

The Joy Questions

Way in

Is there a difference between joy and happiness? If there is, what is it?

Would you say that you are 'full of joy' at the moment? If you are, why? If not, what do you think it would take to experience joy?

Read **John 16:17-33**

Jesus has just explained to his disciples that he is about to leave them, but that it is a very good thing as he will send the Holy Spirit to them after he has gone. They are confused. After all, the promised messiah was going to bring freedom, peace and redemption. How can he now be going away?

1. In verse 20, Jesus mentions to his followers that they will grieve, but then discover unexpected joy. It seems as though he is talking about his imminent death, when they will of course be devastated. And yet, their mourning will be 'turned to joy'. What might this mean, and why will it bring great joy?

2. According to verse 22, this joy will not fade away. How does this compare with all other happiness that we may experience in life? When you think about people you know who aren't followers of Jesus, is this joy something that they associate with being a Christian? Why/why not?

3. After church on Sunday, a Christian friend says to you, 'I've lost my joy, and don't know how to get it back.' What would you say as a response?

4. Verses 23-28 point to a transformation in the relationship between the disciples and God. What, according to these verses, has changed in the relationship and why?

5. Several times in this passage, Jesus talks about the disciples not understanding, and whether or not his speech is clear to them (eg. v18, 25, 29). And yet, by verse 29, even though they think they have 'got it', it seems as though they still haven't quite understood. What about v32 would have come as a shock to them? Why is it so important to remind ourselves that peace is only in Jesus (v33)?

6. In verse 33, Jesus says, 'I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace.' This is not the first or last time that Jesus promises his followers peace (See John 14:27, 20, 19, 21, 26). From this verse and these further passages, what do you think the peace that Jesus gives actually is?

Quote for **Reflection**

From the journal of Philosopher Blaise Pascal:

"In the year of grace 1654 Monday 23 November... from about half-past ten in the evening till about half an hour after midnight. FIRE. God of Abraham. God of Isaac. God of Jacob. Not of the philosophers and the learned. Certainty. Joy. Certainty. Emotion. Sight. Joy. Forgetfulness of the world and of all outside of God. Joy! Joy! Joy! Tears of joy. My God, will you leave me? Let me not ever be separated from you."

Choose your destiny

Questions

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Think of someone in your life who has set a good example for you. Now think of another person that you would like to emulate as a Christian. What are the qualities in each that you admire and want to use as an example to follow?

Read **Philippians 3:17-19**

1. From what you have learned through these studies so far, what do you think would have been the example that the Apostle Paul would have given to his friends in Philippi? Verse 17

2. If we are to use Paul as our example what characteristics does he commend in the following verses; Ephesians 5:1 & 2, 1 Thessalonians 1:6 and 1 Thessalonians 2:14?

3. Why do you think Paul was reduced to tears in verse 18? Do you ever feel like crying for others? If so what causes this? Discuss how we can allow emotion to be a strength particularly in a spiritual sense.

5. What do you think Paul means by the “enemies of the cross of Christ”? Verse 18. What difference has Christ’s death on the cross made for you? See 1 Corinthians 1:18 and Colossians 1:19-20

6. In verse 19 Paul describes some people as having “their minds on earthly things”. What do you think he means, particularly in the light of the rest of the verse?

Quote for Reflection

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

(Galatians 6:14)

The Cross is the object of our boasting. God forbid that we should boast in anything else. Paul’s whole world was in orbit round the cross. It filled his vision, illuminated his life, warmed his spirit. He ‘gloried’ in it. It meant more to him than anything else. Our perspective should be the same. If the cross is not central for us, then we deserve to have applied to us that most terrible of all descriptions, enemies of the cross of Christ.

(John Stott in ‘The Cross of Christ’)