

Ice Breaker: If you were a professional wrestler, what would your entrance theme song be?

Announcements

- *March 5th | GriefShare* - is a friendly, caring group of people who will walk alongside you through life's most difficult experiences. Meets Thursdays at 7:00 pm. Contact Joel Ruddy for more info.
- *March 14th - 21st | Rebuild Missions Trip* - Contact Sally if you're interested in this upcoming missions trip in Lumberton, NC
- *April 4th | College Taco Night* - Meeting in the BorderLand at 5:00 pm. Join us for dinner and fellowship with college ministries and a time to hear more about Supper Club. Contact Lynn Marie Witt (tappin1976@gmail.com) to RSVP.

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Joy encapsulates and is intertwined with the entire story of Jesus, from the womb (John leaping for joy when Mary arrived - Lk 1:41), to His birth ("good news of great joy" - Lk 2:10), to His preaching (quoting joyful promises from Isaiah 61 - Lk 4:17), even to His death ("for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross" - Heb 12:21). Oftentimes we feel pressured to *create* joy. But joy is a gift from God (Jn 15:11) which flows by remaining in relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. We can't create it, but we can be conduits of it. Joy transcends happiness and sadness. It's bigger and better than any of those things. Children are great examples of joy and are often full of joy even when they are sick. The Thessalonian church welcomed Paul's message with joy in the midst of suffering (1 Thess. 1:6). Jesus looked forward to the joy set before Him, giving Him strength to endure the suffering of the cross. Happiness is circumstantial, it is based on the things going on around you, whereas joy transcends in spite of circumstances. Joy is like an undercurrent that constantly flows through our lives and manifests in different ways. It is a foundation of the kingdom of God (the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit - Rom 14:17).

There are two main blockers to joy. First, false positivity says everything is great and awesome and that there's nothing wrong. But in reality, there is true grief and lament. However, they don't stop joy. It's okay to experience grief and loss. Jesus wept over the death of His friend Lazarus, even knowing He would soon raise him from the dead, and He wept over Jerusalem. Allowing Himself to experience the grief and loss and suffering and to be real and authentic allowed the joy to be released. Three antidotes to removing this blocker of joy are: Authenticity must be stronger than avoidance; Realness must be stronger than pretending; Grieving must be stronger than dismissal. The second common blocker to joy is the thought that it is morally irresponsible to have joy (how can I have joy when others experience so much brokenness and suffering and pain?). However, there are things that are genuinely joyful and that joy needs to be expressed. There is great joy over finding one lost sheep (soul) than the ninety-nine. The father greeted the prodigal son with joy, but his brother was angry. Three antidotes to removing this blocker are: Celebration must be stronger than cynicism; Rejoicing must be stronger than apathy; Authenticity must be stronger than avoidance. To have the fullness of joy Jesus promised you, you must remove the blockers. Rejoice together with those who rejoice, and mourn together with those who mourn (Rom. 12:15). Sometimes it feels like you're faking it if you express joy, but it's really just the release of the underlying joy in you. Let it out. Celebrate. Mourn. Be authentic.

Discussion Points

- Do you sense the Holy Spirit is trying to release joy in your life? What's stopping you from experiencing it?
- Take a moment to discuss any areas in your life causing grief, loss, suffering or lament. Take time to mourn together.
- Take a moment to discuss any areas in your life causing joy. Take time to rejoice together and celebrate.
- Which of the two blockers do you see in yourself most?
 - False positivity - everything is awesome even though it isn't or
 - False guilt - there is so much pain and suffering how can it be ok to have joy
- What brings you joy?

Vision - A Christ Centered Community of all ages, mentoring students to change the world

Mission - To know Christ and make Him known.