



December 13, 2009

Message: Story of Joy

DENNIS MURPHY

MESSAGE NOTES

HOPE FLOW...LETTING GOD'S LOVE FLOW THROUGH US EVERY DAY!

Start each day with a prayer that God will give you understanding and wisdom and show you how it can be useful in your life.

Day 1 Joy

Let's do a word association exercise. Write down all the words that come to mind when I say the word "Christian."

◆ Now look at your list. Is the word "joy" on your list?

Unfortunately, joy is not often associated with Christians. Oliver Wendell Holmes once remarked, "I might have entered the ministry if certain clergymen I knew had not looked and acted so much like undertakers."

If joy is on your list, it might be because of the time of year, as Christmas is an occasion for great joy and celebration.

As Gabriel said to the shepherds, "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!" (Luke 2:10,11 NLT)

Joy is described as a strong feeling of pleasure, gladness, cheerfulness or celebration. It is also an inner contentment and purpose in spite of circumstances.

- Is there something you have personally experienced or accomplished that has brought you joy?
- Have you ever experienced immense joy? Did it involve anyone else?
- What kinds of things bring you joy?
- Do you experience joy in your life now? How often? If not, why?

The Greek word for joy is (chara) and the Greek word for grace (charis) share the same common root word. Because of God's grace we can experience great deal of **joy** through the **grace** of God.

Action Steps: Think of all the good things in your life and say a prayer of thanks to God. Thank Him for His grace and mercy.

Day 2 Joy Robbed

Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. James 1:2-3

This season is supposed to be season of joy. But just like in the Dr. Seuss story, the Grinch comes in and steals our joy. As you might have heard in this week's message, there are the five things that rob (Grinch's) us of our joy:

1. Suffering, difficulty, challenges, trials. Unexpected obstacles. Usually revolves around loss (income, jobs, homes, health, relationships, loved ones,)
2. Grinch of conflict – interpersonal relationships.
3. Pressure in life (performance, trying to meet deadlines, obligations & responsibility, raising kids, finances, parenting)
4. Busyness – comes with doing Christmas. Striving!
5. Sin

- ◆ Are any of these 5 things trying to steal your joy?
- ◆ Is there something else that is stopping you from finding joy?
- ◆ Are you spending any time during the day connecting to God (reading bible, praying, quiet time listening, bible studies, etc)?

Action: Pray for God to help you get closer to Him. Pray for Him to reveal to you any sin in your life. Pray for steps that you need to take to resolve those things that are robbing you of joy.

Day 3 Finding Joy

Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day — Henri Nouwen

Finding and choosing joy is your responsibility. Not your friend, not your parent, not your spouse, not your kids, not your boss—your joy is your responsibility. For some of us, this does not come easily. You may be joy-impaired. You will have to fight for it. But it can be done.

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. Hebrews 12:2

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

◆ Read the above two scriptures and list the actions you must take in order to experience joy and peace.

Action Steps: Stop and Smell the Roses: Slow down and enjoy the life God has granted you. Say a prayer of thankfulness for those things and people in your life. Pray to be able to experience joy by looking beyond the suffering, trials or difficulties you are going through, knowing that God is in the process of perfecting your faith. Pray to be able to trust and thank God in all circumstances.

Day 4 Joy in Christ

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. John 15:9-11

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Phil 2:1-2

Inexpressible Joy in the Invisible Christ -Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:8-9

We often pursue the lesser things in life (jobs, relationships, houses, material things) that we "think" will bring us our joy. So much of our time and efforts are invested into those things that will always fall short. We only give God a small part of our life, when He wants to give us the ultimate joy. Joy that can only be found in Jesus Christ. When accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord & Savior, you receive the beautiful gift of salvation. But salvation is not the greatest joy. It is not the end all, it is only the Beginning. God offers us salvation so we can have a relationship with the living God, Jesus Christ. Greatest and ultimate joy is the journey with Christ!

◆ How do you embrace that with your hearts and in your life?

Action Step: Spend some quiet time in prayer. Pray not to settle anything short of than the Joy of Christ.

Day 5 Expressions of Joy Overflowing Joy is not full joy until it comes to expression.

Philippians 1:25-27 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

Joy is one of the fruits of the spirit- Galatians 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control.*

In the above verse, joy follows love as a fruit of God's Spirit and the expression of love brings real joy to our lives. Real joy involves touching the lives of others in a positive way. It's the way of giving, sharing and out flowing concern for others.

Authentic true joy is when it takes on the life of expression and overflows in worship. Acts of worship is not just singing. Some of the ways that the Joy of Christ is complete when we are worshipping, giving, serving loving, confessing, forgiving and reconciling.

Action Steps: Express joy through gratitude and compassion for others. Experience joy by praying for one another. Rejoice by telling someone about Jesus Christ.