

Joy In The Journey, part 2

By: Bobby Sullivan

****Consider it pure joy**, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance . Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be complete and mature, not lacking anything....Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.

(James 1:2-4,12)

So what is JOY? Joy is a topic that is mentioned in the Bible over 650 times (it talks about joy, rejoice, rejoicing, glad, gladness, and delight)

You may say that Joy is no big deal but here are at least 10 scriptures that talk about joy!

Psalm 5:11 - God wants us to rejoice, shout for joy, and be joyful in Him! Notice it says that God wants us to shout for joy, not whisper for joy.

Psalm 43:4 - the Psalmist calls God His "Exceeding Joy." Some of you might say, "Well, I don't need all that joy stuff, brother, I'm just serving Jesus." Well let me tell you something about this God you're serving. He IS exceeding joy! That's His name, and that's His nature. If you get around God, you're going to get a little bit of joy in your life, whether you like it or not.

Job 8:21 - do you know what the book of Job is about? It's about a man who suffered and went through the trials and dark storms of life. Do you know that in the book of Job, joy is mentioned five times? It says that God will fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy. In the book of Job!

Isaiah 9:3 - it says God's people rejoice according to the joy of the harvest. When we see people get saved and give their lives to Jesus, that's joy!

Isaiah 12:3 - the prophet says to draw out water from the wells of salvation with joy. What's he saying here about the wells of salvation? When you get saved, when you give your life to Jesus, you should be experiencing joy. It's fun being saved! There is joy in Jesus

Matt. 25:21 - For those of you who say, "I don't need all that joy stuff," guess what? Heaven is called "the joy of the Lord." When we stand before King Jesus on the day that we enter eternity, He will say, "Enter into the joy of the Lord." So you better get used to joy down here on the earth, because there's going to be a whole lot of it in heaven.

Luke 2:10 - in the familiar Christmas story, the angels appeared to the shepherds and announced the birth of the Saviour Jesus as good tidings of great joy. They said, "This is good news and great joy!"

Acts 13:52 - the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Rom. 14:17 - the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God is about joy.

Gal. 5:22 - joy is the fruit of the Spirit.

It describes the certainty of trials and feelings of powerlessness that trials bring. An Army Chaplain had a sign on his door that said, "If you have troubles, come in & tell me all about them. If you don't have troubles, come in & tell me how you do it."

WHAT IS PURE JOY? The Old Testament word for joy speaks of gladness, dancing, leaping or spinning around in pleasure/intense motion. So it's not just a deep feeling of joy deep down on the inside - it's going to come out! But some of you would say, "Well, that's a little bit too radical for me, brother. Leaping? Twirling? That's not very

dignified!" That's the idea! Who said anything about joy being dignified? Now what is pure joy? Joy in the New Testament speaks of a celebration.

And some people would say, "Doesn't the Bible talk about how we need to have times of mourning and sadness? The Bible does talk about sorrow, Pastor Bob I know it's in there somewhere!" Well, here's what the Bible says about sorrow: **"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." (Ps. 30:5).**

So if you want to have sorrow, have it for a night, but in the morning, let's have the joy! The fullness of joy and rivers of pleasure that God intends for us to experience!

"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Psalm 16:11).

How can we experience the joy of the Lord in our lives? The three things this Scripture tells us we need to do.

- (1) Pick the pathway of life,***
- (2) Pursue the presence of joy, and***
- (3) Participate in rivers of pleasure!***

1.) PICK THE PATHWAY OF LIFE:

"You will show me the path of life..." (Psalm 16:11). What is the pathway of LIFE? Jesus said, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." (John 10:10).

The thing that we need to understand as we're living life here on Planet Earth is that we have an enemy, the enemy of our souls, who wants to steal, kill and

destroy in our lives, but Jesus has come so that we might have life, and have it more abundantly.

If you read through the Scriptures and do a study on the topic of joy, every time you see it, it is accompanied with adjectives – great joy, exceeding joy, joy unspeakable and full of glory. It's fullness of joy that God wants us to have!

But in order to experience the joy, we must pick the pathway of life. **Now what is the pathway of life?**

God said, "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments...I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life." (Deut. 30:15-19).

What does it mean to choose life, and pick the pathway of life?

It means to choose the Bible, to live our lives according to the Word of God. Jesus said, "**These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.**" (John 15:11).

Joy comes from living a life in obedience to the Word of God! If you think about it for a minute: If there is a God, and He created this world that we're living in, and He gave us a Book – the blueprint for life that tells us how to live, and His desire is that we have abundant life and fullness of joy, if we're not experiencing what He intended for us, could it be that we've strayed just a little bit away from this book?

Because He said that when we walk in obedience to His Word, when we follow the guidelines that He has laid out for us, there is fullness of joy!

Someone described the B.I.B.L.E. once in terms of this acronym: Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth

. Do you want to know how to live life to the fullest and experience abundant joy? You have to pick the pathway of life, and that life can be found in the Bible. This book is life.

2.) PURSUE THE PRESENCE OF JOY:

There are research groups that study laughter and joy and offer a 8 step program to assist you in this area!!

- 1.) They work to determine your own sense of humor
- 2.) They help you to become less serious and cultivate a more playful attitude in life which is the foundation for your humor
- 3.) They help you develop a hearty belly laugh
- 4.) They help you improve your joke telling skills
- 5.) They help you create a spontaneous verbal humor
- 6.) Find humor in everyday life
- 7.) Laugh at yourself
- 8.) Start applying these skills to cope with stress

"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy." (Ps. 16:11)

I want to show you something here that I discovered very early on in my Christian life – the way to pursue the presence of joy. How do we get into the place where joy is? The Bible says that fullness of joy is found in God's presence. That tells me that if I want to experience joy, I need to get into God's presence. But the question is – how do I get there?

The answer is found in another Scripture: "But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel." (Psalm 22:3).

Do you want to know where God's presence is? It's in praise and worship. When we praise and worship God, it brings us into God's presence.

Isn't this what Psalm 100:4 says? "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, And into His courts with praise." As we worship God, we walk through the doorway into the presence of God, and in His presence, there is fullness of joy.

Now why is this joy so important? Nehemiah 8:10 says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Do you want to know why we have so many weak and defeated Christians?

Because we don't have the joy of the Lord that gives us strength to go from day to day! When our circumstances are dark, and they are bad – when we experience loss and pain and suffering in our lives,

we need that joy which comes from being in His presence, which comes from praising and worshipping Him! So we need to literally dance for joy!

As we worship and praise the Lord, we come into His presence where there is fullness of joy, and the joy of the Lord gives us strength. Isn't that good?

Now how do we get into the presence? **Jesus said: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing...These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." (John 15:5,11).** When we spend time with God on a daily basis – not just weekly when we come to church on Sundays – through reading His Word, spending time in prayer, abiding in Jesus – we experience His presence.

STUDIES HAVE SHOW THAT LAUGHTER IS A GOOD MEDICINE?

- 1.) Laughter relaxes tense muscles
- 2.) Reduces the production of stress hormones
- 3.) Strengthens your immune system
- 4.) Allows a person to forget about aches and pains and makes you think that it is not as intense
- 5.) A good laugh is like an aerobic workout for the lungs and heart
- 6.) Increase the bodies ability to use oxygen
- 7.) Helps high blood pressure and
- 8.) Has no know side effects!!

How many of you have had so much pressure, trials and circumstances come your way that rather than rejoicing through it, you found your self getting sick?

Psalm 18:14 " The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity."

Amplified says, " The strong spirit of a man sustains him in bodily pain and trouble...but a weak and broken spirit who can raise up or bear?"

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We must know who we are in Christ, who we are through Christ and who we are by Christ!

Trials of many kids are like viruses! We fight off the virus by his presence. We persevere through the pressure. However, it is through all of this that the real us is exposed!!!

The challenge of our faith walk is to learn to optimistically rejoice through it all.

Peter says in **1 Peter 1:6-9** "**In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith-of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.**

1.) Trials refine and purify your faith

2.) Your faith is worth more than gold. Trials increase the value on your faith.

GLORY COMES OUT OF PRESSURE. What is in you will be revealed when pressure is applied.

Our life is like a sponge soaked with Gods glory that no one can really see until we're squeezed under pressure.

We are like a tea bag filled with the aromatic leaves of God's life giving Spirit that can not be tasted until we are in "HOT WATER"

No one will ever know whats inside of us until pressure is applied. Pressure is one of the keys that releasing the Glory of God.

What we see as problems, God sees as opportunities to manifest His glory!!

(JOHN 16:33) Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart I have overcome the world."

(1 JOHN 2:14) I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one."

Why are you strong and why have you overcome? Because the word of God lives in you. How does it live? You feed it!

Feeble Christians are those who have let the Word of God die in them.

(1 JOHN 4:4) You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."

(1 JOHN 5:4-5) For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world, Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."

3. PARTICIPATE IN RIVERS OF PLEASURE!

"At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."
(Psalm 16:11b).

Psalm 36:8 "They relish and feast on the abundance of Your house; and YOU cause them to drink of the rivers of your pleasures. For with you is the fountain of life..."

God wants us to participate in rivers of pleasure. Would you take a minute or two to just meditate on the awesome truths contained in this next Scripture?

"How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust under
the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly
satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You
give them drink from the river of Your pleasures."
(Ps. 36:7-8)

You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures.
We need to learn to drink from God's rivers of
pleasure. Are you thirsty for God's new wine?

Let's do a little Greek lesson on a Scripture here:
This verb is in the imperative tense. That means it's
a commandment. Do you want to obey the Lord? We
are commanded to "Rejoice in the Lord always."
(Phil. 4:4). Rejoice – it's a choice! "Well, I don't feel
very happy today pastor Chris!" We're not talking
about happiness here, we're talking about rejoicing
in the Lord. It's a commandment! And do you think
that God would command you to do something you
can't do? "Well, I can't rejoice today because this
happened in my life." How can we rejoice? In the
Lord. In the presence of the Lord where there's
fullness of joy. Jesus said, "Your heart will rejoice,
and your joy no one will take from you." (John
16:22). Nothing and no one has the power to steal
your joy, unless you let them! Unless you stop
rejoicing and being in the presence.

CONCLUSION!

WE need to drink from the rivers of Gods pleasure

Pressure, trials, obstacles, stress, tension, debt are
all used to perfect the art of passionately pursuing
His presence.

Consider it pure joy because it develops
perseverance that promises the crown of life!