

Hidden Springs — What's Your Secret?

Adapted for Cedar Springs by Marlene George, St. John's, Newfoundland.
(Resources taken from The Secret Things of God, Dr. Henry Cloud)

Have the ladies share in a game of "Secret" where the first lady in the circle whispers a secret to the lady next to her. She then passes the 'secret' on to the next lady and so on until each person has received the message and passed it on. When the last lady has received the message, she will share it with the group. See how well the group did with keeping the original message.

What's Your Secret

Have you ever had someone you haven't seen for a long time say, "Wow, you haven't changed a bit, ... what's your secret?" Have you ever looked at a friend who seemed more privileged than you ... nice husband, nice house, nice kids, etc. Always happy, never down and wonder, "what's her secret?"

Read Matthew 6:33-34 How do these verses describe the secret to abundant living?

Hidden Springs Revealed

If you sincerely seek God, He will show up. What pictures do you visualize when you think of the theme 'Hidden Springs'?

The beauty and refreshment of hidden springs will remain undiscovered unless we seek them. What hidden springs do you hope to discover this weekend? No matter where you are in your faith journey — whether you are just testing the waters to see if there is anything out there worth believing in, or you are a longtime believer desiring a richer, more fulfilling relationship with the Creator of the universe — the starting point is always the same. Seek. If you sincerely seek God, He will show up.

Jesus said, "Seek and you will find." Matthew 7:7 (NIV)

Invite a couple of ladies to share their "God Story." Everyone's God story is unique — telling

how He meets us where we are, in just the way we need. Share an incident where you sincerely sought God, and He revealed Himself to you.

The Path to all Other Hidden Springs: Trust

"It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him." Hebrews 11:6 (NLT)

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do and he will show you which path to take." Proverbs 3:5-6 (NLT)

Through the act of trust we connect with God in a way that shows our reliance on Him and our surrender to Him.

As we take that first step of faith we learn that trust moves us beyond where we are and connects us with what God wants to do for us and through us.

Read Hebrews 11. As you look at the Faith Hall of Fame, those who trusted God despite uncertainty, who is it that you can most identify with? In which areas of your life are you needing to trust God for right now?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> relationship | <input type="checkbox"/> career choice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> health concern | <input type="checkbox"/> financial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> worry | <input type="checkbox"/> depression |
| <input type="checkbox"/> addiction | <input type="checkbox"/> service |
| <input type="checkbox"/> grief | <input type="checkbox"/> other |

Read together: Ephesians 3:14-21 (NIV)

"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious

riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being (hidden springs) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that

surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

Happiness Quiz: Satisfaction with Life

Quiz developed by Ed Diener at the University of Illinois

How satisfied are you? To find out, read the following five statements. Then, use the 1–7 scale to rate your level of agreement and add your answers together.

1 = Not at all true 4 = Moderately True 7 = Absolutely True

1. In most ways, my life is close to ideal.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. I am satisfied with my life.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Satisfaction with your life Score:

If you scored 15 or under, you are dissatisfied with your life. If you scored 31 or higher, you are extremely satisfied with your life.

If you scored somewhere in the middle, happiness expert Dr. Robert Holden has some advice on how to live a more satisfying life. Dr. Holden says the key to being happy is overcoming “destination addiction,” which he defines as “living in the not-now.”

“It’s always about tomorrow, so you’re chasing ‘more,’ ‘next’ and ‘there,’” he says. “You promise yourself that when you get there, you’ll be happy. And I promise you, you won’t, because you’ll always set another destination to go for.”

Instead, Dr. Holden says if you are unhappy with your life or looking to improve your score, there are two things you can do. “We have to learn to let go of our past, we have to give up all hopes for a perfect past. Let the past go, it’s gone.” After that, he says, “Take a vow of kindness. Be kinder to yourself and to others. “It’s never too late to be happy,” he says.



Hidden Springs — Happiness

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Introduction

Interactive Exercise: The Happiness Quiz

Interactive Exercise: Happiness in a Word

(Ask each lady to share one word that comes to their mind when they think of happiness)

Remember, every minute spent angry is 60 seconds of happiness wasted

God created us with the capacity and the desire to feel happy. While being happy is not God's only priority for us, He very much wants us to have a sense of well-being — He wants us to be filled with joy and peace and hope. Read Ephesians 3: 14-21 (NIV)

Secret # 1 Happiness = _____

Read Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12 (NIV)

One of the secrets of hidden springs of happiness is recognizing that the God who created us in His image, created us to be connected with others.

This secret is also supported in health psychology research. From the womb to the tomb, people who are connected to others have been shown to be healthier and happier.

While all of us have many people in our lives we know it is essential to our happiness that we have those in our lives that we are connected to. In your life how many people are you 'connected to'?

Secret #2 Our Happiness is affected by our _____

What happens inside your head will find its way outside — into your life. Our thoughts are so important to our well-being and the outcomes of life that the Bible talks about them a lot.

Read the following passages:

Philippians 2:5; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:1,2; Colossians 3:15,1

Many of us feel powerless to control our thoughts, but being in control of our thoughts is one of the secrets to controlling how we feel — and thus, how happy we are.

Read: 2 Corinthians 10:5 (from both *NIV, The Message*)

The research of Dr. Aaron Beck (Cognitive Therapy of Depression) has shown that some emotional problems are clearly linked to negative thinking, usually about three areas: the world, ourselves, and our future. The way you view these areas has a huge effect on your happiness.

- How do you view the world?
- How do you view yourself?
- How do you view your future?

Dr. Henry Cloud suggestions to help us control our thoughts should include the following:

- Monitor and observe the thought/take it captive to obedience (2 Corinthians 10:5)
- Analyze it: keep what's true, reject what's false (Philippians 4:8)
- Replace what is false with God's truth (John 8:38)
- Open up to positive people who will love and support you.

Secret #3 You are as Happy as you are _____

Read: Galatians 5:1 (*The Message*)

Slavery is one of the overriding metaphors in the Bible to portray the freedom that Christ came to provide. It began when the children of Israel were held as slaves in Egypt under Pharaoh.

“Slavery happens when you lose your freedom to choose, whether it relates to people or to patterns of behaviour.”

Given the above definition, share examples of modern day types of slavery. (i.e. alcohol, food, approval, power, etc.)

“Learned helplessness” is one of the classic and most researched causes of depression and despair. It occurs when people feel as if they have no choices that will make a difference.

Read: 2 Corinthians 3:17 and Galatians 5:23
How does this knowledge impact the list of 'modern types of slavery' ?

Secret #4 Happiness does not depend on happy _____

In the Bible we read amazing stories about people like the Apostle Paul, who while in a dungeon prison actually praised God and wrote letters to others about happiness.

Read: Philippians 4:12
The truth of living in this fallen world is that 'bad things will happen to good people.' Ask if anyone would be willing to share an experience that may reflect this statement.

How does this impact 'happiness'?

Would you agree with the statement that happiness is a result of what you believe and what you do, not a result of what happens to you? (Open for discussion)

In closing, share in praying of the Serenity Prayer ...

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

Notes for Bible study leaders only

- Secret #1:** Happiness = Being Connected
- Secret #2:** Our Happiness is affected by our Thoughts
- Secret #3:** You are as Happy as you are Free
- Secret #4:** Happiness does not depend on happy Circumstances



Hidden Springs - Forgiveness

*Adapted for Cedar Springs by Marlene George, St. John's, Newfoundland
(Resources taken from The Forgiveness Model, Dr. Daniel Klassen)*

Since it was the Creator's design that at the heart of the human condition is the need to be connected — to have relationships. When things go wrong in our relationships with others as inevitably they will from time to time — there is need for a plan . . . something to help us reconnect . . . often what is needed is forgiveness. Forgiveness is the ability to release the painful effects of an offence and move on to healing.

Mark 11:24-26 (New American Standard)

"Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you. And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."

Read: Matthew 18:21-35

What does this parable tell us about the conditions of forgiveness.

When we fail to forgive others, we burn the bridge over which we ourselves must cross to be forgiven.

Matthew 6: 12, 14 (paraphrased) If we are seeking forgiveness from God (or anyone else) we must be willing to forgive those who have offended us.

It seems clear then that Scripture points out two very important points concerning forgiveness:

- Our personal forgiveness is conditional on our willingness to forgive others. The Golden Rule of relationships applies here as well
- We must include ourselves in the pool of offenders or potential offenders because until we genuinely understand and admit the potential for wrong-doing in ourselves, we are not likely to learn how to deal with the wrong — doing of others. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

How do you feel about including yourself in "the pool of offenders?" Can you recall a time when you have offended someone and sought their forgiveness? What impact does this knowledge have on your willingness to forgive someone who may have offended you?

I'm sure we would all agree forgiving is not easy; perhaps the only thing more difficult than forgiving is not forgiving.

Forgiveness is by definition “to grant pardon or freedom from a penalty: to cease to blame or feel resentment for a wrong that has been done.”

- is always a voluntary choice... no one in the universe has ever forgiven anyone because they have to — only because they want to (*Five Things Everyone Should Know About Forgiving* - Lewis Smedes)
- is making your peace with the offence
- freeing your spirit ... When I forgive I set a prisoner free, and discover that the prisoner was me (Lewis Smedes)
- a process ... Forgiveness is seldom instantaneous. It often takes time to complete its course ... similar to the process of grief
- difficult and humbling ... being willing to let go of what we feel is our right to ‘get back’ or take revenge. Humbly going before God, we are reminded of the many times God has forgiven us. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
- Exercising God’s strength and grace ... loving and accepting someone who has hurt us requires resources outside of ourselves. As we respond to God’s will to forgive He will empower us to love the unlovable.

We have been reminded today, one of the valuable hidden springs about relationships is to recognize that at the heart of our human condition we have been designed with a need for belonging and for connection. Another valuable hidden spring to healthy relationships is to recognize we are not wired to be able to successfully ‘write off’ those who have offended us — to be healthy and happy in relationships is to learn and practice the grace of forgiveness.

Remember Matthew 18 ... the truth is, just as the servant could not repay the master what he had owed him — it is impossible for the one who has offended us to repay or undo the offence.

So what do we do with the debt that is owing? Where do we go with it? We go to the road to healing — forgive.



Think about it, the reality of life is that it is predictable that you will offend someone close to you in your life time; it is also predictable that you will be offended by someone close to you in your lifetime and this is where forgiveness comes in.

Forgiveness is most supremely exemplified by the amazing grace of Jesus Christ. We believe that Jesus paid the price for the debt of our sinful state — “I owed a debt I could not pay, He paid a debt He did not owe ... I needed someone to wash my sin away ... and now I sing a brand new song, ‘Amazing Grace,’ Christ Jesus paid the debt that I could never pay.”

The hidden springs reveal the only one who can pay the debt is the victim. Is it fair? (NO) ... yet healing is in the word FORE — GIVE it is to give before the person owing can give to you.

Is there someone in your life you need to forgive?

Sing the chorus, “He paid a debt he did not owe” and pray silently for the grace to forgive that person and set yourself free from the pain of the offence. Blessings on You!

As we reflect on what we have learned today regarding hidden springs about relationships — we would all agree that we are not meant to be alone.