

HAPPINESS IS WHERE YOU ARE

Aims of these notes:

- ✓ *To realize that all of us are born to be happy.*
- ✓ *To become aware that happiness is not found so much in the place of our choice, or in the work we do, or in any other circumstances of our life but in the place God placed us.*
- ✓ *To disabuse ourselves of the fallacy that we have to search for happiness.*
- ✓ *Happiness is everywhere within us just for us to enjoy!*

These Jottings may be used:

- ✓ *For personal reflection on our attitudes*
- ✓ *For recollections.*
- ✓ *Discussion groups*
- ✓ *Growth sessions*
- ✓ *Prayer sessions*
- ✓ *Talks and Sermons.*

Practical Hints

- ✓ *In case you offer these notes to different groups, narrow down the theme to an area that is relevant to your audience For instance*
- ✓ *For a student, his happiness is in his books and in the class room*
- ✓ *For a father, mother or child (family members), happiness is in family life.*
- ✓ *For religious, happiness is in their community*
- ✓ *For a worker, his happiness is in his work and workshop.*
- ✓ *For a teacher...for a nurse...for a priest...for an administrator...etc. happiness lies in their respective callings.*

Starter: THE LITTLE FISH (A Fable)

Narrator: There was a little jolly fish. He was happy and free in the sea. He could swim and frolic in the vast limitless expanse of the ocean. That was his home with all the treasures of the deep to enjoy.

He was born to be in the sea. And he was not alone...Oh No. He had the company of many other little fish like him to play with day and night. No worries about anything. No anxieties about tomorrow. It was fun 'N food for all the time. How could anyone not be happy like that? And he was happy!

It happened that one day, perchance, the little fish came close to the surface of the sea and peeping over the water he discovered the large world outside. Then he said to himself.

L. Fish: Let me see what it must be to live outside the water? O....O....O...hhh ... What's this I see? How wonderful....Something new...It looks great.

Narrator: He spent the next few days trying to find a way to stay longer outside the water and see more.

L. Fish: I know what to do.... I'll jump as high as I can.

Narrator: And that was what he did. He jumped as high as he could.... And this time the sun was up. He exclaimed:

L. Fish: How warm and nice I feel! See how it shines! I've never felt warmth like this in my life ever. How wonderful if I could feel I like this for ever.

Narrator: Then he was back again in the water and said:

L. Fish: It's so cold and gloomy here....

Narrator: So, it was not long before he tried again. He shouted:

L. Fish: Vow! What a beautiful beach, lovely green trees, colorful flowers.. What a sight! ...even fruits...I wish I could have all that right down with me here in the deep.

Narrator: Now, our little fish felt that he had nothing but the inhospitable sea. He hated being condemned to be a prisoner in the deep ocean.

From that day on, the little fish forgot about all that was around him: The vast sea and mighty ocean, the fun 'N' food and his companions. No more swims, no more play and frolic. He wailed:

L. Fish: I'm not free here. How can I be happy while in the Sea? The day I'll get out of this water, I'll be free. I'll be able to enjoy life like all the birds and animals. I'm convinced...I've made up mind and there's no changing it...I'll be happy only when I get out of the sea.

Narrator: There was no time to lose and the little fish pursued his new found course to be happy. He swam like he never did before...full speed...towards the beach...Nothing could stop him from attaining the happiness he longed for. He had proof of it.... He knew exactly where he was going. When he came close to the beach...with one big leap and dash, he skimmed over the water and landed on the sand....finally he was out: He yelled with delight.

L. Fish: UUFF... This is wonderful, so good to be free...such pure air...how warm I feel, now I'll have fun with my new friends; the trees, the flowers, the birds...everything around will bring me the happiness I've always longed for.

Narrator: No sooner had he said that, something very strange happened to the little fish...he got a pain in his chest...he couldn't breathe... He moaned:

L. Fish Oh no... I exerted myself too much.... I need a rest. Oh! Oh! But I am gasping...Ahh ahh.... ahh....What's choking me? Auch! Auch!....Lord, this is terrible! I can't bear it!....Uh... uh...I am dying.....

Narrator: A few minutes later, the little fish was dead on the beach.

Hints for Personal Reflection (Ideally write down your replies)

A Questionnaire:

1. What was the real problem with the Little Fish?
2. First, he was very happy; later on he lost his former happiness, how and why?
3. Did he find happiness on the beach? Why?
4. What was the final outcome of his mistake?
5. Does the story of the Little Fish tell something about us human beings? What?
6. Can we be really happy in this world? How? Why?
7. Where shall we find happiness?
8. Can you tell what happiness really is?
9. If God created us for happiness, how is it that there are so many unhappy people? Give reasons.
10. Mention some of the obstacles that may come on the way to our happiness?

Explain the Following sayings:

- Most of people in our world lead lives of quiet desperation.
- Happiness is a mind-set, not a set of circumstances.
- Happiness is an inside job.
- Happiness is what you are and where you are to be.
- Happiness cannot be found in one place only, it is everywhere.
- You can be as happy as you wish to be..

A Fantasy:

- Write an imaginary dialogue between the Little Fish and the Sea. In fantasy listen very attentively to the dialogue that goes on, the arguments they use to convince one another, etc...
 - ✓ The Little Fish in order to be happy wants to get out of the water ...
 - ✓ The Sea tries to convince the Little Fish not to do so....
- Finally, you yourself, try to dissuade the fish from jumping into the beach.

Self-examination.

1. Are you happy with yourself? Yes/no. How much? Why?
2. Are you happy with your studies, work or occupation? Yes/no. Why?
3. Are you happy with your talents, abilities and qualities? Yes/no/ Why?
4. Are you happy with your physical appearance, your body? Yes/no/ Why?
5. Are you happy with your parents, brothers, sisters and family members? Yes/no/ Why?
6. Is there anything lacking for you to be happy? What's that?
7. Is there any enticing beach you feel like to jump into?. Which? Why? What should you do?

Ponder on the following Sentences.

- If you cannot have what you want, want what you have.
- If you cannot do what you like, like what you do?
- You are the only person who can make you happy or unhappy.

Suggested thoughts for an Input

- God made all of us for happiness.
- Everybody can find happiness in this world, but only in the place God has placed him.
- Our place is the place given to us through the circumstances of our life.
- We need not go out or far away to find happiness.
- We have to be contented and satisfied with what we are and joyously accept our limitations.
- To search for happiness where it is not found, spells disaster.
- We have to highly price what we have, much or little.
- Pining away for what we do not have or what we are not supposed to have, deprives us from what we actually have.
- Be what you are. If a little fish, a little fish; if a bird, a bird;
- We may change the things than can be changed but we ought to accept the things that cannot be changed!
- For a husband, for a wife, for a child, happiness is in the home. For a student, happiness is in the school and in his books. For a worker, happiness is in his work.
- All of us are limited, yet happiness is unlimited for all.
- One of the greatest dangers to happiness lies in irrational expectations namely, expecting to be or to have something beyond our reach. If you expect the moon, you can say bye, bye to happiness for ever.
- Do not claim as a right or 'expect something' you think you need to be happy.
- We make people unhappy by thrusting on them our expectations.
- Let everyone be free to be himself/herself.
- Be and let be is the key to happiness..
- Parents, superiors, teachers, friends, do not 'expect' your children, or your subordinates to be like you or like someone else.
- Models are challenging, but not to be duplicated.
- Each man is unique! Do not compare yourself to anyone else.
- No one is superior or inferior in the eyes of God. Everyone is unique! Incomparable!
- Each one of us is irreplaceable!. Surely, not interchangeable!
- After fashioning each one of us, God broke the mould!
- Advertisements and commercial propaganda blazoned across our cities corrupt the happiness of our world!
- They want to make us believe that in order to be happy we should be like this or that, to have this or that, dress like this or that.
- The world of advertising wants us all to be alike, otherwise things would not sale.
- Since all of us are not alike, advertisers are the greatest sellers of unhappiness.
- **Be true to yourself! Stand for your conscience. !**
- **Dare to be yourself, do not be what the world and others expect you to be.**
- Only in being yourself you will find genuine happiness
- Being yourself, you will be always unique and so different. .

APPENDIX ONE Activities:

- ✓ *If you offer these notes to sundry audiences, time permitting, you may have group activities.*
- ✓ *Afternoon hours are best suited for group activities.*
- ✓ *According to the age and composition of your audience, you may plan your activities. We suggest a few of them below:*

Bible Themes:

Ask the group or groups to prepare a role-play, in modern setting, based on some Bible passages akin to the theme of the day. For instance:

Genesis 3/1-24. The story of Adam and Eve.

- They were created to be happy. They could have been happy being what they were supposed to be.
- Yet, they wanted to be like God, thus they ruin their original happiness.

Luke 15/11-6. The Story of the Prodigal Son.

- He could have been happy at home. He had everything necessary to be happy..
- Yet, he looked for happiness outside the home: freedom, money, drinks, sex, and friends
- He lost everything. He became most unhappy.

Analysis of Adverts

- Collect a good deal of advertisements from newspapers and magazines in which ‘happiness’ is promised for the asking. ‘Joy’ is supposed to come with a drink or a cosmetic!
- Distribute these adverts to the groups and ask them to discuss the following:
 - ✓ What do these adverts promise?
 - ✓ To whom they make such promises? How?
 - ✓ On what grounds do they make such tall promises? Are they justified?
 - ✓ Can they deliver the ‘happiness’ they promise?
 - ✓ Are they not bluffing us? How? Should we believe them? Why?
 - ✓ Do people believe them? What are the sad results?
- Next, ask the groups to prepare a fresh set of adverts to counteract the harmful effects of those adverts.
- Encourage them to be witty, even sarcastic. They may ridicule them by making even taller claims than they do.
- The participants will show their new ads to the house and explain their meaning. .

Dramatization by ‘ Role playing’ or ‘ Puppetry”

- Ask the groups to express the main ideas or lessons of the day by dramatizing some events or instances taken from real life. For instance:
 - ✓ A married man looking for happiness in joints or pubs.
 - ✓ An adolescent searching for joy in drink and drugs.
 - ✓ A youth running after girls for sex and kicks.

- ✓ A married woman looking for joy in ‘bridge-parties’ and in ‘gossiping’ in neighbors’ houses.
- ✓ A college student looking for fulfillment in college dances, dates with his girl friends and in wasting his time in the college Canteen.
- ✓ Someone aping others’ styles and mannerisms to feel accepted in society.
- ✓ A girl overspending on cosmetics to be admired by all.
- After assigning the activities give the group’s time to complete their task, say, 30 to 60 minutes, according to the nature of the activities.
- By turns each groups will present his activity.
- After each presentation, a short analysis and evaluation will follow.

APPENDIX TWO A Closing Prayer

- Quiet down.
- Some relaxing or awareness exercises will help.
- Read and sing the hymn: “Happiness is where you are.”
- A prayerful reflector on some of the points touched today may be called for:
 - Am I happy with **what I am?**
 - Am I satisfied **with what I have?**
 - Can I improve my happiness? How?
 - What things do upset me most in life? Do they take away from me true happiness? What can you do about them?
 - Do I accept the things I cannot change? Which? How?
- Close with The Our Father and a hymn