

When joy comes in the morning

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Gal 5:22-24

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

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This morning I want to focus on one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit and that fruit is joy.

Nehemiah 8:10 says

The joy of the Lord is your strength

Sometimes for whatever reason it can be that we as believers can lose our joy and our walk with Jesus can become a drudgery and just plain hard work

We can find ourselves saying what's the point, why don't I just give up and give in. Simply live my life without Jesus.

When this happens we become weak as Christians, our lives don't sing to the praises of God, our love grows cold, our witness becomes ineffective and we become weak and subject to the attacks of Satan.

But when that wonderful sense of God's joy is in our lives then it is at this time that we are at our strongest, our most content and at our most effective with God.

So I want to look at some joy robbers and some joy givers.

JOY ROBBERS

I want to focus on only two joy robbers this morning and I am sure you can think of more but these are two that I believe cause the most problems for us

1) Unmet expectations

These can be a great joy robber and are often the result of our expectations being set just too high

They can be of ourselves but more often than not they are directed toward others

Isn't amazing how easy we can be on ourselves and how hard we can be on others - don't you think?

- Husbands/Wives
- Parents/Children
- Teachers/Students
- Managers/Workers
- Pastors/Church members

All of these relationships have expectations attached either implicitly (subconsciously or not articulated i.e. Not spelt out in detail) or explicitly those we spell out discuss and agree upon

It tends to be the implicit ones where we get into the most trouble - the ones where we expect people to just sort of understand without letting them know

- ✓ He didn't let me know what was expected of me with this school assignment
- ✓ Such and such husband buys her flowers so why doesn't my guy do the same?
- ✓ She visits that person but I never seem to get a visit or a call
- ✓ I have told her so often to keep her bedroom clean but it's in one ear and out the other
- ✓ Why on earth won't this worker just get the job done?
- ✓ Can't this manager see that she is just being a pain in the neck?

And the list goes on and all of these have the potential to rob us of our joy

Our assignment is to monitor our expectations and keep them in check, not letting them get out of control by feeding on them without confronting them and not letting Satan magnify them.

2) Critics

We should **LISTEN** to the critic but we should not **LIVE** with the critic

That is our critics can often have something to offer us and show us but we also need to be very wary about those people who are always seeing the bad and never seem to have anything positive to say about anything or anyone

These sort of folk will steal our joy and often without us even realizing it.

Also we need to guard our own hearts from becoming those very people ourselves.

I see this in guys way more than I see it in girls and for us guys when it is allowed to

fester then we can find ourselves on the slippery slope to depression if we are not careful

Remember this.

There has been no monument that I know of in the world that has ever been erected to a critic

JOY BRINGERS

The one thing with joy robbers or joy bringers - it is all about what we choose to focus on

If we focus on the joy robbers then that's exactly what we will get and likewise if we focus on the joy bringers then the joy of the lord will continually be our strength.

1) Jesus

Now this might seem obvious but there are times we can focus on THE BENEFITS that Jesus brings us rather than purely on Jesus himself and him alone

We can also get sidetracked on issues and our own hobby horses - our pet subjects - our pet teaching ministries - our pet gripes etc

I am fully convinced that when we take our eyes off of the author and finisher of our faith that we are in continual danger of losing our joy

If you find you are in this place then I encourage you to spend some time fasting.

I know of no other more effective way we have as believers to re-calibrate our lives on what and who is most important

The self righteous hated being around Jesus but those who were seeking God's righteousness just loved being around Him and joy was always one of the hallmarks

Luke 19:1-10

1 He entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 And there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. 3 And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. 4 So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." 6 So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. 7 And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." 8 And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have

defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” 9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

2) Circumstantial contentment and counting our blessings

Paul said in Philippians 4:11 that he had learnt to be content in whatever circumstances he found himself in and his secret was found in verse 13 where he says I can do all things through him who strengthens me

Contentment with Godliness

1 Tim 6:6-10

Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs

To maintain our joy we need to continually count and recount our blessings.

The blessings of God are wonderful when they are fresh and new but we can get ourselves into a rut when we forget them.

Remind yourself of these things - they will be fuel on the fire of your joy in God

3) The lost getting saved and the saints getting sanctified

The lost getting saved is all about people initially submitting themselves to Jesus and it brings the angels much joy. It should also bring us great joy and if it doesn't you need to question your own life closely

The saints getting sanctified is about the continual submission of their mission to God's mission and this brings God the greatest glory and us our greatest joy

If we are not looking for these things in people then we are in a rut of self centered joyless religious formalism that has no life, no power and no joy

We need to celebrate as the angels do - party time

4) Heaven

Finally let's keep our focus on our eternity in heaven with God

Think often about your final days and your final destiny. For the believer this should bring great hope and great joy.

The earth will never be transformed by us while we are here on earth and not every person will bow their knee in submission to Jesus - there will however be a day when will be part of a new heaven and a new earth along with the multitudes who belong to Jesus

Hebrews 12:1-2

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Let's not allow others to rob our joy or ourselves to rob ourselves of own joy by becoming judgmental, dogmatic, overly critical, or perfectionistic.

The joy of the Lord is our strength - so let's guard it jealously and zealously.

Let's pray.