

December 9, 2018
La Jolla Christian Fellowship
JOY TO THE WORLD: Part 1
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Hebrews 12:1-3

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

The Christ following life is one that is meant to be characterized by joy.

- **Romans 14:17** *For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*
- **We often expect joy to be a natural byproduct of Christ following.**
 - Creating a culture of joy in your life requires a commitment to ruthlessly pursue joy at the suffrage of all other devotions of the **heart**.
 - This is because the heart and soul are the domain of joy.
 - **Psalms 94:19** *When the cares of my heart are many, your consolations cheer my soul. (ESV)*
 - **Psalms 4:7** *You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.*
 - **Psalms 4:7** also shows that joy is also something which is bestowed from God.

We are living in a world which is becoming increasingly hopeless and where joy is under threat of extinction.

- **Hebrews 12:3** *Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

God's word in Hebrews 12 gives us a template for creating hearts that manufacture joy.

1. **Remove the hindrances**
2. **Change your focus**
3. **Activate faith**

1. **Remove the hindrances: Vs. 1** *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us **throw off** everything that hinders and the **sin that so easily entangles**.*
 - a. Sin entangles the heart and strangles joy.
2. **Change your focus: Vs. 2** *...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Joy is created through an outward focus rather than one which is primarily inward.

3. **Activate Faith: Vs. 3** *Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Joy does not come to the stagnant, but rather is a renewable resource that comes by an active and generous faith.

Benediction: Romans 15:13 *Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.*

Walking it out: Use these questions and challenges to go deeper this week in personal reflection or in one of our community groups.

1. How many times in the last month have you experienced true joy?
2. Have you ever wondered why you don't have more joy? Have you ever considered that joy is something that must be harvested.
3. What currently rules your heart the majority of the time? Is it joy, fear, control, worry, peace or perhaps hope?
4. An inward focus rarely produces joy. Do you find this true?
5. Joy does not come to the stagnant. How could you activate and empty yourself in faith so that you might be open to being filled with joy?