

Cultivate Reflection Guide

New Voices: How to be Happy – Derwin Gray Week of August 2, 2020

If you missed this weekend's messages, watch at cultivate.sc/discussion

Who you listen to matters. This summer, Pastor Matt has invited friends and fellow pastors to lend their voices and share their perspectives. As we begin this new series and many community groups resume meeting, we've updated our reflection guide to include opportunities for you to cultivate God's word in community and/or continue to respond through daily personal reflection. The choice is yours!

1. Noteworthy: What got your attention this weekend? How were you challenged, encouraged or motivated by the worship, the scripture shared or the message? Linger here for a few moments and ask God to show you what He wants you to hear or even how He is leading you to respond.

2. Cultivate Wholeness: We were created to be happy, but God's definition of "happy" is vastly different than the world's and often, quite different than our own. We aren't called to chase self-centered happiness, but rather to pursue God-centered wholeness. REAL life-fulfilling happiness is found when we respond to God's mercy by taking our whole life and offering it to Him.

"Beloved friends, what should be our proper response to God's marvelous mercies? I encourage you to surrender yourselves to God to be his sacred, living sacrifices. And live in holiness, experiencing all that delights his heart. For this becomes your genuine expression of worship. ² Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total reformation of how you think. This will empower you to discern God's will as you live a beautiful life, satisfying and perfect in his eyes." Romans 12:1-2 TPT

Be REAL with self – what defines happiness to you? When do you feel most satisfied and fulfilled? Is the happiness you're pursuing based in surrender, sacrifice, holiness and worship or is it influenced by a desire to imitate the ideals and opinions of the culture around you? Do you need to change how you think about happiness? Pray and invite the Holy Spirit to help you see REAL happiness so that you can pursue the whole life God desires for you.

3. Read Luke 10:30-35. Being a merciful person means we cross ethnic, cultural and religious barriers to help hurting people. There is no better example of that kind of mercy and love in action than Jesus.

- Who do you most relate to in this story - the broken traveler, a passerby or the good Samaritan? What about yourself do you see in them?
- How do you see Jesus in this story? Reflect on a time you've experienced His love, healing or compassion in your life. How has that experience impacted your willingness to show love and compassion to others?

4. Read Luke 10:36-37. Derwin Gray challenged us to invite the conviction of the Holy Spirit by asking ourselves how often we experience God's mercy yet walk passed those who need ours. We can't solve every problem, but we can ask God to help us see the ones we can. Who is someone in your life who needs your mercy? This could be practical (money, energy, time), emotional (love, kindness, prayer) or even relational (friendship, forgiveness, community). How can you "go and do the same" for them this week?

Cultivate Community: Whether individually or as a group, you can share the love and encouragement you've found in the family of God. That could look like joining forces to pursue a service project in your community or simply loving a neighbor. It could also look like welcoming someone who needs community into your group or connecting with someone who could use a friend. Go be the hands and feet of Jesus!

5. Praiseworthy: Derwin Gray encouraged us that "proximity breeds intimacy." As we draw near to God, He draws near to us (James 4:8). The closer we are to our Father, the more we know Him and the more we become like Him. Read *Psalm 103:8-13* and reflect on God's merciful character. In which of His characteristics would you like to grow? Ask God for what you need so that you can grow closer to Him and become more like Him.

Dig Deeper: From the very beginning, we see God's mercy on display. Go to biblegateway.com and do a search on the keyword "mercy." Take a few moments to browse the fullness of God's mercy through His word.