

The Samaritan Institute
at
The Sunshine Cathedral

***Happiness**

A Five Week Course

*Course curriculum designed and prepared by The Reverend Dr. Durrell
Watkins

*"Here at the Sunshine Cathedral, we are
seekers and students of Truth, empowered
by Spirit, sharing the Light with the World"*

Sunshine Cathedral
is
A Metropolitan Community Church
Affiliated with The Center for Progressive Christianity

TSI is the educational arm of the Sunshine Cathedral

Lesson 1

Ice Breaker: Imagine a time when or a place where you were blissfully happy. Was it on a beach at sunrise? Was it a moment during a fabulous vacation? Was it a first date? Was it seeing a phenomenal performance on Broadway? Was it a childhood Christmas? Just imagine the happy time/place...notice how you feel NOW. Choosing to entertain happy thoughts or happy memories has an immediate effect on us. Where is your happy place? It is only ever a thought away.

Reflection: Have one person read the Robert Holden quote. Another person can read the reflection that follows it. And the entire group can then say the affirmation together.

Available Now

“Another way of seeing our ‘I want it now’ world is that this clamor for happiness now reflects an instinctive wisdom and a great spiritual truth, which states that everything – absolutely everything – is available to you now.” Dr. Robert Holden, *Happiness Now: Timeless Wisdom for Feeling Good FAST*

Dr. Holden has an exercise where he asks people to call out what they see when he shows them the following letters: HAPPINESSISNOWHERE. Some people answer, “Happiness is nowhere” while others answer “Happiness is now here.” The difference between “Happiness is nowhere” and “Happiness is now here” is where one places one’s attention. Do we focus on the one possibility (nowhere) or on the other (now here). Where we focus our attention determines what we will see. There is probably a very important lesson in that, don’t you think?

**My happiness is Now Here! I claim it. I celebrate it. I allow it to be.
And so it is.**

Today’s devotional prepared by Durrell Watkins

Lesson: Teachers have observed that we are either Now Here or we are Nowhere. The same letters in the same order produce two different phrases with opposite meanings. But our focus makes all the difference. We can choose to be happy in the present, because the present is the only time that really exists. Even a fond memory from the past becomes part of the present when we bring it to light. We can recall the past or imagine the future, but we are doing this remembering or imagining NOW. So, whatever we are thinking about we are thinking NOW. And the feelings those thoughts produce are being produced NOW. What we bring into this moment is determining how we will feel in this moment,

and this moment is the moment of power. This week, let's practice having happy thoughts. We can choose in an holy instant to return to happiness, hope, love, and empowerment. The holy instant is now. By focusing on joy now, we can experience joy, now.

Discuss: Have you formed a habit of nursing and rehearsing painful or disappointing scenes in your thoughts? Are have you learned to create a happy place in your thinking to which you can return in any given moment? What happy thought are you willing to hold sacred and bring into the NOW whenever it is needed this week? The prophet Nehemiah said, "The joy of the LORD is my strength" (Neh. 8.10). Are you willing to let joy be your strength in the week ahead?

Circle Prayer: Standing in a circle, holding hands, just say in a word or two something you would like people to remember in prayer for the upcoming week. Then, starting with one person and going around the circle, just say a one or two line prayer...you can pray for the group, for the church, for someone on your heart, for peace in the world, for people on the church's prayer list...just pray. If you aren't comfortable praying aloud in front of people, just gently squeeze the next person's hand to let them know to pass you. Your silent prayers are effective too.

Lesson 2

Ice Breaker: Think of a time you chose an item while shopping, or you chose an entrée while dining out, and you didn't like the item or the dish once you got it. Did you take the item back? Did you send the entrée back? Did you make another choice? Were you happier with your new choice?

Reflection: Have one person read the Robert Holden quote. Another person can read the reflection that follows it. And the entire group can then say the affirmation together.

Choose Life

"Relationships suffer because people wait for love instead of being loving; they wait for friendship instead of being a friend. At work, one of the biggest causes of a poor team spirit is that everyone waits for the team spirit to get better. People age prematurely because they wait to have fun after work...after bills...after retirement...Healing takes longer because people wait to be well again before they choose happiness...Choose now." Dr. Robert Holden, *Shift Happens: Powerful Ways to Transform Your Life*

Deuteronomy 30.19 challenges us to "Choose life!" The advice isn't to pursue life. The mandate isn't to wait for life. We are told to "choose life." When we choose hope over despair, life tends to be more abundant. When we choose self-acceptance over condemnation, life tends to be more abundant. When we choose to give rather than waiting to receive, life tends to be more abundant. When we choose to access the peace that God has already implanted within us, life tends to be more abundant. When we choose to allow ourselves to be happy, life tends to be more abundant. Choose life! Choose now.

**I choose an abundant, happy life. I choose it now, in Jesus' name.
Amen.**

Today's devotional prepared by Durrell Watkins

Lesson: *A Course in Miracles* teaches: "You always choose between your weakness and the strength of Christ in you. And what you choose is what you think is real. Simply by never using weakness to direct your actions, you have given it no power. And the light of Christ in you is given charge of everything you do." The *Course* tells us to "choose once again"! We may have chosen to focus on negativity, fear, or regret; but we are free to make a different choice right now! Colossians 1.27 speaks of "...Christ in you, the hope of glory!" We may not have focused on the

Christ within before this moment, but we can choose again. We can focus on what is good in our lives. We can focus on our potential. We can focus on our gifts. We can focus more on what we have left than on what we have lost. We can focus on what we can still do rather than on what we have so far left undone. We can (and will) choose where we place our focus. And the choice that we make will make all the difference in our lives.

Discuss: Can you choose to see the perfection of Christ in your own life? If so, how does that feel? If you can't, what "old tapes" are keeping you from knowing the truth of your beauty, brilliance, and sacred value? Are you willing to choose to think more positively about yourself?

Circle Prayer: Standing in a circle, holding hands, just say in a word or two something you would like people to remember in prayer for the upcoming week. Then, starting with one person and going around the circle, just say a one or two line prayer...you can pray for the group, for the church, for someone on your heart, for peace in the world, for people on the church's prayer list...just pray. If you aren't comfortable praying aloud in front of people, just gently squeeze the next person's hand to let them know to pass you. Your silent prayers are effective too.

Lesson 3

Ice Breaker: Has there been a moment when you KNEW you were Wonder Woman or Superman? It may have been just a moment, but for that moment you knew you were valuable and wonderful and wise and supremely capable? When was the last time you remembered your “super” powers?

Reflection: Have one person read the Robert Holden quote. Another person can read the reflection that follows it. And the entire group can then say the affirmation together.

I Am Good Enough

“Unless you’re happy with yourself, you won’t be happy with what you do...unless you’re happy with yourself, you won’t be happy with where you are...unless you’re happy with yourself, you won’t be happy with who you’re with...unless you’re happy with yourself, you won’t be happy with what you have...When you accept your Self, you accept joy naturally.” Dr. Robert Holden, *Happiness Now: Timeless Wisdom for Feeling Good FAST*

We often suffer from “Not-Enough-Ness.” We fear that we just aren’t good enough. We think of ourselves as “just” human, or we claim the label of “sinner” or “fallen” or “weak.” We have been hypnotized into believing that what we are is the personification of lack or littleness or insufficiency. But once we start to believe that we are GOOD, we are children of a good God, filled with the spirit of a mighty God, part of a beautiful creation that God calls VERY GOOD, then our Not-Enough-Ness condition starts to heal. We can be happy, because we are good enough. We are made in the image and likeness of God and God is Good. So are we!

I am good enough!

I Am good enough!

I AM Good Enough!!!

This is my truth; I own it, I celebrate it, and I give thanks. Amen.

Today’s devotional prepared by Durrell Watkins

Lesson: We all make mistakes or poor choices and we naturally enough regret those mistakes. However, what is important to remember is that we are not the mistakes we’ve made. We are not our circumstances. We are not our parents. We are not the pain we’ve experienced. We are not the illnesses we have endured. We are expressions of the divine Reality!

We are children of God, filled with God's spirit, enfolded in God's love. Who and what we are, at our core, is certainly good enough! Focusing on our sacred value rather than on the failings or difficulties of the past will help us make fewer mistakes and will keep the mistakes we've made from troubling us any further. Our goal is to know, really know, that we are good enough!

Discuss: Has anyone ever praised you? A grandmother? A teacher? A friend? Not insincere flattery, but honest appreciation for who you are? That person was affirming the truth of your being. We can affirm our truth as well. Are you willing to affirm your sacred value every day this week?

Circle Prayer: Standing in a circle, holding hands, just say in a word or two something you would like people to remember in prayer for the upcoming week. Then, starting with one person and going around the circle, just say a one or two line prayer...you can pray for the group, for the church, for someone on your heart, for peace in the world, for people on the church's prayer list...just pray. If you aren't comfortable praying aloud in front of people, just gently squeeze the next person's hand to let them know to pass you. Your silent prayers are effective too.

Lesson 4

Ice Breaker: Make an “I am” statement (e.g., “I am tall,” or “I am in a relationship,” or “I am a home-owner,” or “I am a good driver,” etc.). Avoid negative or self-deprecating statements. Using positive language, state with conviction that “I am” something...

Reflection: Have one person read the biblical quote. Another person can read the reflection that follows it. And the entire group can then say the affirmation together.

Using “I AM” Wisely

“...If they ask me, ‘What is God’s name?’ what am I to tell them? God replied [to Moses], ‘I am who am...tell them I AM sent...you.’”
Exodus 3.13-14

It’s profound to consider that I AM is one of the names of God. How carelessly do we use the power of that divine name? What do we carelessly bring into our I-AM-ness? Are not we using the divine name in vain when we attach “I am” to something negative? In his hour of agony, Jesus said, “I thirst” (John 19.28). He did not say, “I am thirsty.” He acknowledged the experience without identifying with it. I AM should be followed by positive statements, because I AM is God’s name, and what follows “I AM” is our prayer. Let’s keep our prayers positive by only using God’s name, I AM, in constructive, positive ways.

**I AM happy, healthy, and prosperous. I AM full of life and full of joy.
I AM a child of God, made in God’s image. I AM continuously
blessed. I AM one with the love of God, and all is well. Alleluia!
Amen.**

Today’s devotional prepared by Durrell Watkins

Lesson: Consider these statements attributed to Jesus: “God is at work, and I, too, am working” (John 5.17). “I am in God and God is in me” (John 14.10). “I am the vine, and God is the vine grower...I am the vine, you are the branches” (John 15.1, 5). When Jesus says, “I am...” he follows that affirmation with something positive. He claims his mission, his divine inheritance, his sacred value, his potential. When using the power of God’s name (I AM), we should always be careful to use it reverently, intentionally, and positively. God is good; I AM good. God is love; I AM love. God is abundance; I AM abundance. When we say “I am,” we are using affirmative prayer. Let’s always and only affirm what is good, because the divine I AM is always and only GOOD.

Discuss: Practice making powerfully positive “I am” statements. Say, “I am...” and follow it with the most wonderful ideas you can imagine: I AM wonderful; I AM a person of power; I AM kind and generous; I AM brilliant and beautiful; I AM a child of God; I AM a good person...*And so it is!*

Circle Prayer: Standing in a circle, holding hands, just say in a word or two something you would like people to remember in prayer for the upcoming week. Then, starting with one person and going around the circle, just say a one or two line prayer...you can pray for the group, for the church, for someone on your heart, for peace in the world, for people on the church’s prayer list...just pray. If you aren’t comfortable praying aloud in front of people, just gently squeeze the next person’s hand to let them know to pass you. Your silent prayers are effective too.

Lesson 5

Ice Breaker: Divide the group into pairs. Each pair will now spend 30 seconds looking at one another. After 30 seconds, the duo turns back to back to each other. Each person then changes three things about his/her appearance. Now, face each other again and try to name the three things that were changed.

Reflection: Have one person read the Robert Holden quote. Another person can read the reflection that follows it. And the entire group can then say the affirmation together.

It's Here Now

“The more you give to now, the more you get from now.” Dr. Robert Holden, *Happiness Now: Timeless Wisdom for Feeling Good FAST*

Now is the only time that exists, and all power is available NOW. When we change our minds NOW, a miracle takes place. Now is where the power is. Now is where the presence of God is. So as we give to now, we get from now. To post-pone our happiness until some future date or event is “not now.” But we can choose to be present in the now and access the power of I AM...I AM is always in the present! Time is an illusion and cannot make us happy, but our attitude can and our attitude is now. Stop putting conditions on your happiness...just show up in the now and embrace the happiness that is already here. It's ours to behold and to embrace.

Right where I am, in this magic moment, my Good already exists! I behold it. I claim it. I receive it. I give thanks for it. I am filled with gladness and gratitude. I am happy, now!

Today's devotional prepared by Durrell Watkins

Lesson: Happiness isn't the result of things going our way. Happiness is a condition, an attitude, a state of being. We have been learning how to embrace happiness regardless of our circumstances. As we become happier, we may find that circumstances improve! But even when they don't, we'll find that circumstances can't keep us from being happy because they didn't cause our happiness to begin with. We have been learning how to choose our own happiness and how to live in the power of joy no matter what is going on our the world around us. Happiness is available to us now, and once we embrace and embody it, nothing will be able to take it from us!

Discuss: When was a time that changing your attitude changed your experience? Did changing your attitude help you get through a crisis? Did it help you see the lesson or the blessing that was hidden within a challenge? Did it help you grow during a difficult time? How did changing your attitude bring blessings into your life-situation?

We have the power to change our thinking and our attitudes in an instant; and in the instant of attitudinal change, miracles often take place. The time for a miracle is now. What change in attitude are you willing to embrace in this magic moment?

Circle Prayer: Standing in a circle, holding hands, just say in a word or two something you would like people to remember in prayer for the upcoming week. Then, starting with one person and going around the circle, just say a one or two line prayer...you can pray for the group, for the church, for someone on your heart, for peace in the world, for people on the church's prayer list...just pray. If you aren't comfortable praying aloud in front of people, just gently squeeze the next person's hand to let them know to pass you. Your silent prayers are effective too.