

The Healing Power of Joy

I want to share this wisdom about the healing power of laughter and joy because Spirit-led living doesn't only bear spiritual fruit, it will improve every area of your life—health, family, sense of fulfillment—and deepen your relationship with God. In a sense, I've sought to do this over the years in the more than 1,000 issues of *Charisma* and over 2,000 books I've had the privilege to publish.

Best-selling author Dr. Don Colbert is a board-certified physician. And though it may be surprising to hear it from a medical doctor, he has some of the best teaching on joy you can find. He says embracing joy is in understanding how our brains work and how to control our thoughts and manage our feelings. That starts with remembering what the apostle Paul says in Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice."

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Our brains control everything we do. We worry using our brains. And when we feel joy, it's the brain giving us that joyful feeling. As Colbert says, the same brain with which you worry or are depressed can shift to joy. That's pretty exciting. No matter what's happening around us, instead of worrying, we can make the deliberate choice for joy!

To put this into perspective, think about the world in which Paul lived. He was telling these early Christians to rejoice in the Lord while Nero was tarring and burning them in the streets of Rome and their family members were being imprisoned.

The Spirit of God was instructing Paul to tell the church to rejoice at its darkest time in history. If Paul and those early Christians were able to rejoice, or have joy, how much more should we!

Even with the world being upside down in so many ways, as I described in my newest book, *Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World*, Colbert reminds us that no matter how bad things get, we can have joy, which is a state of being. Compare that to happiness, which is based on circumstances such as falling in love or getting a big raise.

Colbert is a physician, but he's also a Spirit-led believer who through his books and public appearances helps other believers understand health matters that otherwise might confuse them. It's good to know that in addition to trusting God for good health, there are practical steps we can take to be healthy. For example, if you're sick and believing for a healing miracle, it's helpful to learn that losing weight by following a healthy diet and exercising can not only improve your health but also make you feel better emotionally.

Colbert has a way to activate joy and happiness, and he shared his formula on a recent podcast: "For years, I've been prescribing 10 belly laughs a day. Why? Because belly laughter activates joy. But you must activate your joy with happiness, and you activate it by smiling and laughing." He noticed that many of his patients seemed to have what he calls a spirit of heaviness. They weren't necessarily depressed, but they were down. There was no joy in their faces, no smiles or laughter.

The reason might surprise you. Colbert says this happens when our joy center wasn't filled when we were babies. This "joy center" begins to develop at three months of age and when it's developed, it regulates emotions, pain and even controls the immune system. That's why people full of joy and laughter have stronger immune systems.

Babies begin to feel joy by being held close as they are breastfeeding or just by being held close to Mom or Dad. This is also when the visual areas of the brain start to develop, and the baby literally starts to look for eyes that are looking at them with joy.

When they find eyes that are smiling, the baby starts to smile back. Have you ever smiled at a baby, and the baby smiled back? That happens because the baby has started to look for joy in people's eyes.

Filling the joy center is kind of like filling a tank of gas; smiling, laughing and dancing activate joy and fill up that tank. There are other things we can do, such as gathering with other believers to worship and pray together. This is why Hebrews 10:25 says: "Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together." You won't believe the difference this will make and the refreshing it will bring to your spirit.

Stephen Strang *is founding editor of Charisma. His latest book, Spirit-Led Living in an Upside-Down World, is available at .*