

Dear friends and family,

I can't say that I've ever been particularly good at, or fond of scheduled exercise. But I suggest rock climbing, hiking, shooting hoops, or waterskiing and I'll say yes every time. They are enjoyable in the moment! Ask me to join you at the gym each morning at 5am? I'll probably pass. It's too much like work! I understand the long term benefits of working out and the potential for good health it carries, but the commitment is hard and there is sacrifice involved and it's hard to enjoy sweating at the gym before breakfast. This familiar example illustrates the dichotomy of delayed gratification versus immediate gratification and resounds with our spiritual life as well.

### **Pastor's Point of View**

The question to consider this week is this: **Where does your Joy come from?**

*Sing praise to the Lord, you His **godly** ones,  
And give thanks to His holy name.  
For His anger is but for a moment,  
His favor is for a lifetime;  
Weeping may last for the night,  
But a shout of **joy** comes in the morning.  
Psalm 30:4-5*

**Is joy, true Christian joy, an immediate gratification?**

**Do we find ourselves overcome by joy the moment we become Christians?**

**Or is joy the result of a process, like working out, that comes with some pain and trials and heartache?**

**Is joy an emotion?**

**Or is it the overwhelming sense of the Holiness of God wrapped tightly around us, whispering in our ear, "I will never leave you nor forsake you"?**

This past Sunday we discussed overcoming life's storms by responding to them not in fear of the storms, but by placing our fear in the Lord. Next week we will make the vital connection between the fear of the Lord and the outpouring of our worship towards Him.

Dr. Peter Masters wrote, "It is only when we truly hold God in respect that the Holy Spirit gives genuine Christian joy. If we dislike reverence, seeing it as a gloomy alternative to Christian joy, we will only achieve a sham, worked-up, shallow, emotional substitute. All the charismatic meetings in the world, with their noise, rhythm and sensationalism, cannot work up *real* Christian joy, because they do not have a foundation of reverence, fear and awe."

## Day 1

READ – Philippians 2:1-13

- Paul states that his desire is to see his joy made complete. He goes on in vs. 2-4 to outline the qualities the believers at Philippi should have.
  - Which of those qualities are a struggle for you?
  - In which areas do you think you are particularly strong?
  - For the sake of unity, how can you help someone this week in one of these areas?
- In vs. 5-11, Paul provides a model example of who we should be following and striving to live like. If Jesus could put aside Heaven to come to Earth for us, can we put aside some immediate gratification for the greater joy of the fellowship of believers? What would this look like in your own life?
- What do you think it means to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”?

## Day 2

READ – 1 Timothy 4:6-10

- Paul utilizes this familiar imagery once again, exhorting believers to “workout” or “exercise”. He encourages us to discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness.
  - What do you think godliness means?
  - Why and how does Paul contrast bodily discipline vs. discipline for godliness?
  - What is the difference between sound doctrine and fables?
  - How can disciplining ourselves to godliness bring about true Christian joy?
- The Greek word for godliness found here is *Eusebia*. This word is made up of two root words meaning ‘well’ and ‘the inner response to the things of God’. We should understand godliness as an attitude that is focused on being “well devout to God”.
- In what areas of your life do you need to establish being well devout?
- Are you being “constantly nourished on the words of faith and sound doctrine”?

## Day 3

READ – 1 Timothy 6:3-11

- In vs. 11, Paul lists a variety of virtues, one of which is godliness. Godliness is the theme running throughout this section of scripture.
- What would it look like if someone advocated for a different doctrine, one opposed to the sound Word of Jesus Christ?
  - The popular health/wealth doctrine of TV evangelists is one of immediate gratification and happiness. How does this compare with the doctrine of true joy?
- How does life change if Scripture is our ONLY source of truth and godliness?
- What does it mean to have a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes?
- How do you need to implement this teaching about godliness AND contentment? Another way to state these two terms might be true reverence for God and true joy in God.

## Day 4

READ – 2 Peter 1:4-9

- Peter reinforces what Paul has already stated regarding godliness by adding it to his list of virtues as well.
- Peter tells us to add to our faith these virtues. The word used here sometimes translated as ‘add’, ‘supply’ or ‘supplement’ is *epichorégeo*. It means to aid or minister nourishment to something. What an interesting thought that our faith needs nourishment (1 Tim. 4:6)!
- What do you think it means to nourish our faith? How would you go about doing that? (HINT: exercise)
- Each one of the individual virtues listed by Peter is vitally important to our sanctification and growth with the Lord. Peter closes the section by stating that “if these qualities are yours and are increasing...”
- Consider today how you can nurture these qualities in your life and pray that the Lord increases them.
- Pay close attention to the virtue of godliness. Where does it fall in the list? What does it come after and what does it come before? Is the order of the list even important?

***People do not drift toward Holiness. Apart from grace-driven effort, people do not gravitate toward godliness, prayer, obedience to Scripture, faith, and delight in the Lord. We drift toward compromise and call it tolerance; we drift toward disobedience and call it freedom; we drift toward superstition and call it faith. - D.A. Carson***

What Godly qualities, that the Lord longs to instill in your life, need some of your attention and effort? Are you willing and ready to invest in your spiritual growth, committing to discipline, work, and sacrifice so that you may be fully equipped, effective, and productive for the kingdom for Christ? Joy is the promised outcome of the exercising of our faith. It comes when we obtain true godliness, that well devout reverence toward a Holy God, and pour out our love and devotion to Him in worship. In turn He pours out His joy and peace upon us! May you find joy in the Lord this week as you draw closer to him!

*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13*

In love and joy,

-Pastor Matt

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