

“Joy”
All the Feels: When Emotions Get the Best of Us
Philippians 4:8-9
Rev. Brandon Blacksten
September 6, 2020

“We do not see the world as it is, but as we are.”

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Proverbs 4:23

This Week: Joy

While we don’t choose our feelings, we do control our _____ to our feelings through thought and action.

“Just as experiences outside our control can shape our brains, we can also reshape them based on how we choose to think and act.” Seth Gillihan

You may not be able to ensure that your circumstances are joyful, but you can choose joy even in _____ circumstances.

God has given us the gift of joy. It is up to us to _____ it.

Obstacles to Joy

“We can define joy as emotional attunement between the self and the world – usually a small portion of it – experienced as blessing.” Dr. Miroslav Volf

Our thoughts, feelings, and actions all _____ one another.

Negative thoughts often lead us toward _____ emotions and behaviors.

Negative emotions tell us lies about the _____ of joy.

- **Guilt:** I would be joyful if only I weren’t so _____.
- **Envy:** ...if only I had _____.
- **Anger:** ...if only I had my _____.
- **Fear:** ...if only the world weren’t so _____.

Negative thoughts often arise from _____ about the world and ourselves.

What are your core beliefs? _____

Attuning to Joy

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.” Philippians 4:4

Our _____ life shapes the way we see and experience the world.

Paul teaches the Philippians to be _____ about where they focus their thoughts.

When we attune our minds to goodness, we begin to experience the world as _____.

We _____ negative thoughts and beliefs that lead us away from our core identity.

What is most important about you is that you are a _____ child of God.

“Personally, as my struggle reveals, I don’t often ‘feel’ like a beloved child of God. But I know that that is my most primal identity and I know that I must choose it above and beyond my hesitations.” – Henri Nouwen

When we know who we are, we can rejoice even when we are rejoicing “_____.”

When we are attuned to our core identity, we can experience God’s blessing in _____ circumstance.

God’s joy _____ our hearts and minds.

As we grow in emotional health, God, our families, and our communities—not our emotions—will get the very _____ of us.

Action Steps

1. Monitor your thoughts and moods.
2. Set your mind on God’s blessings.
3. Every day this week, pray, “Thank you for choosing me as your beloved child.”

Daily Reading and Reflection

September 7-11

Monday – Psalm 30: *“You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, so that my soul may praise you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.” Psalm 30:11-12*
Joy is a gift from God. Joy isn't an environmental emotion we experience given our current or past circumstances. It is a perpetual gift from God. As the Psalmist captures in today's reading, we can think of joy as a new set of clothes. Sackcloth was worn during times of mourning and death, the absolute opposite of the gift God has in store for us. When we live clothed in joy our response to the world becomes one of thanksgiving.

Gracious Lord, I give you thanks for the gift of joy. Allow it to change the way I see the world, and help me to give thanks in all circumstances. AMEN.

Tuesday – 1 John 3: *“Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.” 1 John 3:7*

On Sunday Pastor Brandon reminded us of our core identity: beloved children of God. This is who we are. As children of God, the joy of God is our birthright, and the more we mature in our faith, the easier it will be for us to experience joy as a state of being rather than just an emotion. This chapter also reminds us that there will be people who wish to steal our joy; not that they would have it for themselves, but simply because it is too difficult for them to see others experience it. Joy is yours. We can share it and spread it, but it cannot be taken.

Dear Jesus, I am a beloved child of God, and I give you thanks for my salvation and adoption in your holy Kingdom. Make me wary of those who seek to steal my joy, and provide me opportunities to share it. AMEN.

Wednesday – Jeremiah 31: *“Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness from sorrow.” Jeremiah 31:13*

Joy is a perpetual gift from God, and we have agency in experiencing joy in all kinds of circumstances. However, we will still experience the gambit of other emotions which God has given us, and in those moments, it will be hard for us to remember or maintain our joy. There will be seasons in life when we are too weak, too sorrowful, or too broken, and we cry out to God to return our joy. That's a good thing! We have both agency for ourselves AND a dependence on God.

God, I remain in need of your love and grace every day. Be my strength when I forget that I am your beloved, when it's hard for me to remember your joy. AMEN.

Thursday – Isaiah 12: *“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted.” Isaiah 12:3-4*

Just as we were created in God's image, we were created to experience the divine spectrum of emotions. The words from the prophet Isaiah remind us of God's own joy in redeeming his children. You cannot give a gift you do not possess, and in saving us through his son, Jesus Christ, God experiences and shares God's joy with us.

I praise you, O Lord, for the gift of salvation. You sought me out, brought me in, and redeemed me from the dark. You saved me with a glad heart. May I live with a glad heart as well. AMEN.

Friday – 1 John 1: *“We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.” 1 John 1:3-4*

One of the best ways for us to experience joy and remain in a mindful state of joy is for us to share our joy with others. This simply means to share the Good News which we have received in Christ. If you are discontent with the circumstances around you, speak the love of Christ into them. If you feel overwhelmed with negativity and fear, speak and share the light of Christ with others. Joy accelerates joy, and as the Gospel is shared, the Kingdom of God grows.

Holy God, give me your eyes to see and your words to speak. Let me be a beacon of your light into this world. Help me to spread the joy which you have given through salvation in Christ. AMEN.