

Joy



So many Christian workers lose their joy in ministry. The burdens and weights they carry over time drain the life out of them. They are not fun to live with, or as far as that goes work with!

Certainly, at times Jesus carried the weight of the world upon His shoulders but generally He was the most happiest of all people. In reference to Jesus it is written 'You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy' Hebrews 1:9.

Bible Perspective

Again Jesus' ministry was characterised by joy. For example, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." John 15:11. "No one can take away your joy" John 16:22. David the Psalmist continually writes about joy and worship often through his darkest days, when King Saul and others hounded him while they sought to kill him. Biblical 'joy' is much more than being simply happy and getting what you want.

Observations

1. Satan is out to kill your joy and make your life ineffective. He seeks to do that in a number of ways, like a breakdown in relationships, by being attracted to wrong relationships, worry over many things including a lack of finance, your children and what people say about your ministry etc. Determine to think with praising and grateful thoughts. Don't let your mind get overcrowded. Be solution orientated rather than problem orientated.
2. Joy comes when there is real repentance of sin. There are no short cuts. The words 'sorry' or 'please forgive me' to God and others when we do wrong should not be foreign to our lips no matter how hard it is not to blame others for our short comings.
3. I grew up in an environment where the emphasis on discipleship was mainly on suffering and the cross. However Jesus spoke a lot about joy even leading up to the cross, when He was entering His darkest days of ministry. "...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross". Hebrews 12:2 Joy and suffering can walk alongside each other. Being stretched in life and learning to be dependent on God's help leads to far more joy than indulgence in pleasure.
4. An attitude of joy, gives you strength in ministry and is a great encouragement to others. 'The joy of the Lord is your strength'. Nehemiah 4:10.

George Muller was a famous Christian leader who provided accommodation and food for hundreds of orphans during the darkest days of Britain during the 1800s. He did this without asking for money or food but simply by calling out to God in believing prayer. I doubt whether his burdens of ministry were lighter than yours or mine, especially when many of his prayers were only answered at the last minute. What was his secret? He states, "The first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day is to have my soul *happy in the Lord*." In other words the first thing he did each day was to get into the

habit of enjoying Jesus through reading the Bible and prayer. Develop that discipline before your tasks of the day take over.

11. Learn to meditate and foster the presence of God. “....you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.” Psalm 16:11. When I am not living in His presence little burdens become heavy, while when I do live in His presence heavy burdens become light.
12. Choose your company carefully. We become like the people we mix with. Joyful people are attractive people. People like being in their presence.
13. The fruit of the Spirit is ‘Joy’, second on the list in Galatians 5.

Resources

Regularly memorise Scripture pertaining to joy, faith and trust.

‘The imitation of Christ’ by Thomas A Kempis.

‘Desiring God’ by John Piper.

‘The celebration of Discipline’ by Richard Foster