

LIFE GROUP GUIDE: THE JOY OF BEING GOD #1

CONNECT IN with one another

Welcome back! What was the best thing and what was the worst thing about your summer?

CONNECT UP with God

- Ask somebody to **read 1 Timothy 1:11**. This can also be translated *“the good news about the glory of the happy God”*. Do you think of God predominantly as being happy? Why/why not?
- Now ask somebody to **read Matthew 5:3-12**. This can also be translated *“Happy are those who...”* Do you think of the Christian life predominantly as being happy? Why/why not?
[Help for leaders: Really help people to grapple with this. Lots of Christians view happiness as rather shallow, preferring to see it as a virtue to follow Jesus through gritted teeth in misery. We’re not suggesting that we become shallow, happy-clappy Christians - the pain in the world is real - but we are suggesting we become *“sorrowful, yet always rejoicing”* (2Cor 6:10).]
- Why does it matter whether or not we think of God as happy?
[Help for leaders: Convince people that we become like what we worship (2 Kings 17:15 & Hosea 9:10)]
- Why does it matter whether or not we become happy in God ourselves?
[Help for leaders: Convince people that the Lord really wants us to be happy (see John 10:10, 15:11 and 17:13). Convince them that happiness is stored up for all those who trust in Jesus (Luke 2:10 and Matthew 25:21&23). Convince them that miserable Christians are weak and bring dishonour to God’s name, whereas *“The joy of the Lord is our strength”* (Nehemiah 8:10).]
- Let’s face up to the fact that British Christianity isn’t known for its great joy - in fact, it’s often known for the opposite. How can we grow in our joy in God, Jesus and the Gospel?
[Help for leaders: There are many different ways of answering this question, but what they seem to have in common is that the more we know God personally the more joyful we become (Heb 12:2 & Phil 4:4), and the more we are filled with the Holy Spirit the more joyful we become (Psalm 36:8, Isaiah 61:3, Luke 10:21 and Galatians 5:22).]
- CS Lewis argues that *“We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”* Do you agree?
- Lead into a time of worship and prayer, delighting in the Lord and rejoicing together.
- **CONNECT OUT with the non-church people around you**
- How are we going to share the joyful message of the Happy God with the nonbelievers all around us this autumn?
- Lead your group in planning different ways to help people to find their way back to God. What socials might you run as a group? How might you go out to share the Gospel together? Who might you invite to come to church? Imitate the Happy God, as he is described in 2 Samuel 14:14: *“He devises ways so that banished people do not remain banished from him.”*
- End by praying together that your joy in the Lord would be contagious and would flow out from you into your wider community.