

STUDY GUIDE

SIX SESSIONS

MAX LUCADO

*New York Times* Bestselling Author

HOW  
*Happiness*  
Happens



FINDING **LASTING JOY** IN A WORLD OF COMPARISON,  
DISAPPOINTMENT, AND UNMET EXPECTATIONS

# HOW *Happiness* Happens

FINDING LASTING JOY IN A WORLD OF COMPARISON,  
DISAPPOINTMENT, AND UNMET EXPECTATIONS

STUDY GUIDE | SIX SESSIONS

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## MAX LUCADO

WITH ANDREA LUCADO



THOMAS NELSON  
Since 1798

*How Happiness Happens Study Guide*  
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ISBN 978-0-310-10571-8

First Printing August 2019 / Printed in the United States of America

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## A Word from Max Lucado

*H*appiness. Everyone craves it, wants it, searches for it. We are longing for this sense of contentment and well-being. Worldwide, people profess that happiness is their most cherished goal.<sup>1</sup> The most popular class in the three-century history of Yale University is on happiness.<sup>2</sup>

We think we've figured happiness out. We think we know how and where to find it. The often-used front door to happiness is the one described by the advertising companies: *acquire, retire, and aspire* to drive faster, dress trendier, and drink more. Happiness happens when you lose the weight, get the date, find the mate, or discover your fate. It's wide, this front door to happiness . . . or so they claim.

Advertising companies claim to have the key to happiness, yet our society still seems to be struggling to find it. Only one-third of Americans surveyed said they were happy. In the nine-year history of the Harris Poll Survey of American Happiness, the highest index was only 35 percent. This means a cloud of perpetual grayness overshadows two out of three people.<sup>3</sup>

What's up? How do we explain the gloom? While the answers are varied and complex, among them must be this idea: *we are using the wrong door.*

## How Happiness Happens Study Guide

The motto on the front door says, “Happiness happens when you *get*.” The sign on the lesser-used back door counters, “Happiness happens when you *give*.” And standing at the entryway to welcome you is Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus was accused of much, but he was never, ever described as a grump, sourpuss, or self-centered jerk. People didn’t groan when he appeared. They didn’t duck for cover when he entered the room.

He called them by name.

He listened to their stories.

He answered their questions.

His purpose statement read, “I came to give life with joy and abundance” (John 10:10 VCE). Jesus was happy, and he wants us to be the same.

But how? How do we attain this type of true side-door happiness? We can begin by taking a cue from the New Testament. The New Testament contains more than fifty “one another” statements—practical principles for making happiness happen. In this study, I have condensed them down into a list of six:

1. Accept one another (Romans 15:7)
2. Bear with one another (Ephesians 4:2)
3. Serve one another (Galatians 5:13)
4. Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32)
5. Carry one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2)
6. Love one another (1 John 3:11)

This is how we give happiness away and, in turn, get happiness ourselves. So let’s open the door to each of these “one another” passages and embark on a happiness project.

## How to Use This Guide

Looking for greater happiness in your life? Then you are in the right place. The *How Happiness Happens Video Study* is designed to be experienced in a group setting such as a Bible study, Sunday school class, or any small group gathering. Each session begins with a brief reflection and “Talk About It” questions to get you and your group thinking about the topic. You will then watch a video with Max Lucado and jump into some directed small-group discussion. You will finish each session with a brief closing activity and prayer as a group.

Each person in the group should have his or her own study guide, which includes video teaching notes, Bible study and group discussion questions, and between-sessions personal studies to help you reflect and apply the material to your life during the week. You are also encouraged to have a copy of the *How Happiness Happens* book, as reading the book alongside the curriculum will provide you with deeper insights and make the journey more meaningful. See the “For Next Week” section at the end of each session for the chapters in the book that correspond to material you and your group are discussing.



## How Happiness Happens Study Guide

To get the most out of your group experience, keep the following points in mind. First, the real growth in this study will happen during your small-group time. This is where you will process the content of Max's message (and the testimonies), ask questions, and learn from others as you hear what God is doing in their lives.

For this reason, it is important for you to be fully committed to the group and attend each session so that you can build trust and rapport with the other members. If you choose to only "go through the motions," or if you refrain from participating, there is a lesser chance you will find what you're looking for during this study.

Second, remember the goal of your small group is to serve as a place where people can share, learn about God, and build intimacy and friendship. For this reason, seek to make your group a "safe place." This means being honest about your thoughts and feelings and listening carefully to everyone else's opinion. (*Note: If you are a group leader, there are additional instructions and resources in the back of the book for leading a productive discussion group.*)

Third, resist the temptation to "fix" a problem someone might be having or to correct his or her theology, as that's not the purpose of your small-group time. Also, keep everything your group shares confidential. This will foster a rewarding sense of community in your group and create a place where people can heal, be challenged, and grow spiritually.

Following your group time, maximize the impact of the course with the additional between-session studies. For each session, you may wish to complete the personal study all in one sitting or spread it out over a few days (for example, working on it a half hour a day on four different days that week).

## How to Use This Guide

Note that if you are unable to finish (or even start!) your between-sessions personal study, you should still attend the group study video session. You are still wanted and welcome at the group even if you don't have your "homework" done.

Keep in mind the videos, discussions, and activities are simply meant to kick-start your imagination so you are open to both what God wants you to hear and how to apply it to your life. As you go through this study, be watching for what God is saying as it relates to each of the "one another" passages you will be studying: *accepting* one another, *bearing* with one another, *serving* one another, *forgiving* one another, *carrying* one another's burdens, and, finally, *loving* one another as Jesus loves you.

As you open the door to each of these "one another" passages and embark on your own personal happiness project, you will discover what the Bible teaches and research affirms: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).



## Session One



# Accept One Another

*It's hard to know the best way to respond to people who represent your "opposite you." Do you ignore them? Leave the room when they enter so you don't say something you later will regret? Share a meal and discuss your differences?*

*Dismiss your differences? How do you find and show acceptance toward someone when you would rather show them the door? The answer can be found in this admonition: "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Romans 15:7).*

MAX LUCADO

## Opening Reflection

We are creatures of comfort and creatures of habit. We like the familiar and predictable. We like agreement over conflict. Peace over disruption. These are the things that make us feel happy, content, at rest. And all these things—comfort, familiarity, agreement—are achievable as long as we interact only with people who are just like us. People who are part of the same political party, church denomination, ethnic group, or country. People who like what we like and dislike what we dislike.

This is all fine and good, but there is one problem. To live in the world we live in today, we are bound to interact with someone who is different from us. A coworker, someone next to us on the bus, a neighbor, classmate, teacher, or pastor. We have been created equal, but we have not been created alike. For this reason, if our happiness depends on being surrounded by people who agree with us all the time, we won't feel happy very often.

In this week's study, we will be looking at Romans 15:7, where Paul wrote, "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." Note that Paul did not specify to the Roman church *whom* they should accept. He did not say *accept the people you like* or *accept the*

## Accept One Another

*people who look like you or accept the people who think the same way as you think.* He left it general and open-ended. Accept whom? One another.

Could it be we are called to accept the Democrat and the Republican? The Midwesterner and Southerner? The immigrant and the native? The Catholic and the Protestant?

Further, Paul instructs us to accept one another as Christ accepted us. How did Christ accept us? He loved us so much that he made the greatest sacrifice for us. He died for us. Rose from the grave for us. Left the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. Christ welcomed us into the family of God. And this, the Bible says, is how we are to welcome others.

So open your mind and your heart as you explore today's topic. Discover how accepting one another can make happiness happen in your own life—and for those you accept as Christ accepted you.

## Talk About It

If you or any of your group members are just getting to know one another, take a few minutes to introduce yourselves. Then, to kick things off, discuss one of the following questions:

- What is something that made you happy this week?

—or—

- What comes to mind when you think of “accepting one another”?

## Hearing the Word

Invite someone to read aloud Romans 15:5–7. Listen for fresh insights as you hear the verses being read, and then discuss the questions that follow.

<sup>5</sup> May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, <sup>6</sup> so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

What is one key insight that stands out to you from this passage?

In what ways did that represent a new insight?

According to this passage, why should we accept one another?

## Video Teaching Notes

Play the video segment for session one. As you watch, use the following outline to record any thoughts or concepts that stand out to you.

Happiness happens when you choose to give it away. Jesus' words were spot-on when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

One of the most difficult relationship questions is what to do with your "opposite you." You know the one—it's the person with whom you fundamentally disagree.

*Accept one another.* The verb Paul uses for *accept* means more than to merely tolerate or coexist with someone. It means to welcome the person into your fellowship.

While Jesus doesn't accept our sinful behavior, he always accepts us as his wayward children. He doesn't tell us to clean up before we can come to him.



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You are never called to redeem the world. Happiness happens not by *fixing* people but by *accepting* them and entrusting them to God's care.

It is one thing to have an opinion. It's something else to have a fight. So when you sense the volume increasing and the heat rising, close your mouth.

Happiness happens when you show other people that they matter. The Bible says that as you greet others and show acceptance, you *demonstrate* the love of Christ.

Three phrases—"I love you," "I forgive you," "supper's ready"—summarize Jesus' message. He came with love, grace . . . and a dinner invitation.

## Accept One Another

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*I got to the point where I realized that if there was going to be joy in my life, I had to be a joyful person. So I bought a bunch of candy, and I went around the office and gave it out. I walked past a conference room and I saw a coworker that I wasn't particularly fond of, and I thought, "Maybe he needs some joy." So I placed some candy on the table. He looked at me and he said, "Is this a joke?" We both got a chuckle—it was a nice moment for both of us to just let our guards down and be kind to each other. It's not like this was an earth-shattering experience that changed either of us. But I think it was impactful for the both of us to just have something that brought a little kindness, a little happiness, to both of our lives.*

— ALLISON, FROM THE VIDEO

---

## Group Discussion

Take a few minutes with your group members to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

1. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Have you ever experienced happiness by giving it away? If so, describe that experience.

## How Happiness Happens Study Guide

2. Paul instructs, “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you” (Romans 15:7). What is the difference between *accepting* someone and *tolerating* someone?
  
3. Whom would you consider your “opposite you”? (This could be someone from your past or someone in your life today.) How do you typically interact with that person?
  
4. Read John 1:14. What does it mean to be full of both *grace* and *truth*? Who is someone in your life who is full of grace and truth? How does this person show these qualities?
  
5. Read Romans 14:1–3. Social media provides a hostile environment where people often argue, disagree with each other, and tear each other down. How can this passage be applied to the way we get into arguments and debates on social media and elsewhere?

## Accept One Another

6. Read Romans 16:16. Why do you think Paul made it a point to instruct the church members in Rome to greet one another?
7. When was a time someone greeted you when you were having a bad day or going through a difficult season? How did that greeting make you feel?
8. What part of Allison's story resonated with you? After listening to her story, did anyone come to mind whom you need to accept? How could you work to accept this person?

## Closing Activity

To apply today's study, complete the Scripture exercise below:

- *Fill in the blank with the name of someone who is difficult for you to accept:* "Accept \_\_\_\_\_, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Romans 15:7).
- *Fill in the blank with the name of someone with whom you often disagree:* "Be in agreement, understanding

## How Happiness Happens Study Guide

\_\_\_\_\_, loving each other as family,  
being kind and humble” (1 Peter 3:8 NCV).

- *Fill in the blanks with the name of someone you need to greet and how you could greet him or her* (for example, a handshake, a “hello,” a note of encouragement):  
“Greet \_\_\_\_\_ with a holy \_\_\_\_\_”  
(Romans 16:16).

If you feel comfortable, share with your group what this experience was like for you.

### Closing Prayer

Close your time by spending time with your heavenly Father. Using the prompts below, have one person lead your group in a time of group prayer:

- Thank God for accepting you into his family by giving you his Son, Jesus.
- Confess that you have not always been accepting of others in the past.
- Ask God to give you empathy to help you better understand the people around you.
- Praise God for creating such a diverse world full of beauty and creativity.

## Between-Sessions Personal Study

### *Session One*

**R**eflect on the material you've covered this week in *How Happiness Happens* by engaging in any or all of the following between-sessions activities. Each personal study consists of four days of reflection activities to help you implement what you learned in the group time. The time you invest will be well spent, so let God use it to draw you closer to him. At your next meeting, share any key points or insights that stood out to you as you spent this time with the Lord.

### Accepting Others

During your group time you discussed Romans 15:5–7, where Paul instructed you to “accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” In today’s lesson, you will dig deeper into this passage in order to better understand why and how you can accept others in the way that Christ accepts you. Begin by rereading Romans 15:5–7:

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<sup>5</sup> May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, <sup>6</sup> so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.

1. According to Paul, what does God give us? How has he given you these things?
2. What do you think Paul meant when he wrote we are to have “the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had” (verse 5)?
3. Paul describes this “attitude of mind” in Philippians 2:5–8:

<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

## Accept One Another

According to this passage, what was Christ's mindset?

4. How can you mimic this mindset toward others? How could this mindset help you to better accept others—even those difficult people in your life?
5. According to Romans 15:6, how does unity with one another bring glory to God?
6. How could disunity hurt the image of God, Christ, and the church?
7. Have you ever experienced disunity in the church? If so, what was that experience like?
8. How have your experiences with other believers shaped the way you view God, Jesus, and the body of Christ?



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9. Have you ever been a part of a faith community that felt unified? How did being a part of a unified body affect your faith?

10. Perhaps you have never attended church because of the disunity you've observed. It may not seem like a welcoming place for you. Have you had any new observations about Jesus or the church after today's study on acceptance and unity? Explain.

**Prayer:** *Ask God to give you the mind of Christ. Ask for humility. Ask for love for one another and a desire for unity. Repent of any moments this week when you may have contributed to disunity either in the church, in your home, or in your workplace. Ask God to give you opportunities to work toward unity and, therefore, to glorify him.*

## Practicing Empathy

Empathy is the practice of putting yourself in someone else's shoes. When you empathize with others, you are able to accept them, even if they have different beliefs, come from a different culture, or have a different socioeconomic background. Begin today's study by reading through the story of Levi, who would later be called Matthew:

<sup>27</sup> Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax collector's booth. Jesus said to him, "Follow me!" <sup>28</sup> So Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.

<sup>29</sup> Then Levi gave a big dinner for Jesus at his house. Many tax collectors and other people were eating there, too. <sup>30</sup> But the Pharisees and the men who taught the law for the Pharisees began to complain to Jesus' followers, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

<sup>31</sup> Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy people who need a doctor, but the sick. <sup>32</sup> I have not come to invite good people but sinners to change their hearts and lives" (Luke 5:27–32 NCV).

Although Levi was a Jew, tax collectors were not well liked by other Jews. They considered Levi a "sellout"—someone who worked for the Roman government and got to keep a cut of the taxes he took from others.<sup>4</sup> So though Levi was rich in money, he wasn't rich in character or reputation. Taking this into consideration, put yourself in the shoes of the different characters in this story and answer the following questions.

## Jesus

1. Why do you think Jesus wanted Levi to be his follower even though Levi had a bad reputation?

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2. How do you think Jesus felt at the dinner at Levi's house? Celebratory, relaxed, or perhaps nervous to be around this type of crowd? Explain your response.
3. Why do you think Jesus reacted to the Pharisees the way he did (see verses 31–32)?

### Levi

4. How do you think Levi felt when Jesus looked at him and said, "Follow me"?
5. What do you think Levi was thinking when the Pharisees walked into the party?

### The Pharisees

6. Why do you think the Pharisees judged Jesus for hanging out with tax collectors?

## Accept One Another

7. What do you think the Pharisees thought about Jesus' reply, "I have not come to invite good people but sinners to change their hearts and lives"?
8. Which character in the story do you identify with the most—Jesus, Levi, or the Pharisees? Why?
9. How did considering three different points of view help you understand this story better or change your interpretation of the story?
10. Is there anyone in your life you need to empathize with? Maybe someone you don't get along with or have had an argument with recently? How could you put yourself in that person's shoes today?

**Prayer:** *Thank God for sending Jesus to serve as an example for how you should accept and empathize with others. Ask God to help you empathize with those people who are often difficult to handle. Ask God to give you a new understanding of those individuals.*

## Accepting Yourself

If you are finding it difficult to accept others, it could be because you haven't accepted yourself. The Bible says that in Christ we are a new creation (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). We have received the spirit of adoption and have been adopted into God's own family (see Romans 8:15). Because of this, we can be confident that we are fully loved and accepted by God and nothing can separate us from that love (see Romans 8:38–39). With this in mind, spend some time today looking at what the Bible has to say about your acceptance into Christ's family and how believing in that fact could help you accept others. Begin by reading Romans 5:8–10:

<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

<sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

<sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life (NKJV).

1. How did God demonstrate his love for you?
  
  
  
  
  
2. What did Christ's death on the cross do to your relationship with God?

## Accept One Another

3. How does this passage help you to understand your acceptance by God through Christ?

4. Read the following story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman told in John 4:

<sup>3</sup> [Jesus] left Judea and departed again to Galilee.

<sup>4</sup> But He needed to go through Samaria.

<sup>5</sup> So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

<sup>7</sup> A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." <sup>8</sup> For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

<sup>9</sup> Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

<sup>10</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

<sup>11</sup> The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? . . ."

## How Happiness Happens Study Guide

<sup>13</sup> Jesus answered and said to her, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, <sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. . . .”

<sup>15</sup> The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.”

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”

<sup>17</sup> The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.”

Jesus said to her, “You have well said, ‘I have no husband,’ <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.”

<sup>19</sup> The woman said to Him, “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. . . . <sup>25</sup> I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When He comes, He will tell us all things.”

<sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He” (verses 3–11, 13–19, 25–26 NKJV).

What kind of person was the woman in this story? What status do you think she held in society?

5. Who initiated this conversation—the woman or Jesus? Why is this significant?

## Accept One Another

6. According to verse 9, how did the woman feel about Jesus' request?
  
7. Jesus breaks three cultural barriers during this conversation. First, he speaks to a woman—and traditionally, Jewish men were not to be seen conversing with women.<sup>5</sup> Second, he speaks with a Samaritan, and as the passage says, Jews had no dealings with Samaritans at the time (see verse 9). Third, he speaks to a woman who he knows has had more than one husband and is now with a man she isn't married to (see verses 17–18). Considering this, why do you think Jesus still spoke with the woman?
  
8. What does Jesus do in verse 26? Jesus was not yet telling everyone who he was at this point in his ministry, so why do you think he chose to reveal himself to this woman?
  
9. What does this story tell you about the type of people Jesus does and does not accept? What does this story tell you about how Jesus accepts *you*?



10. Think about the Samaritan woman in this story. If Jesus fully accepted her, what does this mean about his acceptance of you—faults and all?

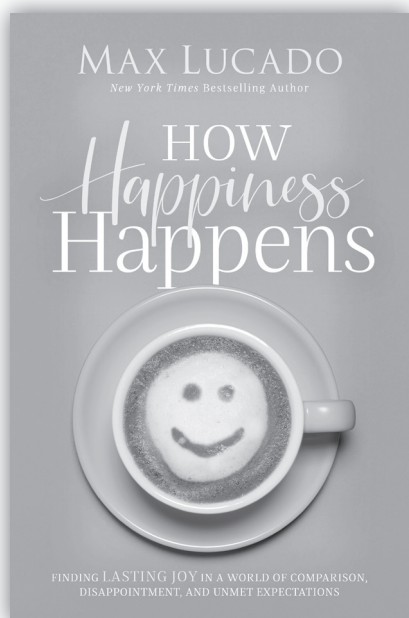
**Prayer:** *If you've never accepted God's love, pray about that now. Ask God to show you the fullness of his love and acceptance toward you. If you have accepted the love of God through Christ, then spend some time thanking God for sending his Son, Jesus. Ask him what areas of your life you might be holding on to or hiding because you don't think they are worthy of his love. Ask God to help you feel his love for your full self, not just the "good" parts.*

## Further Reflection

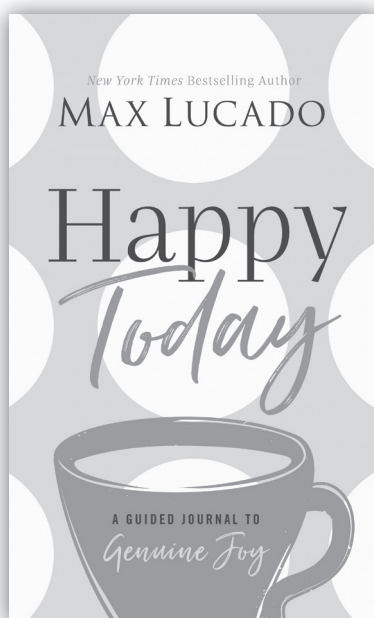
Reflect on what you studied this week: acceptance of others, empathy, and self-acceptance. Journal your thoughts or write them as a prayer to God, whether you need to ask him questions about what you learned, thank him for what you have learned, or ask him what to do next now that you have a better understanding of these topics in Scripture. Also write down any observations or questions that you want to bring to your next group time.

**For Next Week:** In preparation for next week, read chapters 2–3 in *How Happiness Happens*.

# ALSO AVAILABLE FROM MAX LUCADO



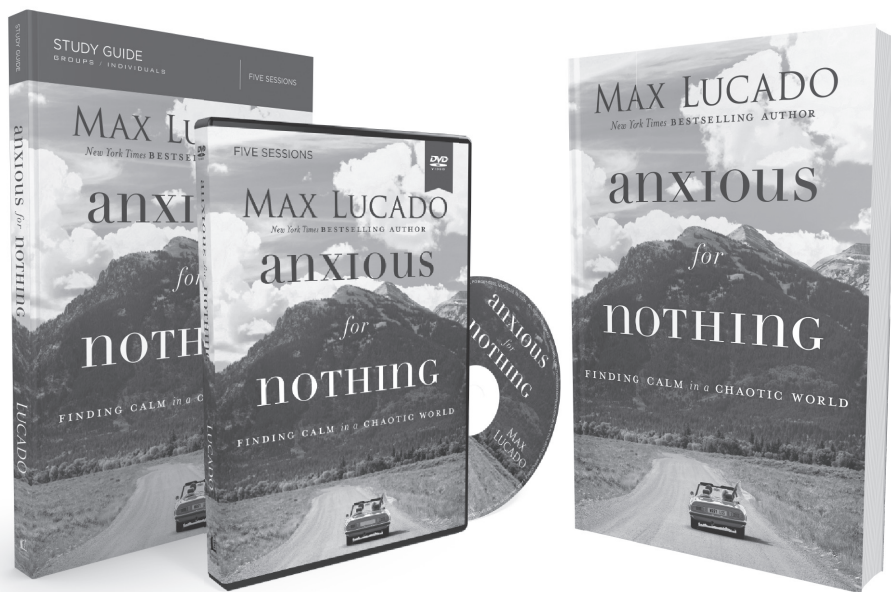
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