

Crossroads Community Church: Have you lost your joy?

Pastor Don lead us in prayer giving God all the Glory, Honour and Praise for the His guiding hand through all the trials we have encountered.

He encouraged us to always turn to Lord Jesus for our joy, even when it feels like we have lost part of it; letting us remember how our Father sacrificed His son for our sins.

Why do some Christians lose their joy? On occasion, we need to renew our joy in Christ to become useful again.

Philippians 3:1 Paul tells us to rejoice in the Lord; to celebrate and be exulted. After King David had an affair with Bathsheba, David begged the Lord to restore him to the joy of His salvation.

Have you felt stagnant in your joy for the Lord; just going through the motions? David felt this way with his adultery separating him from God. Any unconfessed sin will leave us separated from God. God wants us to have a close and intimate relationship with Him. Only full confession of our sins will restore the joy of our relationship with God. Remember the excitement you felt when first becoming a Christian. We wanted to share our exhilaration with others; talk about our new faith. David needed a fresh start and God gave it to him. As we journey through this life, there are many things that can rob our joy leaving us needing a clean beginning.

If you have never lost your joy perhaps the following message can help maintain what joy you have. The Apostle Paul helps us to find our joy in Philippians 3:1 where he says, 'Rejoice in the Lord?'. He is concerned for the joy of the Philippians just as Pastor Don has concerns for us. But this message is to help us regain the joy we may have lost.

We need to adhere to the following guidelines:

Live each day by Grace remembering God's undeserved favour. Ephesians 2:8-9 Our salvation and faith are gifts and we should respond with gratitude. But legalism can kill our joy. Legalism is substituting man's rules and regulations for a relationship with Jesus. It can happen very subtly; when we take the focus off what God has done for us and put it on what we must do for God to love us.

Reading our Bible, attending church every week, assisting in various areas of church ministry are all good habits but none cause God to love us any more or less.

God loves us because He chooses to do so. Romans 5:8 God sent Jesus to die for our sins, not because we were good enough but because He loved us. If we feel uncertain about God's love, remember He loved us before we turned to Him. God's love is just like the air around us; it's everywhere. Living by Grace, God's undeserved favour is the secret of joy; it is by God's Grace rather than something we feel we have earned.

At the time of this written message, there was a wrong belief among Jewish Christians stating it was essential for Gentiles to follow all the Old Testament laws, especially submission to circumcision to receive salvation.

This backwards thinking indicated what was done to their bodies made them believers rather than the free gift of God's grace. What believers do is a result of faith not a prerequisite. God values the attitude of the heart. Philippians 3:2-3 We who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones truly circumcised; relying on Jesus' sacrifice not in human effort.

Paul tells us there are 5 examples of legalism for which we need to watch. 1) Beginning to trust in rituals. Philippians 3:5 Paul lays out his fleshly credentials; things he has accomplished. Today, we have baptism, communion and baby dedications. It must be your heart relationship with Jesus. 2) Trusting your background. Matthew 3:9 Just because you come from a Christian home does not mean you are a Christian. We each need a personal relationship with Jesus. 3) Beginning to trust in our religion. Paul states in vs 5, that he is a very religious man because of his heritage; the Tribe of Benjamin which was highly esteemed among the Jews. Religion

is man's attempt to get to God. God attempts to relate to us through Jesus Christ. No denomination has a patent on God. We must have a relationship. 4) Trusting in rules could trap you in legalism. Paul was a member of the Pharisees. They demanded the strictest obedience to the rules. They kept rules and regulations created by man rather than focusing on obedience to God. Finally, 5) Trusting in your reputation.

In Philippians 3:6 Paul tells us you cannot 'earn points with God' for doing things such as the aforementioned. God does not owe us for anything; however He does love us unconditionally. 1 John 4:10

Paul explains Christianity is not a matter of rules, rituals or regulations; it is a relationship with Jesus Christ; it is a life of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The first guideline for living a life of joy is to live with Grace.

Next keep your priorities in perspective. 1 Timothy 6:6 tells us to honour God, centre our desires on Him and to be content with what God is doing in our lives. Too many people look for joy in the wrong places. You can be religious and still not have joy; nothing is more valuable than a relationship with Jesus. Philippians 3:7-8

We need to know what is important so we don't lose our joy over things that don't count. Number one reason for losing joy is misplaced priorities. Paul tells us what matters is not prestige, possessions or power. It's a personal relationship with Jesus.

You can have everything and still be unhappy without that relationship.

Jesus warns us in Luke 12:15 to avoid enticements and concentrate on God.

Fourth, we need to grow in our relationship with Christ. And finally, lasting joy comes from knowing Christ more and more. Paul tells us in Philippians 3:10 when we become one with Christ through trust, we experience the power that raised Him from the dead. This same mighty power will assist us in living morally renewed and regenerated lives.

We must continue growing and developing our relationship with Christ. The moment we stop growing we start losing our joy. Keep growing your relationship with Jesus by spending time with Him. John 10:27 Listen to Jesus as He speaks to you. Speak to God because every great relationship needs communication. And Ephesians 6:18 tells us we can pray, any time.

Finally learn to trust in God. God will show us time and time again that He is faithful. If you feel you have lost your joy turn anything that isn't joyous over to the Lord. 'Remain in me and I will remain in you.' This is Jesus' promise.

May God richly anoint these, His words. AMEN