

JWAR: Advent 2011/JOY

Intro: Joy is one of those things that we sing about at Christmas time, and write on our Christmas cards, see TV But it isn't something that is in fact a part of most of our day to day lives as we get ready for Christmas!

- Joy at mall...Pepper spray! Joy at Home...parties, gifts, family crazy
- Joy at work...end of year ton to get done! Joy outside...cold, dreary, snow, rain...

We sing Joy to the World...but in reality...Not so much.

I think that is true because we don't understand real Joy! We have substituted something else...Cheap knock off Couple of years ago Darlene got me a gift...Mall kiosk...all the old video games, Packman, original Mario Excited...blast from the past...got the controller...first move...pop! Handle broke off...realized...cheap imitation!

That's what happens to us with Joy. We know the real thing is out there somewhere....but can't find it! We end up settling for a cheap substitute, a knock off that promises...but never delivers.

Luke 1 and 2 we discover where REAL joy comes from and how we can have it. Pg 724

Joy Defined:

Joy is the emotion created by well-being, success or good fortune or by the promise of receiving them. It originates in gratitude and unshakeable trust in God who has helped and is still helping His people. While internal, joy often manifests itself in outer expressions such as laughter, shouting or other exuberant expressions.

Synonyms: Delight; Bliss; Pleasure and Happiness are synonyms

Joy Vs Happiness:

Because we often confuse the two we need to define them clearly. We "buy" happiness thinking we are getting joy!

<u>Joy</u>	<u>Happiness</u>	<u>Example</u>
Based In God	Based in Others, Circumstances, Events	
Internal	External	(Battery)
Energy that motivates you	Energy that DRAWS you	
Purpose Beyond Yourself (Selfless)	Purpose IS yourself (Selfish)	
Enhanced by difficulties/Trials	Destroyed by difficulties/Trials	
Limitless/Sustainable	Limited/Unsustainable	Keep Feeding
Given to us	Pursue	

Joy Builders:

- Finding Your Place in God's Plan: John Baptist: Luke 1:44 *"The baby leaped for joy!"*
Mary: Luke 1:38 *"May it be to me as you have said"*
"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior"

This explains WHY we are so moved and blessed by serving others. We were MADE to do that! When we are a child of God, and have the Holy Spirit living in us we are simply fulfilling our purpose as we engage with God's plan. So, when we serve in a food pantry, or give gifts to others in His name we are blessed, we are joyful, because we find our place in His plan! Look at Mary's song vs 46-49...Her place in God's plan! John Baptist...even in womb...His Place!

(Teach, Encourage, Serve, Build Up)

Do you want Joy? Then quit thinking it will come as you pursue more presents, more parties and more people. It doesn't come from them. It comes from finding your Place in God's plan!! Do the...Christmas Challenge...Vision 2012

- Sharing God's Blessing: Elizabeth: Luke 1:58 *"...and they shared her joy!"*
One of the things you learn as your grow older is that many times OTHERS joy is more special than your own. For example; Grandparents...what is better...getting something you want for Christmas...or GIVING to Grandkids? That is what comes with maturity. The unnamed neighbors of Elizabeth got it. They went to share!

*So, if you want more joy this Christmas. Who do you know that you can share with? New baby? New Home? Housewarming party or gift? Who is excited about what God is doing...and you can join in? Interesting
Joy is Multiplied when it is shared. Sorrow is diminished*

- Sharing/Seeing/Hearing the Message of God's Love: Luke 2:10 *"I bring you good news of great joy"*
~God has provided for lost mankind
~God has visited His people
~God has redeemed His people
~God has Good Will toward Mankind!

2:14 *"peace to men on whom His favor rests!"*

When you and I see, hear and share the message of God's love we experience Joy. Both for ourselves and for others! What we are doing is finding our place in the story. Just like the shepherds, "Lets go tell!" God is not angry, God is not busy, God is not turning His back on you. He is doing everything possible to say..."I love you!"

Favor: Lit =to wish you the best! To desire good on your behalf!

CONCL:

Most of us are pursuing the WRONG things this Christmas. We are running after happiness...when it is really joy we desire Comes one of three ways:

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| 1. Finding our place in God's plan...and fulfilling it | Focus on Giving, Not Getting! |
| 2. Sharing God's blessing with others | Warm yourself at their fire! |
| 3. Seeing Hearing and Sharing God's favor...KNOWING He is on our side! | Share God's Favor with Others |

God,

**I know there are people searching for joy all around me,
People desperately chasing happiness, thinking it will satisfy.**

I ask you to show them to me.

I ask you to give me the courage to go...and LOOK for them.

I ask you to give me the words to speak, and the actions to take that make your joy clear to them

God, give me the courage to walk across the room....

With all my heart I say to you Here I am, send me.

And God when you speak...I will be quick to hear...and quick to go.

And quick to demonstrate share your Joy

Amen