

July 1, 2012
River of Delight
Psalms 46:4 NIV

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God.

NLT: A river brings joy to the city of our God.

Guess what I had this week? I had, “one of those days.” I fought to keep my joy. My wife helped me when she reminded me by saying, “Stay joyful, right?”

Well, it has been about 30 days since we started our experiment in joy. Let’s **Review:** what we’ve talked about in this first month of joy:

First we look at Philippians 4:4 (NLT)

Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!

Is it possible to be full of joy always? Yes, the Bible not only says so, it commands it. How is it possible? Only “in the Lord.”

The second week we learned that according to Ecclesiastes, the key factor in happiness is not possessions, but the ability to enjoy what we have by accepting our lot - and this is a gift of God.

Then we discovered that maintaining joy was a battle, a spiritual battle, but you will win your spiritual battles when the enemy knows you’re willing to fight. So love the struggle, and have a winning attitude, because God is with you and your name is written in heaven. **Fight the good fight of faith. 1 Timothy 6:12 NKJV**

And last week we learned from Habakkuk that joy doesn’t just happen; it involves an act of the will. Happiness is a choice. You must admit to the door of choice in the center of your will and then step through that door. Lasting joy comes by a series of choices or steps taken one after another in the direction of staying joyful. Once you see that, it’s not hard to choose. The hard part is admitting you have a choice. Be committed to joy, give it permission to control you, no matter what the circumstances say with Habakkuk (3:18 NLT) **yet I will rejoice in the LORD!**

A life of joy is possible, even commanded, but you must accept your lot, and learn to be content, you must fight the enemies that are trying to rob your joy, and you must admit you have a choice to be miserable or joyful and choice to move in the direction of joy. Be committed to joy.

Recharge

Sounds like a lot of work doesn’t it? Ever feel like a toy when the battery is going dead? You know how it’s still moving, but in slow motion. At home I have some rechargeable batteries. I’ve used them in a wall clock; when the clock starts to run

slow or stops, I know it's time to recharge the batteries. I take them out of the clock, and rest them in the charger. They stay there until a green light indicates the process is over and the batteries are fully charged.

I feel like that sometimes. My batteries get weak, I start to run down, and need to get myself recharged. The way I do that is to rest in the Charger until I'm fully recharged by Him. It means sitting silently before the Lord for as long as it takes, letting Him pour His Spirit into me.

During these times when I need recharging, I don't know how to pray, or even think. I can try to pray but I don't seem to be able to formulate coherent prayers. So I stay silent and let the Holy Spirit do His work. I can't do anything but receive a steady stream of God's love flowing into my spirit. You see, "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God."

I can't give you an amount of time this process takes, I never know how long it will take and the time may vary. Often, I become impatient, I have things to do. Imagine, feeling guilty for staying before the Lord, silly, isn't it? I have to force myself to stay still and empty before the Lord, and not move until the process is over. There is no green indicator light that goes on, but when I'm recharged, I know it, and I rise from those times full of life and joy. But, if I don't wait for the process to be over, and start to do, instead of be; if I leave prematurely, or try to control the process myself I suffer.

Staying, waiting, resting in the Lord's presence as I just described is the means by which the Lord gloriously restores our joy. At least that is what I have discovered, and He does it apparently without any contribution from me. Whatever joy I experience comes directly from Him.

To live in joy, submit yourself to these times of being washed in God's River of delight. As you do, you will find joy naturally flowing through your life. If you don't submit yourself to this process the opposite will happen.

Why Resist?

Why do we avoid/resist these quiet, meditative times with God, coming into His presence an empty vessel in order to be filled by Him? Maybe because it sounds too much like meditation and we question whether mediation can be spoken of as Christian. Mediation sounds to Eastern religion-ish. It's a sad commentary on the spiritual state of modern Christianity that being meditatively silent before the Lord is so foreign to our ears. It was not foreign to the writers of the Scriptures:

Genesis 24:63 NIV

(Isaac) went out to the field one evening to meditate.

Psalms 63:6, 11 NLT (David writes)

I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night...
the king will rejoice in God.

Psalms 119:148 NIV

My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.

These were people who were close to the heart of God. Today we hear little of this practice of staying silent before the Holy Spirit, could it be one reason why we have so little joy?

To live in joy you must practice Proverbs 3:5 NLT

Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.

You must discover a way of relying less on your own understanding and more and more on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

River of life

Ezekiel 47:1-5 NLT (Ezekiel's vision)

In my vision, the man brought me back to the entrance of the Temple. There I saw a stream flowing east from beneath the door of the Temple and passing to the right of the altar on its south side. **2** The man brought me outside the wall through the north gateway and led me around to the eastern entrance. There I could see the water flowing out through the south side of the east gateway.

3 Measuring as he went, he took me along the stream for 1,750 feet and then led me across. The water was up to my ankles. **4** He measured off another 1,750 feet and led me across again. This time the water was up to my knees. After another 1,750 feet, it was up to my waist. **5** Then he measured another 1,750 feet, and the river was too deep to walk across. It was deep enough to swim in, but too deep to walk through.

When I was a kid and my mom took me to the beach, I remember seeing older ladies walk into the water up to their ankles and stand there. Perhaps, they would bend down cup some water in their hand and rub it on their arms. Then they'd go back to their beach chair. I guess that's all they needed to cool off. But I admired the men who would run right into the water and dive into a wave.

In Ezekiel's vision of the river of life, first the water was up to his ankles, then it became knee-deep, then it was up to his waist. Finally, he found that the river was too deep to walk across, because it became deep enough to swim in. When it comes to the

river of delight, the Lord doesn't want us to just get our feet wet, He wants us soaked and to stay wet.

God doesn't give halfhearted joy, joy is not halfhearted. No, the Lord's joy is marked by completeness.

John 15:11NIV

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Why settle for less? Complete joy is ours for the asking:

John 16:24 NIV

Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

The Lord wants us to ask and wait to be filled with joy. Many times I have felt the batteries getting low, I felt spent and discouraged and even just a few minutes later after having sat down to pray felt completely refreshed. I could almost feel His power and joy flowing into me, filling me up more and more. Sometimes, actually bring a smile or even a laugh and always thanks and praise.

Luke 13:20-21 NIV

"What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."

That's how I'd describe the change. It begins with a pinch of yeast, with just a pinch of joy, and delight, working gently within me filling throughout soul and body. I'm sure my joy is not as complete as that of some other Christians, but it's complete enough to delight, make glad, and thrill me every day. His river of joy is deep enough to swim in, right now I have as much as I can practically hold, but it keeps increasing.

The Lord wants to do something new, a river that brings joy, a new trust, a new ability to relax and go with the flow of each day's events. He wants a transformation of character. And this "something new" is a gift the Lord has been wanting to give you all along – the gift of complete joy. Are you ready to receive it?