

Youth group @ Home

Sunday 17th May 2020

Christian Character – Session 5: Being Joyful

Good morning and welcome to session 5 of Youth Group @ Home. Each week we are going to look at a different element of what builds Christian character. Last week we looked at being patient, this week we are going to explore how we can be more joyful. Why not go through today's session with family or friends? You could always Zoom call some friends and go through the activities together.

Activity

Put the list below in order with what you think is most required for happiness at number 1, down to what is least required for happiness at number 10.

- money
- top job
- boyfriend/girlfriend
- feeling close to God
- fame
- dream house
- health
- a great body
- close friends

Discuss the following:

Why did you choose the order that you did?

Is there anything else you think should have been included in your list?

Are all the things on the list reliable (i.e. will they ALWAYS make you happy)?

Think

Do you think there is a difference between Happiness and Joy?

Happiness is usually thought of as an emotion that is created purely from our physical circumstances, now God can make us happy when he changes our circumstances so that they can bring us happiness but the Bible says joyfulness is different, something that develops in us as we get closer to God (read Galatians 5:22). What do you think this means i.e. should a Christian always smile? Will someone who knows God never cry or be cross? Should they be happy when bad things happen?

Although often Christians will be happy because of the circumstances that they're in, when the Bible talks about joy, it is describing a feeling of deep spiritual contentment that comes from trusting that God knows what's going on and will look after you. Because we should be casting our worries on to Jesus ('Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' Philippians 4:6-7) it doesn't matter what's going on around us – we can still experience this joy in the hardest of times.

Bible Study

Has anyone ever experienced a moment of sheer happiness e.g. when you have got a really good exam result? Or the birth of a little sibling?

How did you feel at the time? Do you still feel a sense of that joy now, as you look back?

If looking back that feeling decreased over time, then it was probably due to some physical, earthly event that had happened in your life and was overshadowed by the next exciting thing in your life.

We are now going to look at 3 different accounts of people's encounters with Jesus, and the joy that those encounters brought, so if you haven't already got your bibles then grab one now or look these passages up on your phone, whatever is easier.

While you read these verses try to think about the answers to the following questions for each passage:

1. Who is filled with joy?
2. Why are they filled with joy?
3. How long lasting do they think the joy was?
4. How would their joy have affected the people around them?

The 3 bible stories that we are going to look at of people encountering Jesus are:

Luke 1:39-45 – Elizabeth's baby

Luke 19:1-10 – Zacchaeus

Acts 3:1-8 – Peter and John heal a lame man

It's amazing that even an unborn child (John born to Elizabeth) responded to Jesus (who Himself was still unborn), but both mothers must have been filled with awe and joy at the wonder of his response.

Zacchaeus responded to Jesus with joy and his life was turned around completely, as was the lame man's although his encounter was through the witness of Peter and John.

That can be our story too – if we respond to Jesus then He will fill our lives with joy, which is long lasting and will give us strength in times of difficulty and will be seen by our friends and family.

“Be joyful because you have hope. Be patient when trouble comes and pray at all times.”

Romans 12:12

Idea for the week

Listen to some songs which reflect the joy Christians experience knowing that they have encountered the living Lord Jesus.

Suggested songs include (easy to find on YouTube):

Happy Day (Tim Hughes and Ben Cantelon)

I Am A Friend of God (Israel Houghton)

Joy In This Place (Tim Hughes)

From the inside out (Hillsong)

10,000 reasons (Matt Redman)

(if you're missing christmas) Joy to the world (Chris Tomlin)

Remember

Here are some key points for you to remember:

- 1) Joy that grows in us as we get closer to God is not the same as earthly happiness because it is long-lasting and will still be there when we are in times of trouble. It is the content knowledge that God has control over our situation and will never give us more than we could handle.
- 2) There is a whole Bible full of examples of how people who have experienced Joy given to them from God have been so amazed that they have told everyone about it. For example in Psalm 18, David is declaring how wonderful God is and what Joy he brings to David – Maybe you could look it up and then try and search out some more examples (Google is very helpful!).
- 3) It can be hard to remain joyful when we are going through a hard time in our lives but we know that God is working to make us joyful every moment that we spend getting to know him better and this will show to those around us, so in times of trouble it is important to talk to God about our trouble and spend time with him.

Prayers

Spend a few moments thinking of any situations where you would like to experience God's joy – a feeling of contentment and trusting God to look after us. e.g. worrying about exams, feeling fearful of starting something new or meeting new people...

Now think of people you know who are going through a tough time and need to know that 'the joy of the Lord is their strength'.

As we come to the end of our session, let's take some time to pray for everyone that needs the sense of joy that only God can bring to someone's life. Let's ask God to help us to grow closer to him to experience his joy in our own lives.

Dear God,

We pray for those people we know who are struggling with circumstances in their lives right now, who perhaps know you but also for those who are yet to find you. (name a couple of people you are close to)

We pray for those struggling because of this time of lockdown, give them contentment in their individual situations and help them to be looking forward to those times when things will improve.

We pray for people who feel let down by times when we haven't been as joyful as we should have been (you may want to pray for a specific situation) Please help them to forgive us, and please help us to be forgiving to those who we feel have been grumpy and haven't been kind.

We pray for the situations in our lives at the moment that we want God's long-lasting joy in, where we are struggling to stay positive (You could talk to God about your own personal situations).

Please God, lead us and guide us. Help us to remember that you are always with us and love us no matter what.

Amen.

Remember, you can pray anytime – day or night – God is always listening to you and He loves to hear your voice.

We really hope you enjoyed this session (if you managed to stay away from that sweet, well done, you may eat it now!). If you have questions you want to ask, or want to request a certain topic for a future session, you can email me: Freya@Bedhampton.Church.