

Day 8

Joy

Silence (2 minutes) Take some time to be quiet, to calm down, and to listen. What has God been teaching you? What are the next steps He wants you to take? How is your spirit doing?

Scripture *"So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun."* Ecclesiastes 8:15

Discussion The words found in the book of Ecclesiastes are often attributed to King Solomon who was considered by many to be the wisest man who has ever walked the face of the earth. He says that if we want to have joy, then make it a priority to enjoy your life! Seems pretty simple, but it's not always easy. We often let stress burden us. We worry about financial problems. We get angry at people who offend us. We have fear of what we cannot control. It seems that we spend much of our lives with joy just beyond our reach. If only I made more money we wouldn't have to worry. If only I were more attractive I could find love. If only got the promotion people would respect me. What we need to understand is that there is no guarantee that we will ever receive what we wish for; but that doesn't mean that we cannot have joy.

Solomon didn't say that we should work hard to find happiness. He doesn't say that money or success or fame will fulfill all of your dreams. In fact, he says the opposite. None of those other paths lead to fulfillment. They are empty, vanity, meaningless. So how do we find fulfillment in life? Enjoy the blessings that God has given to you. Be content with what you've been given.

The Apostle Paul also encourages us to be content. *"But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that"* (1 Tim. 6:8). Let's not make life so complicated by wishing for more than we've been given. Let us rejoice for the abundant riches that God has given to us in Christ Jesus and the blessings that He gives us to enjoy each day. God has been good to us! Even in our dark times He gives us plenty to be thankful for. Whether you are in the best season of your life, or if it's never been worse, look for opportunities to express your gratitude to God. Life is an adventure. Get out and live a little! Have a blast and enjoy the gift of life that God has given to you. He doesn't just want you to make it through this life; He wants you to have a *"full and abundant life"* (Jn. 10:10).

Application What do you enjoy doing most? Or, if nothing got in your way, what would you really wish that you could do? Would it be possible? Would it bring joy to God's heart to see you enjoying it? Imagine how God feels when we love and appreciate the gifts and abilities that He has given to us. Take about 5 minutes to think about how you can could do a better job at enjoying your life. Could you worry less and trust God more? Could you cut out some of your busyness by saying "No" to some unnecessary commitments? Finally, pick one thing that you enjoy doing and do it today, thanking God for creating you to enjoy the life He has given to you!

Prayer Heavenly Father, thank You so much for giving me the life that I have. It hasn't always been easy, but it is easy to see how you have blessed me in so many ways and my heart is grateful. Help me to see these blessings so that I can appreciate them, enjoy them, and so I can express my gratitude to You. God, I don't know why you have been so good to me, but I praise You for reaching into my life with your love. Help me to be the kind of person that overflows with joy to those around me that I might testify to your goodness in my life. Make my joy contagious that I might bring glory to Your name! Amen.

Silence (2 minutes) Talk to God about what you are learning. What are your fears? Where are your hangups? Pray for direction.

Scripture memory for the week: *"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."* Mark 12:29-31