

Unlocking Joy in Your Life

by Santosh Poonen

This sermon emphasizes the importance of choosing joy, hating sin, praising with thanksgiving, turning off worldly influences, and sowing seeds of service to unlock the joy of the Lord in our lives. It highlights the transformation that occurs when we focus on blessing others and seeking God's presence, leading to radiant joy even in the midst of trials.

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Scripture: Psalm 126:5, Romans 12:2, Psalm 34:5, Acts 6:15, Proverbs 11:25

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Description

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Transcript

We had some good memory verses again this week. I was thinking of what the preschool class told us, you know, it's a Matthew 16 verse 15. Who do you say that I am? Of course, we know the answer, maybe they'll memorize that next.

But I think even that verse in itself, it's important that Matthew 16 verse 16 isn't just Peter's answer. And that's what I thought of as I was listening to the children saying that verse. It was, we know Jesus was asking Peter, who do you say that I am? But that's recorded in Scripture because Jesus is asking me today, Santosh, who do you say that I am? And when you say, when you give an answer, will it be Peter's answer? Think about it for a moment.

Jesus was to come to you and say, who do you say that I am? And you say, well, yeah, yes, Lord, you're the Christ, the Son of the Living God. He'll say, no, that was Peter's answer. What's your answer? Peter didn't have a verse in the Bible that he was quoting when he said, you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

He got revelation from the Father. Nobody told him. There was no Matthew 16 verse 16 for Peter.

And thank God for the Bible. Thank God for Peter's answer. But that must be our answer.

I'm thankful that the children didn't memorize 16 also today. They stopped at verse 15 as if to say, River of Life Christian Fellowship. Who do you say that I am and why? Have you received revelation from the Father more than just, oh, I know Peter wrote it in Matthew, said it, and it's there in Matthew 16 verse 16.

Has the Father revealed to you that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, that he will save you from all sin? Has he revealed it to you that he's the Son of the Living God, that all power is available to Jesus? If he hasn't revealed it to you, Peter, it's just Peter's words. You can say, it's like Jesus asking me, who does Peter say that I am? Yes, Lord, Peter said you are the Christ. But can you honestly say, Lord, I know.

The Father has revealed to me personally. And if I was the only one on earth that believed it, I would still stand for that truth. That's how you know the Father's revealed it.

When the Father revealed it to Peter, it didn't matter. Peter could say, Jesus himself could offer to Peter and say, you can leave too if you want, Peter. Everybody else has left.

You also want to leave? And Peter would say, no, Lord, the Father has shown me you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I can't go anywhere else. So that's a good verse.

And I also thought about this word constantly in our adult verse. We who are alive are constantly being delivered over to death. What did your week look like? Was it 24-7? That's what that word constantly means.

Imagine if you were constantly being nagged by your boss, right? Middle of the night, he sends you a text message saying, hey, I need you to take care of this. You get a little bit of sleep. And again, hey, you missed this one.

And then again, this one or that one. That's a nagging boss. He's like, my boss is constantly asking me to do this and to do that.

I got that picture a little bit of what constantly means. Now, God is not a nag. He's not trying to harass us, but he is using the circumstances of this earth.

And he's constantly delivering us over to death. For what reason? So that the life of Christ may be manifest in us. And if in that constantly, if after one hour of being delivered over to death, I give up and say, man, not again, Lord, I'm done with this.

Make it stop. It's no wonder then that the life of Christ can't come out as much is hindered to the extent that we are delivered over to death is the extent that we will manifest the life of Christ. Let me turn there real quick.

So we see it. I want to repeat the sentence I just made. I believe it with all of my heart.

The extent to which you will experience the life of Christ is the extent to which you allow God to deliver you over to death. And if you find that the life of Christ is lacking, there's only one possible explanation. If you got only 10% of the life of Christ this past week, it means very simply that you allowed yourself to be delivered over to death.

Only 10%. That's it. 2nd Corinthians 4 verse 11.

We who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus sake so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. We who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus sake so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. And so if the life of Jesus was not manifested in our mortal flesh or is manifested only a little bit, then it means that I allowed myself to be delivered over to death only to that extent.

If there was a lack of joy in our lives this week, Christ is joy. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is joy. If you have the spirit of Christ in you, you will have rejoiced this week.

If you were able to rejoice only 10% of the time, it's simply because there was a delivering over to death that God wanted you to have that you didn't allow to happen. And so the joy is lacking. And I'd like to continue talking about joy just to finish some things the Lord laid on my heart and I shared last week.

Let's turn to Romans chapter 12. Every time I read about Paul's life, I'm really challenged, really amazed at his life, the standard at which he was able to live. And he says here in Romans 12 verse 11, Romans 12 verse 11, not lagging behind in diligence.

He's encouraging the church in Rome to not lag behind. When you see somebody who's running the race, running the Christian race, and he's running with all his might, or she's running with all her might. You just say, Oh, good for them.

Well, thank you, sister. Thank you, brother, that you're the Lord is letting you. He's using you so mightily and you're so diligent.

Or do you say, man, I'm lagging behind. Or you look at Jesus and how he ran the race until the end. You read the example of Paul, how he was faithful and gave himself constantly to be delivered over to death.

When you read that, you think, Lord, I'm lagging behind. And he says, let's not be lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit. Fervent, I get when I think about that word fervent, think about a fire in a fireplace that's a fireplace that's starting to die out.

Time to put another log on, fan the flames, blow on it, get the flames going higher. That's why we sing the kind of songs we sing. Press on, don't give up, be fervent in spirit in serving the Lord.

And then he says, rejoicing in hope, rejoicing in hope. And the reason we can truly rejoice is because we've been given a hope. And he talks about that a few chapters earlier in Romans chapter five.

Let's turn there together. If you've lost sight of your hope, you'll find it really difficult to rejoice. You'll find it really difficult to be triumphant in trials.

And that's what Paul talks about here. He says in verse five, Romans five, verse five, he talks about a hope that does not disappoint, a hope that does not disappoint. I think the reason that this is on my heart lately, the over the last couple months or so is that I see I'm observing the tendency in my own flesh and I'm fighting it.

But also as I observe other people I've known, I observe other Christians who I find are lagging behind or starting to just have a dis that Christian life is a disappointment. They feel like it is. They're starting to give up.

They're starting to grow tired and weary. They started out well, maybe they were going well, but something's happened. There's a lack of fervency.

There's a discouragement. There's a gloom. And I have a burden in my heart that that will never be in my life.

But even for us as a church, that the joy of the Lord will be in our midst and in our lives more and more. And that's why I'm sharing these things. And I see that what the devil wants to do by bringing trials and tribulations in our life is to get us to lose that joy.

Or somehow we're dragging in this Christian life. That should never be. Let's lift up our heads, River of Life Christian Fellowship.

Let's really be joyful. I'm not talking about a fake smile or a fake pretense. That the more that God allows trials and things to press in, the more that we are squeezed, what's inside will come out.

Right? If you squeeze a grape, what do you expect to come out? You don't expect bitterness or dirt to come out. You expect grape juice to come out. You expect wine.

And if I could summarize it this way, when you're feeling squeezed and you find that the squeezing and the tribulation is causing you to hang your head down, the response shouldn't be, well, I'm going through so much. That's why my head is hanging down. No, we have to go to the root of the problem and say the reason that my head is hanging down is that when I was squeezed, I got to see what was really inside.

Inside was gloom and that's why what you see on my face is gloom. So the trials shouldn't be an excuse for gloom. It should cause me to say the tree is bad.

If the tree was really good, the more you squeezed this grape, grape juice would come out. And if you find that when the squeezing is coming and the tribulations are coming, that unbelief, weariness, wanting to give up and gloom and discouragement is there, you ought to say, man, thank God for the trial because I've realized that the tree has been bad all along. And so Lord Jesus come and lay your axe to the root of the tree.

Let me get rid of this tree and let me get the tree of joy. Give me the tree of joy so that the next time there's a trial and a tribulation, when there's a squeezing, what comes out is joy. And that's the essence of what the Lord's laid on my heart, what I'm after with all of my heart.

Say, Lord, if there's even been one moment of heaviness in my life, it means that there's something in the tree that's bad. Get rid of blaming the trial. Get rid of blaming the person that may be aggravating you.

Get rid of pointing the finger at somebody else and say, well, they incited me or they stirred me. And that's why I reacted that way. Be done with that.

We quote this line of Amy Carmichael's often in this church. A cup of sweet water can never spill a drop of bitter water, no matter how much it is shaken. A cup of sweet water can never spill even one drop of bitter water, no matter how much it is shaken.

And so if you're after a life of sweetness, the sweetness of joy that comes from being in the presence of the Lord and you've been shaken this last week and you found that drop after drop of bitterness came out and heaviness and discouragement and people can see that you're going through a hard time because

you're being shaken. Don't blame the shaking. Don't blame God.

Say, Lord, I want the sweet water of your joy. I want that life. Romans 5, let's begin verse 3. Not only this, but we also exult in our tribulation.

See, Paul didn't have Romans 5 verse 3 again. I think often when I read scripture, I read Paul writing. See, for him, he had a genuine life of the Holy Spirit inside of him that caused him to spontaneously say from within, I exult in my tribulations.

For me, it's Romans 5 verse 3. For Paul, it was a life within him. It was a root and a fruit that was manifest in him. And I tell you, brothers and sisters, when you read the scriptures in the New Testament and you read the life of Paul especially and John and others like that, you'll read how Jesus was.

Do you see a life that can come forth from within you where the word, Romans 5 verse 3, can become flesh in you also? This is the hope of our glory. Christ in me. Romans 5 verse 3, in me, not in the Bible.

Yes, it's great that it's in the Bible. Praise God it's there. But when we preach from God's Word, when you read God's Word, is it food for you? Are you eating Romans 5 verse 3 in a way that now you can say, I've gone past it written in my Bible.

I can say from within my own life, I exult in tribulations. And it's not just a verse I have on the wall or that I have on my phone. All these verses that we memorize and every verse in scripture, the promises and the commands.

Let me make it very simple, dear brothers, sisters, children. Imagine yourself taking that verse and eating it like a mango or a grape or some other fruit. You take this little, somebody's cut up a nice little mango, you take that.

This week was our new verses, whatever it is, I can't remember now, but last week was 2 Corinthians 4 verse 11. Did you take it like a piece of mango and eat it? And when you said it this morning or when you thought about it, was it from within your innermost being, from your belly, you're saying 2 Corinthians 4 verse 11 because it's food. You tasted it and you're expressing the Word of God out of it becoming life in you.

Oh, that's our goal. That's my goal. I don't, you know, let the rest of Christendom memorize all the scriptures and become experts at it.

We memorize it so that we actually eat it and it becomes life in us. And I'll tell you, the only way that can happen is through tribulations. Tribulations force us, as it were, to bite into the Word of God, as it were, to swallow it and to take it in.

Even if it's bitter in the taste, it becomes something within my innermost being. And this is what Jesus promised. Out of his innermost being, out of his belly, will flow rivers of living water.

So take God's Word and eat it, dear brothers and sisters. Take the messages you hear, the daily devotions that you all listen to during the day, the other things you read, take it and eat of it and let it become life within you from your belly. And not only this, verse 3, we also exult in our tribulations knowing Paul didn't just try to exult.

He could actually exult. Why? Because he had a hope. That's what he gets to.

He could exult because knowing this, that the tribulation is God's way of bringing about perseverance, and that perseverance is God's way of proving our character, proving what's inside the grave, and that proving character, proven character results in hope, a hope that does not disappoint because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. Which is why we speak often, oh, if you have not come to an experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit genuinely, not enough that you know somebody that's filled with the Holy Spirit, but that you are filled with the Holy Spirit, cry out for it. Don't give up, dear brothers and sisters.

Don't give up. Cry out for the power of the Holy Spirit. I'd like to just now talk about a few things that the Lord's shown me of that I would call unlocking the joy of the Lord.

Often, you know, I started with that parable that we read in Matthew 13. Let me look at it again with you briefly before we go on. Matthew chapter 13 verse 44.

Matthew 13 verse 44. The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again, and from joy over it, from joy over it, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. So, unlocking the joy of the Lord.

Why is it that some people, even though they've known the Lord, they talk about dwelling in His presence, they still seem to lack it. Perhaps it's locked up. Perhaps that treasure is there, but it's in a treasure chest.

And now it's time to just break the lock and open it up and let that joy overflow. And here are some things that the Lord has shown me about unlocking the joy, because perhaps you know it's a treasure, but it's got a combination. Recently, my son's been playing with a combination and trying to build a little thing that you need a code to unlock it, things like that.

Maybe the devil's, you found the treasure, but it's still locked up. Here are some things that the Lord has shown me about how I can unlock that joy in my life, and I hope it's an example to you. Let's start with Philippians chapter 4 verse 4. If you're waiting to experience the joy of the Lord, I want to say this very simply, the choice is yours.

Experiencing the joy of the Lord comes from choosing joy. Choose joy and you will have joy. Because Philippians 4 verse 4 is a command.

It's not a promise. I mean there's actually both, you can say. But Philippians 4 verse 4 is a command, first of all.

The promise is the joy of the Lord, which will be your strength. The promise is that you can exult in every tribulation because of the hope that you have, like we read in Romans 5. But before that, there's a command. Rejoice.

Philippians 4 verse 4, rejoice in the Lord always, 24-7, constantly. Again, I will say rejoice. It's a command.

And there's something I've discovered about obedience to the Lord's commands. If you'll turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 30. Obedience to God begins with a choice.

It's a choice that's up to you. It's not your own strength. And that's why you can say, well do I need to accomplish this joy? Is God leaving me on my own to experience that joy? No.

He says you must choose it first. You must make a choice. And that's the way he presented it all the way back in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 19. After God had given all these commands that you read about in Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers and all of Deuteronomy, at the end of it he says, Deuteronomy 30 verse 19, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today. I have set before you life and death.

And you can say that about every part of the life of Christ. I have set before you a life of love. The love of God.

And the life of death. Lacking love. I have set before you a life of peace in every circumstance.

Or unrest in circumstances. I have set before you a life of joy in every circumstance. Or gloom, discouragement, heaviness.

I have set before you life and death. The blessing and the curse. So what should you do? Choose life.

God's setting before us joy. Let's just talk about joy. That's the intent of my message this morning.

He set before you a life of joy this week. Or a life lacking joy. You could have, I'll tell you this, 24-7 joy this week.

24 hours a day, seven days a week, God has promised before you. He says I've set that before you. And I've set before you something else.

I'll tell you what's death. Death is even one minute of depression, discouragement, heaviness, unbelief, all these things. Jesus says I've set before you 24-7 joy.

Think about it. I don't know if a single one of us has experienced even one entire week where it's been 24-7 joy. I don't know.

Even if I look back at last week, I say, Lord, I think there's been a little bit of that. I've had mostly joy. I'll be honest with you.

Really, it's just God's mercy. I've been mostly joyful this week. It's not been 24-7, I think.

I want 24-7. And I'm not going to quit. I'm not going to quit digging until I say, Lord, I want a week where it's been 24-7 joy.

Where there's not even been one minute of lacking of that in my life. And God says, I'm setting that before you. Do you believe me, brothers and sisters? Not me.

Do you believe God? When he said, rejoice in the Lord always, he actually meant it. I set before you 24-7 joy this week. Now we've already gone 11 hours into it, but that's okay, right? The rest of this week, 24-7 joy.

I set that before you. And I've set before you an alternative. It could be just like last week was, or last month, or last year.

Like it's been. A little bit here, a little bit there, joy. Mostly heaviness.

Or maybe you're a little bit better. You're like, mostly joy, but yeah, I'm about 60% joy. Let us press on to perfection.

Let us press on to perfection. God says, I've set before you life. Choose that.

And according to your faith, it will be unto you. If you say today, Lord, today I am going to choose this. Will you give me this life? He says, yes, I will choose life and you will live.

Choose joy and you will have joy. And your children. You see that? The last part of verse 19.

Do you think that you have the privilege, dear brothers and sisters, dear parents, fathers and mothers, you have the privilege and the opportunity to choose joy today. To say, Lord, I'm going to make that choice. I'm going to allow you to make that a reality in my life.

And guess what? Your children by overflow have a 24-7 joy week. Do you think it's possible that your children could, could look back and say, you know, there was one week that week, beginning August 6th, 2023, I actually had 24-7 joy. And they'll be able to say, you know what? It's because I saw dad and mom.

They were 27, four, seven joy. I looked on their face and they were so joyful. I knew what they were going through.

And I could tell that there was something going on at work or something else, but I saw my dad's face. I saw my mom's face and there was such joy that I had joy. Oh, will you choose joy today? Choose joy.

And your home will become overflowing with joy. You and your descendants will have joy. Now apply that with anything of the life of Christ that you're lacking.

Anything. I believe that there will be some people hearing this that will somehow the devil will come right after I've said these words that I believe are from the Lord. It's not my words.

I'm reading from God's word. So you will see it. The devil will come and pluck it away.

And maybe even this evening already, there will be some moment of lack of joy, some moment of discouragement. I'm like, no, the problem hasn't changed. The circumstance hasn't gone away.

And so I can't rejoice. And the devil will allow you to have one excuse or another for why you shouldn't be joyful. Don't let him.

Oh, don't let him please. You're being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake. He's worthy of it.

Let me make it this way. Say it this way. Jesus is worthy of your having a joyful week.

God doesn't want you to have a joyful week even for your sake. It will be yes for your sake. That's great.

But isn't he worthy? We're being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake. I want him to get glory. I want him to get the benefit of his life being manifest in me.

What glory it gives Jesus when the life of Christ is manifest in me. How much more is the name of Jesus not exalted when Santos' life is full of 24-7 joy? And people look at it and say, wow, I want that. And I say, yes, it's not mine.

It's Jesus' life. You can have it too. So if you want joy, choose joy, first of all.

If you find that joy has been locked up, you found the treasure in the field, but it's still locked up in a chest, choose joy. Make that choice. And if you find this evening already that you missed it somehow, don't say, well, I got to start over next week or next year.

Don't make it a New Year's resolution or a new month resolution or a new week resolution. This moment, today is the day of salvation. Now is the appointed time.

Now is the time to choose joy. And if you find yourself on Saturday evening and you made a mess of the whole week, say, Lord, I'm not going to wait even until tomorrow morning. Now I'm going to choose joy.

And you'll see the difference. Now this is a journey. You may not get to 24-7 joy right away.

But if you make that your goal and you press on and you press on and you press on, then the Lord will allow even more and more difficult circumstances in your life and you will experience joy, choose joy and you will have joy. The second thing I want to say, that's the first thing you can write it down. I'd like to choose joy and you will have joy.

The second thing I want you to see is in Hebrews chapter one, hate sin radically, hate sin radically and you will have joy. It'll unlock the joy as it were. Hebrews one, it says verse nine, the middle of verse nine.

Let's begin reading in verse nine. God, it's talking about Jesus. I want the joy that Jesus had.

Remember we saw last week, the joy that is in me may be in you and your joy may be made perfect 24-7, 365 days a year until Christ returns. That's perfection. And Jesus says, it's my joy.

I had it. Do you know this? Jesus had 24-7 joy from day zero till the end of his life. Never once did he lack joy.

And the reason he is our example and the reason he came down to this earth was to be our example so that you and I too could have 24-7 joy. What God did for Jesus, he will do for me. Jesus could have a life from the day he was born until the day he ascended up to the Father full of joy.

Why not I? I can too. I can because Jesus did. I will have such a life because Jesus did.

And here we see Jesus' life. God the Father anointed him with the oil of gladness above all his companions. God poured joy over him.

Do you want to unlock joy in your life? True joy, 24-7 joy. It says why? That word I started with was therefore because Jesus loved righteousness and hated lawlessness. If there's a radical hatred for sin, any form of sin, when you find a little bit of sin in you, a little bit of a motive, if there's a careless word that you spoke to your wife and you're convicted of it, now she is gracious enough to put up with it.

She humbled herself and didn't say anything to you but you saw the look of how her face shrunk when you said that and that convicts you. You say, Lord that was not right. I hate sin so much that I'm going to repent of it.

I'm going to go and ask for forgiveness from you first of all and then from her or vice versa. Husbands with your wives, with your husbands, with your children. Maybe you had to discipline your children but you said

it in anger and you saw the way your child just shrunk and shriveled up when when you spoke to them that way and yes you must lead and train up your children but never in anger, never in a way that exasperates them.

We're told in Ephesians 6. Fathers don't exasperate your children. Don't speak to them even when you discipline them with such harshness that they shrivel up and if you're convicted of that you say, Lord I hate sin so radically. If there's a thought, a fleeting thought of lust, if there's a fleeting motive that's corrupt, that's unchristlike, if there's a fleeting seeking of honor from others, seeking a reputation in your life, hate it, hate sin radically and you'll find God pouring joy over your life, gladness like oil flowing down your head, pouring such oil over your head that it drips down onto your whole body.

Hate sin radically. The more you hate sin, the more you will experience joy. It's just one of those laws of what they call inverse proportions in physics.

That means you hate sin, God will give you more joy. Well you hate sin a little bit, yeah you're bound for a gloomy life. This week will be as gloomy, well this week will be as joyful as your hatred for sin.

This week will be as joyful as your hatred for sin. Okay number three, choose to praise with thanksgiving. Let's turn to Ephesians chapter 5. Choose to praise in the midst of that heaviness, in the midst of that trial when you find that the spirit of heaviness is coming into your life, the spirit of heaviness is in your home.

The book of Isaiah says he's given us a garment of praise. Now that was Old Testament, it's just a garment of praise that they could put on and take off. You know it's outward, everything in the Old Testament is outward.

You put on a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness and it's kind of like where you cover up that spirit of heaviness. The spirit of heaviness is still there but you put the garment of praise over it. Yeah that works but God has given us something else.

He's given us the spirit of praise where if there's a spirit of heaviness inside, you get the spirit of praise inside that casts out the spirit of heaviness. We are not trying to cover up the spirit of heaviness with a garment of praise anymore and then once the spirit of praise is over, after the time of singing is over, you take off that garment and now the spirit of heaviness is still there. God has given us the spirit of praise.

That's why Ephesians 5 verse 18 says be being filled with the Holy Spirit. If you find the spirit of heaviness inside of you, if you find that there's a heaviness coming over your home, you wake up and it's Monday morning and the rest of the world calls it the Monday morning blues or whatever, stormy Monday, all these terms that they talk about Monday. Ah man, heavy Monday.

No it doesn't have to be like that. God has given you a spirit of praise. He wants your heart to be filled with the spirit of praise.

Verse 18, do not be drunk with wine for that is dissipation but be being filled with the spirit and what is the manifestation of that? The first thing he says is speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord. Choose to praise. Now sometimes that could be just turn on some music, some songs of praise, true songs of praise, not frothy songs.

That's why I love the songs that we hear. You go back and read what that author's life was like. Last week we talked about Annie Johnson Flint and you see how the more that the arthritis got worse and the more

that her physical situation got worse, the more she found creative ways to bless others by sending cards to people and writing with those twisted fingers little cards that she could send to somebody.

Choose praise. Choose to praise with thanksgiving. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit so that a spirit of praise comes within and turn up the music if it will and sing loud.

I used to do that especially in my younger days and sometimes I do that even now when I'm driving by myself. Roll up the windows, crank the music and sing with it. Sing loud and then when you stop at the stop light if you're embarrassed about what people say you can turn it down and pause it for a little while and then once the car is going again turn it back up loud and sing in your heart to the Lord.

That's what I used to do. Sing loud with the music. You know I tell you, you have to choose it.

Instead you could choose to just be heavy but sing. Choose praise. Choose to praise in your heart.

Verse 20 says always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God even the Father. Always giving thanks for all things. Always giving thanks for all things and I found that a way to do that is just to turn up praise.

I love this. Something I've learned from my wife Megan that's often when it's time to get the kids up earlier in the morning whether it's school or something else we turn on the music and it's pretty loud in our house. The music's pretty loud.

It's got to be heard even in their bedroom. It's got to wake them up out of their sleep. Let's start the day with praise.

Now if you choose to do it differently that's fine. If you'd rather sing yourself I think that's great. If you've got a good voice sing from the kitchen.

Mom's a song over your children and let them hear praise in the home and that's why you know me I like to sing when we sing whether it's asking you to clap or lift your hands or sing in a way that that the praise can sink deep down within and let's really become a people of praise. You know I think often of I used to see you know there's some things we can learn from our brothers and sisters in the Pentecostal churches and charismatic circles. They know how to praise.

They've got the tambourines and all that and the drums and you know we don't want to make too much of instruments. That's for we never make music an idol but let's not miss out on praise just because we don't have a whole orchestra or band over here and we have simple music. Our musical abilities are simple but let's make it joyful praise.

That's what we want. We practice beforehand just so that we're not a distraction like I say so that we know the words and we are familiar with the tune but let's sing in such a way that people coming here says man that's a joyful people. I don't mind if we open the windows a little bit on a neighbor says man that's a loud church.

They sing loudly not like this oh yeah rejoice be glad in the Lord and rejoice. You know I don't want to point out any of you but sometimes I look out here I'm not looking at anyone in particular and I look I see some of you that are like this. I say oh I wish I could come and just slip away from the stage and just say hey loosen yourself up a little bit.

I'm not talking about temperament personality also but that there sing the words from your heart. Do you really believe that you want to rejoice in the Lord? Rejoice rejoice be glad in the Lord and rejoice. Don't be discouraged brothers and sisters if your temperament's not like that you know maybe even at the football game you wouldn't be rejoicing you know shouting and all that if your temperament's that's like that it's fine.

I'm not trying to change your personality but I hope within your heart is a real joy a real joy because it's not for now that matters it's not that we sound good it's so that that joy you'll take with you when you walk out this door and you'll be singing and and you know what matters now is not here is not how you stand when you're here because that's easy and there's a lot of people that pretend and dance and sing and all of that on Sunday morning but when they go home they're not. You know they're waving the flags and all this that they do in some churches but there's no flag waving on Wednesday that's what matters and so if you stand here and you're a little bit stiff because you're not comfortable doing that in public at least in secret in your heart if you're rejoicing then it's wonderful that's that's the kind of praise we have so choose to praise with thanksgiving give thanks always in all things always giving thanks in all things that's a 24-7 thanksgiving you will have 24-7 joy unlock it choose it don't you know make that choice say lord i'm going to choose to give thanks today i'm going to choose to sing today whether i'm in tune or not because i want joy so are you following me so far first of all choose joy and you will have joy secondly hates and radically thirdly choose to praise with your mouth choose to praise with thanksgiving number four let's turn to romans chapter 12 turn off the world's input tell you the more that you listen to what the world has to say the more it will rob you of joy how does our joy get robbed i'll tell you this it's because there's one person who is an expert thief and that's the devil it says he's come to steal and to kill and to destroy he's going to steal your joy and he's the god of this world maybe you say well if the devil himself came to me and says i'm going to steal your joy you'd be like i'm gonna let you steal my joy imagine this the devil whatever he looks like most of the world thinks he's got pointed ears and you know a tail and he's red and all that but imagine if the devil himself was to come to you and says i'm going to steal your joy right now i'm almost certain in fact i'm 100 certain every single one of them says no devil you're not going to steal my joy so he knows that he knows that if he comes looking like the devil he we won't let him steal our joy but he'll says okay i know how i can do that i'm going to get them to just watch social media all the time or listen to the news or listen to their co-workers or pursue a dream that they see that the world is painting of what life you can have like an angel of light say what's wrong with that i can still be a christian and have that right and that's how your joy is stolen that's how our joy is stolen romans 12 says verse 1 therefore i urge you brethren by the mercies of god you know why therefore is there because romans 11 verse 36 because from him through him to him are all things to him be the glory forever amen therefore i urge you brethren by the mercies of god romans 12 verse 1 to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice acceptable to god which is your spiritual service of worship and as we have often said in this church presenting our bodies means i'm presenting my tongue say lord i will not use my tongue that way i present my eyes lord i will not look at things that way i present my ears i will not listen to those things that way and verse 2 do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may prove what the will of god is that which is good and acceptable and perfect and then later on in verse 12 he gets to saying that's how we rejoice in hope persevering in tribulation devoted to prayer you wonder why romans 12 verse 11 and 12 is not true in your life it's because i'll tell you i've seen this in my own life i've been listening to the things of this world whether it's through social media whether it's through the news whether it's through this friend of mine or that other friend of mine whether it's through this person or that person turn off the world's input turn it off don't be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind let your mind be made new different from the way the world thinks don't be conformed to the

world remember how does the world conform us how does the devil conform us to the world by the things we hear by the things we see by the things that the world has taken up with the more you're exposed to that the more you're influenced by that the more you receive that input in your life the more you will be conformed to the world don't be conformed to the world turn off that if it means not reading certain websites or not you know just uh putting your social media account on pause for a while yeah do so it might seem you know this is the interesting thing to i have found that you might say well i only listen to happy things but it's a fake happiness see the devil can discourage us and bring a lack of joy in our life through the spirit of discouragement and heaviness that's in the world but i believe that another way that he can do that is by presenting to us a fake happiness that's in the world you look at somebody whose life looks happy and you think i need that life too and no wonder then you end up with a lacking joy joy comes only from the holy spirit and from the word of god so turn off the input even if it's seemingly happy things that the world is presenting to you that fake happiness that the world has will rob you of the true joy of the lord turn it off turn off the world's inputs you with me so far choose joy and you will have joy hate sin radically you will have joy choose to praise with thanksgiving you'll have joy turn off the world's inputs and you'll have joy you won't you'll have that joy not robbed from you i want to say one more thing you read in romans 12 verse 13 the next verse almost 12 11 says not lagging mind and diligence fervent in spirit serving the lord rejoicing in hope verse 12 persevering in tribulation devoted to prayer contributing to the needs of the saints practicing hospitality contributing to the needs of the saints practicing hospitality and i would say it this way do you want to have joy don't forget that god has given you a bag in your hand um i'll talk about that in a second but the secret to experiencing the joy of the lord i found is to find a way to bless somebody else contributing to the needs of somebody else here you are experiencing a trial and a tribulation and something's going on in your life and you're perplexed and there's a heaviness and there's things that god hasn't answered in your life but you say lord i want you to unlock the joy in my life and you look around for somebody else that you can bless let me think i mean did we see that in annie johnson flint's biography that i shared last week uh at the end of our meeting how in the midst of that she could have thought about how her twisted knuckles couldn't write she says no but i've got to bless somebody there's somebody else on the other side of the world or the other side of town that i could just write a little note and send it to them and it would be a blessing to them and what joy you know as far as we know she never got healed of her arthritis and the pain in her body and her her fiction but oh what joy she experienced what joy she experienced and if you're looking to experience joy in your life look around for the needs of somebody else bless somebody else in the midst of your trial and you will see how god will bless you you know that verse in proverbs chapter 11 proverbs chapter 11 verse 25 the generous man will be prosperous and i believe that more often than not god is looking for generosity in our lives in the midst of affliction you read that in second corinthians 9 how from the poverty of the saints there they gave they didn't have an abundance and says okay that's why we don't preach tithing it's not giving more because i've got so much it's saying i have a little but i'm going to give it all i'm looking for somebody else to bless in the midst of my littleness and i believe that heaven will show that some of the most generous people in the world have been ones who have very little had very little it's going to be so true and god will give them such a rich reward and there will be others who says well i you know i didn't have that much and i you know i was barely making ends meet i'm not talking about you know you give away your money and your family suffers no please understand but it's a spirit of generosity it's a spirit of giving it's a spirit of meeting the needs of others whether it's financially or otherwise it doesn't cost much to send a text message to somebody it doesn't cost much to call somebody and say i'm thinking of you brother thinking of your sister it doesn't cost much to pray for somebody oh it'll cost you some time but you don't need a lot of money to pray for somebody and intercede for them the generous man will be prosperous and he who waters others

will himself be watered i've thought about it like this i got this picture once when i was thinking about this verse about me looking at my garden my junkyard like i talked about last week it says this garden's a mess and there's weeds and all of that but there's somebody else whose garden's a little bit needs watering too and instead of me only worrying about my own little garden i'm going to hold my hose over that person's garden and water their tree and water their plant i'm going to think of some way in which i can bless somebody else even though yeah i've got this thing and i'm praying for god to help me and all of that i'm meeting my own needs i'm taking care of my own family yes but i'm watering somebody else and all of a sudden the heavens open up and it rains over my garden i tell you brothers and sisters i've experienced that over and over again i think you all can testify to that to some extent if you're waiting for your garden to blossom find another garden that you can water he who waters others god will water and if you're sitting there being stingy because well i need to water my garden i need to water my garden it's no wonder that the heavens that have been waiting that god wants to unlock the heavens over your life over your home over your spiritual journey over your marriage over your children over even your work what you do for a living he wants to bless that too but he wants to see that you have a burden to bless others instead of only thinking of yourself when you sit here after we go back after lunch after the meeting we have lunch together and we have fellowship your thoughts just revolve around you what your week is like and who uh who's going to talk to you or are you looking to bless somebody well they don't need to know what you've the secret trial that you walk through but you want to water their garden that's why we stick around sometimes till five six in the evening why we want to water others i say lord give me a little bit more time to water one more person by what i share it doesn't matter what my week's been like you'll take care of that lord you will pour the heavens over my garden i want to water at least one other person psalm 126 we're speaking about unlocking joy in our lives psalm 126 that's a song of praise let me read the whole song when the lord brought back the captive ones of zion we were like those who dreamed then our mouth was filled with laughter and our tongue with joyful shouting then they said among the nations why because they saw us laughing they saw our mouths filled with joy our tongues with joyful shouting the neighbors around rlc have said what's going on in that church they used to be the gloomy singers now they're the joyful singers we can hear them even though the windows are closed what's going on the lord has brought the captives out to zion and then the neighbor said the lord has done great things for rlc the lord has done great things for us we will say yes we are glad the lord has done great things for us we are glad you know if a christian was to look at you and say why are you a christian he says well yeah god's done good things for me says he would say you should look like your team just won the super bowl if really that's true because what you're telling me is much greater than anything any trophy this world could ever have that's what the world ought to say man these people are joyful the lord has done great things for us we are glad restore our captivity oh lord as the streams in the south and i want you to see this those who who weep shall reap with joyful shouting is that how your bible reads those who weep those who have tears shall reap with joyful shouting they say lord i cried so much right it's time for me to know what did those people who were weeping do somebody say they sowed those who sowed in tears see i for four years i missed it i i was focused on the tears i was like those who had tears it's like lord i've had so many tears in my life right i know there's a joy coming says santos you wasted that just by weeping feeling sorry for yourself that's not what he's talking about those who were weeping they couldn't help it the the circumstance caused them to weep and the tears would just break out and suddenly they would break down but what does it say about them this person is going to and fro weeping carrying his bag of seed carrying his bag of seed that's why i said don't forget the bag that's in your hand and you will find unlocked your joy unlocked look down dear brothers and sisters god's given you a bag a bag of seed i know you're going through a trial i know you're going through something difficult i know there's perplexity i know there's things that you're

carrying that probably nobody else can understand but Jesus does and he's put a bag in your hand that he wants you to sow now in the midst of that trial in the midst it's almost like a sowing in winter you can't sow in winter in the natural realm but you can in the spiritual realm it's a storm it's a blizzard but God's put a bag in your hand so let me read it now those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting he who goes out and weeps carrying his bag of seed shall indeed come again with a shout of joy bringing his sheaves with him there'll be a shout of joy because you'll be bringing sheaves with you and you'll see how God brought those sheaves out of times of trial some of my favorite hymns favorite I mean we we sing about it we know about it it's so much harder to put it into practice though isn't it some of the hymns that we sing that have the deepest impact on us are ones that were written and composed through heavy trial you know the story of it is well with my soul that man lost his entire family almost in a moment and then he says I gotta write a song many many stories like that out of his out of his riches in Jesus he giveth and giveth and it giveth again Annie Johnson Flint so don't forget the bag in your hand there's a um famous this is not a biblical quote but it applies I think the principle is biblical there's a man named who's a poet in India he had a lot of respect for Christ he was not a Christian as far as I know but he he said once he says I slept and dreamt that life is joy he slept and dreamt that life is joy and he awoke and dreamt and saw that life is service you following me I slept and dreamt a life of joy when I woke up I saw that life is service I acted and behold service is joy we say it again I slept and dreamt that life is joy I woke and saw that life is service I acted I served and I found that service is joy I think that sums up very well what I've been trying to say perhaps you're in a dream you wake you hear a a life of joy being preached about like I've been talking about and it's like a dream then you wake up it says well I got to go to work Monday morning the dishes are still there the children are still there I got to homeschool the kids I got to do this I could do that I got to work hard my boss is going to pressure me I got this and that and that's all is going on I found that life is service act serve think of the needs of others get outside the box a little bit find somebody else that you can bless and you'll find service is joy if you water others you will be watered um I'll close with this Psalm 34 I'll summarize those five before I go on some 34 you can turn there with me first of all choose joy you will find joy in your life hate sin you will find joy in your life choose to praise with thanksgiving you'll find joy in your life turn off the world's inputs you'll find joy in your life and lastly don't forget the bag of seed that's in your hand you'll find joy in your life Psalm 34 verse 5 they looked to him and were radiant and their faces will never be ashamed God is joy if you were to see the of God you will see joy beaming from heaven David saw a glimpse of it in his presence is fullness of joy it's like a beaming high beam you know you have a drive on the road at night and the car's got their high beams on it and from a distance it's not so bad you know you can handle it as they get closer they'll you you'll flash your light so that man the high beams are in my eyes you know you get closer to God you know what his high beam is joy at his right hand are pleasures forever have you come close enough to God to see his high beam of joy so much so that like I said once that you look like you've been out in the sun you've been tanning because you've been in the presence of God your face looks tanned why because you've been in the sun in the joy of the Lord will you come back next week dear brothers and sisters with the tan of joy on your face you look darker you look joyful why because I've been looking at God he's his joy has been over my life you know there's a couple of stories which I quickly want you to see um and then we'll we'll close um it said this about Hannah first Samuel chapter one first Samuel 1 verse 18 um it says you know Eli verse 17 said go in peace may the God of Israel grant your petition that you have asked of him and for her that was enough back then God spoke through the priests and she was crying out and in fact so much so that she thought people thought she was drunk she was pouring out her soul to the Lord she was carrying this burden and Eli got a word from the Lord says God it'll be done to you and she said verse 18 let your maidservant find favor in your sight so the woman went her way and ate and her face was no longer sad you see that God spoke a word and that

was enough her face was changed had she had the son yet no no that was to come but you heard the word from the lord and her face was like no longer sad will you go forward this week dear brothers and sisters with a joyful face even though god has not yet answered in the way that you want him to answer uh one more example it's in acts chapter six it's the why the story of of um steven acts chapter six it says um right as they're about to stone him so it says you know look at what's happening to steven he's facing this oppressions uh hannah she was her her the her husband's other wife was making fun of her right i think that was the case and she was just being made fun of and feeling deprived and you know back back then if you didn't have a child it was like the worst possible thing and and here's steven it says in verse 12 they stirred up the people and the and the elders and the scribes and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the council verse 13 they put forward false witnesses who made up a whole bunch of lies about him and they made up all this story and now here's steven brought like a prisoner completely innocent a whole bunch of people have said a whole bunch of lies against him and they look at him and you would expect him to be in fear and worried and shaking and panic instead they fixed their gaze on him and all who were sitting in the council saw his face like the face of an angel i long for that i imagine a scenario where a whole bunch of people line me up and they sit in a circle around me throw a whole bunch of accusations against me and then they look at me and they're like peace the face of an angel why face of an angel angels behold the face of the lord we read in matthew 18 they're constantly beholding the face of the lord if you were to yell at an angel and scream at him he'd be like you can't shake me i spent 24 7 beholding the face of the lord you can't shake me and god promised gave that life to steven in the midst of that trial he's giving that life to you says do you want that life look to me and no matter what you face you could have all the authorities lined up against you making fun of you telling evil lies about you and they look at your face and they see it's like an angel smiling smiling at them forgiveness love i long for this life i hope you do too dear brothers and sisters and let's press on to perfect joy god is offering that to us and it shall be so amen

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