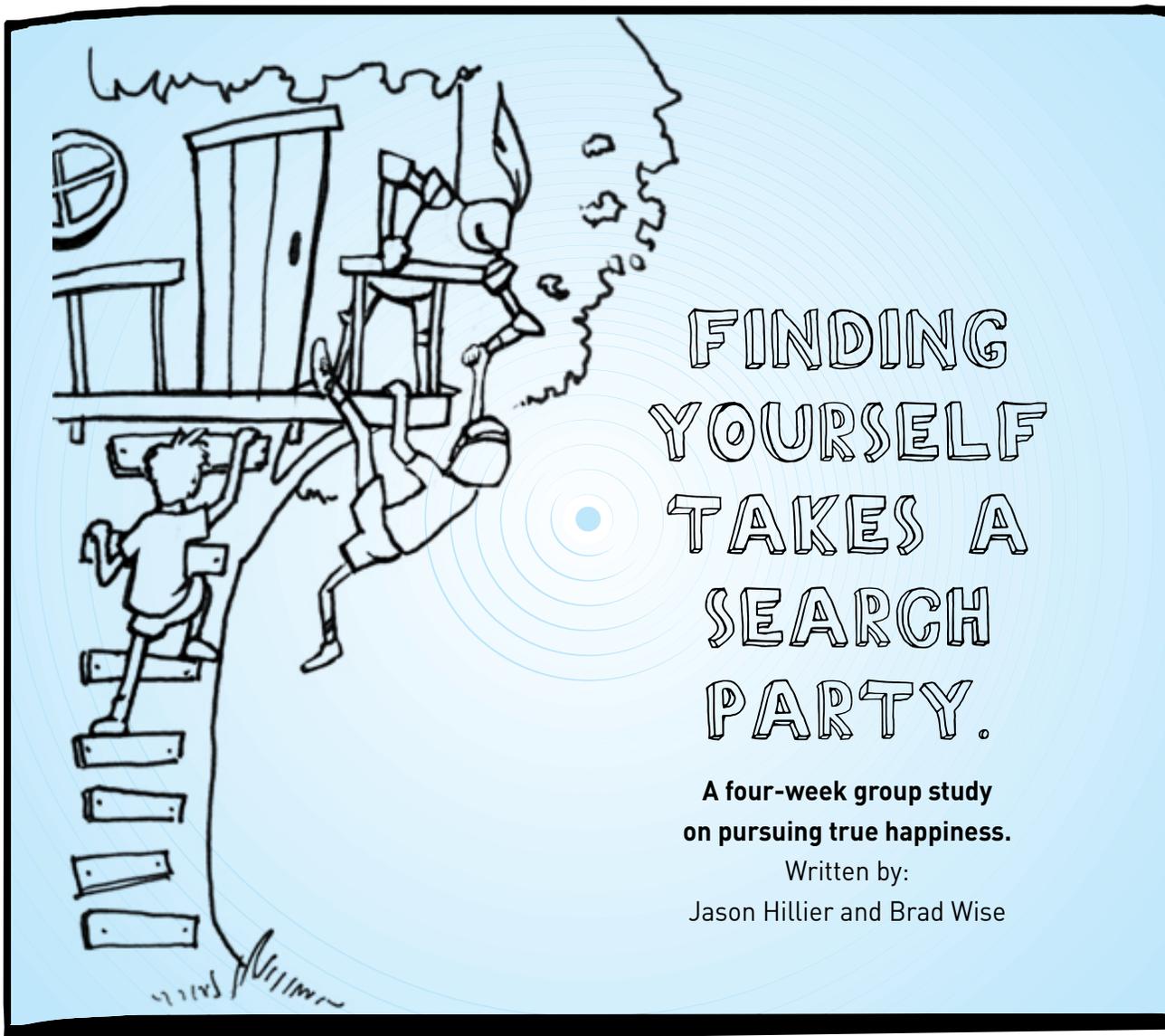




A STRANGE BRAND OF HAPPY

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE



FINDING
YOURSELF
TAKES A
SEARCH
PARTY.

**A four-week group study
on pursuing true happiness.**

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A STRANGE BRAND OF HAPPY

GROUP DISCUSSION NO.1

BIG IDEA NO.1:

ALL PEOPLE ARE BROKEN, SEARCHING FOR PURPOSE, AND NEED TO BE RECONCILED TO GOD.

KEY SCRIPTURE

Romans 1:18-23 (The Message) The basic reality of God is plain enough. Open your eyes and there it is! By taking a long and thoughtful look at what God has created, people have always been able to see what their eyes as such can't see: eternal power, for instance, and the mystery of his divine being. So nobody has a good excuse. What happened was this: People knew God perfectly well, but when they didn't treat him like God, refusing to worship him, they trivialized themselves into silliness and confusion so that there was neither sense nor direction left in their lives. They pretended to know it all, but were illiterate regarding life. They traded the glory of God who holds the whole world in his hands for cheap figurines you can buy at any roadside stand.

TAKE-A-WAYS FROM THE MOVIE

1. David (main character) is clearly listless when we meet him in the film. He lacks a God-given vision for his life.
2. We see many of the characters being defined by what the world says is important (i.e. job status, being in a romantic relationship).
3. Some of the happiest characters seem to be the ones who are focusing on God and engaging people in meaningful ways.

QUESTIONS

- What has your own Spiritual journey looked like in the past? Currently? Are you searching? Confused? Feeling hopeless? Full of hope?
- Who or what do you think has defined your life thus far? Job status? Money? Being attractive? Gaining approval?
- Do you believe you have ever experienced that "strange brand of happy" (joy) before? If so when? How did it come about?

A STRANGE BRAND OF HAPPY

GROUP DISCUSSION NO.2

BIG IDEA NO.2:

**TRUE HAPPINESS COMES FROM KNOWING AND LOVING GOD
AND THE PEOPLE HE HAS CREATED.**

KEY SCRIPTURE

John 15:11-17 (NLT) I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other.

TAKE-A-WAYS FROM THE MOVIE

1. David acts out his relationship with his attractive landlord (Terry) in a selfish way. This leads to disappointment for both of them.
2. Joyce's friendships, work at the senior center, and service work at the "Ponderings" event seemed to be based in selfless love. She seems fulfilled.
3. David has a "break-through" when he decides not to publicly shame William (his boss) but chooses instead to honor those people who have encouraged him.

QUESTIONS

- When in your life have you felt the most joy-filled? Who or what situation was the reason for that? Why do you think much of society seems sad or depressed?
- What value do you see in honoring people/relationships like David does at the end of the film? What are some ways we can honor others?
- What are some examples of "loving each other as God has loved us?" What makes that so difficult? When has someone loved you selflessly?
- Is it hard to accept that God loves you unconditionally? Why?

A STRANGE BRAND OF HAPPY

GROUP DISCUSSION NO.2

BIG IDEA NO.2:

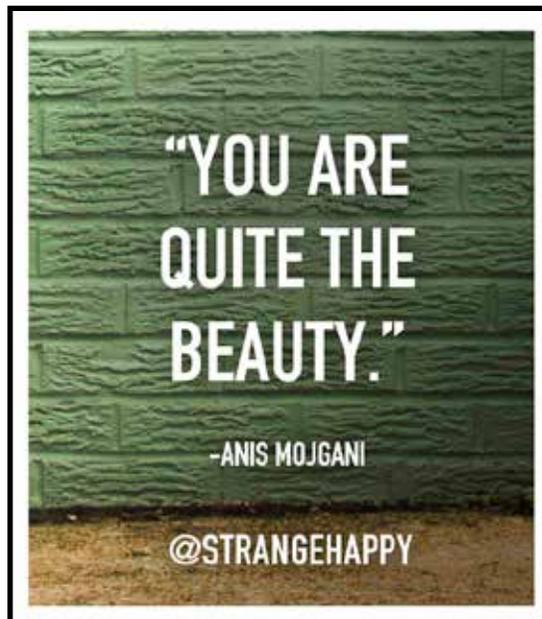
**TRUE HAPPINESS COMES FROM KNOWING AND LOVING GOD
AND THE PEOPLE HE HAS CREATED.**

PERSONAL REFLECTION

A strange brand of happy can essentially be called “joy.” Unfortunately, joy seems to elude most of us. Many people search for the next “thing”, the next relationship, the next job promotion, the next experience which will bring them joy. In reality, joy is not based on outside circumstances...it is based on internal heart change; a heart full of love for God and people.

Have you fully embraced God’s love for you? It starts with an admission of our selfishness and brokenness and ends with the joyful acceptance that we are fully loved by our Creator.

Joy is not found in regrets of the past, or worries of the future. It is found today. Start by asking God to fill you with His joy. Go ahead. Ask Him.



A STRANGE BRAND OF HAPPY

GROUP DISCUSSION NO.3

BIG IDEA NO.3:

OUR JOY IS NOT BASED ON THINGS OR CIRCUMSTANCES. IT IS BASED ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD; TRUE HAPPINESS BEGINS WITH JESUS.

KEY SCRIPTURE

Luke 10:38-42 (NIV) As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

TAKE-A-WAYS FROM THE MOVIE

1. Joyce walks in confidence that God loves her. She is joyful, fulfilled and purposeful. She doesn't seem to base her worth on what others think of her.
2. William (David's boss) is full of pride. He believes he is better than David. He is always trying to "change the situation" and control the outcome of relationships.
3. David receives grace from other characters despite his actions. William receives grace from David at the end of the film. David's circumstances don't drastically change...his heart does.

QUESTIONS

- Do you know someone like Joyce who seems to draw their happiness from God/Jesus/something bigger than themselves? If so, describe them to the group.
- What do you think about this phrase: "true joy is not based on circumstances?"

A STRANGE BRAND OF HAPPY

GROUP DISCUSSION NO.3

BIG IDEA NO.3:

OUR JOY IS NOT BASED ON THINGS OR CIRCUMSTANCES. IT IS BASED ON OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD; TRUE HAPPINESS BEGINS WITH JESUS.

QUESTIONS CONTINUED

- Why do we usually want to control situations and relationships? What do you think about the idea that there is freedom in letting go of control?
- Is it difficult to believe that God loves you and wants to be the source of your joy? Have you ever fully accepted that Jesus is who he said he was? What does it look like to “trust in the Lord”?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

What if our true happiness is not based on circumstances, but is actually based on being with Jesus? That’s easier said than done isn’t it? It’s scary to lay down our pride, let go of our control, and just sit with Jesus like Mary. We’re more like Martha. We’re driven to accomplish more, earn more, chase more. We kind of apply the concept of climbing the corporate ladder to our spirituality.

What if we stop climbing and just sit? What if we embrace this haunting notion that we are made to experience deeper and deeper levels of joy as we draw closer and closer to Jesus and let him do the work? Maybe find a quiet place this week and say: “Jesus, help me believe you are the true source of my identity and my joy. Teach me to rest in you.” That’s a great start.



A STRANGE BRAND OF HAPPY

GROUP DISCUSSION NO.4

BIG IDEA NO.4:

**WE ARE ALWAYS HAPPIEST WHEN OUR LIFE HAS A PURPOSE
BEYOND OURSELVES.**

KEY SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV) For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

TAKE-A-WAYS FROM THE MOVIE

1. Joyce finds purpose and happiness in serving others (cooking, setting up the "Ponderings" event, spending voluntary quality time at the senior center).
2. William (David's Boss) seems focused almost exclusively on himself and his own priorities. He seems negative and distant throughout the film.
3. David's happiness grows as he begins to value other people more highly.

QUESTIONS

- Why do you believe so many people seem to be lacking purpose?
- Have you ever spent time reflecting on your own purpose in life? What do you believe your "life's purpose" is?
- Joyce's character spent significant resources on other people. Why do you believe it is difficult to align our "time, treasures and talents" with our God-given purpose? What are some practical ways to create margin in life?
- The verse above says "we are created by God to do good works". What are some of your personal giftings (things you naturally excel at)? Do you like to help & serve others? Encourage them? Train and teach people?

A STRANGE BRAND OF HAPPY

GROUP DISCUSSION NO.4

BIG IDEA NO.4:

**WE ARE ALWAYS HAPPIEST WHEN OUR LIFE HAS A PURPOSE
BEYOND OURSELVES.**

PERSONAL REFLECTION

Finding your purpose is a lifelong pursuit. It will probably change and morph through the years. But a worthy purpose will always have three verbs attached to it. It will HONOR God. It will SERVE others. And it will BRING you joy. Are you in the middle of your search for purpose right now? Or do you feel like maybe a new season is coming? Take some time to reflect. What do you love? What are you good at? Whatever that may be, can it be done in a way that it honors God, serves others? If not, no big deal, you've found a great hobby. But if you're on the hunt for discovering your purpose keep an eye out for something that does all three; HONORS God, SERVES others, BRINGS you joy. You are God's handiwork created to do good, meaningful, joy-filled work.

