



Introduction

Many schools follow a programme of key values throughout the school year. These values can be an important framework for helping to define and validate the work of the school 'beyond the curriculum'. Each value can be used as the theme for collective worship, the focus for classroom reflection and the subject matter for main hall or quiet corner displays.

The Bible has so much to offer in this area of positive personal, relational and community values, and its timeless wisdom can help all schools pass on to the next generation the qualities of life that are most valuable and which, as Christians, we believe are not only God-given but also can be God-energised in our lives.

Preparation

What follows is a series of ideas linked to the value of '**Happiness**'.

It includes: key themes to explore, a key Bible verse to use, key concepts to unpack, ideas for displays and reflective corners, as well as Bible story links with further connections to material on the Barnabas websites.

Development

1. Key themes to explore:

Personal happiness - inner contentment, enjoyment of life, laughter, at peace with the way things are, having a ready smile, deep joy

The happiness of others - making other people smile, putting others at ease, spreading a good mood or good cheer, sharing a joke, relieving other people of worry or fear

Finding a happy medium - working to create an atmosphere that helps everyone relax, setting a positive tone for a group of people, avoiding hurtful extremes, making everyone feel at home

Contributing to a happy environment - working towards an inclusive, welcoming ethos, putting other people's happiness before your own, finding ways together to overcome problems, giving everyone the opportunity to flourish, contributing to the health of all

2. Key Bible verses

- The beatitudes are Jesus' surprising recipe for a happy life and include becoming peacemakers, showing mercy, pursuing justice, recognising limitations, being humble and even suffering in a good cause. They are surprising because they're not about personal gain - see Matthew 5:1-12.

'Happy those people who made peace; they will become God's children' (a paraphrase of one of the beatitudes).

- 'Happy are those who hear God's message and act on it' Luke 11: 28 (paraphrase).
- 'Living God's way with happiness is the best way forward in life' 1 Timothy 6:6 (paraphrase).
- The golden rule for a happy life: 'Treat others as you want them to treat you' Matthew 7:12 (paraphrase).

3. Key concepts to unpack

Happiness and health have strong links.

Happiness is 'the greatest gift we possess' according to the Ken Dodd song!

We usually enjoy being with someone who is happy!

Happiness can be catching.

Outer happiness is very visible, for example smiles and laughter; inner happiness is described as contentment, inner peace and deep joy.

Happiness is often linked to a favoured place, good friends, special meals and big celebrations.

The Bible links happiness and being blessed. To be blessed by God is our greatest happiness.

Children encounter happiness when:

- they enjoy being with their friends
- the experience fun and play with others
- they tell jokes
- they enjoy the success of team or a group activity
- they enjoy the benefits of a happy place that has a happy ethos about it

4. Display and reflective corner ideas

Use smiley faces as a themed visual for this area.

Include favourite jokes from children or a book with jokes.

Include a Mr Happy book.

Have pictures of people laughing and smiling.

Give the opportunity for contributions on Post-it notes from the children: 'I am happy when...'; 'True happiness is...'



Have a thermometer and a thermostat available and ask, 'Are you are a thermometer that only responds to other people's happiness or are you a thermostat that sets the tone happiness for others?'

Include famous quotes about happiness'

Invite contributions to a 'recipe for a happy school'.

Some questions to ask:

What makes me happy? What can I do to make others happy? What are the marks of a happy class? ... a happy school? ... a happy community?

Have a picture of the laughing Christ. (See, for example, the CMS <http://www.cms-uk.org/> pack 'The Christ we share'.) What would make Jesus laugh?

Key Bible verse:

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13 (CEV):

'I know that the best thing we can do is always to enjoy life because God's gift to us is the happiness we get from food and drink and the work we do.'

5. Some Bible story links

The happiness of our new home in heaven that God promises everyone:

- see Revelation 21: 1-8 - what will be missing from heaven to make it happy?
- see Revelation 22:1-5 - what will be in heaven that make it a happy place?

Jesus tells stories about the kingdom of God and uses the image of a happy party. What makes these parties happy?:

- see Matthew 22:1-10 - The Great Banquet
- see Luke 15: 20-25 - The Prodigal Son

Other:

See the Beatitudes - Matthew 5:1-12.

A recipe for a happy life is also found later on in the Sermon on the Mount - Matthew 6:25-34. What are the characteristics of happiness?

Peter gives some advice on happiness - 1 Peter 3:8-12.

Read a happy psalm - Psalm 126.