

A NEW BEGINNING: FINDING JOY!

Scripture used: [Hebrews 12:1-3 \(NIV\)](#)

OVERVIEW

This week we continue our sermon series on joy. This is a timely series because we are more than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic. All of us are dealing with much more stress than usual. We can all identify with the feeling of being weary, and struggling not to lose heart. There is so much suffering in our homes, our communities, our nation, and the world. We need new strength and fresh joy, which comes only through God. But this doesn't seem right to many of us. Joy during a pandemic? Pastor Hurmon framed the situation with the following question: *during times of stress and great suffering, is experiencing joy impossible, naive, or even callous?* To help us understand God's will for us, we are learning about the incredible testimony of Kay Warren from her book [Choose Joy: Because Happiness Isn't Enough](#). She and the rest of the Warren family experienced the parallels and joy and sorrow. Her husband Rick Warren was leading a global movement toward greater faith thanks to his bestseller [The Purpose Driven Life](#). At the same time, Kay was diagnosed with cancer and the doctors told her it was terminal. This combination of joy and sorrow became a pattern in Kay's life. She came to understand them as railroad tracks, representing the reality that immense joy and deep sorrow can coexist in our lives even at the same time. One side captures the feeling of "Praise God!" and the other side captures the feeling of "God help me!" Eventually the verse [Isaiah 45:3 \(NLT\)](#) helped Kay understand how God used dark times to give her "secret riches" in the form of a deeper relationship with Him and greater appreciation of each day. This is what it looks like to find joy!

KEY POINTS

- 1) **Joy is greater than happiness.** Happiness is a feeling based on circumstances. It is predominately based on what's happening to us, and it fluctuates all the time. On the other hand, joy is an attitude that defies circumstances. It is based on how we decide to interpret what's happening to us, and it does not change and can persist despite difficult circumstances.
- 2) **Joy begins with faith.** Jesus is a man of joy, and the starting point for followers of Jesus trying to find joy. Jesus' joyous nature is part of the reason He engaged so playfully with children and pointed to them as examples of how to behave. Jesus' joy is also what allowed Him to triumph over death and take His place at the right of God's throne.
- 3) **Joy and sorrow exist together.** Jesus is also a man of sorrow. He was honest with His emotions, from weeping over the death of His friends to speaking to God the Father about His frustration and fear. It was this same joy that enabled Him to take on the pain, the injustice, and the shame of the cross.
- 4) **Joy encompasses more than we think.** We must broaden our understanding of things we consider to be a part of joy. Joy is not all smiles and laughter. It is also hope-filled expectation, contentment, conviction, gratitude, compassion, and faithfulness. These are elements of a joyous attitude that allowed Jesus to triumph.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Dutch theologian [Henri Nouwen](#) said "when we are crushed like grapes, we cannot think of the wine we will become." The feeling of being crushed is something we are all experiencing during COVID. There are challenges popping up everywhere, and there seems to be no end. When we choose to find a mature joy, we focus on the wine we are becoming. What things typically make you happy? How have these been impacted in this last year?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [Hebrews 12:1-3 \(NIV\)](#). What are the joy lessons that stand out to you in this passage? What can we learn from Jesus in terms of finding joy in spite of difficult circumstances. When we broaden our perspective about where joy can come from, what are the potential sources of joy in your life right now? Pastor Hurmon challenged us to bring out the positive from the last year despite the pandemic. Think back over everything that has happened. What joy have you found hidden in the darkness?
- 3) **DO** - We are only 3 weeks away from [Easter Sunday](#). All of us have the opportunity to share the hopeful message of our resurrected Lord and His victory over death. Invite at least 5 people by simply sharing the [NBCC Easter Celebration link](#) with them so they can sign up! See you next Sunday as we continue to expand our understanding of joy as we walk with Jesus and Jesus walks with us!