

Topic	Got Joy
Reference	1-Thessalonians 5:16-18
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We are meant to be happy and when we are not happy we are being disobedient.

JOY AND RE-ALIGNING OUR HEART'S DESIRES.

There is a difference between the word joy and happiness. If you Google the word and you look at psychologist and cognitive behavior people they will tell you there is a difference. They would say, happiness is externally driven. Joy is internal. Meaning joy comes from within. So the way the world describes it and I am not saying is right or wrong, it is a fair description, it is semantic. Joy comes from within despite your outdoor external circumstances, so the word recognizes joy as something which is character driven, meaning you could be going through bad times, you could have bad health, bad marriage, bad stuff happening to you but you are joyful. That's the way the world describes it.

The scripture describes it as follows:

Jeremiah 31:13 I will turn their mourning into gladness: I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.

Gladness here, the Hebrew is happy. As far as the Bible is concerned, there is no difference. That's an important point to pick up. As far as God is concerned joy and happiness is the same thing, because as far as scripture teaches us, all joy comes from within, not from the outside.

The root of this is the desires of our heart. Because what scripture tells us, all of us have vacuum, you enter life we have an expectation and they are vacuums and you fill those vacuums with things or people and they make you happy, and sometime they only make you happy for a while.

The first thing we have to understand about happiness is expectation versus reality. We all enter this world with expectations. A youth goes to school expecting hopefully to do well and have friends. You go to work you expect to do well and fit in, you come to church you hope people treat you well and you find some purpose, you get married and you want to live happily ever after, but many times the reality does not meet the expectation. This is rule 101 is why people are not happy. Now there is a reason for all of this. Some people don't have their expectations crushed, is simply lessens.

Our happiness spikes on certain days and then it drops and then you move onto something else that will make you happy. In fact, they call this a cycle. You enter life and you say this is going to make me happy, either it crushes you or makes you happy for a while that happiness sets down and then you move to something else. It is a cycle, in fact there is a term for this, it is called the happiness treadmill or the more scientific term is called the hedonic treadmill, meaning you got to work at your happiness. You keep going on and on and on and you find something that makes you happy while it will settle then after a while you try to find something else that makes you happy and then it settles and so that is life.

A very famous Christian philosopher called Blaise Pascal says this, *all man/woman seek happiness even those who hang themselves.*

Everyone seeks happiness, even while seeking God the motive behind is to be happy. It is dishonest to yourself to say, I like to be unhappy or sad. What psychologists are telling us is that it takes an effort and it is a cycle and this goes back to very famous Christian teacher called Augustine and he said this, *Desire has no rest because happiness comes from your desires. It is infinite in itself, endless and as one calls it a perpetual rack, a horse mill.*

Now this does not square with scripture but here is the first point. Happiness has got to do with what are the desires of your heart, you fix that and you fix your happiness.

Scripture says that if you are not happy as poor, you will not be happy as rich. If you are not happy as single, you will not be happy married. If you are not happy without a child, you will not be happy when you have children because you are simply transferring your happiness to something else and that becomes a cycle that goes on and on and on. You have to fix the desires of your heart. That's that vacuum.

Be joyful always, pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Jesus Christ. 5:16-18

It is not joy in your marriage, joy in making money, joy in your friends, joy in your career, is in Jesus Christ.

Delight yourself in the lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4

Why, because the desires of your heart will be in the Lord and to be more accurate in Jesus Christ. Now this is not only a commandment, this is simple wisdom.

As being humans we are happy because things are going well. Like I am very happy with my marriage, my wife or my children, my work, my health, but what happens if those things are

taken away, not by any reason but it is just taken away, would I still be happy. So CS. Lewis said something very right, *Don't let your happiness depend on something you may lose.*

So God in his wisdom says, anchor your happiness in the Lord because those are treasures you will not lose. How did Paul practiced this and we can see this in 1-Thess 3:

Therefore, brothers in all our distress and persecution we are encouraged about you because your faith, for now we really live because you are standing firm in the Lord.

He has translated his joy to the things of God and these things cannot be taken away. This is simple wisdom and this is the joy that takes you through difficult time and that's why in the Book of James it says, consider it pure joy my brothers when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that testing your faith develops perseverance.

So settle your joy first, let's get the fundamental right, realign your heart's desires and realign it to God, realign to the things of heaven, don't realign to things of the world and you will find a lasting joy that will take you through difficult times.

That's theory but doing it is much more difficult. It is very easy to say to put your joy in God. Because of sin we are much more wired to find happiness and joys in tangible things, not in the intangible, not in those that are spiritual, so how do you develop an attitude that allows you to change the desires of your heart to Godly things and you do it via habits.

JOY AND GODLY HABITS:

Aristotle said, "*We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.*"

This is a mantra of every management book you read. Manners make us man they say, not so true, habits make us man or woman. You are what you every day repeatedly do. If you for example are bitter, you are always complaining that will become you. You are always comparing yourself to others, that will become you. What is the way out of that, you don't do that by saying, tomorrow I am going to be hero, I am going to break all habits. The way you change is by doing what people call replacement habits. Replacement habits empower you and is slowly take you out of bad habits, because they shift you with Godly habits.

In the book of Galatians there are two fruits, the fruits of the flesh. How do you find the fruits of the flesh, you put on the fruits of the spirit and that's how you walk in the spirit. Now the text gives us basically two habits and they are prayers and thankfulness.

Now how do we know it is a habit. The text says that, you want to be joyful you have to pray. If you are not joyful it means you don't pray. If you pray but you are not joyful it means you are praying for the wrong things. They are all tied.

How do we know it is a habit, because of these three words which are interchangeable, 'always', 'continually' and 'in all circumstances'. It means generally, despite what the world whacks you, you are strong. This is really about the victorious Christian life.

Let's break down these two habits. The first is prayer. Until prayer becomes the air you breath, there will be no real joy, because prayer is your connection. Until prayer becomes your habit, you will not find true lasting Godly joy, it has to be the air you breath.

The second habit is the habit of thankfulness,

Give thanks in all circumstances.

Human beings basically are negative. Because of our sinful nature we are generally negative, you just recognize it and negative people are unhappy people and that's why scripture picks it up and scripture says, give thanks in all circumstances.

Not only give thanks when you are going well in your life, give thanks in all circumstances. He didn't say give thanks for all circumstances. He said give thanks in all circumstances, meaning people who pray very often and look around, they don't just pray for their Santa Claus list, they pray because they are thankful.

Do you at the end of every day sit down, kneel down and say, God I thank you for today. Every day is a blessing from God. Happiness comes from a grateful heart. If you are thankful that Jesus died for you while you were still a sinner, his love so overwhelms you, it takes away one word which the world uses so often and it is this word, entitlement. You and I are entitled to nothing but the wrath of God and every day when you live under the shadow of grace, you become more grateful and grateful people are happier people. Develop these two habits and that's all God is saying this morning and is a simple habit. When you do it daily, repeatedly, it will take away a lot of the negativity and these habits will make you breathe life and be happier.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God that transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and mind in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:6-7

When you are thankful, when you pray you surrender your life to God and you basically say, God no matter what I pray, my petition, my worry, I trust you Lord, your will be done then you will have peace. A thankful heart takes you through anxiety.

JOY AND SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

Do not quench the Spirit, Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all, hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil. 5:19-22

Joy is a fruit of the spirit. You are not joyful, you don't have the fruit of the spirit and that's why it says, you are commanded to be happy. If you are not happy there is something not right with your Christian life. But here is what he is saying, joy comes in a package, you got to have love, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. If you don't have the rest of the fruit of the spirits, you are not having Godly joy, it comes in a package.

Why did Paul put in this verse, do not treat prophecies with contempt? Why suddenly, he inserts this verse in the final instructions, quite likely because there were people going around, trying to prophesize about the end days, because in chapter 5 he talks about brothers verse 1, the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. 2For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

So some people trying to prophecies and because of that the Thessalonian church were despising every kind of prophecy. So basically they were cutting out the good with the bad and that's why he says, hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil. It means if someone had a prophetic word, you test it.

How we are tying that to joy? It is about quenching that which is good and which God has given you, because the same verse is given when Paul talks to Timothy, fan into flames. We are talking about discernment. The other word which is very linked to unhappiness is called stupidity. It is true. A lot of us make very stupid decisions and those decisions make us unhappy. Paul says, those that want to be rich have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with grief.

When things go bad in our life we always blame it to others, when things go right we say I deserve it. There is a desire in us believe lies and that's why you are unhappy, it is the art of self-deception. In the same way, when prophecies come, you despise them all, you can't discern the good and the bad in your life. That means when things go bad, you are always the victim. It takes a lot of discernment to recognize your fault. Recognizing your own fault is the key to happiness.

How can you know whether you are living a lie or living a truth?

Take a piece of paper and write down your faults. You will find it is very hard to do that and if you do it, you probably will write two lines. Take the same piece of paper and go to someone you trust and ask him to write down your faults. It will be twice as long. You can't see your faults, but I will plead with you to be joyful is recognizing your shortcomings. That's why we are sinners, that's why come before God and we say Lord forgive us our sins. How can you ask God to forgive your sins if you don't know what your sins are and this art of self-deception makes you live a lie, because living a lie makes you happy short term.

Joy Fueled by Worship:

When you are happy you sing. People sing only when they are happy and so here is the last point to really tie it up. Joy is fueled by worship. Everything we just spoke about is worship. What is worship? Roman 12 tells us, it is the presenting of your bodies and everything you do to glorify God, is 1-Cor 10:31, in everything you do whether you eat or you drink, do it to glorify God.

Monday to Friday everything you do at work, at home is worship that's what scripture says. Sunday when you sing, is worship, but how are the two tied together. It is an important point.

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Psalm 100:1

There is a big misunderstanding, we think that the worship team are the performers and we are the audience. That's not right.

Monday to Saturday you worship God with your actions and your deeds, you come on Sunday you worship together. On Monday to Friday the world hits you, you come together as a family, you recognize you are together and as you sing those words and they go to heaven, heaven responds to you and what heaven does, heaven recharges you and as heaven recharges you, you go out tomorrow, you will be happier.