

Everyday Joy

Acts 13:52

The early Christians faced some pretty extreme challenges. Yet we read this remarkable statement about them in Acts 13:52: "They were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit".

Right away we see that joy isn't determined by what's happening around you, but by who is inside you.

Saints of all ages have drunk from the river of delight (Psalm 36:8), the river of joy. They found it was a power source that can bring life and meet every challenge.

The River Has a Beginning and End

It began with you leaping for joy in your mother's womb.

The Mother of John the Baptist experienced her unborn baby leaping for joy when they came close to the Mary and the unborn Jesus in Luke 1:44

God destined us for joy in the presence of God from before we were born.

It will end for the believer in Jesus with the ultimate reward: Isaiah 55:1 describes the ultimate homecoming, of the people of God being joined with God forever.

"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."

The ultimate reward of the follower of Jesus isn't rest – it's joy. If you find yourself feeling diminished through sorrow, or sickness, your crown is coming – hold on.

The River has stages along the way

Primary school geography – Youthful, Middle and Old aged rivers! Young rivers have energy, vitality – they cut through rocks. The wisdom of an Old age river navigates meanderingly around the obstacles

Experiencing joy is a whole person experience. Affects our hearts our minds and our wills.

The middle stages of the river of God are not sequential, but we experience Joy through these ways through our lives:

HEART EMOTIONS: Experience

The moment of Salvation is often accompanied by joy. Acts 8:8; Philip preached in a city and many were healed, many were set free from life-long habit patterns. And there was great joy in the city.

Seeing what God does in others produces joy (Jesus was once filled with joy as he saw the disciples' success). We're designed to experience joy when we hear good news.

BUT Jesus warns us about emotional joy in Matthew 13 – the seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. Then its lack of root causes it to die.

If all we feed on is the latest story, then we will be yo-yo Christians. We can become cynical as disappointments happen.

Joy must be more than a feeling.

MIND: Truth

We use our minds to live in the truth of God's word, the truth of his work in our life.

It brings us joy when we think about the unconditional grace of God that is ours in Jesus. When we contemplate past failure forgiven forever. When we read of his faithfulness and love through all generations.

1 John 1:8 "If we confess our sins he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Do you feel Joylessness? Galatians 4:15 "What has happened to all your joy?" Confess it, don't let the enemy use it! Joy will come.

Make sure you sing songs of truth, not just what I'm feeling. Worship the Holy Trinity of Father, Son & Spirit, not "me, myself and I"

WILL: choice

David Psalm 122:1: "I rejoiced with those who said to me let's go to the house of God"

Joy is found in the choice! Others were saying to David- let's go! Maybe he wasn't feeling it! But he found joy in choosing to go with what others said.

Our hearts may not always "feel like it". But our will can rejoice by choosing what is good.

Psalm 42:5 "Why so downcast? Put your hope in God... I will yet praise him!"

LLOYD JONES "Our trouble is we spend too much time listening to ourselves, not enough time talking to ourselves!"

Finally, God made us not just to experience this river of joy, but to water the world with it.

John 7: 37 "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive.

Questions:

- **Joy is not determined by what's around you but who's inside you.** How does that help us in our current situations?
- **Heart, mind, will.** How do you primarily find it easiest to experience joy?
 - **Heart:** share something recently that has brought you joy in God- even if it's something small.
 - **Mind:** go around the group and ask each person to share one truth about our God that gives us reason to be joyful (try not to repeat!).
 - **Will:** what are you finding hardest about following Jesus at the moment? Are you applying "I will" to your situation do you think? What help would you value from others in this?
- **Flowing out:** Who has God put in your path this week that you could share his joy with? What might that look like?