

ENJOYING GOD – WEEK 2 “The Joy of God”

1. Review

- a. Last week we learned that we were created to pursue happiness. We instinctively know that God created us for reasons other than to be miserable. God created us in His image: And I believe that because God is infinitely happy He created us to be happy.
- b. God created us with a great big open place in our heart where our heart longs to fill – knowing that when we fill this empty space, this big vacuum, we will be happy.
 - i. Unfortunately, each of us is born in a state of spiritual death – we are born “separated” from God relationally because of the inherited sin of Adam. Our spirits are dead TOWARD God.
 - ii. So naturally, as we grow and find this big hole in our heart, we try to find our happiness in things OTHER than God.
 1. We try success, relationships, alcohol, drugs, sex, career, possessions, hobbies:
 2. If you can name it, you probably tried it and found out it doesn’t make you happy.
 - iii. What we learned last week was that God created us to find our happiness in HIMSELF – that only He is big enough to fill that God-sized hole in our hearts.
 1. John 4:13 *“Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*
 2. We have an unquenchable thirst and a hunger for “something” and only Jesus can meet that need and that hunger.
- c. Then finally last week we learned about delight and enjoyment of God. I read a quote that I want to read again that ought to rattle your world:
 - i. *“God is most glorified in me when I am most satisfied in Him.”*
 - ii. Properly understood, we have to come to realize that “being saved” is less about “not going to hell” than it is about finding our total and complete satisfaction and enjoyment in God, beginning now, for eternity!

2. The Joy of God

- a. I am concerned that many people want to enjoy the gifts and favor of God without actually enjoying Him.
 - i. How would a father feel if his son or daughter only called when they needed money, and instead of asking him how he is doing, only said, “Dad, I need \$100, thanks, bye.” They would feel used and valued not for who they are or for their relationship as a dad, but only for what they can do for their son or daughter.
 - ii. Many of us do this with God. We pray and ask God for stuff.
 1. We pray and ask for protection and to have our needs met.
 2. We sometimes remember to say thank you.
 3. But do we ever pause and simply enjoy Him?
 4. Do we enjoy our relationship with Him?
 5. Or do we just want God for what He can do for us?
- b. I want you to get a glimpse of God today, and change how you see Him!
- c. Did you know that God rejoices over YOU with joy:
 - i. Open your bible to Zeph. 3:17 *“The Lord your God is in your midst (he is present) a victorious warrior. He will EXULT over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love; He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy!”*

- ii. Most of us have a mental image of a dignified, stoic God sitting on a throne judging the nations and sending down lightning bolts on unrepentant sinners.
- iii. But the picture that Zephaniah paints for us is ONE who is not far away but near and present, and who is celebrating over His people and who shouts with rejoicing over His children
 - 1. He will "rejoice" (suws, soos), which means to be cheerful, be glad, rejoice greatly, joy, or make mirth;
 - 2. And He will do it with "joy" (simchah, sim-khaw'), which refers to glee, gladness, joy, pleasure, and rejoicing);
 - 3. When the prophet says He "will joy" (giyl, gheel), he uses a word which suggests that He will "spin around" (under the influence of any violent emotion), usually to rejoice, or be glad;
 - 4. And the word "singing" (rinnah, rin-naw') is a shrill sound, a shout (of joy or grief), a cry of gladness or joy, singing or triumph.
 - 5. Can you imagine such a picture of God?
 - 6. Doesn't that shake the image you have had of God?
- iv. God is a Father who takes delight and joy in His children!
 - 1. God did not create the human race in order to become its Judge; rather He created it in order to become its Father.
 - 2. He wants us to be His own family, for His delight.
- v. Jesus built on this picture when he said, (Luke 15:10) *"there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*
 - 1. You see, it isn't just the angels that rejoice. It says that "there is joy in the presence of the angels who are in God's presence" (my paraphrase).
 - 2. God is the one who is celebrating.
 - 3. God is ecstatic when one of His children turns toward Him and away from self-worship and a life of self and sin!
 - 4. Father-God celebrates every time a human being comes into the destiny for which he was made!
 - a. Every time a person moves from self-worship to God worship; from self-destruction to re-creation – God REJOICES!
 - 5. In the parable of the prodigal son, Jesus tells of a father who waits every day, looking for his wayward son to return home – and when he sees him in the distance, he RUNS to him.
 - a. A Jewish patriarch would never do something like this in Israel, it would be undignified.
 - b. But Jesus paints this picture of undignified rejoicing – and then tells us that it is God who is the one who is celebrating!
 - c. Oh, how I wish we could grasp this picture.
 - d. How I imagine Jesus wanted us to get a hold of this picture.
- vi. **God who is the creator and lover of the universe, doing the unimaginable and CELEBRATING AND DANCING AND WHIRLING AND SHOUTING when one of His children enters into the destiny for which he or she was made...an eternal relationship with HIM!**

3. What is JOY?

- a. Go through a bookstore and you will find book after book with the word "joy" in the title:
 - i. "The Joy of Cooking", "The Joy of Living", "The Joy of Sex" "The Joy of Parenthood," "The Joy of Painting" etc.

- ii. These titles infer that somehow you will find lasting joy and happiness from engaging in the subject matter of their books.
 - iii. But that is a lie.
- b. You see, happiness and joy are independent of one another.
 - i. We have looked at them as being the same for way too long.
 - ii. Happiness is dependent upon your outside circumstances, when things go our way, we are happy, when they don't...our happiness runs away.
 - iii. Happiness is fleeting. Happiness passes when the new car gets its first scratch, when your boyfriend or girlfriend breaks up with you, when you get a "D" on a report card.
 - iv. I read a quote that says, happiness "is like a good meal given to an inmate on death row. It is only a momentary diversion in the grim march toward death."
 - v. If you build your life seeking and jumping from one fleeting happy experience to another you will find yourself very sad at the conclusion of your life
 - vi. Everyone seeks something that lasts, but most people are shopping in the wrong store.
 - 1. The warehouse of the world doesn't have it on their shelves. It only has substitutes and counterfeits.
- c. One of the first things that we need to know about joy is that it is not something that we can produce.
 - i. Joy is a supernatural experience.
 - ii. We can choose to rejoice, but joy is something that comes from God.
 - iii. Rejoicing is a choice – **rejoicing encompasses the actions of looking toward God and delighting in what we see.**
- d. But when we feel joy, we are not feeling our joy.
 - i. **When we experience joy, we are actually feeling God's joy.**
- e. In Matthew 25:21 tells us of 3 men who are given funds to invest and of two of them who are faithful to the grace given to them and Jesus tells what their master says to them, "*Enter into the joy of your master.*"
 - i. Did you notice, he didn't say, "experience joy for your good work!"
 - ii. He didn't say, "you will know and have joy because you were faithful."
 - iii. No, He says, "ENTER INTO THE JOY OF YOUR MASTER."
 - iv. I believe that what we are hearing and reading throughout scripture (I found over 120 passages specifically mentioning joy in the bible) – is that **It is in our act of enjoying God that we experience HIS joy.**
- f. Maybe this is because **Joy is the common experience of someone who is worshipping in the presence of God.**
 - i. In Luke 24:52, when Jesus appears to the disciples after the resurrection, the bible says, "*and they, after worshipping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy!*"
 - ii. Psalm 16:11 "*You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of Joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.*"
 - iii. Each of these passages describe acts of worship in the presence of God and the joy associated with those acts.
- g. Jesus has also given us a legacy of His JOY. Over and over we find Him talking about joy
 - i. In the book of John, during Jesus' final instructions to his disciples, we hear the following:
 - ii. "*These things I have spoken to you so that MY joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*" (Jn 15:11)

- iii. He prays to the Father two chapters later in Jn 17:13 and says, *“But now I come to You and these things I speak in the world so that they may have MY JOY made full in themselves.”*
 - iv. Jn 16:24, *“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your JOY may be made full.”*
 - v. Jesus brings us out of a life of self-led sin and into a God directed, God oriented, God enjoying life.
 - 1. And the end result of this is the experience of JOY!
 - 2. Joy is rooted in our experience with God
 - 3. Joy is a gift.
 - a. **Happiness is something you try to achieve, but joy is something you can only receive.**
 - b. Ps. 16:11 *“You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In your right hand there are pleasures forever.”*
 - c. Joy is only found in the presence of God.
 - vi. Happiness will be lost when your body falls apart from age, disease or pain.
 - vii. But joy, if it is founded in the Unchanging God in whose presence is joy eternal, lasts despite the sorrows and difficulties of life.
 - viii. Comparison:
 - 1. Happiness is external, Joy is internal
 - 2. Happiness is based on circumstances, Joy is based on Christ.
 - 3. Happiness is an emotion, Joy is a state of being.
- h. Where does Joy come from?
- i. God is the source of joy for us.
 - 1. In fact, we will not find joy by seeking it as an end in itself. It must be given by God.
 - 2. It is the by-product of a life spent in relationship with God.
 - 3. Joy is not found in an object or a possession or an event or an experience, it is **found in an eternal Person.**
 - 4. Joy is experienced when God allows someone to catch a glimpse of Himself.
 - ii. Jn 16:22 *“Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you”*
 - iii. Recall the song, “This Joy” the line goes *“the world didn’t give it and the world can’t take it away!*
- i. Def. of **Joy: The felt experience of God’s pleasure and presence.** (In our spirit)
- i. You may recall the movie “Chariots of Fire.”
 - 1. Eric Liddell, an Olympic runner, a devoted Christian and soon to be missionary and martyr in China says, “when I run, I feel God’s pleasure.”
 - 2. He was made for the moments he was living in. They were offerings of worship to God. And as he felt God’s pleasure, he was experiencing the joy of God.
 - 3. Joy is something we experience when we are participating in what God is doing.
 - 4. At Jesus baptism and transfiguration, the Father spoke words out of heaven: do you remember what they were? “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased (or take pleasure in).”
 - 5. In Jon 8:21, Jesus tells his disciples, “for I always do what pleases Him (the Father)”
 - 6. Pleasing God, seeking the Father’s pleasure, instead of seeking your own results in joy. It is the essence of joy, because in it you feel His joy, His pleasure.

- ii. **Joy is a manifestation of the Holy Spirit's presence.** When the bible says that people are full of the Holy Spirit the word JOY is often used.
 - 1. Acts 13:52 *“And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”*
 - 2. This was the state of the early church. Is it the state of Here's Hope?
 - iii. **Joy is felt when we are experiencing the pleasure of God –**
 - 1. *“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that our joy may be complete.”* (Jn 15:10-11)
 - 2. Some have taught that joy is dependent upon our obedience.
 - a. But I believe that joy is dependent on something more than simple obedience. You can obey out of duty or out of delight.
 - b. When you obey God out of delight – it is there that you experience the delight of God's pleasure.
 - c. Your actions are like giving that dozen roses to your spouse and saying, “I want to give you these because I love you.”
 - d. In fact, when you obey God, ie, walk in His Spirit, you experience His pleasure, His joy of having His child experience life as He intended and designed.
 - 3. There is nothing like experiencing the pleasure of God!
4. How do you know what joy feels like?
- a. Joy is available only the born-again Christian – the person whose life is not centered on God cannot because their spirit is not connected to the Father. It is “dead” toward God. If you reject God, why would you expect to experience HIS pleasure?
 - b. Joy comes out of our spirit, where God dwells, and it floods our emotions and our being.
 - c. Joy is something you know when you experience it.
 - i. Because joy is a spiritual experience, it is also listed as one of the fruits or evidences of the Holy Spirit's control and activity in your life.
 - ii. Gal. 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*
 - iii. In fact, peace and joy are often used in the same sentence in scripture

5. Characteristics of Joy:

a. Joy sustains us in trials and difficulties

- i. 1 Peter 1:6-9 *“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”*
- ii. **We see the power of Joy when we encounter sorrow.**
 - 1. Walter Wangerin writes, *“The difference between shallow happiness and a deep, sustaining joy is sorrow. Happiness lives where sorrow is not. When sorrow arrives, happiness dies. It can't stand pain. Joy, on the other hand, rises from sorrow and therefore can withstand all grief. Joy, by the grace of God, is the transfiguration of suffering into endurance, and of endurance into character, and of character into hope-and the hope that has become our joy does not (as happiness must for those who depend upon it) disappoint us.”*

2. Joy does not exclude weeping and pain and sorrow. Joy isn't skating across life. Joy encompasses our pain, our sorrow. It is not an escape from sorrow. Pain and hardship come, but they are unable to drive out the true joy of those whose lives belong to God.
3. We are told in Neh. 8:10 "*The joy of the Lord is your strength.*"
 - a. The experience of God's presence and pleasure sustains us, His joy is our strength.
 - b. Not His strength is our strength. His Joy is our strength.
 - c. The joy we experience is HIS JOY: The joy that belongs to God.
 - d. We experience His joy (His pleasure and presence).
 - e. His joy is our strength.
 - f. So why aren't we hungry for His joy then?
4. "James 1:2 "*Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials.*"
- iii. Quote of 3rd century man was anticipating death, he penned these last words to a friend: "*It's a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians--and I am one of them.*"

b. Joy is the Normal Christian Life!

- i. Romans 14:17 "*The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*"
 1. For way too long the church has preached the NOT DRINKING portion of that definition and hammered on the RIGHTEOUSNESS portion and neglected the part about "*peace and joy IN THE HOLY SPIRIT.*"
 2. When you became a Christian and gave control of your life over to Jesus, you got a taste of joy.
 - a. A taste of what Heaven will be like. A taste of what experiencing and enjoying God forever will be like.
- ii. As a child of God, you CAN be joyful all the time!
 1. Jude 1:24 "*Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy.*"
 2. 1 Peter 1:8 "*And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with JOY inexpressible and full of glory*"
 3. 1 Jn 1:4, "*These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.*"
 4. Joy is supposed to be normal for us. Joy is something we must be hungry for. Joy is something we are to be looking to God for.

c. Joy is the supreme motivator for life.

- i. Heb 12:2 - *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God*
- ii. Jesus' joy was not in the victory, but in His Father and in the celebration He and the Father would have as each of billions of human beings would be reconciled to God throughout the remainder of history.
- iii. Joy set before us: Our motivator is not success. It is not numbers. It is JOY.
 1. Until 15 years ago, Romania was a Communist country that persecuted true Christians severely. By a miracle, Josef Tson was able to leave the country in the

1960's; called to the ministry, he studied theology in England. Upon completion of his studies, he announced that he was returning to Romania.

2. Some of his friends counseled him: "Josef, don't do that! What chance of success do you think you have?"
3. Josef replied: "Success? Success? That's a typically Western way of thinking. In Romania, when one becomes a Christian, one doesn't think of success. You think of losing your job, losing your income, of beatings, slander, and possibly martyrdom. I'm called to preach the gospel in Romania. So I'll go."
- iv. Happiness runs from suffering. Joy passes through it.
 1. Which do you seek? Joy is not getting your strokes and satisfaction from results but rather from the pleasure of God. It is hearing "this is my beloved child...in whom I am well pleased" that gets our attention and that we live for.

6. Conclusion: **Ways to lose your joy:**

- i. **Sin/Rebellion** – (wilfull sin, including unforgiveness, bitterness, etc). David, after sinning with Bathseba and murdering her husband, is confronted and is broken by the realization of how serious his sin is. He cries out to God, in Ps. 51:12 "*Restore to me the joy of my salvation.*"
 1. Too many Christians I know have been sidetracked and lost the reason for living.
 2. The most miserable person on earth is a Christian who is outside of the will of God.
 - a. Turn to Jesus and let go of your sin. God wants to celebrate you turning from the godless self worship to Him! He wants to be the God and father of your life!
 - b. Why not turn and let Him celebrate today over you!
 3. Let Go! Let God love you!
 4. Don't let self love or choosing less than God's best be your barrier to the experience of the pleasure of God!
- ii. **Walking by the flesh instead of by the Spirit.**
 1. A self-directed life is what it means to "walk by the flesh."
 2. A God directed life is what is meant when the bible says "Filled/controlled by the Spirit."
 3. I had someone tell me this week that they were doing something they heard God tell them to do something. This person obeyed. And experienced great joy!
 4. Obedience – walking by the spirit – that is where joy (the pleasure of God) is encountered. But walking by the flesh will leave you high, dry and very thirsty.
- iii. **Being choked by the cares of life** –
 1. Jesus talks about folks who are like ground, when the sower of seed comes and sows the seed of the word of God: Mt 13:23 "And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."
 2. Has the word been choked off in you? Has the pursuit of wealth or success so choked off the word of God that you have awakened today and realized your joy is gone?
 3. Turn back to Jesus, Your first love. Remember the taste of Joy you knew when you met Him.
 - 4.
- b. Maybe you have never tasted the Joy of the Lord.
 - i. You have tried to go from happy experience to happy experience, seeking out the things that will keep your existence from seeming meaningless.
 - ii. But God has promised joy in His kingdom, that will not fade or change, but that will sustain you through life. Why settle for a substitute?

- iii. You can become a child of God today. You can be the reason for celebration in heaven and on earth, if you will turn from a self-led life and come to Jesus Christ. He came to earth and died upon a cross for you so that you could know forgiveness and the destiny for which you were created.
- iv. Won't you let Him have His way in your life today? The Father is looking for you today. Waiting for you.

Is the joy of the Lord your strength? Or is your own pleasure your weakness?

Extra Notes

One way the fruit of the Spirit reveals itself in my life is in joy.

However, if I do not clearly understand the nature of joy, I may live for a counterfeit and call it joy.

Is the focus of joy physical happiness?

Is the foundation of joy physical well being?

Is the expression of joy euphoric feelings?

Can joy exist in my life only if things are going like I want them to go in my physical existence?

If the joy that is the fruit of the Spirit exists, how will I recognize it?

Again, my focus as a Christian is extremely important.

When it comes to having joy, my expectations determine my focus.

If joy from God's Spirit is present, what do I expect?

How will I know if joy is there or not?

Is it purely a matter of physically feelings? Is it just my emotional response?

Romans 15:13.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- I. We will not understand unless we distinguish between our concept of pleasure and the New Testament concept of joy.
- II. Our concept of pleasure is based on physical feelings that we like.
 - A. The result is indulging our physical desires.
 - B. Pleasure's voice commonly says, "But it feels so good!"
 - C. That means the physical sensation is delightful.
- III. The New Testament concept of joy is based on purpose in existence.
 - A. Christians are not slaves to physical sensations and responses.
 - B. They live for something more important than having pleasurable physical sensations.
 - C. Existence is not about the slavery of physical indulgence.
 - D. They understand life does not end at death.
 - E. Joy is based on a sense of fulfillment and purpose that pleasure cannot understand.
- IV. By way of contrast, if pleasure "is the ultimate" why is it that the more people improve their physical life styles and acquire the means for pleasure, the more their boredom and depression increase?
 - A. Why is it that their children are often disgusted with existence?
 - B. Why is addiction a common experience in seeking pleasure?

Never take your eyes off of our great encourager, Jesus Christ.

- I. He showed us how to dedicate our entire existence to faith.
- II. He showed us how a person who matures in godliness lives by faith.
- III. He showed us how to live by faith in God in spite of incredible opposition.
 - A. He endured death by crucifixion.
 - B. He was not destroyed by the shame and humiliation of crucifixion nor by being rejected by his own people.
- IV. How did he do it? He knew the joy that was set before him.
 - A. He knew the joy of living with God.
 - B. He knew the joy of accomplishing God's purposes.
- V. Because he knew the joy, he ignored the hostility he experienced.
- VI. If we know the joy, we will ignore the hostility of physical existence.
- VII. It is in the joy that you will find the strength and endurance of service. It is in the joy that you will find the praise of worshipping God.