

Recovering Our Joy For The New Year

What is the easiest thing to lose?

- Keys – Patience
- Phone – TV Remote
- Glasses – Job

Actually, I think it might be joy! One phone call, one email, and our world can turn to gloom. These are gloomy times, yet even during these times, joy should abound. If my family never had joy that would reflect poorly upon me. If God's children aren't filled with joy, it reflects poorly of God in our world. Cranky Christians are poor witnesses. God wants us to witness with our countenance.

Paul said, ***“The kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink (rules & rituals), but of living a life of goodness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 14:17, NLT)***

God wants us to live a life marked by goodness, peace and joy. Satan wants to kill all of these things. Jeremiah the prophet knew hard times. He said of Israel, ***“God’s people...the joy of our hearts has ended.” (Laminations 5:15)***

How do you get your joy back?

I. **Admit that I have lost it.**

Questions:

Has there ever been a time in my life where I have been close to God then I am not?

1. If so, will I admit it.
2. David did. He said in Psalm 51, ***“Restore unto me the joy of my salvation.” (vs. 12)***
3. He had not lost his salvation, but the intimacy with God.

II. **Analyze the cause.**

Question: What caused it?

“Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord.”

(Lamentations 3:40)

- Examine your life.
- Test it – “What are the kill joys.”
- Return.
 - 1) An unbalanced life.

Am I overworked or underworked? We need balance in our lives. We need to give, but we need to also receive. You can't take in and not give out. Input without output will hurt you.

- 2) An unused talent.
- 3) An unconfessed sin.
- 4) An unresolved conflict.
- 5) An undernourished spirit.

III. Correct what's wrong.

I have been in God's family for over 50 years and in vocational ministry for over 30 years. Here's what I know kills joy in people's lives: "Knowing what they should do but not doing it." Jesus said to know the right thing we need to do and not doing it is sinning.

“If you obey my commands, you'll 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)

When I obey God it brings joy to my heart. The Bible is the joy manual for life. God gives us instructions because He knows us and loves us. He knows what brings blessings and what bring burdens. I hear this all the time, “I know this is not right but I'm going to do it anyway.”

IV. Focus on what's good in your life.

“The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.” (Psalm 126:3)

Gratitude changes our life. I love the song, “Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.”

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

- Good and worthy of praise.
- True and honorable.
- Right and pure.
- Beautiful and respectful.

No T.V. series will make this into a series. So you have to go elsewhere to help get your focus. By high school graduation a kid watches 18,000 hours of T.V. The average life spends 9 ½ years by retirement watching T.V. Is T.V. worth giving your life to? Is it worth your life? Because that’s what you are giving to it.

V. Spend time with God every day.

“Your words are what sustains me. They bring me great joy.” (Jeremiah 15:16)

- Daily read God’s Word.

“Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” (John 16:24)

- Daily go through your prayer book.

“Let’s sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.” (Psalm 95:1)

- Praise God with your voice. I can’t sing so I pray scripture (Example – Psalm 23 & the model prayer) I sing at church. I am more excited here than at a ball game! I am a fan!!

VI. Find a way to give back.

“God has...given us new lives from Christ Jesus; and long ago he planned that we should spend these lives in helping others.” (Ephesians 2:10)

The root to joy is giving and serving. When you give yourself in serving you always get back joy! Jesus said, ***“There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.” (Acts 20:35)***

- I can't tell you the joy I got out of filling two shoe boxes for a boy & girl that I don't know and will likely never meet.
- Happy are the givers!

We get the word "deacon" from "service." We also get our word "persecution." It's the idea that I sacrifice myself for someone else.

There are 195 countries in the world. Christians are persecuted in 60 of them. Christianity is the most opposed religion in the world. This year 176,000 Christians were killed for their faith. If 1,000 people die in a storm it's world news, yet we hear nothing about it. The media does not care, but God does. 100 million Christians sacrifice today because of their faith. More have died in the last 100 years than the last 1,000 years.

- Yet those persecuted have joy in their testimonies. Tongues have been cut out, eyes blinded, and limbs cut off – this is common.

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:11-12)

VII. Tell the good news to others.

"There is joy in heaven over one sinner who changes his heart and life..." (Luke 15:7)

The Bible says, ***"He who wins souls is wise!"***

Stages of sales people:

- Enthusiasm – Excitement
- Customer Service – Maintenance
- Justification of non-performance – Discouragement.

See Luke 15:1-24

The result of finding something lost is joy.

Nehemiah said, ***"The joy of the Lord is our strength."*** When we are filled with joy, the result will be sharing it with others.

A. There is joy to the one who hears.

Paul asked in Romans 10, *“How will they hear unless someone goes...”* Beautiful are the feet of the one who comes with the goodness saying, “You are free; you can go home!” The gratitude of the hearers overshadows the inability of the message.

B. There is joy in the one who heralds the Good News.

Paul rejoices in Philippians because the church was in partnership with him for the gospel.

C. There is joy in heaven when I tell the Good News.

Heaven celebrates because people are important! There is a celebration for each person saved!