Flourishing: The Healing Power of Joy
July 17 and 18, 2015
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TMPS 7145

“The glory of God is a human being utterly, totally, fully alive”
St. Irenaeus

“I came that they might have life and have it in all its abundance.”
John 10:10

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”
(John 15:11-12)

“Sing for joy, O heavens, and exult, O earth! Break forth, O mountains into singing! For the Lord has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his suffering ones.”
Isaiah 49:13

“Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”
Phil. 4:8.

“A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.”
Proverbs 17:22

“Goodness always tends to spread. Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us, and becomes more sensitive to the needs of others. As it expands, goodness takes root and develops. If we wish to lead a dignified and fulfilling life, we have to reach out to others and seek their good.”
Pope Francis

“Happiness is the meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of human existence.”
Aristotle

“Find a place inside where there's joy, and the joy will burn out the pain.”
Joseph Campbell

“The purpose of our lives is to be happy. If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion.”
Dalai Lama

“We are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think. When the mind is pure, joy follows like a shadow that never leaves.”
Buddha

“Joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls.”
Mother Teresa

“Let us be grateful to people who make us happy, they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.”
Marcel Proust
"I salute you! There is nothing I can give you which you have not; but there is much that, while I cannot give, you can take. No heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today. Take Heaven. No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in the present moment. Take Peace. The gloom of the world is but a shadow; behind it, yet within our reach is joy. Take Joy!"

Fr. Giovanni

Course Description
Pastoral care has been dominated for too long by a focus on the healing of individual suffering without sufficient attention being given to the power of joy in facilitating healing and transformation. Pope Francis speaks of how the gospel invites us to a life of joy, yet too often we see pastoral care as only attending to the binding and healing of wounds. We also need to discover what helps people flourish and strengthen their capacity to be resilient in the face of adversity by connecting them to sources of joy in their lives. Joy is evoked through many sources: through a strong faith, healthy relationships, being part of a life-giving community, living a purposeful and meaningful life, being compassionate to oneself and others, learning how to receive the gift of the moment, living with a sense of wonder and gratitude, and learning how celebration and play enhance our capacity for joy.

Neuroscience research speaks of an evolved negativity bias hardwired into human beings. This has profound implications for people’s search for meaning and happiness. We need to know how we counter this tendency. We will learn how cultivating the sources of joy can lead to a flourishing and whole life. The class will be grounded in one’s own personal experience, in the science of positive psychology, relevant neuroscience research, and theological and scriptural foundations. We will explore the implications of what we learn for the care of individuals and faith communities.

Goals of the Course
1. To foster imagination, creativity, and intellectual daring in learning how the cultivation of joy and its partners, playfulness and celebration, foster individual and communal healing and flourishing.
2. To foster healthy ways of group interaction which contribute to a greater sense of individual and communal wellbeing.
3. To increase our capacity to meet the adaptive challenges of our times through becoming more playful and spontaneous in our responses.
4. To show how an emphasis on positivity, strengths, gratitude, self-compassion, and compassionate living foster joy and a flourishing life.
5. To explore creative ways by which the congregation can be a playground and a facilitating environment for human flourishing.

Required Texts:
Brother David Steindl Rast, Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer: An Approach to Life in Fullness. New York: Paulist Press, 1984

ONE of the following five books:

**Additional Required Articles are posted on Blackboard.**

**Recommended Texts for Future Reading:**

- Jacob Hamman, *A Play-full Life: Slowing Down and Seeking Peace*
  Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2011
- Cynthia Winton-Henry with Phil Porter, *What the Body Wants*
- Shawn Anchor, *The Happiness Advantage: The Seven Principles of Positive Psychology that Fuel Success and Performance at Work*
- Judy Cannato, *Field of Compassion: How the New Cosmology Is Transforming Spiritual Life*
- Linda Graham, *Bouncing Back: Rewiring your Brain for Maximum Resilience and Wellbeing*
- Rick Hanson, *Hardwiring for Happiness*
- Rick Hanson, *Buddha’s Brain: The Practical Neuroscience of Happiness, Love and Wisdom*
- Ellen J. Langer, *Counter Clockwise: Mindful Health and the Power of Possibility*
- Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology and Joy*
- Kristin Neff, *Self-Compassion*
- Henri Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*
- Pope St. Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel: Evangelii Gaudium*
- Christopher Peterson, *A Primer in Positive Psychology*
- Gretchen Rubin *The Happiness Project*
- Robert Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*
- Ronald Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Wellbeing*

**Grading for this course**

Grading will be based on the following:

1) Faithful attendance and participation for both all day sessions. If a student misses more than two hours of class, a failing grade will be given.
2) Quality of assignments submitted based on grading criteria provided by the School of Theology and Ministry. Each paper will count for 50% of grade.
3) Assignments turned in late will be docked a half a grade a day.
Assignments:

1) Take the VIA Character Strength Test at [http://www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org) and download your results. Write a 5-page paper that does the following:
   a) describe your assessment of your top five strengths and how you might use them in some new ways to strengthen joy and flourishing in three arenas of your life: personal, school, ministry or work,
   b) describe any relationship you see between your strengths and your history of play as a child,
   c) give a theological and psychological rationale, using required reading, for focusing on others’ strengths for healing and not simply on their vulnerability.
   **Due July 27th**

2) Write a letter of gratitude and a 5-page reflection. The letter of gratitude should be to someone who has significantly influenced your life, but to whom you have not fully expressed your gratitude. It should tell the person in specific detail why you are grateful to them. The five-page reflection is to be based on David Steindl-Rast’s *Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer* and one book from the five options for the second required book on the syllabus.
   Your reflection should highlight three things:
   a) what from the reading has deepened your understanding of gratitude and gives additional significance to writing your letter of gratitude,
   b) show how you understand gratitude as key to a flourishing and joyful life,
   c) demonstrate theological and psychological understanding of how gratitude is key to healing.
   **Due August 3rd**
Class Sessions

Saturday, July 17th - Morning Session
Session #1

The Gospel Invitation to Joy and a Flourishing Life
Overcoming Our Evolved Negativity Bias
How Psychology Lost Its Way and Theology Became Sin–full

- What is Jesus’ central and primary hope for human beings?
- What are the theological and psychological assumptions underpinning the class?
- What are the differences and commonalities between joy, happiness, and positivity?
- How do we open ourselves and others to the transformative power of joy?

Goals for this Session:

1) To understand the relationship between joy, happiness, play, celebration and positive emotions.
2) To grapple with the psychological and theological power of a theology of joy.
3) To show how creating joyous playful spaciousness in our lives contributes to healing and flourishing.
4) To experience the impact of our wired negativity bias upon us and how it has created an emphasis on pathology in our approach to psychology and a “sin-full” theology.
5) To share key research on how positive emotions foster human flourishing and to experience how they shift our states of being.

Great Website to Check Out:
www.Interplay.org
Resources for Interplay

Afternoon Session
Session #2

Thanks be to God: Gratitude and Its Relationship to Human Flourishing

- What does gratitude have to do with joy?
- How do we learn to take in the good and learn to savor it?
- Why practice gratitude?
- How does gratitude contribute to wellbeing and a flourishing life?

Goals for this Session:

1) To understand why gratitude is one of the central practices of positive psychology and Christian spirituality.
2) To review the research on gratitude and show how it and gratitude practices contribute to human flourishing.

3) To show how gratitude is fostered by attitude and what we give our attention to.

4) To evoke gratitude within us.

**Recommended Reading:**

“A Serving of Gratitude May Save the Day”


Emmons, Robert, *Thanks! How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier*


**Websites to Check Out:**

www.greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude


www.gratefulness.org

Research by Robert Emmons on gratitude

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**Evening Homework**

- Write a letter of gratitude, one to two pages long, to someone who has made a difference in your life, but to whom you have not expressed the fullness of your gratitude. Be as specific as you can in sharing how this person has impacted you in a positive way. This is a letter you may or may not decide to send or deliver in person.

- Take the strength inventory on [http://www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)

- Write one page that describes a time, an event, an encounter when you were at your best, when you felt really good about yourself, when you celebrated with a sense of joy you at your best. (This will be shared in class tomorrow)
Exploring Elements of a Flourishing Life
What does Positive Psychology Offer to Our Understanding of Joy and Healing?
Paying Attention to Strengths

• What are the most important basic principles of positive psychology?
• What contributes to human flourishing?
• How does a basic understanding of neuroplasticity and hardwiring of the brain help us understand the science of happiness?
• How does changing your practice, habits, and focus of attention change your life?
• What is the role of strengths and virtues in fostering human flourishing and joy?
• How do they contribute to healing?
• How do we live out of these strengths in our work, personal life, community of faith?
• How does cultivating our strengths contribute to peace, justice, and right relationships?

Goals for this Session:

1) To understand how and why human flourishing became the goal of positive psychology.
2) To understand why Robert Seligman names PERMA, the five elements of the good life: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment (PERMA) as central to happiness.
3) To demonstrate how emphasizing the positive increases a sense of wellbeing and shifts the mood of a group and how a change of focus of attention can change your life.
4) To anchor in our consciousness the centrality of cultivating strengths to human flourishing.

Websites to Check Out:
http://www.greatergood.berkeley.edu
Research Center at the University of California Berkeley that deals with the science of many of the topics of this course
http://www.authentichappiness.org
Research from Robert Seligman on positive psychology
Afternoon Session
Session #4

Bringing the Healing Power of Joy to the Hard Places
Caring for Those with Alzheimer's
Exploring The Place of Forgiveness and Self-Compassion in Happiness and Joy

- How do we turn a place of dread into a place of joyful engagement and meaning?
- Where can joy be cultivated in the care of persons with Alzheimer’s and dementia?
- What is the connection between forgiveness, self compassion and cultivating compassion for others for creating a flourishing life?
- How can we further the practices of self compassion and compassion for others while attending to the centrality of joy for a flourishing life?

Goals for this Session:
1) To show how joy can be present in caring for those in the hardest of places and how joy adds meaning and depth to those in places of extremity.
2) To increase our understanding of how forgiveness, self compassion and compassion for others contributes to happiness and joy.
3) To illustrate through lectio visio and the story of the prodigal son how this happens.

Recommended Reading:
Jade Angelica, Where Two Worlds Meet
Joanne Costes, Learning to Speak Alzheimers (especially chs. 1 and 2, pp.1-42)

Websites to Check Out:
http://self-compassion.org
   Self-scoring on self-compassion scale
www.mindfulselfcompassion.org
   Research related to self-compassion