. He went early and caught the wise old balloon seller before he came into the neighborhood. Ryan asked him respectfully, “Sir, please tell me WHAT COLOR balloon will go the HIGHEST IN THE SKY?”

The old guy grinned a knowing smile, “Son, it’s not what’s on the OUTSIDE of the balloon that you SEE that ever determines how high a balloon goes. IT’S ALWAYS HOW MUCH OF THE ‘INVISIBLE RIGHT STUFF’ YOU PUT ON THE INSIDE THAT DETERMINES HOW HIGH A BALLOON WILL BE ABLE TO FLY.”

3. And so, it is with all of us. If you want to fly at some pretty high altitudes...in your walk with Christ, in your dreams, and in your relationships...JUST CONTROL THE INVISIBLE THOUGHTS YOU LET FILL YOU UP ON THE INSIDE. Those “invisible thoughts” will determine how far you go in life...or how quickly you crash back down to the sidewalk.

D. CLOSING:

1. So as you leave the auditorium tonight, receive one of the white balloons we've inflated that several of the leaders are holding along the two sides of our building.
2. Take any belongings with you as well as your notes and 4:8 bookmark.
3. I'm going to ask you not to talk to anyone...but create a respectful, prayerful environment as you go outside with your balloon. Thus, this would NOT be the time to run or joke around, please.
4. I'm asking you to just talk to the Lord about **PUTTING THE RIGHT KIND OF THOUGHTS INSIDE YOUR OWN MIND** that will allow your life to go as high as He wants it to. Maybe even take another minute to answer even a couple of the 4:8 Questions off the back of your bookmark.
5. Then **RELEASE YOUR BALLOON** into the sky symbolic of owning your thought life and using 4:8 thinking to **GO TO A HIGHER PLACE IN HIM**.
6. After you're through, you're welcome to come back into the café to hang out with each other, have fun, or wait for your ride on the sidewalk. Please just don't scatter around the property.

VIDEOS

VIDEO #1: INSTAGRAM OR INSTA-FAKE? SCENARIO #1: Mental voices of INSECURITY
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balled hard today! This year NOBODY will be able to see me on the court...this season I'm trying to average a triple double... #YungLONZOball #CantSeeME #StepUrGameUp

VIDEO #2: INSTAGRAM OR INSTA-FAKE? SCENARIO #2: Mental voices of being a SPIRITUAL FAKE/HYPOCRITE (<https://vimeo.com/231948056>)

I had an INCREDIBLE quiet time this morning! God's Word just came super alive to me. And so I did devo's with JV this morning and shared what God showed through His Word. #superlit #freshmanna #revelations

If the Enemy can't mess you up spiritually by getting you not to care about sin and compromise, he'll get you to care too much so you'll beat yourself up because you'll never keep doing for a long time what you keep feeling you're a failure at.

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Another great day!...hungout with the crew and Damien's party was super lit!... but hard to break a few more ladies' hearts. #BossedUp

In all three monologues, we took a picture of the actor and made up a “fake” Instagram post to show on the screen before they took the stage. The monologues are then done live on stage with the actor holding the frame around his/her own face. They used a mic on a stand or another wireless mic besides speaker’s wireless. This enabled them to have hands free to hold the Instagram pretend-frame around his/her face.

SCENARIO #1: Mental voices of INSECURITY
(<https://vimeo.com/231950240>)

balled hard today! This year NOBODY will be able to see me on the court...this season I’m trying to average a triple double... #YungLONZOball #CantSeeME #StepUrGameUp

Great post on Instagram, if I must say so myself! Move over, LONZO BALL! Andrew the Dominator is coming through!

[Voices changes...Gets serious and sad.]

What a joke. I’m no more the Dominator on the court than the day I got cut from the Varsity team last year. Not exactly “dominance.”

Who am I trying to kid anyway? No matter how hard I try to make myself look cool and confident, that’s not what SCREAMS OUT in my own head. Man, I wish I could TURN MY BRAIN OFF sometimes.

Thoughts like, “I don’t have what it takes”...“I don’t even want to try because I’m just gonna mess up again”... or “Give up, pal. Your dreams sound great...but they’re never gonna happen.”

SECURITY? Great word...I just guess I don’t know what it REALLY means...not in the secret world of my own HEAD at least.

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I had an INCREDIBLE quiet time this morning! God's Word just came super alive to me. And so I did devo's with JV this morning and shared what God showed through His Word. #superlit #freshmanna #revelations

If the Enemy can't mess you up spiritually by getting you not to care about sin and compromise, he'll get you to care too much so you'll beat yourself up because you'll never keep doing for a long time what you keep feeling you're a failure at.

Awww...wow. The JV gang came through again! They gave me a bunch of "like's" on my post this morning. That's so awesome...

[Voice changing]

Good thing they don't know THE REAL ME. I look like the "poster child" for spiritual leadership on my Instagram feed...but that's a pretty big joke...if people REALLY knew me.

Oh, I know. I've heard it over and over. "I'M TOO HARD ON MYSELF!" "NOBODY'S PERFECT!" blah...blah...blah.

But I feel like I don't even have the RIGHT to be called a spiritual leader most of the time. I mean, I still mess up more than anyone knows with my rotten attitude. Just ask my kid brother...and he'd agree that I'm a JERK at home more times than I want to admit.

Then there's my quiet times. Life just gets SUPER BUSY during the school year. I try to be half way consistent. I know --- "5 out of 7 times is a successful week." But there are tons of weeks I barely check in with Jesus AT ALL!!!

Then I come to The Capitol and feel like the world's biggest PHONY when I try to worship or pray.

You know what, Mariah? You're pretty much the classic church HYPOCRITE! Why don't you do yourself and Jesus a FAVOR...and back away from this God stuff until you can do it without being such a SPIRITUAL LOSER behind the scenes?!?! "Fake it till you make it" is just NOT a good motto for life.

SCENARIO #3: Mental voices of LONELINESS and RELATIONAL EMPTINESS
(<https://vimeo.com/231944641>)

Another great day!...hungout with the crew and Damien's party was super lit!...but had to break a few more ladies' hearts. #BosSEDUp

It is so hard being this famous! My calendar is so full...I need an eighth day at the end of the week just to fit everybody in!

Eighth day? More like eight minutes. I didn't even know those people. We took that picture...they were just standing around me and after the picture was done, they all left and I haven't talked to any of them not even once since. That's REAL FRIENDSHIP...what a joke!

Who am I kidding? Every time I go out, people say I'm the life of the party. They don't understand what I go through. I go there putting on this face like I need someone solid in my life. I need a friend I can really count on in my life. But they look past the fake smiles and the fake laughs and they don't see what's really on the inside. Loneliness...loneliness...and more loneliness. That's what is on the INSIDE. Not exactly the "face" I want to show all my followers on social media.

Why should I be so surprised? I know that when people really get to know me, they all walk away. I'm not COOL enough, FUNNY enough, or SHARP enough to have with-it people stick around. It's been this way since 3rd grade. And...it's never gonna change.

And girls? Man, "puppy love really DOES lead to a dog's life." This isn't my idea of FUN at all. All I feel is REJECTION. By this point in life, everybody else has had 2 or 3 serious girlfriends. Me? When girls get to know me, they all tell me they "just want to be FRIENDS." It's never going to work out for me.

So where do I go from here? I'll probably post another picture tomorrow of me with another bunch of SMILING FACES. And nobody will ever bother to look past my fake smile to see that my heart is ripping open with loneliness and rejection. Smile, Dean! All your followers are waiting to see your next FAKE post.

THE JOY OF THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH

A small boy had just learned how to walk. One day, he was sitting in his highchair eating raisins. He took one of his raisins, crawled down from the highchair and toddled across the room to his dad and put the raisin in his dad's mouth. Being a good parent, the dad began to clap and praise the little boy, because his son, who had just learned how to walk, had toddled all the way across the room to put the raisin in his mouth...a big accomplishment for the little boy.

Because the dad was so joyful, the little boy got back up in the highchair, got another raisin, got down and toddled back across the room to his dad and put another raisin in his mouth. Again, the dad began to clap and praise the little boy.

So, the little boy went back to get another raisin...

The little boy kept going to all the hard work of delivering the raisins because his dad was joyful and proud of him. It will make a huge difference in your life when you CHOOSE JOY and that JOY will give you STRENGTH.

LOOKING FOR HAPPINESS

The first story took place in a college psychology classroom. The teacher stopped talking pretty abruptly mid-lecture and announced to the class that they were going to do a “group activity” together. He gave everyone a flat, uninflated white balloon and a felt marker. Each of the 50 college students was told to write their name on the outside of the balloon. Then all the balloons, still not inflated, were collected and taken into another classroom nearby.

About an hour later, the professor stopped abruptly again. He told the students that all of their balloons had been inflated with helium, each had a string attached, and were hanging from a low ceiling in the next room. The 50 college students were given only 3 minutes to find the specific balloon with their name on it, grab it, and meet back together in the lobby.

People frantically started looking for their name, pushing each other in the crowded room, causing a bunch of confusion. By the time the 3-minute signal was given, only about 8 people had located their own specific balloons and reassembled in the lobby. Over 40 of the college kids were still pushing people around, trying to find the balloon with THEIR NAME ON IT.

So then the teacher had NEW INSTRUCTIONS. He told each of the 40+ remaining students to randomly collect a balloon and give it to the person whose name was written on it. Within just a couple of minutes, everyone had received their own balloon back.

The college gang laughed not getting what the instructor was trying to tell them. Finally the professor spoke up:

“Exactly what you just experienced is a pretty accurate picture of what is happening in a lot of people’s lives today. Everyone is frantically looking for HAPPINESS all around, not knowing what it really is or where to get it. But you see, our true happiness often comes from helping OTHER PEOPLE find THEIR own happiness. Help to GIVE happiness to someone else and you will invariably RECEIVE HAPPINESS FOR YOURSELF.

IT'S WHAT YOU PUT INSIDE

A young 5-year-old kid named Ryan lived in a quiet, country town. There wasn't a lot of excitement in the small country town, especially to keep the young boys entertained during the summer months when school was out. As a matter of fact, one of the highlights of the week was on Tuesday afternoon when an old man selling popsicles and helium balloons would come through the country neighborhood.

The popsicles were 50¢, but the balloons were only a dime. So, they made up a simple game. They each bought one balloon and met together at a large, deserted field. Then they released the balloons at the same time and had a competition to see whose balloon went the HIGHEST.

The first week, Ryan chose a BLUE BALLOON...the color of the sky itself. "That one will probably win!" he said to himself. But he was disappointed as he watched all different colors of balloons pass by his in the sky...and win the contest.

So, the next week on Tuesday, Ryan bought a RED balloon. "After all," he thought. "Red was the color of the balloon that flew the highest last week." But sadly enough, the balloons were released and once again, Ryan's balloon did not fly very high at all.

On the third Tuesday of the competition, Ryan decided to secretly try another approach before the other boys showed up. He went early and caught the wise old balloon seller before he came into the neighborhood. Ryan asked him respectfully, "Sir, please tell me WHAT COLOR balloon will go the HIGHEST IN THE SKY?"

The old guy grinned a knowing smile, "Son, it's not what's on the OUTSIDE of the balloon that you SEE that ever determines how high a balloon goes. IT'S ALWAYS HOW MUCH OF THE 'INVISIBLE RIGHT STUFF' YOU PUT ON THE INSIDE THAT DETERMINES HOW HIGH A BALLOON WILL BE ABLE TO FLY."

And so, it is with all of us. If you want to fly at some pretty high altitudes...in your walk with Christ, in your dreams, and in your relationships...JUST CONTROL THE INVISIBLE THOUGHTS YOU LET FILL YOU UP ON THE INSIDE. Those "invisible thoughts" will determine how far you go in life...or how quickly you crash back down to the sidewalk.

THE BIGGEST SECRET TO HAPPINESS

1. A copy of the bookmark with 4:8 Questions on it (included in the Source).
2. A white balloon filled with helium either to release or with a tag that says, "Help to GIVE happiness to someone else and you will invariably RECEIVE HAPPINESS FOR YOURSELF."
3. A notebook with a sticker that says, "TO THINK LIST" and "*“If there is any virtue and excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise...then think on, weigh, and take account of these things. (Fix your mind on them).” - Philippians 4:8*"
4. Toy glasses or magnifying glass with a tag that says, "YOU CHOOSE WHERE YOUR FOCUS GOES."
5. Small globe that says, "The WORDS I use today will create the WORLDS I experience tomorrow. So SPEAK what you SEEK."
6. A colored balloon with a tag that says, "IT'S ALWAYS HOW MUCH OF THE 'INVISIBLE RIGHT STUFF' YOU PUT ON THE INSIDE THAT DETERMINES HOW HIGH A BALLOON WILL BE ABLE TO FLY."

BOOKMARK FRONT

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THE BIGGEST SECRET TO HAPPINESS

Instagram Or Insta-fake?

- With every thought that you allow to race through your own mind, you are continually REINVENTING and RESHAPING YOURSELF and YOUR FUTURE
- Instead of a "To Do List," make a "To Think List."

Philippians 4:8 "If there is any **virtue** and **excellence**, if there is anything **worthy of praise**...then think on, weigh, and take account of these things." (Fix your mind on them)." *The Amplified Bible*

- My emotions don't reveal the QUALITY OF MY LIFE. Instead, they only reveal the QUALITY OF MY THINKING at any particular moment.
- To make wise decisions, let your GOALS, not your EMOTIONS, guide you.
- Don't ever unconsciously build your happiness around another person or obtaining a certain goal. That's a set-up for an "emotional earthquake."
- The more MATURE you are, the LESS you consult your feelings to determine how your life is REALLY GOING.

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BOOKMARK BACK

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- **Make a daily morning "ritual" of asking yourself what we call the "4:8 Questions" (Taken from Philippians 4:8).**
- Create your own 3-4 questions that most stand out to YOU. If you write 6 "4:8 questions," ROTATE using 3 every other morning. Here are some of mine and some other possible examples to get you started:

#1 = What are 3-4 specific things I am thankful for right now?

(Don't allow yourself to just repeat the same things over and over again... and look for SMALL things that can occasionally be included in this list...like "I'm grateful yesterday was sunny outside"...OR "I'm grateful that I had a fun time recently with Alex.")

Besides including some "little things" like mentioned above... ALSO include some occasional "big things" (like "I feel myself growing in my walk with Christ" OR "I really like who I'm BECOMING" OR "Things at home are becoming a little better.")

include 2 "little things" and 2 "big things" on your gratitude list.

#2 = What are three personal strengths or positive traits in my own life right now?

(Again, use VARIETY. And let yourself say some of the "big ones" ... like "I'm a genuinely loving and caring person"...as well as some of the "smaller ones"...like "I am keeping my room at home decently clean these days.")

#3 = Who are three people in my life right now who genuinely care about me? (Variety again...And you're not looking for just "best friends" or people who always treat you amazingly. Just people who are showing you some aspect of care, concern, and/or love.

No fair to repeatedly include on this list your romantic interests...i.e. boyfriend/girlfriend. And Jesus is a "Given" here. So He can "make your list"...but add 3 more people. LOL.)

#4 = What's one thing I'm genuinely looking forward to in the next few days?

#5 = Though I'm sure not perfect, what's one area of weakness (or sin) that I'm growing in (or gaining even a small amount of victory in)?

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THE BIGGEST SECRET TO HAPPINESS

1. What are some things in your life right now that make you the most HAPPY? It could be a sport, a friendship, a relationship, a hobby? Just have fun with it!
2. Now, let's flip it. Honestly, what are some things that really, don't make you very happy at all? It could be family situations, a bad friend, poor grades... Just remember, no matter what you share, it stays right here in this group.
3. Now, what are some signs that maybe, you see, when you're starting to become unhappy? It usually starts in your mind. What are some thoughts you find yourself thinking often, that really, WE ALL HAVE.
4. Based off of the message, what would you say is one 4:8 question that you really want to focus on this week? Just as a reminder, these are the questions that we talked about tonight, but feel free to share one of your own ideas.
 - What are 3-4 things I am thankful for right now?
 - What are 3-4 personal strengths or positive traits in my own life right now?
 - Who are three people in my life who genuinely care about me?
 - What's one thing I am genuinely looking forward to in the next few days?
 - Though I am not perfect, what's one area that I am growing in?
5. We also talked about giving happiness away when we most need it. Who's one person in your family, school, or team, who you can intentionally make happier?
6. *[After students share, close in prayer.]*

THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

by Jeanne Mayo

True happiness cannot be obtained by having a large ministry. It comes through having a large heart. Far too easily we equate true happiness with staggering numbers and being flown around the nation, but too quickly we buy into what is honestly a fallacy of ministry. If those things really did bring personal fulfillment, I'd have a million reasons to be happy, for by the grace of God, I turn down more speaking engagements than I am fortunate to accept and the Lord has allowed several large youth ministries to emerge from humble beginnings. But hear my heart from this amazing journey of no regrets, not once did any of those things bring me real happiness. My peace, joy and completeness come solely from my relationship with Jesus Christ and sharing a large heart with Him.

Secondly, I find it in my amazing husband and two wonderful sons, and lastly from having a large heart with my kids in the youth ministry. My teenagers, as I am sure yours do, keep me fresh spiritually, give me purpose and at times a reason to get out of bed in the morning. In this latter season of my life, it is the men and women from the trenches of youth ministry who are propelling me to press on in the journey. The masses never motivated me. It remains the trademark of my ministry to love, give and stay encouraged by one face at a time. I cannot imagine Jesus any other way. In the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son, we find His heart lavishly poured out over just the one.

As you rest in His love and trust, allow yourself to find happiness knowing that He's much more impressed with the size of your heart than the size of your ministry.



THERE'S MORE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT
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