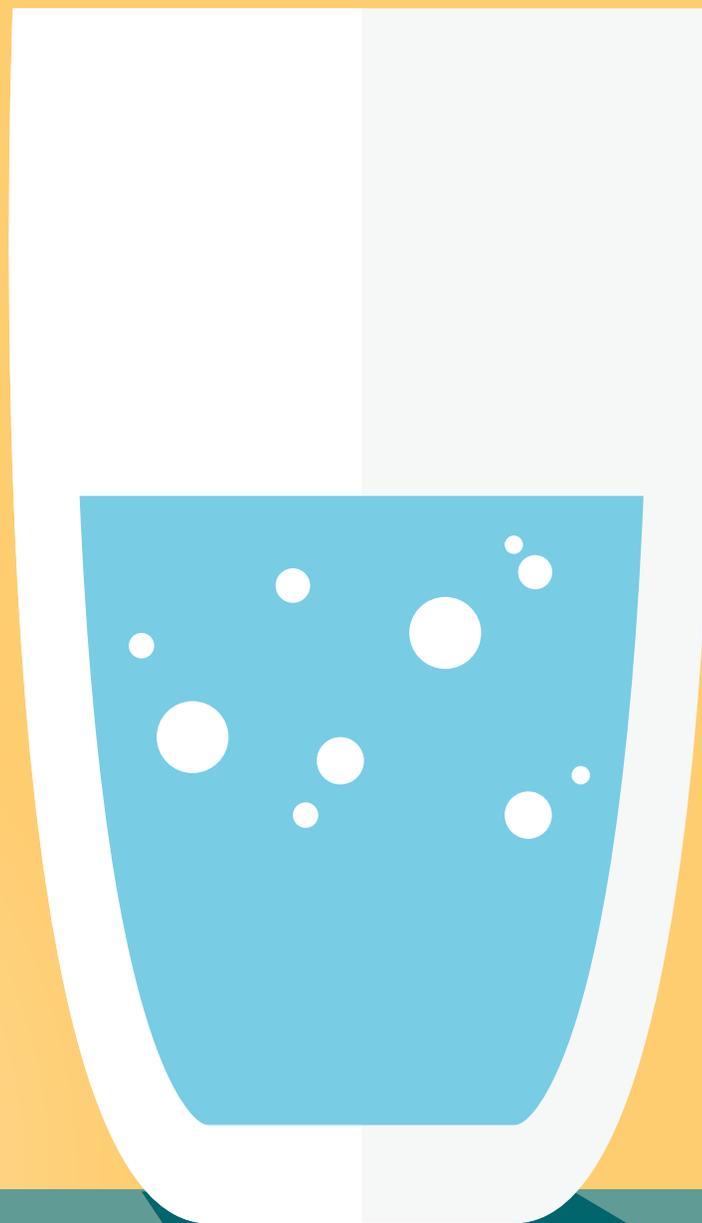


HOW JOYFUL PEOPLE THINK

Discussion Guide



Chapter 1

GETTING TO KNOW ME

These questions generate responses that are self-revealing and informative. Feel free to ask all of these questions to your group or simply choose the one that best fits your group.

- What caused you to have a “bad” attitude this week? Is it possible to control your attitude? Is it insincere to have a good attitude when your circumstances are bad?
- In what types of circumstances do you demonstrate a sarcastic “whatever” attitude? When do you demonstrate a fatalistic “whatever” attitude?
- Was there a time recently when your thinking changed your attitude despite your circumstances? Explain.

INTO THE BIBLE

These questions draw group members into the Bible to discover truth from passages related to the chapter content.

The following verses give examples of what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent and praiseworthy:

- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7
- Romans 13:3
- Matthew 22:16
- Romans 12:17
- Acts 22:12
- Proverbs 12:4
- James 1:27
- 2 Samuel 23:3

- Match the verses above with one of the characteristics found in Philippians 4:8.
- What is the opposite of these characteristics?
- How has Jesus demonstrated the characteristics of Philippians 4:8?
- How can reflecting upon Jesus change your attitude?

APPLICATION

These questions apply the main points from the chapter to daily living.

- How does the Gospel help you live out Philippians 4:8?
- How can you make thinking through Philippians 4:8 more habitual?
- What things in your life are reinforcing poor ways of thinking? For example, how does what you hear or watch affect what you consciously or unconsciously think? What would you like to change?
- Memorizing Philippians 4:8 would be beneficial for developing a godly attitude. Start memorizing this together as a group by repeating it a few times.

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

Chapter 2



GETTING TO KNOW ME

- Do you tend to have an overly negative or positive view of life?
- Do you believe in “absolute truth?” (i.e., truths that are true for everyone for all time). Why or why not?
- Jamie defined “transcendent truths” as truths that “come from God.” Do you have a favorite Scripture or doctrine that gives you hope when confronted with trouble? Share with your group.

INTO THE BIBLE

Jamie wrote that “transcendent truths come from God... doctrines...unaffected by time and space.” What else does the Bible teach about transcendent truths? Read the following passages and list out the other traits about transcendent truth that you discover in these passages:

- Psalm 119:9, 11
- 2 Peter 3:16
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- 2 Timothy 2:7
- Romans 1:19-20
- Psalm 19:7

APPLICATION

Jamie wrote that “we must live in light of known reality - both transcendent and personal reality.”

- How do transcendent truths change your attitude? Give some examples from your life:
- In what areas are you most susceptible to confuse personal reality with transcendent reality?
- What are some questions you can ask or filters you can apply to your perception to help discern the difference?

Chapter 3

GETTING TO KNOW ME

- When it comes to “getting things done” . . . are you a person who checks off the list or tries to soak up the journey? Explain.
- Are you more task-oriented or relational-oriented? Why do you think this is?
- Jamie described two kinds of Christians: Adrenal (those who respond and act...more out of emotions) or coronary (those who respond and act...from heartfelt response). Which one describes you best?

INTO THE BIBLE

- Read Hebrews 12:1-3. How does this passage help you grow in becoming non-reactary?
- Read I Corinthians 9:24-27. How might this passage address the idea of becoming a non-reactary thinker?
- What is the difference between “training” (v. 25) and “trying”? How does the idea of “strict training” help us?
- Jamie wrote that the three ingredients that comprise a non-reactary life are wisdom, self-control and steadfastness. Read James 1:1-5. How does this passage help you grow in these areas?

APPLICATION

Jamie described the three ingredients in this way:

- **Wisdom** - keeps you thoughtful and contemplative.
- **Self-Control** - keeps you under control.
- **Steadfastness** - keeps you in the game.

Which of these is a strong suit for you?

Which do you struggle with?

- If you're feeling courageous, share an area of your life where you tend to be adrenal in your faith (reactary)? Is it how you respond to politics? Marriage? Parenting? Church? Something else?
- What would it look like for you to be non-reactary in this area?
- As a result of this chapter, what is one thing you plan to do to move closer to becoming a coronary Christian or a non-reactary thinker?

Chapter 4

GETTING TO KNOW ME

- What injustices bother you the most?
- Have you experienced an injustice that has particularly shaped you?
- Do you find it hard to forgive wrongs done to you? Why or why not?

INTO THE BIBLE

Jamie wrote that justice is “deeply rooted in God, His revelation, His character, and His law.” Respond to the following questions about God’s character and revealed law in order to have a better sense of His moral will.

God’s character includes many attributes like His truthfulness/faithfulness, jealousy, and wrath. Read through the following passages and the corresponding questions:

- Numbers 23:19 - Is it ever right to lie? If so, why? Give an example.
- 2 Corinthians 11:2 - Is it ever right to be jealous? If so, why? Give an example.
- Hebrews 1:9 - Is it ever right to hate? If so, why? Give an example.

God’s law also includes many moral principles (see Romans 15:4 & 1 Corinthians 10:11). What moral principles can be deduced from the following passages?

- Leviticus 19:19
- Deuteronomy 22:8
- Leviticus 19:28

APPLICATION

- Jamie wrote that “we [all] must discern, assess, and respond to injustices around us.” What is the wrong (i.e., injustice) that you want to make right?
- What is the first step in making it right? Will it require financial investment, time/energy investment, or both? Does seeking justice always require both? Explain.
- Jamie also shared “we must remember that God’s justice includes grace, mercy, and forgiveness.” How can you show forgiveness to the people who are instigating injustices?

Chapter 5



GETTING TO KNOW ME

- Jamie defined purity as “unstained; without defect; not mixed together.” What are some images/examples of purity? Pair up and create a word picture that represents “purity.” Share with your group.
- Are there temptations/impurities that are specific to your occupation or current life stage? If appropriate, share with your group.
- Has your upbringing made certain temptations/impurities more common in your life? If appropriate, share with your group.

INTO THE BIBLE

Read Genesis 39:1-12

- Why does Joseph refuse Potiphar’s wife (v. 8-9)? Do his reasons motivate your own purity? Why or why not?
- How does Joseph overcome the temptation to accept the wife’s offer? (v. 10 & 12). How would one imitate Joseph’s example to be pure in our day and age?

Read Matthew 5:29-30

- What does Jesus mean by tearing out our eyes and cutting off our hands? Again, how would one apply this principle in our day and age?

APPLICATION

- How does seeing others as “beta Christians” help us maintain “relational” purity? Share an example. How does relating well with others put Christ on display? Again, share an example.
- Why should we “be good” when being bad doesn’t *seem* to hurt anyone?
- Jamie taught “With God I will be good and relate well.” How does God empower us to “be good” and “relate well” when it is difficult?

GETTING TO KNOW ME

- What gives you the greatest pleasure? (e.g., your kids, a long run on a cool morning, a hot cup of coffee, etc.)
- Generally, how joyful are you (use a 1-10 scale)? Why?
- Thomas Aquinas said, "No one can live without delight..." Do you agree? Explain.

INTO THE BIBLE

Jamie wrote that we should nurture healthy sources of pleasurable love like safe people, solid activities, and a sound view of God. Dive deeper into what the Bible says about each of these sources.

Read the following verses on friendship and deduce some traits of a biblical friend:

- Proverbs 18:24
- Proverbs 16:28
- Proverbs 25:17
- Proverbs 17:17
- Proverbs 22:24-25
- Proverbs 27:6, 9, 17
- Proverbs 17:9

Read the following verses on morally good activities that can become morally bad. What can you deduce from the following?

- Proverbs 23:20-21; 29-30
- Proverbs 27:7a
- Proverbs 25:16
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

Read the following verses on "a sound view of God." What can you deduce from these passages?

- Psalm 34:8
- Luke 24:32
- John 6:35

APPLICATION

- Jamie referred to illicit pleasures as "idols." How do you know when an idol exists in your life? How do you remove an idol from your life? What merit is there to removing an idol from your life?
- What are some qualities you look for in a "safe harbor relationship?" Regarding your dating or marriage as well as your family relationships, how would you like them to exemplify ideal safe harbor relationships?
- What "solid activities" do you want to add to your life in order to find greater joy? Share with your group.
- Is God your greatest source of pleasure? (Be honest!) How would you rate your enjoyment of God (use a 1-10 scale)? Why should He be the chief pleasure in your life? What can you do to receive greater pleasure from your relationship with God?
- Jamie wrote that God is able to bring joy out of difficult circumstances. How is He able to do it (consider reviewing Acts 20:35 for one way that he does it)? Have you found this to be true? Share with your group.
- Are there other ways that God can bring joy out of difficult circumstances? Are you going through a difficult circumstance that your group can pray about?

Chapter 6

GETTING TO KNOW ME

- What is your reputation? How do you know? Is your reputation different in different contexts? (e.g., home, church, work, etc.) Why?
- Have you experienced an unfair assessment/slander?
- Who do you consider to have the best reputation? Why?

INTO THE BIBLE

Read 1 Timothy 3:2-7 & Titus 1:6-9

The character qualities of someone who is “above reproach” are expounded in the verses that follow it in each of these passages. While these passages specifically speak to the characteristics necessary for someone to be an elder/pastor in a church (e.g., “able to teach”), all Christians should be striving to adopt these traits in their own lives in order not to give anyone reason to doubt the validity of the gospel or the integrity of the church. *As a group, list all the attributes from these two passages. Make note that some of the attributes are listed twice. Answer the following questions:*

- What does it mean in our age to be hospitable? Read Luke 14:13-14. How does this passage inform your understanding of hospitality? How is hospitality helpful in keeping a good reputation? Do you have any examples from your own life or the life of another?
- What does it look like to be a “lover of money?” How does this trait hinder developing a good reputation? According to Jesus, we can be deceived by money (Matthew 13:22). How can you prevent from being greedy knowing that you can easily deceive yourself?
- What three attributes are most meaningful to you? Why? Share with your group.

APPLICATION

- Is it ever wrong/unhelpful to care about what people think about you? Explain.
- Jamie taught that the building blocks for a good reputation include faithfulness, kindness, righteousness, and honor. As a group, give examples of each of these “building blocks”:
- Take a moment to choose the “building block” (i.e., faithfulness, kindness, righteousness, or honor) where you would like to grow. What do you specifically want to change? How will you grow in this area?

Chapter 7





GETTING TO KNOW ME

- Do you pursue excellence in every area of your life? What areas demonstrate the least and most excellence?
- Do you find God doing many “excellent” things in your life? Should we expect God to do many “excellent” things in our lives? Explain.

INTO THE BIBLE

Jamie wrote that “we think excellence” when it is guided by the Bible. Specifically, he offered three areas where excellence can be demonstrated - marketplace, relationships, and character. He also taught that there are many other areas where excellence can be demonstrated. Have people in your group each take a different area (below), read what the Bible says about each of them and answer the following questions:

- What does the Bible say in these verses about what excellence looks like in this area?
- How does what the Bible says differ or contrast from what society/culture teaches about this area?
- Share with the group about how the Bible challenges or changes your presuppositions about this area.
- Marriage - Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; Genesis 2:18-24; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7
- Singleness/Dating/Engagement - 1 Timothy 5:2; 1 Corinthians 7:32-38; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Timothy 5:14
- Parenting - Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 1 Samuel 2:26; Luke 2:52; Ephesians 6:4
- Ministry/Service - Romans 12:3-6; Timothy 4:14-15; 2 Timothy 2:21

- Finances - Matthew 6:21; Luke 3:14; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Proverbs 10:4; Proverbs 3:9
- Health - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Timothy 4:8
- Grandparenting - 2 Timothy 1:5; Deuteronomy 4:9; Proverbs 13:22
- Manhood/Womanhood - Proverbs 31:10-31 (Women); 1 Peter 3:3-4 (Women); 1 Timothy 2:8-10 (Men); 1 Timothy 5:11 (Men)

APPLICATION

- Why is excellence an important attitude for you to adopt in every area of your life? As a group, create a list of 10 or more ways that excellence can make a difference. What are your group’s top three?
- Jamie gave three areas where the Bible can assist us to become more excellent. Which was most meaningful to you? Why?
- Jamie wrote that we “think excellence” when we’re spirit-empowered rather than using our own power. What do you need to do in order to be empowered by the Spirit?

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

GETTING TO KNOW ME

- Share a time where someone offered you praise that made a difference to you.
- What effect does receiving praise have on you?

INTO THE BIBLE

Jamie described praise as the recognition and approval of good things, and that the Bible records many instances of praising God. Read the following verses and share your observations on what attributes or characteristics of God are being approved:

- Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14
- Philippians 1:11
- 1 Peter 1:7

The New Testament also offers instances of praising people. Read these verses and share your observations on what is being approved:

- Romans 2:29; 13:3
- 1 Corinthians 4:5
- 2 Corinthians 8:18
- 1 Peter 2:14

Why do you think God wants us to be intentional about human and divine praise? How does it benefit us to give praise?

APPLICATION

- Jamie wrote that the pathway to praise begins with appraisal. Take inventory and assess the good things eligible for praise in your life. Record those here:
- After appraisal, comes approval, which is an emotional process that includes interaction and relational investment. It is the validation of others in the context of relationship. What are concrete ways you can approve some of the people or circumstances listed in your previous response?
- Finally, praise culminates in applause. It is the action step of what you intend to do to express your approval. List specific actions you can do to applaud or give praise in the opportunities you have listed here:

Chapter 10



GETTING TO KNOW ME

- Which chapter of *How Joyful People Think* was most impactful for you? Why?
- How has this book helped shape how you think?
- What do you normally do to relieve stress?

INTO THE BIBLE

Peace is the promise of thinking the Philippians 4:8 mindset. What do the following passages reveal to you about pursuing and experiencing peace?

- Psalm 34:14
- Psalm 37:11
- Psalm 85:10
- Psalm 119:165

What relationship do you see between the Philippians 4:8 mindset and the following passages:

- Romans 8:6
- Romans 14:19
- Romans 15:13
- Romans 16:20

APPLICATION

- What does it look like for you to “practice the presence” of God on a daily basis? How does doing this cause you to think more joyfully?
- How are you different when you draw near to God? How is your life (or your life circumstances) different?
- Now that you have arrived at the end of *How Joyful People Think*, what are some ways that God has led you to think differently? What difference is it making in your daily experience?
- How does thinking the Philippians 4:8 mindset affect others in your life?
- Where do you sense that God is still leading you and challenging you to think different?