

52 Days week 5 – Joy is Strength

According to *Psychology Today*, in 2008, 4,000 books were published on happiness—up from 50 in 2000.

So Nehemiah got a win. In 52 days the wall was completed the enemies stop their attacks because they had lost and the people could take it easy. They could stop and breath and begin to think about life going forward.

So what did they do to celebrate?

all the people came together as one in the square before the Water Gate. They told Ezra the teacher of the Law to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded for Israel.

² So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. ³ He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law. Neh. 8:1-3

They went to church and gathered to hear the word of God. They wanted to know what it would take to rebuild a nation. To build something that would make a difference for God, a place for their children and their generations to follow.

That is what we are trying to do here at Life Church. We are not only building for ourselves but we are building for generations to come.

They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read. Neh. 8:8

They read from sunrise to about noon. As Ezra read he would stop and explain what this meant. Imagine them hearing the story of the greatness of the kingdom under David and Solomon. The failure through sin and the following devastation from invasion and the destruction of the temple and the beloved city of Jerusalem.

Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, “This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep.” For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Neh. 8:9

This made them sad as they felt the pain of what was lost and how the city was today. But Nehemiah tells them not to mourn. This is a great day a new beginning, a new season of god’s blessing, a fresh start.

God is always willing to give everyone a fresh start, and as many as you need.

Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Neh. 8:10

We spend a lot of time grieving in God's presence and less time in joy and celebration. I hope to help change that in you today.

Focus today on this idea of Joy. Though it seems archaic it is possible to live a joyful life. Need to restore joy in worship. We think joy is shallow and frivolous and church should be serious and pious.

It has nothing to do with a bubbly personality.

Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful. Proverbs 14:13

Joy is not same as happiness

Happy comes from Old English word, "hap", where we get "happen". If good happens we are happy, if bad happens we are unhappy. It is always **circumstantial**.

Though they have been going through much trouble and hard times, their wonderful joy and deep poverty have overflowed in rich generosity. 2 Cor. 8:2

Our hearts ache, but we always have joy. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything. 2 Cor. 6:10

Thermometer versus Thermostat.

To be happy we seek pleasure.

Joy is not same as pleasure

"Joy is never in our power and pleasure often is" C.S. Lewis

Pleasure is like filling up on sweets versus something nutritional. You're full but you wish you weren't, you have regrets. Pleasure is about making yourself happy as the highest goal. You will use people hurt people, it doesn't matter. This is the basis of addiction.

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. Titus 3:3

The self-indulgent person, according to **1 Timothy 5:6**, is dead while seeming still to be live. ***But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives.***

Paul referred to false teachers as "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" 2 Tim. 3:4

God commands His people to be full of joy. (Psalms 37:4; Philippians 4:4) If joy were an emotion based upon circumstances then that command would seem rather harsh and unrealistic.

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 Only Comes From God Exclusively

He will yet fill your mouth with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy. Job 8:21

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Psalm 16:11

You have shown me the way of life, and you will give me wonderful joy in your presence.'
Acts 2:28

But that does not mean we want to tell you exactly how to put your faith into practice. We want to work together with you so you will be full of joy as you stand firm in your faith.
2 Cor. 1:24

This is the only source of Joy. James says, ***every good and perfect gift comes from the Father.***

It is joy that comes from knowing God as Father. No longer are we an estranged son or daughter. We are like an orphan, alone, unprotected, without hope. Then we discover God is our Father and He is inviting us into His family and His home. He offers us adoption.

Joy affects our mental state, our outlook, our relationships, career, and every other area of our life.

Joy is contagious:

The Book of Acts tells how joy continued to characterize those who followed Jesus. After Philip preached in Samaria, the people believed and ***“there was great joy in that city” Acts 8:8.***

Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.
Neh. 8:12

Communion:

There are a handful of different Hebrew and Greek words that are all translated by the term “joy.” The chief one is chara, from which both charis (grace) and eucharais (thankfulness) are derived.

The cross itself was necessary for the joy to become real. **Hebrews 12:2**

Benediction:

"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. John 15:11

Ode to Joy – Beethoven's Ninth Symphony

*Glad, as His suns fly
Through the Heaven's glorious design,
Run, brothers, your path,
Joyful, as a hero to victory.*

*Be embraced, millions!
This kiss for the whole world!
Brothers, above the starry canopy
Must a loving Father dwell.
Do you bow down, millions?
Do you sense the Creator, world?
Seek Him beyond the starry canopy!
Beyond the stars must He dwell.*

Written in 1785 by the German poet, playwright and historian Friedrich Schiller, enthusiastically celebrates the brotherhood and unity of all mankind. Despite the lasting popularity of the ode, Schiller himself regarded it as a failure later in his life, going so far as calling it "detached from reality" and "of value maybe for us two, but not for the world.