



The Happiest Place in the World

PRESENTED TO:

Ekklesia Christian Life Fellowship:

June 14th, 2025



Scripture Reading

Luke 1:1-13

Section One

THE HAPPIEST PLACE IN THE WORLD



Scripture Reading

- One day, **Jesus** was praying in a **certain place**.
- When he finished, **one** of his disciples said to him,
 - “**Lord**, teach us to **pray**, just as **John** taught his disciples.” (Luke 11:1)
- He said to them, “When you **pray**, say:
 - “**Father**, hallowed be your **name**, your **kingdom** come.
 - Give us each day our **daily bread**.
 - Forgive us our **sins**, for we also forgive **everyone** who sins against us.
 - And lead us not into **temptation**.” (Luke 11:2-4)



Scripture Reading

- Then he said to them,
 - “Suppose one of you has a **friend**, and he goes to him at **midnight** and says,
 - ‘Friend,
 - Lend me **three loaves of bread**, because a friend of mine on a **journey** has come to me, and
 - I have nothing to set before him.’ (Luke 11:5-6)



Scripture Reading

- “Then the **one** inside answers,
 - ‘**Don’t bother me!!**
 - The **door** is already locked, and my children are with me in bed.
 - I can’t **get up** and give you anything.’
- I tell you,
 - Though he will **not** get up and give him the bread because he is his **friend**,
 - Yet because of the man’s **boldness**, he will get up and give him as much as he needs. (Luke 11:7-8)



Scripture Reading

- **“So I say to you:**
 - **Ask** and it will be given to you;
 - **Seek** and you will find;
 - **Knock** and the **door** will be opened to you.
- For **everyone** who **asks** receives.
- **He** who **seeks** finds, and
- To **him** who **knocks**, the door will be opened. (Luke 11:9-10)



Scripture Reading

- “Which of you **fathers**, if your **son** asks for a fish, will give him a **snake** instead?
- Or if **he** asks for an egg, will he give him a **scorpion**?
- If **you**, though you are **evil**,
 - know how to give **good gifts** to your children,
 - How much more will your **Father** in heaven give the **Holy Spirit** to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:11-13)



Introduction

The results are in, and the Happiest Place in the World is ...

Section Two

THE HAPPIEST PLACE IN THE WORLD

Introduction

- **Exercise** can release **endorphins**, the hormones that relieve pain and stress.
- **Movement** also triggers the release of **serotonin** and **dopamine**, two additional hormones associated with **happiness**.
- “On top of that,” writes journalist **Kirsti Lang**,
 - “Exercise increases your heart rate, which in turn pumps more **oxygen** to your brain.”
- The good news is that you don't have to run a **marathon** to experience the benefits.
- Lang says that ...
 - “Just 10 minutes of **movement** a day has been proven to be enough to boost **happiness levels**.”



Introduction

- Given the fact that **agriculture, logging, and forestry** involve much moving around, you might expect that **people** in those fields are **happy** with their work.
- And **you** would be right.
 - “Agriculture, logging, and forestry have the highest levels of **self-reported happiness**,” according to an analysis from The Washington Post.
 - They also have the “lowest levels of **self-reported stress**.”
- If your **work** requires you to get outside and move around, you will likely be **happy**.
- On top of this, researchers have found a strong link between **mental health** and being outdoors.



Introduction

- These **studies** reveal trends about **happiness** at work.
- But what makes us **happy** in our free time?
- **Sports, exercise, and recreation** rank second in terms of **happiness**. No surprise there.
- All involve **moving around**, which releases happiness **hormones**.
- Much **joy** can be found in activities such as hiking, swimming, cycling, or playing pickleball.
- But here is the **real shocker**:
 - Do you know the **activity** that tops the **happiness list**?



Introduction

- **Religion** and **spirituality** make **people** happier than
 - sports,
 - exercise,
 - recreation,
 - volunteer activities,
 - eating,
 - drinking,
 - socializing, and
 - traveling.



Introduction

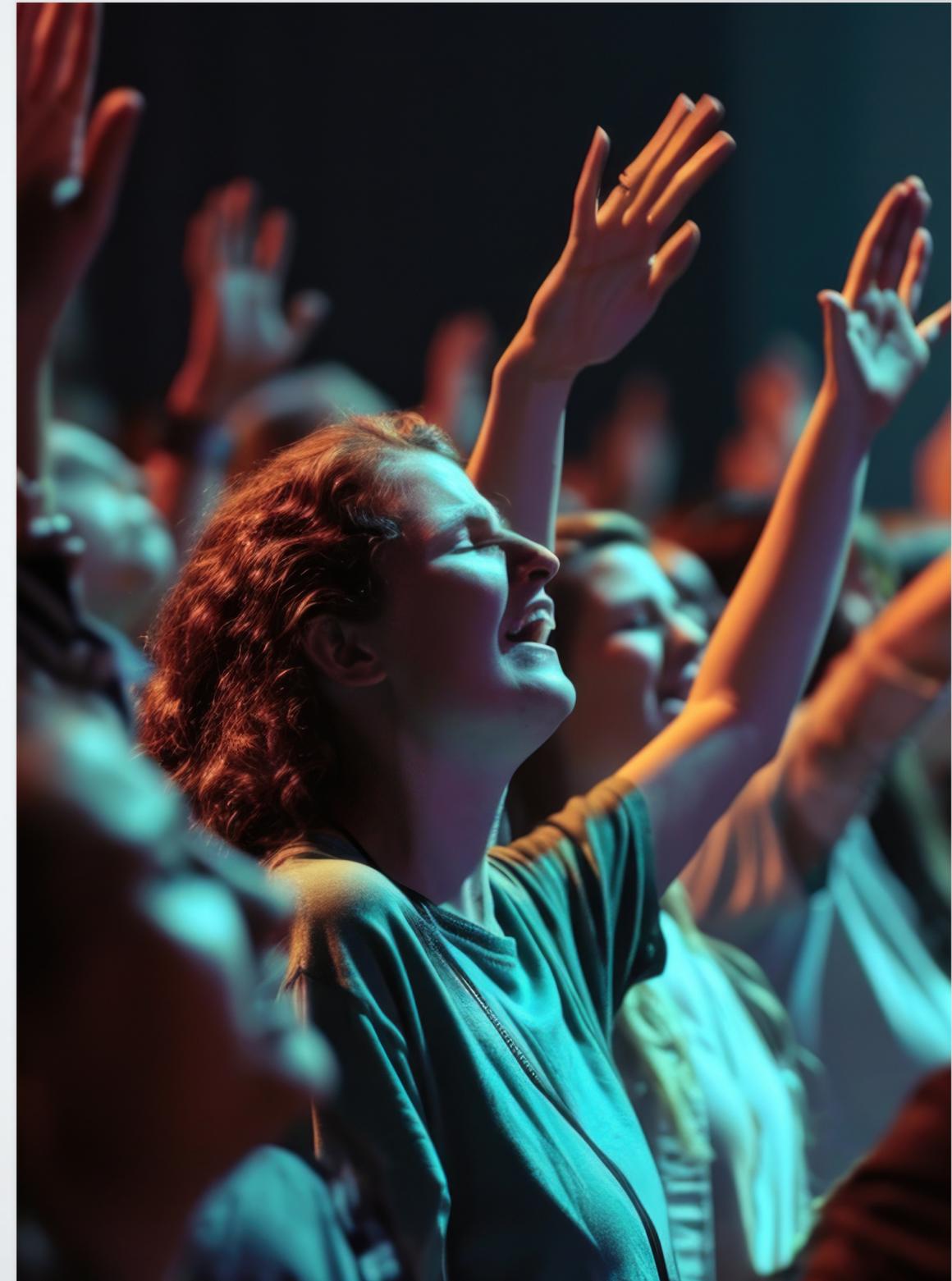
- Four recent **surveys**, conducted between 2010 and 2021, asked people about the **meaning** of **specific activities** to them and how they **feel**—happy, sad, stressed, and tired—when engaging in these **activities**.
- The activities are graded on a **six-point scale**, with **personal care** receiving a score of **2.8** out of 6.
- At the **top**, the most meaningful and **happiness**-inducing activities are those that are religious and spiritual.
- They get a score of **5.1** out of 6.





Introduction

- The **surveys** also looked at locations and found that **places of worship** are ranked as the **happiest places** on earth.
- They get a score of **5.2**.
- At the bottom are **banks**, with a score of **3.8**.





Lord, Teach Us to Pray!

Seeing the result of prayer in Jesus' ministry, naturally, they want to pray as well.

Section Three

THE HAPPIEST PLACE IN THE WORLD



Jesus' Happy Place

- "The **Gospel of Luke** tells us that **Jesus** was praying 'in a certain place' one day (11:1).
- After He finished, **one** of **His disciples** said, 'Lord, teach us to pray.'
- This request reveals a **desire** to connect with God as Jesus did, **seeking** the joy and peace that prayer brings.
- **Scripture** often links **prayer** to divine intimacy and rest — **Jesus** Himself found **strength** in it (Luke 5:16), and Philippians 4:6-7 **promises** peace through prayer that surpasses **understanding**.
- **Jesus** taught **His disciples** to **pray** in a way that aligned them with **God's will**, drawing them into a deep, joyful **communion** with the **Father**.
- Through **prayer**, we too can experience this **spiritual** 'happiest place on earth' — a **state** of closeness to God that **fills us** with enduring hope, peace, and joy.
- **Jesus** invites us into this same **transformative practice**."



The Lord's Prayer - Analysis

- The **Lord's Prayer**, found in Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4, is both a **prayer** to be recited and a **model** for personal prayer.
- Jesus introduces it with 'This, then, is how you should pray' (Matthew 6:9, NIV), indicating it serves as a **framework** for approaching God.
- Its **structure**—praising God, seeking His will, and requesting provision, forgiveness, and guidance—provides a **balanced guide** for prayer.
- Many **Christians** recite it verbatim in worship or personal devotion, cherishing its sacred words.
- Others use its themes as a **template**, adapting them to express their own needs and intentions.
- Historically, the **prayer** has been both chanted in liturgical settings and studied as a pattern for individual prayer, reflecting its **dual role** in Christian practice.

The Lord's Prayer - Analysis

| Element | Matthew 6:9-13 | Luke 11:2-4 |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Opening Address | Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name | Father, hallowed be your name |
| God's Will/Kingdom | Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven | Your kingdom come. |
| Provision | Give us <u>today</u> our daily bread | Give us <u>each day</u> our daily bread. |
| Forgiveness | And forgive us our debts , <u>as we</u> also have forgiven <u>our debtors</u> | Forgive us our sins , <u>for we</u> also forgive everyone who sins against us. |
| Temptation/Deliverance | And lead us <u>not</u> into temptation , but <u>deliver</u> us from the evil one | And lead us <u>not</u> into temptation. |
| Doxology | Absent | Absent |



Parable of the Persistent Friend

- The **parable** illustrates a man who persistently asks a **friend** for bread despite the **inconvenient hour** and initial refusal.
- The word “**boldness**” (sometimes translated as “persistence” or “shameless audacity”) emphasizes the importance of **perseverance** in prayer.
- The **friend** eventually responds not out of **friendship** but due to the requester’s **relentless knocking**.
- The **lesson** here is to **keep praying** with boldness and persistence, even when **answers** seem delayed.
- **God**, unlike the **reluctant neighbor**, is eager to respond to our **prayers**, encouraging us to approach Him with **confidence**.



Parable of the Persistent Friend

- The **parable** of the **friend** at midnight uses a relatable human scenario to illustrate that if **persistence** can move a reluctant neighbor, **how much more** will **God**, who is infinitely good, respond to **our prayers**?
- It encourages **believers** to pray with confidence, intercede on behalf of others, and rely on God's abundant provision.
- As **Jesus** says in the next verse,
 - **Ask**, and it will be given to you; **seek**, and you will find; **knock**, and the door will be opened to you. (Luke 11:9)
 - For **everyone** who asks receives; **he** who seeks finds; and to **him** who knocks, the door will be opened. (Luke 11:10)



Parable of the Perfect Father

- In Luke 11:11-13, the emphasis is on the contrast between **human** and **divine Generosity**.
- The **passage** uses a rhetorical question about a **human father**, who, despite being “**evil**” (imperfect or sinful), still gives good gifts (like a fish or egg) rather than **harmful things** (like a snake or scorpion) when his child asks.
- This sets up a “**how much more**” argument:
 - If flawed **human parents** respond positively to their **children’s requests**,
 - **God**, the perfect Father, is far more willing to give **good gifts**.



Parable of the Perfect Father

- However, here in Luke 11:13, “**good gifts**” is defined as the **Holy Spirit**. Why?
- Jesus emphasizes the **Holy Spirit** as the pinnacle of **God’s gifts** because it represents God’s very presence, power, and transformative work in the lives of believers.
- Unlike **material gifts** (e.g., the bread in the parable of the friend at midnight, Luke 11:5-8), the **Holy Spirit** is a divine gift that meets the deepest spiritual needs and enables a relationship with God.
- Reason for Connection:
 - The **Holy Spirit** encompasses all “**good gifts**” because it is the **source** of spiritual life, guidance, and empowerment.
 - By giving the **Spirit**, God provides not just **temporary provision** but **eternal transformation**, fulfilling every aspect of a **believer’s needs** (John 16:13; Romans 8:26-27).



Benefits of the Holy Spirit

Why possessing the Holy Spirit is the best of all gifts.

Section Four

THE HAPPIEST PLACE IN THE WORLD



Ways the Holy Spirit Helps Us

- **Indwells Believers:**

- The **Holy Spirit** lives within **Christians**, marking us as **God's children** and assuring us of **His presence** (1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:9). This **indwelling** fosters a personal relationship with **God**.

- **Convicts of Sin:**

- The **Spirit** convicts **believers** of sin, righteousness, and judgment, helping us **recognize** our need for repentance and God's grace (John 16:8-11).

- **Regenerates and Renews:**

- The **Spirit** brings **new spiritual life**, enabling believers to be **“born again”** and transformed into **new creations** (John 3:5-6; Titus 3:5).

- **Guides into Truth:**

- The **Spirit** teaches and reminds **Christians** of **Jesus' teachings**, leading us into all **truth** and helping us understand **Scripture** (John 14:26; John 16:13).



Ways the Holy Spirit Helps Us

- **Empowers for Witness and Ministry:**

- The **Spirit** equips **Christians** with boldness and power to share the **gospel** and fulfill God's mission (Acts 1:8; Acts 4:31).

- **Grant's Spiritual Gifts:**

- The **Spirit** distributes **gifts** (e.g., teaching, prophecy, healing, tongues) to build up the church and serve others (1 Corinthians 12:4-11; Romans 12:6-8).

- **Produces Spiritual Fruit:**

- The **Spirit** cultivates **virtues** such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control in the **lives** of **believers** (Galatians 5:22-23).

- **Intercedes in Prayer:**

- The **Spirit** helps **Christians pray**, interceding with "*groans that words cannot express*" when we don't know what to **pray** for, aligning our prayers with **God's will** (Romans 8:26-27).



Ways the Holy Spirit Helps Us

- **Sanctifies and Transforms:**

- The **Spirit** works to make Christians **holy**, helping us **overcome sin** and **grow** in Christlike character (Romans 8:13-14; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

- **Provides Strength and Comfort:**

- As the “**Comforter**” or “**Advocate**,” the Spirit strengthens and encourages believers in **trials**, offering peace and hope (John 14:16-17; Acts 9:31).

- **Seals and Assures Salvation:**

- The **Spirit** acts as a **seal**, guaranteeing believers’ **salvation** and **eternal inheritance** (Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:22).

- **Fosters Unity in the Church:**

- The **Spirit unites believers** as one body, breaking down divisions and fostering fellowship (Ephesians 4:3-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13).



Ways the Holy Spirit Helps Us

- **Guides Decision-Making:**

- The **Spirit** provides **wisdom** and **direction** for **life's choices**, leading believers in **God's will** (Romans 8:14; Acts 16:6-7).

- **Empowers Against Temptation:**

- The **Spirit** strengthens **Christians** to resist **temptation** and live **righteously**, helping them walk in **obedience** (Galatians 5:16; Luke 11:4).

- **Reveals God's Presence:**

- The **Spirit** makes **God's presence** tangible, enabling worship, communion, and a deeper experience of God's love (Romans 5:5; Ephesians 3:16-17).



Ways the Holy Spirit Helps Us

- **Summary:**

- The **Holy Spirit** is God's transformative presence in the lives of **Christians**, guiding, empowering, and equipping us for **every aspect** of our spiritual journey.
- From indwelling and sanctifying to granting gifts and interceding in prayer, the **Spirit** enables **believers** to ...
 - grow in **faith**,
 - serve **others**, and
 - experience **God's** love and power.
- By seeking the **Spirit** through **prayer**, as encouraged in Luke 11:13, **Christians** can access these **blessings** to **live** vibrant, God-honoring lives.



The Presence of the Holy Spirit!

The presence of the Holy Spirit brings us peace amid our problems and troubles.

Section Five

THE HAPPIEST PLACE IN THE WORLD



Guards our Hearts/Minds

- We live in a **world** where most people have little **peace, joy, or hope**.
- Instead, they are filled with worry, strife, and anxiety.
- They go to great lengths to fill this **emptiness** and **void** with adventure, good times, worldly achievements, and all kinds of sensual pleasures.
- Believing that **money** can buy them all of the above, they **work** long hours and even go into debt to accomplish something that really doesn't **satisfy**.
- Some even lie, kill, and steal to get **money, fame, or fortune**, and it too doesn't bring about the **love, joy, and peace** that people crave.



Guards Our Hearts/Minds

- You've heard it said, 'The **fear** of the **LORD** is the beginning of wisdom' (Psalm 111:10), but I also say that the beginning of **love**, **joy**, and **happiness** is not money, but putting God first in all you do, then waiting for Him in prayer with giving thanks.
- This is not easy to do as we live in a **world** that doesn't acknowledge or practice God's will or **ways**.
- Instead, what is on **everyone's mind** is finding **happiness** through the things of this world, which might bring joy in the **short term**, but don't sustain it for long.
- Therefore, brothers and sisters in Christ, our **well-being** is not found in the things of this **world** or in having everything go our way.
- It is found in having a **serious relationship** with the **Lord** that brings good fruit, contentment, joy, and peace, knowing that when we go to the **Lord** in prayer, He hears us.

Benefits of Prayer

- So then, if you know a **Christian** who worries, frets, and is anxious, share the following **Scriptures** with them. Who knows, there still may be **hope** for them.
- **Prayer Promotes Peace and Reduces Anxiety**
 - *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by **prayer** and **petition**, with thanksgiving, present your **requests** to God. And the peace of **God**, which transcends all understanding, will guard your **hearts** and your **minds** in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)*
 - POINT: Praying with **gratitude** shifts focus from problems to **God's faithfulness**, calming the **mind** and **heart**.



Benefits of Prayer

- **Prayer Enhances a Sense of Well-Being**

- *You have made known to me the **path of life**; you will fill me with **joy** in your presence, with **eternal pleasures** at your right hand. (Psalm 16:11)*
- POINT: Spending time in **God's presence** through prayer brings **joy** and a sense of spiritual grounding.

- **Prayer Cultivates Happiness Through Gratitude**

- *Be **joyful** always; **pray** continually; **give thanks** in all circumstances, for this is **God's will** for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)*
- POINT: Regular **prayer** cultivates a habit of gratitude, which research indicates can enhance **happiness** and **life satisfaction**.

Benefits of Prayer

- **Prayer Strengthens Hope and Resilience**

- *For I know the **plans** I have for you,” declares the **LORD**, “**plans** to **prosper** you and not to **harm** you, **plans** to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and **pray** to me, and I will listen to you. (Jeremiah 29:11-12)*
- POINT: Prayer reminds us of **God’s promises**, bolstering our resilience and hope in the face of **adversity**.

- **Prayer Undermines the Devil’s Work**

- *Cast all your **anxiety** on him because **he** cares for you. Be **self-controlled** and **alert**. Your enemy, the **devil**, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. (1 Peter 5:7-8)*
- POINT: Unresolved worry and **anxiety** not only insult **God’s goodness**, but also open the door for the **devil** to use us to do his will.



Conclusion

Prayer helps us to find rest in God and peace for our souls.

Section Six

THE HAPPIEST PLACE IN THE WORLD



Rest for our Souls

- **Prayer** is a transformative practice that nurtures **well-being, peace,** and **happiness** by drawing us closer to **God** and aligning our hearts with **His truth**.
- Through **prayer**, we find rest for our **souls**, strength for our **challenges**, and joy in **His presence**.
- Let us, therefore, commit to making **prayer** the cornerstone of our **lives**, trusting that it leads us to the **happiest place** on earth—**God's presence**.
- As we gather in places of public or private worship, let us approach **God** with boldness, persistence, and gratitude, knowing that He is ready to pour out His **Spirit** upon us.



Rest for our Souls

- May we encourage **one another**, as the sermon urges, to lean into this **transformative practice**, sharing the hope and peace it brings with those who are **anxious** or **lost**.
- By living **prayerfully**, we not only find rest for our souls but also become **beacons** of **God's** love and joy in a world desperately seeking **true happiness**.
- Let us **pray** without ceasing, for in **His presence**, we find the fullness of **joy** that endures forever.
- Isaiah says, You will keep in **perfect peace** him whose **mind** is steadfast, because he **trusts** in you. (Isaiah 26:3)
- As **Jesus** promised in John 16:24 (NIV):
 - Until now, you have not asked for anything in **my name**.
 - **Ask**, and you will receive; your **joy** will be complete.