



“God Wants Me to Be Happy”

Prayer

Introductory Activity

Focus: There are many versions of the lie “God wants me to be happy.” For example: “God wants me to be rich”; or “God wouldn’t want me to rush into marriage so I’ll live with my significant other”; or “God wouldn’t deny me these feelings I have for someone of the same sex”; and on and on. Usually the person saying this phrase is trying to justify a sin that God condemns. It sounds cruel to say, “God doesn’t want me to be happy!” Well then, what does God want for me?

Activity:

- Begin by watching a video about some churches that teach a version of this lie.
- Divide into groups of four or five. Pick someone in your group to read Genesis 3:15-19 aloud. Then discuss how you would respond to the people in the video clip using truths from Genesis 3. Below are some questions to consider as you craft a response.

Why is the thinking expressed in the video so appealing?

If you buy into this way of thinking, what is the foundation of your confidence for your life?

Agree/Disagree: There is profit in serving God.



In Genesis 3, what does God promise we will experience as a result of sin?

This too is a blessing. What would result if we don't experience the consequences of sin?

My Response:

What God Wants for Us

1. Read Mark 8:31-37. What does God want for us?

A _____.

- In Matthew 16:22, Peter expresses the natural reaction to suffering: "Never!" What did Peter want?

Like Peter, we may have our own ideas about what we would have planned for Jesus. We certainly have our own ideas about what we would like for ourselves.

The chart below shows some things that we might have wished for Jesus. Fill in the chart to show corresponding wishes that we might have for ourselves.

<i>For Jesus</i>	<i>For Us (His Followers)</i>
Jesus is crowned King on Palm Sunday.	
Everybody loves Jesus.	

His new church grows rapidly.	
No one ever contradicts or opposes him.	
Everybody wants to get closer to him.	

- Bearing the cross can be summarized in two words: “Deny self.” Why is that so hard?

The cross in a Christian’s life is not simply suffering, but it is suffering that comes as a result of being a Christian. Who of us has not thought, “If I only had _____, then I’d be happy”? (*Fill in the blank for yourself.*)

Actually, getting what we want leads to disappointment, or the joy lasts only a moment before the heart chases after another desire. Within your group, identify the root cause of disappointment and discontent. Give examples that demonstrate how it expresses itself in our lives.

2. Read Romans 7:14-25. What one word describes what life is for us (and what God wants for us)?

A _____.

- Think of Luther’s explanation to the First Commandment: “We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.” What makes that so difficult for us Christians?
- The old self is at work most when the new self is trying to be strengthened. Explain how the old self is at work even when we are praying, listening to God’s Word, or giving an offering.

3. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 together. What does God want for us?

He wants us to be _____.

- You could write your own autobiography with 2 Corinthians 12:9 as the title. List ways that God has proven this to you in your life or how he has used the crosses of life to drive you back to his own cross. Share with your group.

- King David (2 Samuel 11) is a good example for us. What happens when all things are going well and there is no apparent cross in one's life? Now, describe life for David with the cross (much as a result of his own doing).

4. In 1 Timothy 2:3,4 we read: "This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." What does God want for us?

To be _____.

5. John 20:31 says, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." What is the main purpose of the Bible?

Group Discussion

- Think of a scenario in which someone has said to you, "But God just wants me to be

happy.” (A hypothetical situation is fine as well!) With your group, develop a biblical response to that person.

- **Good Quote:** “He doesn’t ask you to take a pilgrimage to Mecca. He doesn’t ask you to wash in the Ganges. He doesn’t ask you to walk on burning coals, or burn incense, or ring bells, or enter a monastery. What he asks is much harder. He asks and insists on it: Deny yourself, and take up the cross and follow me. He asks and he insists on it: Be a Christian!” (Daniel Deutschlander, *Don’t Be Afraid! Cheer Up! It’s the Cross!* Part 1, p. 6). In what ways is being a Christian much harder than the items listed?

Closing Activity

Take three minutes to write a haiku illustrating the blessings of the Christian cross in our lives or in response to the lie “God just wants me to be happy.” (*Haikus are three-line poems with the syllable structure of 5-7-5.*)