

Unlocking Joy – Pt 2

1. Joy gives you strength

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."

Research has shown that joy produces dopamine that helps you to perform better. Sadly many people are anxiously trying to perform in order to produce results so that they can be happy, but it actually works the other way round.

2. Joy draws people

Joy can be experienced at a national level.

Esther 8:17

In every province and in every city to which the edict of the king came, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities became Jews because fear of the Jews had seized them.

They were not intimidating but joyful yet fear seized the others and drew them in.

3. Joy is our response to His presence

Sad to say, many people disassociate joy and gladness from church. They think of religion kind of like health food—it may not taste good, but it's good for you so you endure it. But the Bible declares that in God's presence is fullness of joy; at His right hand are pleasures forever (Ps. 16:11). If we as His people are to reflect His image, then we must become joyous people.

Isaiah 12:6

**5Praise the LORD in song, for He has done excellent things; Let this be known throughout the earth.
6Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.**

Jonathan Edwards has a wonderful sermon, "God the Best Portion of the Christian," based on Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth." He writes (The Works of Jonathan Edwards [Banner of Truth], 2:106),

Hence we may learn, that whatever changes a godly man passes through, he is happy; because God, who is unchangeable, is his chosen portion. Though he meet with temporal losses, and be deprived of many, yea, of all his temporal enjoyments; yet God, whom he prefers before all, still remains, and cannot be lost. While he stays in this changeable, troublesome world, he is happy; because his chosen portion, on which he builds as his main foundation for happiness, is above the world, and above all changes. And when he goes into another world, still he is happy, because that portion yet remains.... How great is the happiness of those who have chosen the Fountain of all good, who prefer him before all things in heaven or on earth, and who can never be deprived of him to all eternity!

4. Sacrifice and giving should be done in Joy.

Ps 27:6

Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord.

When you do God's work do it in joy.

Ps 100:2

Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

Ezra 6:22

For seven days they celebrated with joy the Festival of Unleavened Bread, because the Lord had filled them with joy by changing the attitude of the king of Assyria so that he assisted them in the work on the house of God, the God of Israel.

Proverbs 12:20

"Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, But counselors of peace have joy."

Proverbs 21:15

"It is a joy for the just to do justice, But destruction will come to the workers of iniquity."

Phil 4:1 NIV

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

Crown = Stephanos from Stephe which means to encircle. That which surrounds you. Someone can only be your joy if they are that important to you as opposed to a side show.

5. Things can change

Isaiah 35:10

and those the LORD has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Keys to Unlocking your Joy

Happy people feel more secure, decide easier, have more cooperative behaviour and finally have a satisfying life in today's dynamic and changing environment (Vinhoven, 1993).

1. Develop meaningful relationships

A lot of research tries to get people to remember their past but some research was carried out real time. Harvard Study of adult development (75 years they have tracked the lives of 724 men). They found that the happiest people were those in meaningful relationships.

2 John 1:12

I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.

What are the characteristics of deep meaningful relationships?

- Emotional intimacy
- Empathy
- Vulnerability
- Security – I feel safe. It's going to be ok. Comfort.
- Significance – I matter
- Self acceptance - I belong, I am loved for who I am not what I do
- Self-respect – my dignity is reinforced in the relationship
- Self efficacy – the relationships inspires me to do great things (cf Jesus saying, you will do greater works.
- Self-worth
- Keep growing

A basic need we all have is the need for progress and in meaningful relationships one grows.

2. Abide in Christ

Spiritual object constancy

Your joy will be complete when you are filled with His words.

John 15:11

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

This produces contentment. In Christ I am complete. His words are so dominant in my heart that other words don't affect me. His voice is the loudest within me. Listening to Jesus words breaks us into new levels of joy.

Research has shown the impact of prayer on your emotional state and immune system.

Research has also shown a positive correlation between spiritual intelligence and happiness.

When we walk closely with Jesus we carry His heart and are more likely to do random acts of kindness which influences our level of happiness positively.

Study was done at University of Pennsylvania on tongues and the brain. They found that praying in tongues had an impact on your brain patterns. There was reduced use of the frontal cortex.

Its also been found that voluntary speech during extended vocal prayer causes a major stimulation in these parts of the brain (mainly the hypothalamus). The hypothalamus has direct regulation of four major systems of the body, mainly: a) the pituitary gland and all target endocrine glands; b) the total immune system; c) the entire autonomic system; and d) the production of brain hormones called endorphins and enkephalons, which are chemicals the body produces and are 100-200 times more powerful than morphine.

3. Shift from deficit based to asset based thinking

Asset based = You look for opportunities in calamity

This is learned optimism.

Deficit based = You are more focused on protecting yourself from danger.

When people treat you badly don't react.

Manage your own rage against discrimination or persecution that you feel.

Research by Shawn Achor and others has shown the importance of decreasing negative noise to make room for signals for good things. Internal noise eg worry. Make a decision to not equate worrying with love. Just because you love someone does not mean you have to worry all the time with regards to them. You increase the noise. Increase positive noise eg watching good things on TV, listen to good

things and people. If you watch the news for 3 minutes each morning compared to someone who watches still picture with solution focus, you have a 27% higher chance of being in a bad mood during that day. This is seen in medical school syndrome. Medical students often end up with the diseases they were studying. They are increasing people's happiness and seeing their productivity going up by 31%. It's a predictor of longevity just like smoking, high blood pressure and obesity have correlations with premature death.

4. Develop a lifestyle of gratitude

This is rejoicing! You become joyful to the degree to which you rejoice. This is a verb that produces joy.

What you think about and what you thank about is what you eventually bring about.

Develop a gratitude journal.

5. Take charge of your life

This is primarily seen in

1. Your use of time

- Killing time; Spending time; Investing time. (In addition there is time perspective).
- Keep appointments with yourself
- Include exercise in this

2. Your emotional state

Why are you down cast Oh my soul? Put your hope in God. Ps 42:5

Research shows the correlation between autonomy and joy. Don't allow yourself to be manipulated.

"I love you and give to you because that's what I want to do, not because I am afraid of you. I am free."