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Joy Is A Choice
"YOLO JOY" Week 1
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March 10-11, 2018

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.
John 15:11 (NIV)

Happy. It is what we all want to be, as often and as long as possible. Whenever you ask people what they want out of life, to be happy is one of the main things people want. After all, who wants the opposite, sadness? We make decisions to do things that we feel will make us happy. But there is a problem: It is impossible to be happy all of the time. Since happiness is based on the things that happen to us, we know that it is impossible to have only good circumstances in our life. Sickness happens. People do and say things that hurt us. People we love let us down. When it comes down to it, sometimes life just stinks. As Christians we understand that since we live in a sinful and broken world with imperfect people, bad things happen that rob our happiness from us. In today's study, we will see that there is a better way if you are a child of God. You cannot always be happy, but you can always choose to be joyful. Whereas happiness is based on what happens to you, joy is based on knowledge and trust. Joy is the understanding that although not everything that happens in life is good, everything in life has a purpose, a meaning. God is the one who guarantees that no matter what happens, he can cause it to turn out for our good (Romans 8:28). This gives us the hope that even things that make us unhappy can be good for us. You can choose to be joyful no matter what the circumstances because you trust the One who is in control of all circumstances.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER.

THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE – SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

1. Have each person in your group talk about the time that they were the happiest so far in their lives. What was the situation, the circumstances? How long did the happiness last? Then talk about the time in your lives that you were the saddest. What were the circumstances that caused you to be sad? How long did it last? When you are sad, what do you do to cheer yourself up?

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Romans 15:13 (NIV)

2. In the above verse, hope, joy, and peace are referenced. Do you think that these three ideas are connected? How? According to this verse, when does God fill us with joy and peace? When we trust God, what does the Holy Spirit do?

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NIV)

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3. In the above passage, how does Paul contrast his outward condition (circumstances) and his inward condition? He calls his circumstances “light and momentary.” Read 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 and talk about what Paul’s circumstances were. How can Paul say that his circumstances were “achieving for us an eternal glory”? When he compares his circumstances to this eternal glory, what does he say about the eternal glory? Do you think this could be a contrast between just being happy and being joyful? Because of this comparison, what does he say we should focus on? Why? If you did this, would it bring joy to you?

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 12:2-3 (NIV)

4. In this passage we are told to focus on Jesus because there was a “joy set before him.” What do you think this joy was? What did this joy enable him to do? Have you ever been able to endure something because of the result that you knew it would bring? What was it? Have you ever been weary with life where your circumstances caused you to lose heart? When that happens, what should we do in order to be like Jesus? What should we learn about joy from this passage?

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

John 15:10-11 (NIV)

5. Why should God’s love for us cause us to have joy? From this passage, what do you think a key to having joy is?

MAKING IT PRACTICAL (OPTIONAL)

Below are some practical exercises that your group can do to learn how to be joyful.

Level 1 Challenge: Examine whatever circumstances are going on in your life and talk to God about how you can derive joy from those circumstances.

Level 2 Challenge: Memorize Hebrews 12:2,3.

Level 3 Challenge: As a group talk about what is going on in your lives right now and how you can help each other turn these circumstances into something that you can take joy in.

Sermon Discussion Guide Leader Notes

Suggestions for This Week’s Study

- Help your members understand the difference between joy and happiness.
- Help your members understand that the hope we have in God is what brings joy in all of our circumstances
- Help your members realize that when you are obedient to God, you can live a joyful life because you know the result of that life will have eternal meaning, not just temporary happiness.

Preparing to Lead Your Group

1. PRAY for insight as you begin to prepare for leading your group. Ask for God’s wisdom, that the Holy Spirit will be the teacher, and that you will be God’s instrument to lead the group to greater understanding and a willingness to commit to becoming more like God. Prayer should be your primary source of personal preparation for leading your group.

2. PLAN where you want to take your group in the next 60-90 days. Is your group strong in some areas and weak in others? How can you challenge the members to live more balanced Christian lives? Consider God's five purposes for the church: Glorify God, Relate to Everyone, Act Like Jesus, Care for Everyone, Express God's Love and make a plan to encourage your members to growth and commitment in their weak areas.

3. PONDER YOUR PROGRESS after each session and at the end of a series. Reflect on what went well and what didn't. Re-evaluation is key to your growth as a leader. Consider whether your plan is being effective in moving the group to greater understanding and commitment.

Using This Sermon Discussion Guide

1. Going Further is a tool to aid you in meeting the needs of your group. We've designed it so it can be completed easily within 30-45 minutes. As the discussion leader, you should preview and evaluate the questions based on the needs of your group. Decide in advance what is more important to focus on, should time not allow for the entire lesson.

2. Feel free to adapt the format to meet the needs of your group.

3. Personal applications are essential for growth and should be included in every discussion. When discussing how they will apply principles, group members may state very general goals, such as, "I need to spend more time in prayer." It is important for you to help people make goals that are very specific and commit to specific plans of action by asking, for example, "How are you going to begin?" An example is to get up 25 minutes earlier each morning, spending 15 minutes reading the Bible and 10 minutes in prayer. Encourage each group member to be accountable to the group for personal progress at the next meeting.

4. Your goal as the leader is to bring the group into a stimulating discussion that helps the members recognize their needs for personal life change. Ultimately you want them to be willing to commit to change with accountability to the group. Accountability helps us to persevere in our commitments and achieve the blessings of success.

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