

## Things you cannot afford to loose – Joy – Part 2

### How do you hold on to your joy?

*“Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful.” – Albert Schweitzer*

As mentioned in our first lesson, joy and happiness are synonymous with each other because happiness is an expression of joy. The practical outworking of joy is a visible and audible demonstration of great pleasure and feelings of true happiness. But happiness is a choice. When you get up each morning you can choose to be happy or you can choose to be miserable and dissatisfied with everything. It’s entirely up to you.

Happiness is a quality decision you make and not an emotion you feel. If you are constantly listening to your emotions you will never experience true happiness? You must make up your mind that you are going to be happy, in spite of your emotions. Many of you live in constant turmoil. You’re always upset at something or other; or you are always frustrated at not getting the results you desire, but your happiness is just a decision away. It’s as close to you as your thoughts are!

Scientific research agrees that one of the healthiest things you can do is laugh. So why not start by deciding to smile more often. You may be going through some tough times, and feel that you have good reason to be unhappy. Yet, being unhappy won’t change anything. Learn to laugh in the face of defeat, and you will prepare yourself for victory.

With the right mental attitude, it doesn’t matter what you may be going through, or how difficult it may seem, you can come through it. But you must keep your Joy. Loose your joy and you loose your strength to tough it out! You may be going through a dark time in life. Perhaps someone has let you down badly, or taken advantage of you, or even mistreated you, and you’re tempted to sit around and have a pity party. Well, start rejoicing in the Lord and applauding His majesty.

Then after you have rejoiced **in the Lord**, make a quality decision to live a contented life. My personal definition of contentment is – *the ability to remain happy in any circumstance due to the belief that everything is subject to change for the better*. The Greek word means “a perfect condition of life in which no aid or support is needed.” Therefore, contentment comes, not because of a passive acceptance of whatever our condition may be, but because there is a “perfect condition of life in which no aid or support is needed” – a God given state that we choose to abide in. This is the state of JOY. Inasmuch as every one of us already possesses JOY, we have whatever we need to face life and conquer it; an interesting and inspiring thought.

The most basic description of contentment I could find is; “happy with my situation in life.” Are you happy with your situation in life? Or are you always running around trying to find the pot at the end of the rainbow? Taking everything into consideration, a happy life is still about three things - love, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

In our daily lives, we often rush through tasks, trying to get them done, trying to finish as much as we can each day, and speeding along in our cars to our next destination, rushing to do what we need to do there, and then leaving so that we can speed to our next destination. At the end of the day, we’re often exhausted and stressed out from the grind and the chaos and the busyness of the day.

Most often we don't have time for what's important to us, for what we really want to be doing - for spending time with loved ones, for doing things we're passionate about. And yet, it doesn't have to be that way. It's possible to live a simpler life, one where you enjoy each activity, where you are relaxed in everything (or most things) you do, where you are satisfied rather than frantically rushing to finish things.

If this appeals to you, let's take a look at some suggestions for living a uncluttered, peaceful and joy-filled life:

- 1. Decide what's important to you.** First, take a step back and think about what's really important to you. What do you really want to be doing, who do you really want to spend your time with, and what do you really want to accomplish? Make a short list of things you would like to add to your life; people you want to spend time with; and things you'd like to accomplish at home or at work. And remember to be honest with yourself and God, so don't spiritualise it!
- 2. Examine your commitments.** A big part of the problem is that our lives are way too full. We can't possibly do everything we have committed to doing, and we certainly can't enjoy it if we're trying to do everything. Accept that you can't do everything. Decide that you only want to do what's important to you, and try to eliminate the commitments that aren't that important.
- 3. Attempt to less each day.** Don't fill your day with things to do. You will end up rushing to do them all. If you normally try (and fail) to do 7-10 things, just do 3 important ones instead (with 3 smaller items to do if you get those three done). This will give you time to do what you need to do, and not rush.
- 4. Create a little time for solitude.** In addition to slowing down and enjoying the tasks you do, and then doing less of them, it's also important to just have some time to yourself. You need time to relax, reflect and let your mind wander.
- 5. Do nothing.** Sometimes, it's good to forget about doing things, and do absolutely nothing. Doing nothing is fine! So don't allow yourself to feel guilty. In fact, when you do nothing and take your mind off the issues at hand, you'll probably get all the right answers.
- 6. Sprinkle simple pleasures throughout your day.** Knowing what your simple pleasures are, and strategically placing a few of them into each day, can go a long way to making life more pleasurable. Remember, God has given us all things to enjoy!
- 7. Do only what you enjoy doing.** This is probably the safest way of holding on to your joy. Notice what Albert Schweitzer said, *"Success is not the key to happiness. Happiness is the key to success. If you love what you are doing, you will be successful."* So enjoying whatever you are doing is very important, because it quickly de-stresses your life. Every day your activities should be enjoyed - not endured! So select the things you enjoy doing, and wherever possible, remove the things you don't like doing. But a word of caution, remember to be responsible for what you are obliged to do, or have promised to do.