

Enjoy

Enjoy and Share the Love and Message of God with Everyone

January 5, 2020

This series will focus on what I believe is a “Reader’s Digest version” of what it means to fundamentally be a Christian. We exist to:

Enjoy and Share the Love and Message of God with Everyone

This week we’ll look at “Enjoy.”

DAY 1: Desire

1. Man is made in the image of God. That image includes *desire*.
2. Psalm 51 is David’s mea culpa after committing adultery with Bathsheba. These verses also give us some insight into the personality and heart of God.

*Psalms 51:16 (RSV) For thou hast no **delight** in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldst not be **pleased**.¹⁷ The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

3. What things bring God delight? What is it He desires?

4. God’s message to Jeremiah and the people also reveals to us something of the nature and character of God.

*Jeremiah 9:23 (RSV) Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches;
²⁴ but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practice steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for **in these things I delight**, says the LORD."*

5. God takes *delight* in certain actions and qualities. In what qualities does God take delight?

6. Because growing Christians are aware of bad desires in us, we tend to look down on desire as something ungodly. But that is not the case! Desire is meant to be a good thing, something in which delights God and also delights us! (Of course, **what** desires we pursue and **how** we pursue them determines whether those desires are good and godly, or bad and ungodly).

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: Finding Joy in God

1. Oftentimes, as Christians we inadvertently believe that God is the “key” that unlocks some blessing we believe is the *ultimate* joy.

2. While it is true that God gives us blessings that provide us joy, it is a terrible mistake to substitute blessings God provides with the joy of knowing God and walking with Him as our ultimate joy.

3. God is not just the *giver* of joy and not just the *source* of joy. He is *the person* where joy is found, and *who* joy is! He is the point of joy.

4. Below are some of the Psalms that point us toward God being our ultimate joy. Under each passage, jot down what strikes you from that passage.

Psalms 27:4 (RSV) One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

Psalms 63:1 O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. ² I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. ³ Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. ⁴ I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. ⁵ My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

Psalms 42:1 (RSV) As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God. ² My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?

Psalms 16:11 (RSV) Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fulness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.

5. You may be asking why we don't find more joy in the Lord than we do. Let me suggest several factors:

- a. We want blessings more than we want joy from God. (We “decide” the kind of joy we want).
- b. We really want someone or something more than God.
- c. We assume that joy means we won't also experience sadness, loneliness, etc.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: Trying to find joy in anything more than God

1. Because we are sinners, we naturally veer away from God and trust almost anything else or anyone else other than God to find the joy and satisfaction our hearts long for.

2. Our fallen human nature includes these fallacies:
 - a. We believe we know best the kind of joy we want. (Pride)
 - b. We believe that no matter what we do, we deserve joy. (Arrogance)
 - c. We believe that others ought to cooperate with our quest for joy, and they should “do their part.” (Self-centeredness)
 - d. We believe that joy should be “on our terms,” on our timetable. (A spirit of demandingness)
 - e. We don’t believe we really need God to experience joy, unless we try everything else in our own strength and realize we need more power to find joy. Then we will “use” God to find joy instead of seek Him as our highest joy. (Idolatry—“worshipping a god in order to get what we want”).

3. What strikes you about that list?

4. Are there any of those fallacies that you recognize in yourself?

5. Do you see a correlation between any of those fallacies and the natural result of torpedoing the joy God wants to give us?

Romans 7:21 (RSV) So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, ²³ but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I of myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

6. Our choices as to how to meet desires is the great battle of our lives. On one hand we will feel a “compelling” desire to do the wrong thing. But in our failure to find the joy we seek, God raises up deeper desires in the redeemed heart to want to seek Him as our greatest treasure!

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: “The joy of the Lord is my strength...”

Nehemiah 8:10 (NIV) Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

1. In the secular world, happiness is an **either-or** proposition. Either we are happy because our life is “smooth,” or we lose our happiness when stress, disappointment, or troubles hit us.
2. The Christian learns that joy is a **both-and** proposition. As a Christian we will go through stresses, disappointments and troubles, but those things need not derail joy! In fact, those “negative” experiences turn us repeatedly away from the world for our joy and to the Lord for a joy only He can give!
3. The life of Nehemiah found its apex in the project not just to rebuild the walls around Jerusalem, but to re-build that nation after a devastating invasion and exile to Babylon. When Nehemiah first heard about the devastation of Jerusalem and the nation of Judah he was heartbroken. He was serving the cupbearer to King Artaxerxes.

5. Consider these obstacles Nehemiah had to face:
 - a. He was in a foreign land.
 - b. He had no money to fund the massive building project of turning rubble into a strong defensible stone wall.
 - c. He had no way to leave or return to Jerusalem.
 - d. Jerusalem was in ruins.
 - e. Jerusalem was surrounded by peoples that hated them and would harass and threaten their existence.
 - f. There was no “army” with which to defend themselves.
6. Nehemiah prayed and approached the king. God provided through the kindness of the king the funds for the project, and the “go ahead” to leave and return to Jerusalem!

7. The building project was under constant threat of being overrun, both day and night. The men were tasked with building with one hand while holding their spear with the other.
8. The wall was completed in fifty-two days. Nehemiah had to deal with nobles who were greedy, and found ways to help the poor.
9. Finally, a day of celebration begins! It is on this day that Ezra read from the Book of the Law. Then Nehemiah addresses the priests and people with these famous words:

Nehemiah 8:10 (NIV) Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."

10. What strikes you from this phrase, “the joy of the Lord is your strength?”

DAY 5: Finding the deepest joy in the gospel

Zephaniah 3:14 Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem!

¹⁵ The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm.

¹⁶ On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp.

¹⁷ The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing."

¹⁸ "The sorrows for the appointed feasts I will remove from you; they are a burden and a reproach to you. ¹⁹ At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they were put to shame.

²⁰ At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the LORD.

1. The greatest reason for joy is found in the gospel story!
2. All of us, as fallen, sinful creatures, deserved eternal punishment for our rebellion, stubbornness and pride in refusing to thank God for our very being and life. Instead, we treat Him like our butler or worse.
3. This passage in Zephaniah lays out the gospel story.
4. What things does Zephaniah call the people to do? (Verse 14)
5. What are the reasons for joy and singing? (Verse 15)
6. Why can the people sing with joy? (Verse 17)
7. What does that allow the people to do, even when life is difficult? (Verse 16)
8. Blessings *follow*. Notice, blessings *follow*. Blessings are not the primary reasons for joy. Restoration to walking with God is the primary reason for joy and singing! (Verses 18-20)
9. This passage begins with a call for the people to **rejoice** and **sing**! (Verse 14). The passage reaches its climax when God takes **joy** in His people and **sings** over His people! (Verse 17!!)
10. What strikes you about joy?