

ARE YOU THE GRINCH? (Part 4) - Joy, the Remedy for Selfishness

Last week, we talked about CYNICISM and the Bible's remedy for cynicism which is WONDER. Today, as we wind up our series, we want to talk about SELFISHNESS, the "me first" spirit that seems to be so prevalent today. Thankfully, there is a remedy in the Bible called JOY.

Luke 2:10-11 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy (**THE JOY IS IN THE TIDINGS!**), which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Matthew 2:10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

In life, even the best of relationships goes through ups and downs. You're not going to be happy all the time in a relationship. You married a human being, you're friends with a human being – and human beings are incurably **SELF-CENTERED**. People get sick, we argue, we whine, we have misunderstandings, sometimes we're inconsiderate, sometimes things just don't go right. Life is not a constant honeymoon. Some days, to be honest, are just a complete disaster.

You know it's going to be a bad day when ...

- your horn goes off accidentally and remains stuck as you follow a group of Hell's Angels on the freeway.
- your twin sister forgets your birthday.
- you sink your teeth into a beautiful steak and they stick.
- your birthday cake collapses from the weight of the candles.
- you wake up to discover that your water bed broke and then you realize that you don't have a water bed.
- you put your clothes on backwards and they fit better.

VIDEO CLIP: BRAD STINE

Whenever we look for relationships, whether it's in a marriage or a friendship, people say, "I just want to be happy." But the problem with that attitude is that it's basically selfish! It says, "I want what I want."

James 4:1-2 (TEV) Where do all the fights and quarrels among you come from? They come from your desires for pleasure, which are constantly fighting within you. You want things, but you cannot have them, so you are ready to kill; you strongly desire things, but you cannot get them, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have what you want because you do not ask God for it.

The root problem of relational difficulties is a power struggle between two selfish, insecure people. For a lot of us, to solve the relational problems we're in, the solution is just to grow up and stop being so self-centered.

James 3:16 (NLT) For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and every kind of evil.

In other words, you can't be joyful and jealous at the same time. **Selfishness undermines relationships.** Get the focus off yourself! We hurt each other in relationships, sometimes intentionally, sometime unintentionally – it's a fact of life. What you do with that hurt makes the difference whether you're joyful or you're miserable. Nothing destroys a relationship faster than resentment.

Hebrews 12:15 (LB) Watch out that no bitterness takes root among you, for as it springs up it causes deep trouble, hurting many in their spiritual lives.

Selfishness brings resentment, which eats up emotional energy because you spend all your time resenting the fact that someone hurt you. It also brings fear, which causes us to build walls between us. Fearful people cannot give love and cannot receive love because they're always afraid of being hurt again. When you're full of fear there is no emotional intimacy, and when there is no emotional intimacy there is no joy.

Fear does three things to relationships:

- Fear makes me DEFENSIVE. I won't admit it when I'm wrong.
- Fear makes me DISTANT. I won't share my real feelings.
- Fear makes me DEMANDING. I must always be in control.

1 John 4:18 (NKJV) There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

Most people try to do something to bring "happiness" into a troubled relationship, but that's only a temporary solution! What you need is JOY! And that only comes from God's Spirit!

Joy is very much different than happiness. Most people think, "If only I could ..." or "If only someone else would ..." then I could be happy! They have DESTINATION DISEASE. But life is not a destination, it is a journey! You'll never "arrive!" The grass may be greener on the other side of the fence, but the water bill is higher over there too!

After people make drastic changes, walk away from marriages, quit decent jobs, switch careers, move across the country, build a new house, buy a new car, or get a great promotion, **THEY STILL HAVE TO LIVE WITH THEMSELVES, SO THEY ARE STILL UNHAPPY!**

Nowhere in the Bible does God advise us to pursue happiness – because happiness is selfish. It is not a Biblical concept!

The word “happiness” is only used 22 times in the Bible, and it NEVER means what we have been conditioned to think of today! In the Bible, “happy” doesn’t mean, “having everything go my way.” It means, “blessed or favored by God.”

Happiness is extremely vulnerable!

- Happiness wrapped up in people is insecure because people let us down.
- Happiness centered in possessions is unsure because material goods deteriorate and depreciate.
- Happiness based on health is unreliable because time takes its toll on all of us.
- Happiness grounded in social achievement is unpredictable because a new star eventually eclipses you!

Everything we build our happiness on eventually double-crosses us! That is why the world is full of selfish, cynical and discouraged people; this is why we live in an age of despair. People have tried everything to attain happiness, and it never lasts!

In contrast to happiness, which is self-centered, the Bible uses the words JOY, JOYFUL or REJOICE over 160 times. And it teaches us that joy only comes from the Spirit of God living within us – it’s God-centered!

Happiness is external	Joy is internal
Happiness is temporary	Joy is permanent
Happiness is based on chance	Joy is based on choice
Happiness is based on circumstances	Joy is based on Christ

Joy doesn't come from making me happy, joy comes from making other people happy. God designed it that way!

One popular myth goes like this: “When I get all my problems solved in this relationship, I'll be happy.” That’s not going to happen! Life is simply a series of solving problems. If the only time you learn to have joy in your relationships is when you've got all your problems solved, you're never going to have joy in your relationships. You must learn to have joy even in the middle of problems!

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

How is it possible to always be joyful? When Paul wrote this he was in prison. He was about ready to be executed. He was writing to the Philippian church which is the book on joy. Nineteen times in the book of Philippians he used the word "joy" or "rejoice".

Paul wasn't counting on his circumstances to bring him happiness; he was counting on the Holy Ghost to give Him joy!

Psalm 16:11 (KJV) Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

When I don't have joy it's a warning light that I don't have God's presence in my life!

J – Jesus / O – Others / Y – You

Nehemiah 8:10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

NOTE! Enjoy yourselves, but remember others in your celebrations!