

Reading Group Guide

The Happiness Project

Discussion Questions

1. Gretchen Rubin observes that “Everyone’s happiness project will be different.” How do your spiritual beliefs shape your concept of happiness? How would your happiness project reflect those beliefs?
2. Gretchen emphasizes that resolutions seem to work best when they’re concrete and manageable. What concrete, manageable resolutions might you undertake to give spiritual values more emphasis in your ordinary life? For example, you might choose to keep the Sabbath technology-free.
3. Consider the resolution to “Imitate a spiritual master.” Who’s your spiritual master? Why? What are some concrete, simple ways to weave your spiritual master’s teachings into your usual routine?
4. Now choose a spiritual master from outside your own faith. What attracted you to this figure? What does this spiritual master teach you about your own beliefs? Even though Gretchen isn’t Catholic, she realized that St. Therese of Lisieux is her spiritual master.
5. What books have given you the most insight and encouragement in your spiritual development?
6. Gretchen points out that rituals and traditions play an important part in a happy life, and of course, they’re a key element in religious and spiritual practice. Do you agree that they play an important role—or not? How might you give greater prominence to observations of spiritual rituals and traditions in your life?
7. Did reading *The Happiness Project* make you want to try one of the resolutions? Which one?
8. Where do you feel most spiritually awake? When you’re praying by yourself, singing in choir, walking in nature, meditating in your living room, checking on your sleeping family, developing a deeper understanding through study?
9. Gretchen observed, “When life was taking its ordinary course, it was hard to remember what really mattered.” Do you find that true, for yourself? What resolutions might you adopt to keep “what really matters” in the forefront of your ordinary life?
10. Gretchen describes her Twelve Personal Commandments. What would your Personal Commandments be?
11. Gratitude, mindfulness, service, obedience, study, enthusiasm, humility, selflessness, faith, and kindness are among the virtues emphasized in spiritual practice. When she was starting her happiness project, Gretchen reflected, “I think if I felt happier, I’d behave better.” Do you think being happier helps you to be more virtuous? Or is happiness beside the point?

