

“Got Joy?” * *Philippians 4:4-9* * 9/23/07

“Our dream is to joyfully become a growing Christian church that reaches tens of thousands, teaches thousands, unleashes hundreds, in New England and beyond.” ~ Grace’s Vision Statement

I. Quick Review – what is God’s dream?

To unite all things in heaven and earth together in Christ – to heal all the brokenness and cursedness of life.

II. Joy is part of the birthright of being a Christian. How do we know this?

A. Because **Jesus** said so. (*John 15:10-11*)

B. Joy is one of the 9 **fruit** of the Spirit which God gives every believer (*Gal.5:22*)

1. *Is genetics our destiny, or can we really change?*

Scientists and psychologists who study human behavior will say that people’s dispositions and moods are largely innate, a product of birth and genetics. Some babies are born happy, some are born grumpy. And sure, a good deal of who we are is a product of how God wires us. But the good news of Christianity is that genetics is not destiny. The good news of Christianity is that by the power of Christ in us, we can change, we can alter our course, we can set sail for new horizons. **“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation”** the Bible promises.

C. Because joy is at the very heart of God’s **nature**.

1. *What does Zephaniah 3:17 say about God?*

“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.”

2. *It wasn’t just anger at sin that sent Jesus to the Cross – what else took him there? (*Heb.12:2*)*

Let your mind chew on this one – God is glad you’re here. And you know what – this will really blow you away – it wasn’t just God’s wrath and anger at sin that sent Jesus to the cross, it was

love *and* it was joy for you. Hebrews 12:2 – **“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.”**

III. How then do we get joy?

A. *Are there physical benefits to having joy?*

People with joyful dispositions develop 50% more antibodies than average in response to flu vaccines. Joy can lower the severity of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, colds. A good dose of daily laughter, simple laughter, has been proven to lower blood pressures, lower stress hormones, and reduce the risks of heart attack. “It’s a form of internal jogging,” says one researcher. When Nehemiah 8:10 said, “The joy of the Lord is your strength” it wasn’t kidding.

B. *The research is clear about what gives the most joy.*

High Joy-Givers

Children
Marriage
Work/Retirement (equal)
Family & Friends
Service
Faith (is a huge joygiver)

Low Joy-Givers

Money
Being Young
Education
Where you live

IV. According to Paul in *Philippians 4* there are three areas where a Christian can find joy.

A. A Christian can rejoice **in** the Lord (*vss.4-5*).

1. *What types of earthly things can we take joy in?*
Sports. Food. Change of seasons. Just about anything.

2. *What’s true of all of life’s pleasures?*

The thing about life’s pleasures that you and I must recognize is that we have to lay them all down. Not one of them lasts. And if you try and put all your eggs in one of these baskets, try to build your life on any of these things, well your world is going to fall apart in the end.

3. *What do we have 'in the Lord' that can never be taken from us?*

The “joy of our salvation” – that we have been saved (we are forgiven and our names are written in the book of life); we are being saved (by the presence of the Holy Spirit inside us helping us live new lives); that we will be saved (when our lowly bodies are transformed into bodies like Jesus’, a body that will not sin, or get sick or feel temptation or sorrow or doubt.

B. *A Christian can rejoice with the Lord (vss.5-7).*

1. *What’s the main problem with this life?*

The problem with life on this side of heaven is that it seldom unfolds as we would like. It seldom fires on all cylinders. Disappointments and heartaches and obstacles abound. The famous writer and atheist Bertrand Russell said, “The secret to happiness is to face the fact that the world is horrible, horrible, horrible.”

2. *What do I need to do when facing life’s tests?*

“The Lord is near”, Paul writes. And this truth leads into this great verse about prayer. It’s because the Lord is near, right by our side, that we develop this habit of talking to him constantly about what’s going on in our lives. “In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Some of you are going through a severe season of testing right now. Take Jesus’ hand and do not let go. Keep the conversation of prayer going each and every day. You may not get the answer you’re looking for, but you’ll get Jesus, and if you get Jesus, you’ll have all you need to see you through.

C. *A Christian can rejoice for the Lord (vs.8)*

1. *Is joy – in and of itself – a good and godly thing?*

No. Joy, in and of itself, is not a good and godly emotion. It’s just an emotion, pure and simple. Joy is the raw sensation of something giving us pleasure. God gave us the bodies and minds for feeling pleasure, but that’s not to say that every pleasure our bodies and minds feel is from God. There are some people who

experience joy when they look at the images of unclothed children on the Internet. It’s pleasure that they feel. The real surge of endorphins firing in the brain. Serotonin levels rising. Does that mean it’s good and godly? Not on your life.

2. *What makes ‘joy’ good and godly?*

It depends what the joy is for which shows whether the joy is good and godly or not. If the joy is for something that is consistent with God’s goodness and holiness, then that joy will be life-giving.

3. *If I take pleasure in the wrong things, what must I do?*

The Bible has only one thing to say to the person like this – repent. Recognize the sorry, damnable state of your life and fall at Jesus’ feet and beg him to have mercy on you. Beg him to forgive you and wash your sins away. Beg him to give you a new heart and mind that take pleasure in the right things. It’s the only way you’ll ever be saved. It’s the only way you’ll ever be free. And if you do that, then Jesus promises to forgive you, and what’s more, promises to come into your life and teach you a new way to live. Teach you how to take joy in the right things, in things true, noble, right, pure and lovely.