



Authentic Joy

“Joy is the serious business of Heaven.”

C.S. Lewis

This month we will look at **Joy** and what Jesus meant when he said,

“I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

John 15:11, NIV

Joy

Excerpt from Holman Bible Dictionary on Joy

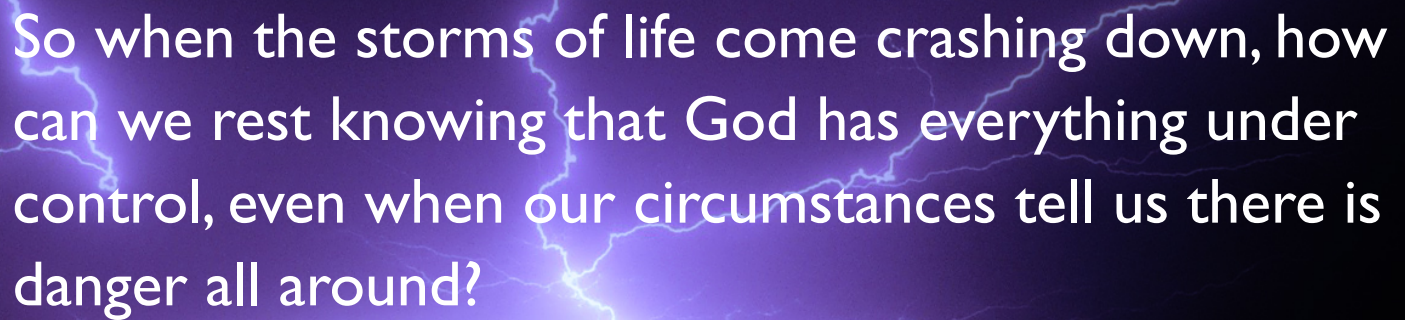
"The happy state that results from knowing and serving God. A number of Greek and Hebrew words are used in the Bible to convey the ideas of joy and rejoicing. We have the same situation in English with such nearly synonymous words as joy, happiness, pleasure, delight, gladness, merriment, felicity, and enjoyment. The words joy and rejoice are the words used most often to translate the Hebrew and Greek words into English. Joy is found over 150 times in the Bible. If such words as “joyous” and “joyful” are included, the number comes to over 200. The verb rejoice appears well over 200 times.

Joy is the fruit of a right relation with God. It is not something people can create by their own efforts. The Bible distinguishes joy from pleasure. The Greek word for pleasure is the word from which we get our word hedonism, the philosophy of self-centered pleasure-seeking. Paul referred to false teachers as “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:4)."

Quote by Oswald Chambers

The Bible talks plentifully about joy, but it nowhere speaks about a “happy” Christian.

Happiness depends on what happens; joy does not. Remember, Jesus Christ had joy, and He prays “that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.”



So when the storms of life come crashing down, how can we rest knowing that God has everything under control, even when our circumstances tell us there is danger all around?

I must admit that **fear** is one emotion that is displayed far more frequently in my life than **joy**. One of the many things that frighten me is thunderstorms. I learned at an early age that they were dangerous; not because I was ever struck by lightening or came close to it, but because of the stories that my mother shared with her four daughters.

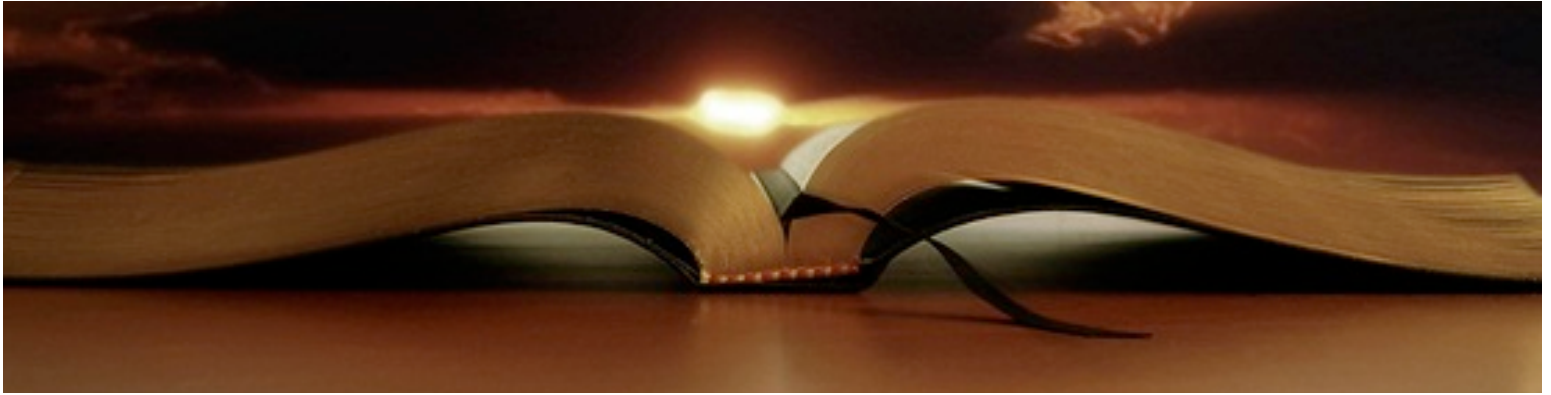
One particular memory I have of a thunderstorm was one that hit in the middle of the night. Somehow three of the four girls ended up in my oldest sister's bedroom. Because I was three and she was nine, I hung on every word as she explained that we were situated in the safest place in her room. She reasoned that if lightening came through the window (really what kids think about lightening traveling through windows) it would fall directly down on the bed that we were **not** on. As she verbalized her assessment she must have concluded that might not happen at all and she quickly moved us to the other bed. Still uncertain of the direction the lightening bolt would take, we eventually moved to the hallway where there were no windows. We reasoned this was the safest place in the house to ride out the storm and eventually we fell asleep.

That night was frightening and void of any type of joy. Rest came only after all of the "what ifs" that our young minds could image were eliminated.

As I reflect on the other types of storms I have encountered, I see my natural reaction is to respond in the same way I learned as a child; survey the danger, eliminate it if at all possible, and seek shelter in the safest place to ride out the storm.

What about you; how do you respond to the storms in your life? Do you survey the danger, attempt to eliminate it if at all possible, and seek shelter to ride out the storm?

Let's look at how the apostles responded to the storms they faced.



Paul told the believers in Rome to...

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer."

(Romans 12:12, NIV)

Paul had credibility when he spoke because he didn't just talk the talk, he walked it.

"...I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." (2 Corinthians 11:23-28, NIV)

Paul also wrote...

"I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Corinthians 12:10, NIV)

James said...

"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." (James 1:2-4, NIV)



1. The Bible has a lot to say about Joy. Look up each verse listed below and write what it says about **Joy**.

Galatians 5:22

John 16:22

Nehemiah 8:10

Nehemiah 12:43

Thessalonians 1:6

Hebrews 12:1-3

2. Describe why you think Jesus was able to endure the cross?
3. Describe why you think Paul was able to endure pain and suffering?
4. Where do you think Jesus's, Paul's, and James's joy came from?
5. Think about a storm God brought you through (or is bringing you through).
Did you attempt to find rest by solving the what ifs? Did you find rest only after the storm had passed?
6. What do you think steals your joy?
7. Have you ever asked God to supply you with His supernatural Joy in the midst of a storm?
8. How do you think your reaction to the storm would be if you asked Him for His Joy?

Norman Vincent Peale once visited a friend in the hospital. He had previously had one leg amputated and now he had lost his other one. Nevertheless, he seemed happy and enthusiastic.

“Everyone tells me you are the happiest person in the hospital,” said Dr. Peale. “You are not putting it on, are you?”

“No, no, I am as happy as can be.”

“Let me in on your secret,” Peale asked.

“Do you see that little book lying over on the table?” the man replied, pointing to the Bible.

“There is where I get my medicine. When I feel a little low, I just read that Book.”

Preacher's Sourcebook of Creative Sermon Illustrations

Prayer

Jesus,

We confess that we know little about authentic joy. Joy that endures immense pain and suffering is a mystery to us. The joy Jesus experienced as He went to the cross knowing His act of obedience would rescue the souls of men.

Give us Your joy; a joy that sees beyond our circumstances. Help us to fix our eyes on You instead of the storm. Give us rest from our fears. Help us to see that we do not need to figure out life on our own because You have everything under control. You are our shelter from the storm.

It is in Jesus Name We Pray,

Amen