

A NEW BEGINNING: FINDING JOY

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

OVERVIEW

This is Pastor Hurmon's third sermon on finding joy. We must ask the question: during great stress and suffering, is it impossible, naive, and even callous to try to find joy? Yes, joy exists; and finding joy starts by a pursuit and intention. But it also requires an understanding that joy is bigger than transitory happiness tied to our circumstances. Joy is an attitude, a posture that defies our circumstances in search of awe, ecstasy, and delight. In this message, we look at three keys to unlocking a deeper experience of joy no matter what our circumstances: reflection, faith, and acceptance.

KEY POINTS

- 1) Joy is hope-filled expectation. It's contentment, conviction, gratitude, compassion, faithfulness. It starts with reflection. Pastor Hurmon reminded us that when we don't see God's footsteps next to ours, it's because He's carrying us through the stormy times. One of the keys that unlocks greater joy is reflection. When we commit to spend dedicated time in reflection, we are able to remember the past faithfulness and discern the current Presence of God in our lives, which allows us to cultivate greater joy.
- 2) A second key is faith: joy is based on faith, which is also an expression of deep trust in God. ([Hebrews 11:1](#)). We have the confidence and assurance that God is for us, not against us; that God is capable; that God loves us boundlessly and won't abandon us; and that God will have the last word. Pastor Hurmon went back to Kay Warren's book, which outlines finding one's place of peace where we know God is enough and we will be OK as a result. We experience the miracle of going from weakness to strength. [Hebrews 11:33-35](#) talks about the mistreated, the imprisoned, the destitute, and the oppressed who struggle with the reality of violence and injustice, and thus seeing a hopeful outcome in the world. Kay Warren's ultimate challenge was the suicide of her 28-year-old son Mark in 2013 after many years battling mental illness. We need to keep our eyes on Jesus and know that God will have the last word, i.e., He will triumph over permanent death and orchestrate the "grand reunion" of all the loved ones. Our faith allows us to experience joy whether we are provided for by miracles, or whether our faith allows us to endure unimaginably painful circumstances; Scripture has examples of God providing joy in both situations, which is important, because even when we experience miracles, they are at best temporary in this life, because we will all pass through loss and death to experience the final victory of God.
- 3) Thus, the final key to unlocking joy is acceptance. Joy is based on acceptance that we are at times in the "miracle group" and at other times in the "non-miracle group." Life can be broken, painful, and hard at times. Yet God gives us the strength to endure the vicissitudes, and His joy can sustain us no matter what because we know that ultimately God has won the victory of death through Jesus.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Share stories of how God carried you or other ones through hard times. Recognize that this is a tender topic. If it feels too vulnerable to speak from your own experience, try to remember significant characters that have inspired you in familiar books or films.
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Slowly reread [Hebrews 12:1-3 \(NIV\)](#). How might this vision of Jesus provide the Church with the courage we need to face our struggles? Consider your own life. Who is a part of your "cloud of witnesses?" (This may be a loved one who has passed, a significant person who was or still is your support, a Biblical hero, or moral giant.) Who inspires you to continue? How might you express gratitude to him or to her through prayer or conversation?
- 3) **DO** - Pray this week especially for those who are struggling through a hard time. Ask for wisdom on how best to help carry those who suffer through this season. If you are one who is struggling, pray and ask for the grace, courage, and strength to press on. Trust that God is carrying you forward. Lean on your brothers and sisters in Christ to help. We hope you'll plan to join New Beginnings for a special Good Friday Gathering at 7 PM on 4/2, and for Easter on Sunday 4/4. As you continue to pray for yourself and others in these 40 days leading up to Easter, consider those you can invite to these special events where God can do some special in the lives of those we care about!