



*What's* **SESSION TWO**

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**HOLDING**  
*you back?*

O Lord my God, teach my heart this day where and how to see you, where and how to find you. You have made me and remade me, and you have bestowed on me all the good things I possess, and still I do not know you. I have not yet done that for which I was made. Teach me to seek you, for I cannot seek you unless you teach me, or find you unless you show yourself to me. Let me seek you in my desire, let me desire you in my seeking. Let me find you by loving you, let me love you when I find you. Amen.

• ——— *St. Anselm* ——— •

HOW  
LONG  
== DO YOU ==  
WANT TO BE  
happy  
FOR?



**PAUL THE APOSTLE (AD 5-67)** was originally named Saul of Tarsus. He was a persecutor of Christians until he experienced a vision of the risen Jesus on the road to Damascus and had a radical conversion (Acts 9:4). Paul became one of the most influential Christians of all time. Fourteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament are attributed to him. He knew well that what we spend our time thinking about tends to multiply in our lives. So, what did Paul encourage us to think about? “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are gracious: if there be any excellence, if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

## 2. WHAT'S HOLDING YOU BACK?

In Session 1 we talked about God’s dream for you to become the-best-version-of-yourself. Nobody wants to be a-second-rate-version-of-themselves . . . so why do we find ourselves doing things that don’t align with our best selves?

Have you ever noticed that sometimes you know something is wrong and bad for you . . . but you *still* desire it? *Not everything you desire is good.*

Or have you noticed that sometimes you know something is *not* good for you and you *don’t* want to do it, but you find yourself doing it anyway?

The problem is, we enjoy things that don’t help us become the-best-version-of-ourselves. This is a part of our **fallen nature**, the disordered desire that exists within every man and woman.

Paul wrote, “I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.” (Romans 7:19)

What was he saying? I want to be the-best-version-of-myself, but sometimes I find myself doing things that don’t help me become the-best-version-of-myself—even though I don’t want to do these things.

We don’t always choose the-best-version-of-ourselves. We don’t always choose virtue. We don’t always choose self-control.

Let’s take a look at what gets in the way, how we get deceived so easily, and what’s holding us back.

### 2.1 THE Quest FOR HAPPINESS

We are all on a **quest for happiness**.

*You* have an enormous *desire for happiness*. This desire is an incredible gift, and God has placed this desire within you for a reason.

We all do certain things because we believe they will bring us happiness. Sometimes the things we choose bring us happiness, and sometimes they don’t. We have all done things that we thought would make us happy, but that in fact left us feeling empty, unhappy, miserable, used, deceived, or worse.





Mother Teresa (1910–1997) founded the Missionaries of Charity, a religious congregation made up of more than forty-five hundred religious sisters who are active in 133 countries. Their work consists of running homes and hospice facilities for those with HIV/AIDS, leprosy, and tuberculosis; soup kitchens; orphanages; family counseling programs; and schools. Members of the order take four vows: the traditional vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and a fourth vow, “To give wholehearted and free service to the poorest of the poor.” Mother Teresa had an immense love for the unloved: “We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked, and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty.”

Happiness is different. Happiness is sustainable.

Here’s another example. I come home from work one day next week, and it is my day to work out, but I don’t really feel like working out. So I have to make a decision: Work out or plant myself in a recliner in front of my 127-inch idiot box with a six-pack of beer and a three-hundred-ounce bag of potato chips?

The choice is mine.

Now, suppose I force myself to work out even though I don’t feel like it. The thing is, whenever I get done working out I am always glad—even if I had to force myself to do it. Happiness can be sustained beyond the activity producing it.

Happiness is more than pleasure. *Don’t settle for an empty life of pleasure.* Choose more. Rebel against the culture of pleasure and start actively seeking the happiness God created you for.

So, what will really make you happy?

Happiness is the result of **right living**. Honesty leads to happiness; dishonesty leads to misery. Caring for others leads to happiness; selfishness leads to unhappiness. Patience leads to happiness; impatience will make you miserable.

There are right and wrong ways to live your life. The culture tells us that there is no right and wrong. The culture says that what’s wrong for you might be right for me. This is nonsense. Hitler’s way was wrong. Mother Teresa’s way was right.

But how do you know what is the *right* thing to do?

At a basic level, you just know. One of God’s great gifts to you is **conscience**. Your conscience guides you in the way of right living so that you can celebrate the-best-version-of-yourself, and live your best life.

Very often we say we don’t know what we should do, but we are lying to ourselves (and to others), because our conscience is telling us the right course of action but we are trying to ignore it.

Our regrets are born when we ignore our conscience.

But there may be a handful of times in your life when you legitimately don’t know what the right thing to do is. It is for these times more than any other that God has given you another of his great gifts: **reason**.

I had dinner last week with some friends, Mike and Samantha. They have been married for two years and have been trying to have a baby,

but have not become pregnant. Their friends have been telling them about different types of fertility treatments, but they don't know if these treatments are part of God's dream for them. Mike and Jessica want to do the right thing, but they are not sure what the right thing to do is. This is a highly specialized and complex area of science and morality. To get to the truth they are going to need to study this issue.

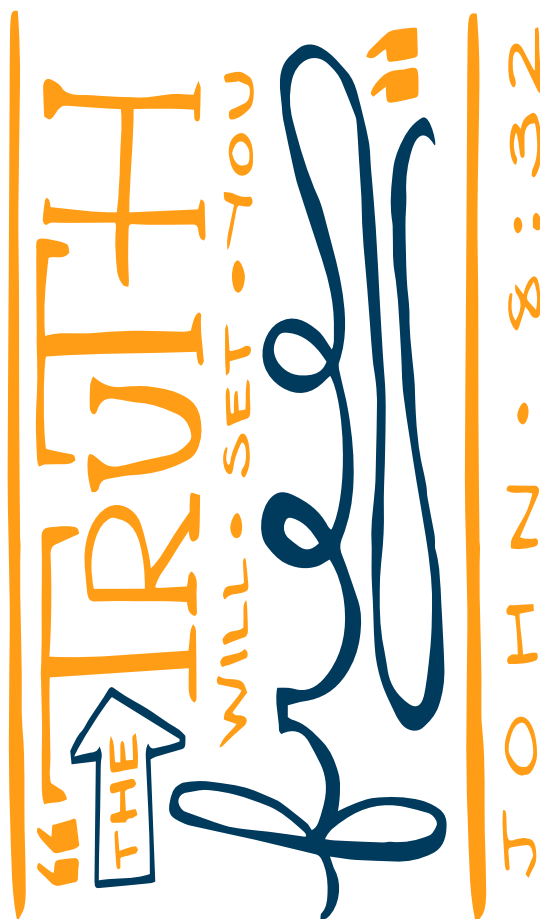
This is a perfect example of why God gave you a *beautiful mind*. You have the ability to study an issue, search for the truth, think things through, seek out God's way, and act on the truth you discover.

If you want to make great decisions, *just do the next right thing*. Don't worry about what you have to do next week or next year; just do the next right thing right now.

Five, ten, fifty, one hundred times a day. Do the next right thing often enough and you will live a life uncommon, a life that is rich with inner peace and happiness.



Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) was the leader of the Nazi Party and Chancellor of Germany from 1933 to 1945. Hitler's was the diabolical mind behind the Holocaust; his regime was responsible for the deaths of six million Jews, as well as millions of others he and his followers considered racially or genetically inferior.



## JOHN 8:32

**KNOW IT:** God created you for freedom and wants you to be free. Jesus is telling us that truth is essential for freedom and happiness.

## THINK ABOUT IT: What lies are enslaving you?

**LIVE IT:** Make a conscious effort to align your actions with the truth this week.



# discussion questions



**1. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE THINGS YOU DESIRE THAT ARE GOOD FOR YOU?**

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**2. WHAT IS SOMETHING YOU THOUGHT WOULD MAKE YOU HAPPY, BUT IN FACT LEFT YOU FEELING EMPTY, UNHAPPY, MISERABLE, USED, DECEIVED, OR WORSE?**

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**3. DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN YOU HAD THE WISDOM AND COURAGE TO FOLLOW YOUR CONSCIENCE, AND YOU WERE GLAD YOU DID.**

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