

Today I Choose Joy! **{Edit}**

Pastor Jim Lowe III

Sunday Morning, 9:30am Stream

04/03/22 (1st Sunday Message)

{All scriptures are NIV84 unless stated}

Review:

John 15 Talks About The Connection We Have With Christ AND With God

Christ is speaking and used a real world example to explain a spiritual concept.

God Is The Gardener Christ Is The Vine We Are The Branches

This is in reference to a grapevine.

John 15:5

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

We are the branches.

If the branches stay connected to the vine, they will produce fruit.

If we stay connected to Christ, we will produce fruit.

Branches cannot create fruit on their own.

They need power that comes from the vine.

We cannot produce fruit on our own.

We need the power that comes from being connected to Christ.

So when we're connected in the right way we'll produce fruit.

Galatians 5:22

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

We have been talking about the “fruits of the Spirit.”

Bishop had been teaching on Love recently.

Last time we talked about Joy.

We talked about what it meant from a Biblical Sense:

Joy (Dictionary of Bible Themes)

**A quality or attitude of delight and happiness,
which is ultimately grounded in the work of God
as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Joy is a gift from God.

It's a fruit of the Spirit.

Meaning if you are connected to God...you have access to joy.

(If you're connected in the right way...you'll bear fruit.)

Other words for Joy:

Delight, Rejoicing, Happiness, Great Pleasure, Enjoyment, Gladness

When we see these words in scripture, these are other words for joy.

They come from God.

God gives us the ability to have joy.

God gives us the ability to be happy!

Being Joyful Has Its Benefits!

The bible talks about the benefits of being joyful.

Proverbs 17:22 (AMP)

A happy heart is good medicine and a cheerful mind works healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.

A happy heart is good medicine.

A cheerful mind works healing.

Being happy in life can be good medicine for you physically and mentally.

It's been written that joy can:

Being Joyful Can: Help You Lose Weight Lower Your Stress Boost Your Immune System Improve Your Memory

But those who are always negative and hardly happy...

scripture says this attitude dries up the bones.

But JUST because it's available doesn't mean you have it.

Just Because Something Is Offered, Doesn't Mean You Automatically Get It!

God can tell you that you can have joy.

He can tell you that you can have peace.

But there are times when we can't seem to find it.

{Today's Title}

Today I Choose Joy!

{Ways To Choose Joy:}

1. Keep Your Focus On God!

Joy is an emotion.

Our emotions are usually determined by the thoughts we have.

We started this year talking about Turning On Focus Mode.

That series was about directing your focus, your attention on to the right things.

Did You Know You Can Choose What You Focus On?

Philippians 4:8

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

The bible is telling you the things you SHOULD think on.

Meaning:

You have control over your thoughts!

When We Control Our Thoughts, We Can Control Our Emotions!

So when we CHOOSE to think a certain way.

That way can affect our emotions.

People say 'focus on the positive.'

It's not always easy...but it's possible.

Psalm 27:13

I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

I am confident that I will SEE the GOODNESS of the Lord.

I will SEE God's goodness...

I am choosing to LOOK FOR God's Goodness!

Keep Your Focus On What God Is Doing!

That sounds so easy...

{Question}

How Can You Focus On God And Ignore The Other Things Around You?

We learned how to do this when we were younger.

Where's Waldo?

When you were playing Where's Waldo,

you would condition yourself to look beyond ANYTHING that wasn't him.

you'd look past 100s of other people, objects...stuff you'd normally focus on.

Because you're looking for Waldo.

{another example}

Finding A Bad Smell

Had a mouse come into my garage one night and ran into the basement of the house...

Eventually I found him when he died.

My nose took me RIGHT to him!

I ignored everything else because I was LOOKING for the source of this smell.

Losing Car Keys

When you forget your car keys and go back in the house to find them.

What are you looking for?

The car keys.

Yes we SEE other things...but our main focus...our source of JOY.

Is God himself.

Another point:

Nehemiah 8:10

10 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."

What does this mean?

Many think this means the "joy you have in God is your strength."

You are strong because you have "joy in the Lord!"

That's true...**BUT**...That may not be what this means.

In this passage, the children of Israel came back to Jerusalem from exile.

Because of their disobedience to God they had been scattered among the nations surrounding them.

God did promise to bring a small group of them one day back to Jerusalem to restore everything.

This group was listening to the law being read.

They were OVERCOME with guilt and condemnation...because they weren't following any of it.

They were out being **COMPLETELY** wild and now couldn't contain their guilt and shame.

Yet Nehemiah told them not to worry...to be have strength.

Why?

Because God himself was rejoicing to have his people back!

Take Joy In The Thought That God Takes Joy In You!

God takes joy in you!!

Zephaniah 3:17

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."

He rejoices over us with singing!!

God is the God who will see us having walked away from him...

We come back all beat up...

We come back crying...

We come back trying to apologize...

And all he's doing is singing songs of happiness!

It's the story of the prodigal son!

Don't Forget God Takes Joy In You!

Stay focused on God...

{Ways To Choose Joy:}

2. Stay Prayerful In All Things!

Philippians 4:6 (NLT)

Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything.

Prayer puts you in the presence of God!

James 4:8...if we get close to God...he will get close to us.

Psalms 16:11

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

God's presence brings us joy.

Keep your focus on him...

Choose to think on him...

Choose to STAY with him.

Because where he is...there is joy.

John 16:24

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your **joy** will be complete.

John 16:24 (MSG)

Ask in my name, according to my will, and he'll most certainly give it to you. Your joy will be a river overflowing its banks!

Talking to God brings joy!

We Can Find Joy In Praying To God!

If you're looking for joy and have a hard time finding it...spend some time praying.

{Ways To Choose Joy:}

3. Keep A Journal Of Testimonies!

"Remember" is found all through the bible.

One specific one:

Deuteronomy 7:17-19

17 You may say to yourselves, "These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?" 18 But do not be afraid of them; remember well what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. 19 You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the miraculous signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm, with which the Lord your God brought you out. The Lord your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear.

Remember what you've seen God do.

What God had done before...He will do again.

Sometimes our problem is we've forgotten the "Egypt" God has brought us from. We look at our new problem and forget how powerful our God is.

Never Forget What God Has Done For You!

1 Samuel 17:34-37

34 But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, 35 I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. 36 Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. 37 The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” Saul said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you.”

Some of us didn’t write down our Lion and Bear moments...so we forgot them.

When new things come, we can take joy knowing God has been saving us all our lives!

Take Joy In Knowing God Has A Proven Track Record!

We need to remember them!

...If they are our stories or stories of how God delivered others.

(Exodus 18:9) Jethro was joyful hearing of what God did for the Israelites!

Don’t Ever Forget How Good God Has Been!

To you...

Your family...

Your friends...

It will give you joy whenever you need it!

{Ways To Choose Joy:}

4. Seek Godly Relationships To Help You!

2 John 1:12

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.

It’s important to have people around you who love God.

You can encourage one another.

You can hold one another accountable.

You can pray for one another.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

9 Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: 10 If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! 11 Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Two people can work together and gain more.

Two can reach out and help each other if one falls.

Two can provide warmth for each other when one alone can't do that.

Two can better defend themselves vs one alone.

And EVERYthing that can happen with 2...

Can be better with 3...

IF all of you are walking AND working together.

Get A Good Support Team If You Don't Already Have One!

People who will not judge...but will help.

People who will protect you.

People who will be a GODLY safe space for you.

{Recap:}

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit.

It is a gift from God.

We don't automatically have it.

But we have to CHOOSE it.

How Do We Choose Joy?

- 1. Keep Your Focus On God!**
- 2. Stay Prayerful In All Things!**
- 3. Keep A Journal Of Testimonies!**
- 4. Seek Godly Relationships To Help You!**

You may not know what the day brings...

But know that joy is something that is available.

God has made it available.

Affirmation:

“Today I Will Choose Joy!”