



Lesson 2

“What makes me happy?”

(Discovering God as the Source)



Opening Prayer

“Jesus turned and saw [Andrew and John] following him and said to them, ‘What are you looking for?’ They said to him, ‘[Teacher] ... where are you staying?’

“He said to them, ‘Come, and you will see.’”

—John 1:38-39, NAB

Lord Jesus, you ask us, just as you asked Andrew and John, “What are you looking for?” So you stand before each heart in this room and ask the same question today.

And just as you invited *them* to “come and see,” you’re offering to lead *us* to the **HAPPINESS** we seek.

We accept your invitation. Help us to find what we’re *really* looking for in life. Give us the wisdom to look for happiness in the right place. Amen.

Dive In: The Price of Fame

Born in a two-bedroom house in a small town in Mississippi, Elvis Presley died one of the most famous people to walk the earth. He starred in thirty-three films, was on TV countless times, appeared in concert more than a thousand times all over the country, and sold more than one billion records worldwide. Yet, the “King of Rock and Roll” died on his bathroom floor from a drug overdose, with more than ten different prescription drugs in his system.

As a child, Jimi Hendrix was often seen carrying a broom, pretending it was a guitar. Jimi’s school social worker told the boy’s father that failure to get his son a guitar might eventually cause a mental breakdown! Jimi got his first guitar at age fifteen and became one of the greatest electric guitarists who ever lived. His genius left an indelible mark on the music industry—yet he also died of an overdose.

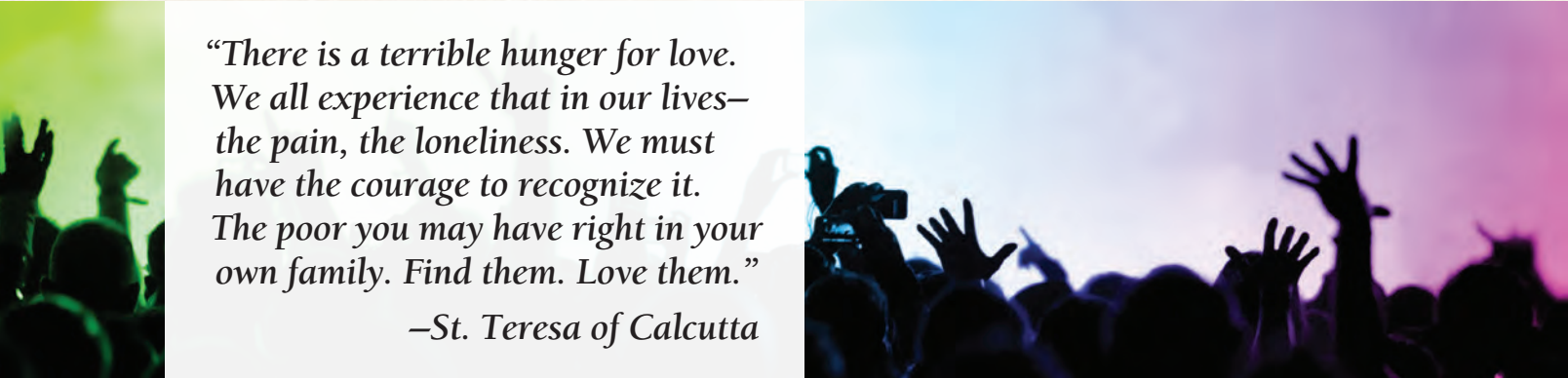
Kurt Cobain’s band, Nirvana, was called “the flagship band of Generation X” by *Rolling Stone* magazine.

Almost overnight, it changed the music scene from “big-hair,” glam bands to grunge. The band sold more than fifty million albums. Kurt had a tough time dealing with fame and depression, however. At the height of his success, he shot himself.

Every generation is packed with fallen idols, sad reminders of the high price of “success”: Heath Ledger, Michael Jackson, Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston. After rising to stardom and fame, each suffered a drug- or alcohol-related death. They seem to stand before us almost as warning signs that say, “STOP! This road does NOT lead to fulfillment!” And yet, according to one poll, twenty-nine percent of young people (up ten percent in recent years) said they’d rather be famous than happy!¹

As we’ll discover in today’s lesson, it takes something more than what this world can offer us to be really happy and truly fulfilled. Today we’re going to take a look at that “something more.”

Note: In presenting these examples of celebrities who struggled and ultimately met their untimely deaths as the result of substance abuse, no judgment on their persons or characters—or the eternal destiny of their souls—is being implied. Even famous people can struggle with difficult problems (e.g., drugs, alcohol, depression, etc.) and ultimately lose their battle. Not every action of a celebrity is worthy of emulation and imitation. You should model your life after the true “heroes”—Jesus, Mary, and the saints.



“There is a terrible hunger for love. We all experience that in our lives—the pain, the loneliness. We must have the courage to recognize it. The poor you may have right in your own family. Find them. Love them.”

—St. Teresa of Calcutta



Segment 1: The Goal of Life

1. Everyone wants to be _____.

Segment 2: Is There Something More?

1. In which television show did Leah appear?
A) "Wheel of Fortune" C) "Dancing with the Stars"
B) "America's Next Top Model" D) "Survivor"
2. **T or F?** Leah was raised as a Catholic.

Segment 3: Are We on Our Own?

1. Brian walks by a famous river that is hard to navigate. Which river is it? _____
2. Brian says that the source of all happiness may ultimately be found in _____.



TO THE HEART with

When I was growing up, my dream was to be an NFL football player (just like 147 million other kids). Then, when I was fifteen, I discovered Psalm 37:4: *“Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart.”* That verse captured my imagination. I thought God was saying, “If you scratch my back, I will scratch yours.”

The summer before my senior year, I met a girl at a youth event in Colorado. I liked her a lot, and when she told me of her plans to attend the University of Colorado in Boulder (CU), I got excited about the possibilities. CU had a good communications program and a nationally ranked football team. So I struck a deal with God: “If you let me walk on and make the team at Colorado, I will do whatever you ask of me and use my platform to share the Good News of the Gospel.” *How could God refuse that deal?* I thought.

Shortly before making the long bus trip to attend CU, I called the girl I was pursuing ... and her *boyfriend* got on the phone. I was stunned—and a little hurt. She had *lied* to me! But at least I still had school and football to pursue. So that August, I drove from New Jersey to Colorado—and discovered I *loved* it out there! The mountains were beautiful, the people were friendly, the weather was great, and I couldn’t wait to try out for the football team. I trained rigorously and had the time of my life. Finally, the day arrived ... and I did not make the team.

At the end of the semester, I transferred out of CU with failing grades, shattered dreams, and a broken heart. *God’s sure not keeping his end of the deal*, I thought. I had faithfully gone to Sunday **MASS**, said my daily prayers, and avoided the wild party scene. *I’m the good guy*, I thought to myself. *So, what’s up with this, God?*

Re-reading Psalm 37:4, it finally occurred to me that I had badly misinterpreted this verse, treating God like a genie in a lamp. By relegating him to an “if this, then that” relationship, I was robbing myself of the freedom and love that God had created me to share with him.

Over the next few years, my **FAITH** grew; I pulled up my grades, played football at a smaller university, and later married the girl of my dreams. Life was pretty sweet, but *none* of these things gave me the lasting happiness that I discovered when I got things right with God. He loves us with a wild, faithful, bold love. His desire for us is deep, and

this is why the psalmist says, “Deep calls to deep” (Psalm 42:7). We may never get that perfect date, straight A’s, that new high-tech gadget, or a pile of money ... but the person who delights in God will receive the *deepest* of all desires. God will give *himself* to that person.

If you take some time to prayerfully consider God’s desire for you, and stack all those other things against the world’s greatest love, deep within you’ll hear the “echo” that God placed in your heart, “O God, you are my God, I seek you, my **SOUL** thirsts for you ...” (Psalm 63:1).

Brian Butler

Find It!

Why does the pope wear white?

“... the person who delights in God will receive the deepest of all desires.”

Hero of the Week



Born:
circa 251

Died:
356

Memorial:
January 17

Patron Saint of:

- skin diseases
- basket makers
- gravediggers

St. Anthony the Great (Anthony of Egypt)

“Put your money where your mouth is!”

It's fairly easy to say you are a Christian, but what would you give up to get closer to Christ? Could you walk away from your Xbox? Put away Facebook? Lose your iPhone?

Listening to a homily on Matthew's Gospel, Anthony of Egypt (also known as “St. Anthony the Great”) was moved by Jesus' call to sell everything and to “Come, follow me” (Matthew 19:21). So Anthony sold his family's estate, which he had recently inherited. He placed his younger sister with a group of Christian women and then moved to the outskirts of the town to live as a hermit. Just like that.

It was a radical move, even then.

Anthony was born in 251 in Coma, near Heracleopolis. He came from a wealthy family of landowners, and when he turned eighteen, his parents died, and he inherited the family estate. He could have lived a life of luxury ... but he left it all behind, gave everything he owned to the poor, and lived a life of simplicity and **PRAYER** in the desert. He dressed in animal skins and ate bread and insects. Anthony and others who followed his example (moving from the outskirts of town to the desert, to live in total isolation) became known as the “Desert Fathers.”

In today's culture, such a demonstration of zeal for Christ is countercultural. But

even then, many must have questioned the mental health of anyone wanting to live this way. For Anthony, it was the ultimate testament to his faith. He listened to God's call and followed. Immediately. Wholeheartedly. And with enthusiasm.

The devil tempted him often, and he suffered both spiritually and physically as a result of his radical commitment and lifestyle. In all of this, God stayed by his side, a source of strength and inspiration. And after each trial, Anthony pushed himself further in his spiritual journey. More than anything, he wanted to experience God's presence in his life and follow him perfectly.

St. Anthony's lessons are enduring. While few are called to be Christian hermits like he was, Anthony stands as a living message to us, that we are all called to give to the poor (rather than live for personal gain), and that we should seek happiness in God over and above anything this world has to offer.

St. Anthony, pray for us. Model for us the perseverance to live the life to which we aspire, moving closer and closer to God every day.

Challenge of the Week

- ☐ **Inspired music:** Come to class next week with a song or image that highlights a musician or other artist's quest for God. Write about it in the space below.
- ☐ **Start a powerful new habit!** Turn off all media for five minutes a day and relax in a quiet place. Ask God to help you to be open to his voice in your life. Write a little about what happened in the space below.
- ☐ **Speak or write a sincere message of encouragement** to someone you know who is sick or who is sad, worried, or upset about something. Say a prayer for his or her intentions. Is there something practical you can do to help this person this week?

✝ Closing Prayer

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”

—Matthew 6:33

Heavenly Father, many people spend their lives chasing wealth, power, status, or fame, hoping to find happiness. Yet, so often they end their lives in despair, having missed out on the greatest treasure of all: knowing and loving you. Show us our true selves, Lord, made in your image and likeness. And inspire us with a holy courage to live, not as the world dictates, but according to your perfect plan for our happiness. Amen.

Taking It Home

For next week's "Review Game," be sure to read over the following ...

1. **Watch It!** questions (page 7)
2. **Wrap-Up**
3. **"What's That Word?"**
4. **Memory Verse**

Don't forget to do your **Challenge of the Week** (page 11)

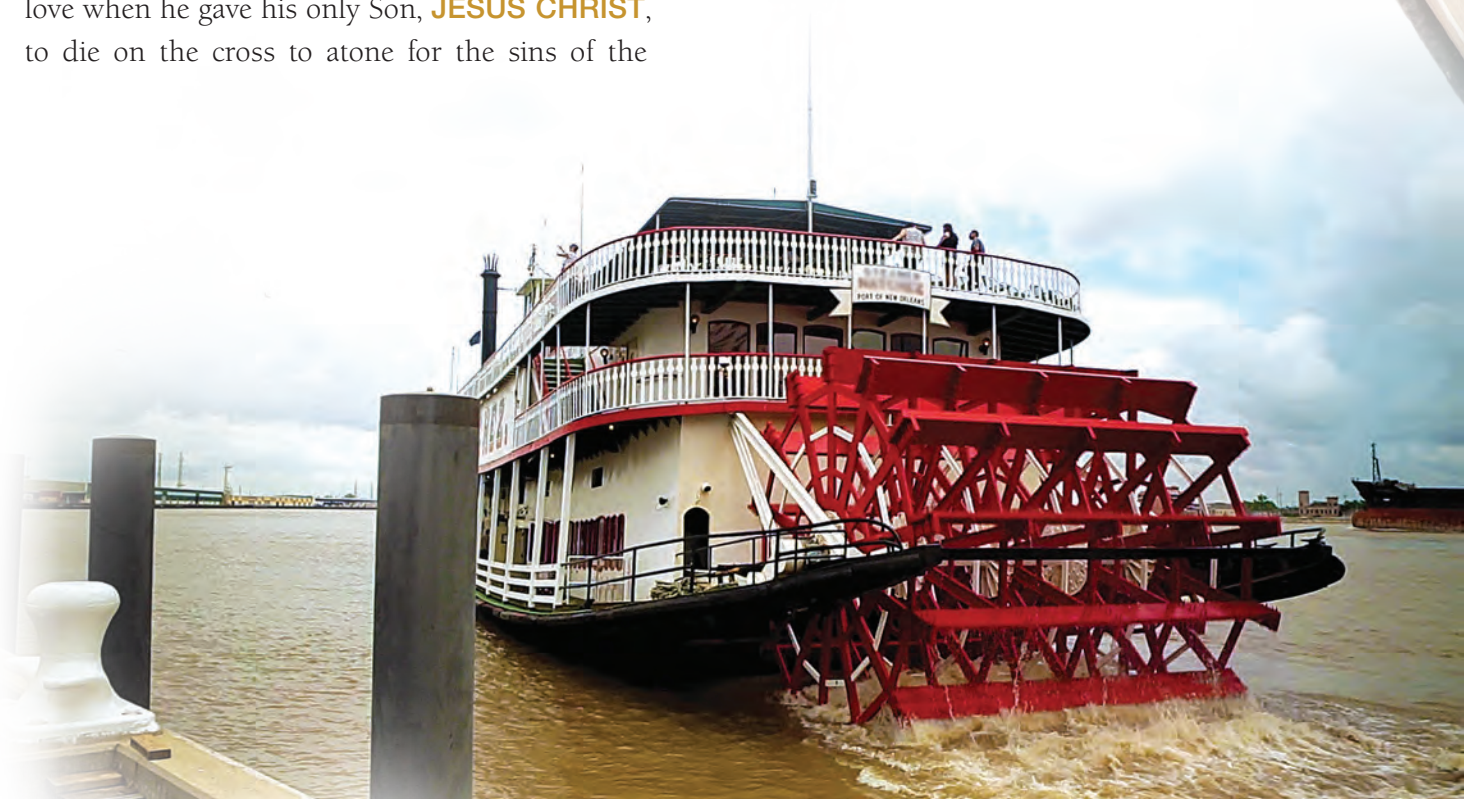
Wrap-Up

Scripture tells us that "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and that he created us for himself. In this life and the next, we will find true fulfillment by knowing, loving, and serving God. That is how he created us to find ultimate happiness—not the passing kind of "happiness" the world gives, but an abiding joy that doesn't depend on circumstances.

God created the whole world out of love for us, and created us to reveal his image and likeness to the world.² God the Father exhibited the ultimate act of love when he gave his only Son, **JESUS CHRIST**, to die on the cross to atone for the sins of the

world.³ Jesus loved us enough to give his own life for us. We are called to this type of unselfish love—to live in a way that reminds those we encounter of the amazing, unlimited love of God.

That's how we become fully human—fully alive! To the contrary, living for ourselves only leads to emptiness.



“What’s That Word?”

HAPPINESS

Everyone wants to be happy. In fact, we could say that all of our actions are motivated by a desire to achieve happiness. We can be mistaken, though, about what will actually make us happy. Many people are confused about what it takes to be happy, and some despair, believing that lasting happiness is impossible.

We can only be happy if we fulfill the purpose for which we have been created: to love and be loved. But no human love can completely fill our hearts. In the fifth chapter of Matthew, Jesus provides us the “blueprint” for happiness in **THE BEATITUDES**, which give us the conditions we must fulfill for a truly blessed, happy life, living in God’s own divine love.⁴

LOVE

We all want it. But what is it? To love someone is simply to will and to do what is good for that person. The ultimate love, expressed in a willingness to **SACRIFICE** for the sake of another *simply because it is best for that person*, is a theme throughout Scripture, found in more than 600 verses. God’s greatest expression of love is found in Jesus Christ, especially in his sacrificial death on the cross.

The meaning of life is love: receiving love from God, showing our love for God through obedience to him, and loving others with God’s own love that is within us.⁵

Memory Verse:



“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

—1 Peter 2:9

PEACE

In everyday use, **PEACE** is often used to describe the absence of war or conflict. The biblical understanding of peace, however, goes a bit deeper. The fifth Commandment (“you shall not kill”) implies that we are to strive for peace in all of our relationships. As Jesus teaches in the Beatitudes, peace is a key goal of our life in him: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.”⁶

In his letter to the Galatians, St. Paul lists peace as a fruit of the **HOLY SPIRIT**.⁷ St. Augustine describes peace as “the tranquility of order,” which can only be achieved through peace with God and living a life of justice and **CHARITY**.⁸ Peace can properly be understood, then, as a harmony existing between individuals and peoples, and within our souls. Given our fallen nature, true peace can only be achieved through the help of God’s **GRACE**.

Did You Know?

*The pope does not earn a salary
and has no bank account.*

Any questions?

What does God have
to do with my finding
happiness or fulfillment?

Your stomach growls because it needs healthy food to fill it—God designed your body to signal that need. If there were no need for food, that growling would make no sense. Similarly, there’s a “growling” in the depths of every soul. But none of what the world offers really works to fill our growling souls. St. Augustine, who had tried out every **SIN** under the sun, said, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”⁹

Can’t I just be a “good person” without God?

In some ways, yes. In other ways, not at all.

Think about it. If you woke up and found yourself surrounded by the most amazing gifts you can imagine—precious gems, the coolest video games, thousands of dollars in gift cards, (insert your favorite stuff here)—and it never even occurred to you to find out who gave you these gifts, and you had no urge to thank anyone for them, that would be a serious moral flaw!

God has given us life, breath, and our very existence. Whether from shallowness or sin, it’s a serious moral flaw to fail to even look toward him, want to know him, or thank him.

