

Life to the Fullest: I Choose Joy

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Boca Raton Community Church, Boca Raton, FL

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, . . .” Ephesians 5:22

The word, *Joy* or *Joyful*, is used 250 times in the Bible and the word, *rejoice*, 200 times.

Scholars’ suggestions for the word, *joy*:
bright and shining

A child’s eyes on Christmas morning or a bride on her wedding day.

leaping or jumping

The crippled man healed at the gate.

chanting and shouting

Yes! All right! Awesome!

moving around in a circle

This fruit called *joy* is a vivid reminder of what “Life to the Fullest” is all about.

JOY IS THE BLOSSOM OF NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

When a person truly experiences the life Jesus gives, the result is a blossom of adornment called *joy*. It is the result of experiencing the love of God firsthand in your life! Joy is love smiling.

Acts 8:39

What a picture of a man whose life is changed by an experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ! “... he went on his way rejoicing.” Joy is intended to be the blossom of evidence that we have life in Christ.

“Let all those rejoice who put their trust in You.” Psalm 5:11

Far too few Christians genuinely display joy. They are green with life, but there is no flower.

“If your life is not full of joy, you have a leak in your Christianity.” —Billy Sunday

“The Christian is a person of joy; the Christian is the laughing cavalier of Christ. A gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms, and nothing in all religious history has done Christianity more harm than its connection with black clothes and long faces. It is true that the Christian is a sinner, but he is a redeemed sinner, and therein lies his joy. How can any man fail to be happy when he walks the ways of life with Jesus?”

—William Barclay

What attraction does the fragrance and beauty of this blossom in us have on those around us? The world seeks joy in all places, yet it is a silk flower. When people come to church, they should immediately be amazed by the joy that is present.

“. . . praising God and having favor with all the people . . .” Acts 2:27

One theme found in Luke 15 is *joy*. Who do you think the prodigal son responded more favorably to: the smile of the father or the scowl of the elder brother?

“C.S. Lewis told me, there is too much solemnity and intensity in dealing with sacred matters, too much speaking in holy tones. The tragic loss in all this pious gamesmanship is to the individual in the pew, who begins to feel that in the midst of the religious razzle-dazzle he cannot get through to the Lord Himself. We have learned that joy is more than a sense of the comic, more than earthly pleasure, and to a believer even more than what we call happiness. Joy is

the enjoyment of God and the good things that come from the hand of God. If our new freedom in Christ is a piece of angel food cake, joy is the frosting. If the Bible gives us the wonderful words of life, joy supplies the music. If the way to heaven turns out to be an arduous steep climb, joy sets up the chair lift.” —Sherwood Wirt, *Jesus, Man of Joy*

Christ’s joy is real! It is fragrant and beautiful to behold. Do you think He was stern, long-faced, weighed down with suffering? What did the children see? What about the sinners? There was something more beautiful about Him than they could describe and they sought to be in the presence of such joy.

“There is more joy in Jesus in 24 hours than there is in the world in 365 days. I have tried them both.” —R.A. Torrey

“These things have I spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” John 15:11

JOY IS SUSTAINED BY A SUPERNATURAL SOURCE

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” John 7:37-38

Joy talk is not just motivational speaking. It is a spiritual truth sustained by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit.

“Unless I have received the Holy Spirit, my personality is dead to all He has to say . . . Every characteristic seen in the life of Jesus becomes possible in our lives once we hand our hearts to Him to be filled with the Holy Spirit.” —Oswald Chambers

Joy will not blossom or remain without the supernatural source of the Holy Spirit.

The world seeks happiness in many places and things. But happiness and joy are not the same.

Happiness = happenings, happenstances, circumstances. Zippedee do dah, everything is going my way.

Joy = continuous, fountain, complete.

Happiness and joy look a lot alike, but they are different in their source.

JOY IS SUSCEPTIBLE TO THE DISEASE OF SIN

At one point, David’s life was infected and infested with a sinful act of disobedience that resulted in a loss of the joy of his salvation. In Psalm 51:12, David writes, “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.”

I do not believe you can ever lose your salvation, but you can lose your joy. Joy is fragile and can be easily tarnished or tainted.

Protective Measures:

□ Apply the Scriptures to your life.

John 15:1-4, 11

“Your words were found and I ate them, and your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by your name, O Lord God of hosts.” Jer. 15:16

You learn about God through Bible study. But you get to know God through obedience, praying, witnessing, waiting, giving, loving, etc.

□ Activate your life in service.

“Joy is the by-product of service. The most miserable people I know are those who think only of themselves. The happiest people I know are those who think only of

others. Selfishness always smothers happiness. It is one of the killjoys of life. But sacrifice and service open the springs of God's happiness and flood our hearts with joy." —Warren W. Wiersbe

JOY IS ROOTED IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IN THE HARD GROUND OF LIFE

Life is not a rose garden. So many places where weeds have grown in, soils have dried and hardened. Can you really have joy?

The Bible is never a book of theory. It is never a research document in the laboratory of the church. Rather, it is a field guide and it addresses life as it is. Much of what the Bible has to say about joy is spoken of in the arena of hardship, resistance, opposition and difficulty.

The joy of the Christian life is in Who we know, not what we understand about life.

"Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything." James 1:2-4 (NLT)

Happiness and difficult circumstances don't balance. Happiness and unhappiness do. But joy can be found and known even in sorrow because we know God.

". . . as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing . . ." II Corinthians 6:10

The Bible is filled with many challenges toward joy.

"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice." Philippians 4:4

"Rejoice always . . ." I Thessalonians 5:16

Joy is a standing order in the Christian life, not because of circumstances, but because of confidence in Who God is and what God is like.

"The Christian is joyful, not because he is blind to injustice and suffering, but because he is convinced that these, in the light of the divine sovereignty, are never ultimate . . . the humor of the Christian is not a way of denying the tears, but rather a way of affirming something which is deeper than tears." —Elton Trueblood

"You will show me the path of life, in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forever more." Psalm 16:11

"Now may the God of all hope fill you with joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Romans 15:13

This message was preached from the pulpit of Boca Raton Community Church, Boca Raton, Florida, on Sunday, April 29, 2001, by Dr. David H. McKinley, Senior Pastor. The complete message is available on audio cassette tape through the media ministry of Boca Raton Community Church. To order this message, simply email us at tapes@bocacommunity.org and specify the message title, date, and billing information. (\$4 per tape including shipping and handling).