

LIFE GROUP NOTES:

SERIES: The Pursuit of Happiness

PART FIVE: Pleasure Vs. Happiness

The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.

*Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. **John 10:10-11 (NLT) & Romans 6:16 (NLT)***



INTRODUCTION

Have you ever watched someone else's life and it was like watching a slow-motion car wreck? You can see self-inflicted pain headed in that person's direction. You wonder how he or she doesn't see it coming. Maybe you've been that person. Others tried to warn you, but you couldn't see the danger that was so obvious to them.

How does that happen? Why are we tempted to make decisions that hurt us in the long-run? The problem often stems from our confusion about the relationship between pleasure and happiness.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Talk about something you do for fun. What do you enjoy about that hobby or activity?
2. Have you ever seen someone undermine his or her own happiness even though that person couldn't see it? If so, what did you do? What happened?
3. Think of a time when you ignored someone's good advice. What were some of the factors that caused you to ignore the other person's wisdom?
4. Read John 10:7-11. What are some reasons it is difficult for people to believe that Jesus wants them to have life "to the full"?
5. During the message, we said, "Eventually, pleasure loses its pleasure and becomes a prison." Is it difficult for you to believe that? Why or why not?
6. Is there a pleasure in your life that is stealing your freedom and undermining your happiness? If so, what is one thing you can do this week to begin to trade your sin for the good shepherd? How can others support you?

MESSAGE SUMMARY

Who is the thief in my life? The uncomfortable truth is that the person with the greatest capacity and opportunity to steal something, kill something or destroy something in my life is **ME!** I can be my own **WORST ENEMY**. As adults, we often make decisions that can undermine our own happiness. We bought it. We took a loan out for it. We ate it. We drank it. We dated it! Jesus invites us to make him the leader of our life and become our good shepherd.

God created us to experience pleasure, but problems occur whenever we **PRIORITIZE PLEASURE** over the principles of happiness (i.e. NoThing- Sowing- Jesus teaching in the Beatitudes). Eventually pleasure loses its pleasure and becomes a prison because of the law of diminishing returns and an increasing inability to say 'NO' to these things. (Rom 6:16). Jesus says we should follow him- not our addiction to pleasure. We should **SOW BETTER** in order to **REAP BETTER** and this will lead us to **FEEL BETTER**. This protects us from our usual coping strategy when we're unhappy; reaching for a quick fix that makes us feel better (shopping- food- alcohol- unhealthy relationships or pass-times).

CHANGING YOUR MIND

Is there a pleasure that is undermining your happiness? Is there a pleasure that's beginning to act like a warden in your life by taking away your freedom to say no? If so, you've prioritized your pleasure over your happiness. Maybe it's time to trade your sin for a good shepherd who offers you life to the full.

*"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep "***John 10:10-11**