

The Wonder of CHRISTMAS

skitguysstudios

Joy

The Wonder of Christmas – part 3

Matthew 2: 1-12

DAY 1: What is joy?

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

1. The Christian understands the joy principle in Nehemiah 8:10, but the secular person is greatly puzzled by this, or would scoff at it.

Euphoric joy?

2. For a secular person “joy” is the feeling of euphoria in the moment. Examples include:

- Love at first sight
- The birth of your baby
- When the groom and bride are pronounced husband and wife
- When you landed that first real job that paid you what you hoped for
- Moving into your first home.

3. There is nothing wrong with those examples of secular joy. It is right to celebrate with joy.

4. But those moments are rare.

5. EUPHORIC JOY is strong, powerful, eventful, memorable. It happens every once in a while, but trying to capture joy, and keep it is more slippery than a bar of soap in a toddler’s bathtub.

6. People spend the rest of their lives chasing those elusive moments of euphoric joy. You can try finding it in your marriage, with your cute little 18-month-old, at a second-grade awards ceremony, in sex, or your career, travel, or retirement. It’s here, and then it’s gone. It fades like the morning mist. You can look back and remember what euphoric joy felt like, but there is usually a lingering sadness, a melancholy, that I may not have that again.

7. Joy is not something that you can seek and find. It is rather a result of character choices, virtue choices, wisdom choices, and truth choices that build something which as a result, not a pursuit, provides **a different kind of joy**. We’ll look at different examples of “Christian” joy this week.

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 2: Different kinds of “Christian” joy (Numbers 1-4)

1. When the bible talks about joy, Christians generally assume the bible is talking about EUPHORIC joy. If that is our definition for joy, we will become disillusioned about why we are not experiencing more joy.

2. Our wrong definition of joy causes us to:

- Look for joy in wrong places (great circumstances),
- Look for a kind of joy we rarely will find in this world (euphoric),
- Overlook the kind of joy God is giving us! (At least 14 different kinds of joy!)

3. This begs the question: What **kinds** of joy is God wanting to give us? Over the next three days, we’ll look at fifteen different kinds of joy!

4. Under each of the following joys, jot down what strikes you.

Insider Joy: The awareness that God is telling a Larger Story in life of which we are a part.

Luke 10:21 At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

Finder’s Joy: The joy of being a part of a lost person’s new birth in Christ.

Luke 15:5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’

Pruner’s Joy: The joy we understand during times of pruning, that new fruit will be born through times of painful pruning.

John 15:11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Everyday Joy: I was faithful to God, today; I attended to my responsibilities and relationships; I was about the Father’s business; I kept moving forward; I got back up on my feet today.

Nehemiah 8:10 The joy of the Lord is my strength.

5. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: Different kinds of “Christian” joy (Numbers 5-9)

1. Like yesterday, jot down strikes you from the different kinds of Christian joy we may experience:

Relational Joy: We are given the key that the deepest relational connection possible this side of heaven. We can reflect trinitarian love to people, and bring pleasure to Jesus.

John 17:13 “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them.

Convictional Joy: This joy is felt as deep assurance. I am on the right road; I am living on the basis of truth, not feelings nor circumstances, I am building my life on eternal truth; I serve the God who redeems every pain, suffering and trial.

Matthew 5:3-10 Blessed are the poor in spirit...those who mourn...meek, etc.

Building Joy: I am *building* my life, my character, my marriage, my kids, my business, my ministry, my finances, my health, my relationships. I am becoming a builder.

Matt. 7:24 Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.

Overcomer’s Joy: (Hope) I am less burdened by my failures; I am less bothered by the failures of others; I am learning how to handle my disappointments; I can see God slowly changing what needs changing in me. Our faithful God is exposing the darker side of me—though it is sad and painful, it what I most need.

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Presence Joy: God can give us the pleasure of His felt presence on His timetable.

Psalms 16:11 You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

2. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: Different kinds of “Christian” joy (Numbers 10-14)

1. Like yesterday, jot down strikes you from the different kinds of Christian joy we may experience:

Sower’s Joy:

Psalm 126:3 Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

The Bible’s Joy:

Jeremiah 15:16 Thy words were found and I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God Almighty.

Both / And Joy:

2 Corinthians 6:10 ...sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing and yet possessing everything.

Persecuted Joy

Acts 5:41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

Sufferer’s Joy:

1 Peter 4:12-13 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.

2. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 5: The joy of the kings at Jesus' birth

1. Here is the story of the kings (wise men/magi), who went to see Jesus after his birth.

Matthew 2:1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

*Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. **When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.** And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.*

2. The joy of the wise men was a combination of several of the kinds of joy we studied!

3. God led these men to the most important discovery of their lives. God is always leading people to the most important discovery of their lives—the Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the many ups and downs of life, the journey is always leading you to Jesus.

4. This is what the wise men ultimately found when they followed the star that led them to the promised Messiah. It was a long journey that cost them time and resources. Ultimately, it was worth it and allowed them to come face to face with the newborn King. After miles upon miles of searching and persistence, the star in the night sky guided them to the Savior who had been born in the stall. They likely were overcome with emotion, reverence, awe, and joy!

5. As the wisemen departed from the One they had invested so much to seek, they likely shared their story with people they came into contact with on their journey home. A star that bright would not have been a hidden phenomenon to others living in that region. It likely would have been a connection point of remembrance as the wise men shared their story of where they had been, how they traveled, and what ultimately led them to Jesus. They likely shared the good news of their storied encounter with the Christ child to all who would listen. They set out with a purpose and found it in this baby who had been foretold by the prophets of old.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?