

Wholeness

Weekly Biblical reflections for looking after our Wellbeing

Reflection 11: Living a life of Joy

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

We are nearly at the season when we talk about love, joy and peace. However, for many of us joy seems to have been in short supply this year, and as we navigate the difficulties in life (at any time not just now) how do we have joy?

Firstly, its important to look at what joy is (and what it is not)! Joy is not a feeling in the way happiness is, nor is it the absence of sadness and grief. Happiness and sadness are often based on the circumstances around us while joy is something different: Jesus had joy yet he wept when Lazarus died. It's important that we recognise joy is not shallow optimism, but as the verse above states a gift from God.

So when joy seems hard to find, does it even matter? Sophie Cliff - The Joyful Coach tell us why joy is important;

Joy is a great predictor of good health

Studies show that joyful people have less chance of having a heart attack, maintain a healthier blood pressure, and tend to have lower cholesterol levels. There's research to prove that joy boosts our immune systems, fights stress and pain, and improves our chance of living a longer life.

Joyful people are kinder

Add to that the fact that joyful people tend to be more patient, kind and creative than their peers. Studies have shown that they're also more likely to have healthy, meaningful relationships that last.

Joyful people are more successful

Lots of people tell me that they know joy is important, but that right now, they're too busy focusing on their careers to prioritise it. I get that idea, I really do, but what if I told you that the research shows that joyful people are 40% more likely to receive a promotion at work? The science shows that our brains work significantly better when they are in a positive state, as opposed to a negative, neutral or stressed state, and so prioritising your joy could be the magic ingredient for your career success.¹

So when joy is in short supply what should we do? Maybe we need to recognize that joy is a gift from God; in John 16:22 Jesus talks of an eternal joy, a hope to come;

Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

John 16:22

The context of this verse is that Jesus is going to leave the disciples, but that the grief they feel for that will turn to joy, just as the pain of childbirth turns to joy, they will see Jesus again and be joyful – there is an eternal hope that joy will come again. But what about now, how do we have joy now? Whatever this world throws at us we can trust a God who has done great things and is a God in whom we can be glad and rejoice in. The pursuit of joy is a choice for most of us, we can choose to accept the gift from God, by spending time in God's presence we can receive that gift. Let's spend some time asking God for joy that transcends our circumstances today.

Reflection questions:

- Do you feel joyful in your life?
- What can you do to bring joy into your life?
- Does spending time with God have an impact on whether you feel joyful?

Prayer:

Thank you Father that your joy transcends the circumstances around us, thank you that by spending time with you we can accept the gift of joy you offer. Help us focus on you and all that you have called us to be and do in our schools, help us to be an example of joy to those around us. Amen

ⁱ <https://sophiecliff.com/blog/2019/9/24/why-is-joy-so-important-anyway#:~:text=Studies%20show%20that%20joyful%20people,of%20living%20a%20longer%20life.>