Lesson One—Part 1

HAPPINESS, SUFFERING, AND THE LOVE OF GOD

Fr. Robert J. Spitzer, S.J.
The Four Levels of Happiness

Introduction and Happiness Overview

By Claude LeBlanc, M.A., © Magis Center, 2017
LESSON ONE: The Four Levels of Happiness

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, you came so that we might have life and have it more abundantly. May we come to know the abundant happiness only you can give and urge others to seek it as well. Amen.
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What makes you happy?

Supplemental Video 1: “What Makes You Happy?”
Watch at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJ8xZtxXLc8
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Pre-Viewing Questions: Journaling

1) What are your thoughts about the video you just watched?

Happiness...
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Pre-Viewing Questions: Journaling
1) What are your thoughts about the video you just watched?
2) What makes you happy?

Happiness
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Pre-Viewing Questions: Journaling
1) What are your thoughts about the video you just watched?
2) What makes you happy?
3) How has your understanding of happiness changed throughout your life, and what has prompted these changes?
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Pre-Viewing Questions: Large Group Sharing
4) What are you hoping to discover by watching this series?
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Video Comprehension

1. What did Aristotle mean by saying, “Happiness is the one thing you can choose in and for itself; everything else is chosen for the sake of happiness”?
Video Comprehension

1. What did Aristotle mean by saying, “Happiness is the one thing you can choose in and for itself; everything else is chosen for the sake of happiness”? Everything we desire or do, including friendships, relationships, jobs, job performance, how we view progress, success, worth and meaning, and the importance of pursuing a relationship with God, is based on whether or not we think they will bring us happiness.
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2. Why is our definition of happiness so important, and in light of this, what makes education so critical?
2. Why is our definition of happiness so important, and in light of this, what makes education so critical? What we think about happiness can lead us to either elation or depression. Education, if it is worth anything, must help us understand the truth about happiness.
3. What did Aristotle notice that our dominant understanding of happiness would become?
3. What did Aristotle notice that our dominant understanding of happiness would become?
Our purpose in life, a guide for decisions and actions, and eventually, our destiny.
"The more one forgets himself — by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love — the more human he is."

Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*
4. What does it mean that the four levels of happiness are increasingly: a) pervasive, b) enduring, and c) deep?
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a) Pervasive means how much their effects go beyond themselves,
4. What does it mean that the four levels of happiness are increasingly: a) pervasive, b) enduring, and c) deep?

a) **Pervasive** means how much their effects go beyond themselves,
b) **Enduring** means how long-lasting they are, and
4. What does it mean that the four levels of happiness are increasingly: a) pervasive, b) enduring, and c) deep?

a) *Pervasive* means how much their effects go beyond themselves,

b) *Enduring* means how long-lasting they are, and

c) *Deep* means how much of ourselves is involved in them.
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5. Even though each level of happiness is more pervasive, enduring, and deep than the previous ones, why don’t people go straight to level four?
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5. Even though each level of happiness is more pervasive, enduring, and deep than the previous ones, why don’t people go straight to level four? Because the lower the level, the more immediate the gratification is, the greater the intensity of the experience, and the easier it is to understand.
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6. In order to move to a happiness that is more pervasive, enduring, and deep, we must be willing to...
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6. In order to move to a happiness that is more pervasive, enduring, and deep, we must be willing to...

Be patient (delay gratification), disciplined (give up intensity), and willing to learn (comprehend deeper truths).
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7. Plato’s and Aristotle's academies were about studying...
LESSON ONE: *The Four Levels of Happiness*

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   **Happiness.**

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8. So that their students (and us) could know: What makes life worth living, what its meaning is, and how not to waste it.
LESSON ONE: *The Four Levels of Happiness*

7. Plato’s and Aristotle's academies were about studying... **Happiness.**

8. So that their students (and us) could know: **What makes life worth living, what its meaning is, and how not to waste it.**

9. Why do we need to know what our highest and lowest natures are, and the challenges we are going to have because of them?
LESSON ONE: The Four Levels of Happiness

7. Plato’s and Aristotle's academies were about studying... Happiness.

8. So that their students (and us) could know: What makes life worth living, what its meaning is, and how not to waste it.

9. Why do we need to know what our highest and lowest natures are, and the challenges we are going to have because of them? So that we can progress from level one to level four.
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Supplemental Video 2: “Are You Happy?”
Watch at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_SYzU2kT0IA
Happiness, Suffering and the Love of God

“If happiness is your destination, and you don’t know what it is...how will you ever be happy?”

(From: the Magis Center’s “Are You Happy”)
10. Describe the first level of happiness (physical-material).
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10. Describe the first level of happiness (physical-material).

Happiness that is experienced through our senses; is immediately gratifying, very intense, and very obvious.

The Four Levels of Happiness:

1. Pleasure (Laetus)
2. Success (Felix)
3. Making a Difference (Beatus)
4. Transcendence (Sublimitas)
11. Describe the second level of happiness (ego comparative).
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11. Describe the second level of happiness (ego comparative). Happiness that is sensed by having a comparative advantage over another or others; for example: achievements, status, popularity, respect, esteem, intelligence, and winning.
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12. In what way is level two happiness good, and in what way can it be harmful?
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12. In what way is level two happiness good, and in what way can it be harmful?

It is good because we can have more, doors can open, and we can do good things; it can be harmful if we believe and behave as if it is the only way to make our lives worth living.
13. About what % of people in our society are at level two happiness, and what can this knowledge help us do?
13. About what % of people in our society are at level two happiness, and what can this knowledge help us do?

70%; knowing this can help us begin healing our culture.
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14. Describe the third level of happiness (contributive-empathetic).
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14. Describe the third level of happiness (contributive-empathetic).
We are happy when our lives are significant, make a great difference, and leave as much of a legacy to others, society, the world, or the Church and the Kingdom of God, as possible.
15. What is necessary for people to get out of level two and into level three?
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They must: a) reflect on what their lives would be like without making a difference,
15. What is necessary for people to get out of level two and into level three?

They must: a) reflect on what their lives would be like without making a difference, b) consider the gifts they have been given and what they could do with them,
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15. What is necessary for people to get out of level two and into level three?

They must: a) reflect on what their lives would be like without making a difference, b) consider the gifts they have been given and what they could do with them, and, c) they have to desire to do this.
16. According to Victor Frankl, how did the struggle between levels two and three happiness play out among the Nazi concentration camp prisoners?
16. According to Victor Frankl, how did the struggle between levels two and three happiness play out among the Nazi concentration camp prisoners? Many who were at level two (focused on wanting their status and control back) eventually died or despaired, while several of those at level three (focused on the difference they could make) not only survived the camp, but went on to live remarkable lives as authors, founders of institutes, etc.
“The more one forgets himself—by giving himself to a cause to serve or another person to love—the more human he is.”

Victor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*
17. What two things can we do to achieve level three happiness?
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17. What two things can we do to achieve level three happiness?

We can make a difference by doing something for, or being connected with, other people.
18. What is the only way we can explain the presence of the five transcendental desires (for perfect truth, love, fairness, beauty, and home)?
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18. What is the only way we can explain the presence of the five transcendental desires (for perfect truth, love, fairness, beauty, and home)? That we are spiritual beings (with transcendent souls), and it is natural to be connected to Transcendence itself.
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18. What is the only way we can explain the presence of the five transcendental desires (for perfect truth, love, fairness, beauty, and home)? That we are spiritual beings (with transcendent souls), and it is natural to be connected to Transcendence itself.

19. What do scientifically verified near-death experiences show us?
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18. What is the only way we can explain the presence of the five transcendental desires (for perfect truth, love, fairness, beauty, and home)?

That we are spiritual beings (with transcendent souls), and it is natural to be connected to Transcendence itself.

19. What do scientifically verified near-death experiences show us?

They provide evidence of souls surviving bodily death that are destined for unconditional eternal happiness.
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20. What does the realization that we have a soul, the five transcendent desires, a natural religiosity, and a spiritual capacity lead to?
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20. What does the realization that we have a soul, the five transcendent desires, a natural religiosity, and a spiritual capacity lead to? Level four happiness; the knowledge that we cannot limit our definition of happiness to this world alone.

Your words became the happiness of my heart.

Jeremiah 15:16
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Small Group Activity
Discuss the Reflection and Discussion Questions chosen by your teacher, then share your thoughts with the class.
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Supplemental Video 3: George Lucas Explains “What is Happiness” Watch at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnHyStDZ3_U
Happiness, Suffering and the Love of God

“The secret is that, even though it is not as intense as pleasure, joy will last you a lot longer.”

(From: George Lucas Explains “What is Happiness”)
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Large Group Sharing

1) What do you think of George Lucas’ definition of happiness?
Large Group Sharing

1) What do you think of George Lucas’ definition of happiness?
2) Compare it to Fr. Spitzer’s four levels of happiness.
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Large Group Sharing
1) What do you think of George Lucas’ definition of happiness?
2) Compare it to Fr. Spitzer’s four levels of happiness.
3) Has your definition of happiness changed as a result of watching this episode? How or why not?
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Take it Home
Complete the handout, How does our Culture Answer ‘What is Happiness?’ for the next session.

Take it Home
My Reflections
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Closing Prayer

Lord, we thank you for making us able to know and experience happiness. May we always seek for the happiness you created us for, and help others to know and experience it as well. Amen.
Next time we’ll cover Lesson One, Part 2: Escaping the Comparison Game

See You Then!