

Guarding Your Holy Spirit-Given Joy From the Devil's Malicious Schemes

Keeping your joy and enjoying life is not always very easy.

Especially when we're surrounded by so much negativity. All you have to do is turn on the news, and you're bombarded with headlines about

- Corruption
- Natural disaster
- Violence
- Killings
- War

And if we are not careful to guard our hearts, we will find our joy slowly dissipate until our hearts are filled with the same negativity we have carelessly taken in.

I'll admit, the reaction to my recent article "Should a Christian Criticize the President" was quite negative on Facebook and other sites that featured it. It seems that Christians today are eager to feed on anger, negativity and drama.

In fact, there are those whose lives are so filled with drama, that they will create drama where there is none.

But anger, negativity, and drama cannot coexist with joy.

If we wish to keep our joy, we make a decision to follow the proper steps that create an environment of joy in our lives that not only causes joy to remain in our hearts, but grow and influence those around us.

4 Ways to Keep Your Joy

1. Renew Your Mind

One of the greatest battlefields in every person is over the mind.

In fact, one of the most common strategies of the enemy is to infect your mind with negative, sinful and critical thoughts. Scripture recognizes this when it admonishes us to:

“And above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish all the fiery arrows of the evil one” (Eph. 6:16).

The first thought he shoots into our mind isn’t sin, but if we fail to bring “every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,” that first thought turns into a second thought and we fall for Satan’s strategy.

Renewing our minds puts a bolt on the door to this entry-gate through which the enemy seeks to come in and steal our joy.

You discipline your thoughts by countering every negative and sinful thought with Scripture. Biblical meditation is one of the best ways we renew our minds.

2. Control Your Tongue

If the enemy sees an open door to your mind, he will begin to take over your tongue.

We see this truth in Scripture when Jesus said, *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bears what is good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bears what is evil. For of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks”* (Luke 6:45).

Proverbs say that the power of life and death are in the tongue. This means our tongues have the power to speak life or

death not only to those around us, but to our own hearts and spirits as well.

James says this:

“The tongue is a fire, a world of evil. The tongue is among the parts of the body, defiling the whole body, and setting the course of nature on fire, and it is set on fire by hell. ... But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:6, 8).

And just a cursory glance at the book of Proverbs reveals a lot more about the tongue and the damage it can do.

When we learn to control our tongue, we will begin to create an atmosphere in our heart for joy to grow and bear fruit.

And may I offer a bit of advice?

As we scroll through Facebook and see something we don't like or agree with, let's purpose in our hearts to move on. If we don't have something positive, encouraging or uplifting to say, lets just scroll on or walk away.

Don't feed the drama beast!

3. Submit Your Will

Not long ago I saw something in scripture that took my breath away. It was this: “stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Sam. 15:23, emphasis added).

Stubbornness is often viewed as a positive character trait, and yet Scripture calls it iniquity (*in biblical terms, sin that is premeditated, ongoing, and increasing in nature*) and idolatry.

Stubbornness is refusal to submit our will to God and to the authorities whom He has placed over us.

I am deeply disturbed by the fact that recent generations have

so forgotten the biblical principle of respect and honor for authority that today we are seeing a rebellious overthrow of authority on all levels

- Parental authority
- Police authority
- Church authority
- Governmental authority

And it all stems from this one area that will either cause joy to grow in our lives, or kill it: **our will**.

When we learn to submit our will to God and make His Word the final authority in our lives...

When we cease to rationalize why certain passages don't apply to today or what "God really meant when He said." But when we truly live like we believe that every Word of the Bible is God-breathed and meant to have the last word in every area of our lives, we will create an environment for joy to thrive in our lives!

4. Direct Your Emotions

I know, many people will tell you that you can't control what you feel.

You know what?

They're wrong. You *can* and you *must* learn to direct your emotions in healthy ways; because if you don't, they will control you. And being controlled by our emotions is not only unhealthy; it is dangerous.

Our emotions are unstable, especially for women, because so often our emotions are influenced by our hormonal fluctuations. They are also influenced by our health or vitamin and mineral levels.

But when we follow the first three steps to maintaining joy,

we find it almost natural to begin directing our emotions.

One of the phrases every Christian should eliminate from his vocabulary is "You made me feel [insert emotion]."

No one can make us feel anything. We choose to feel certain ways. Perhaps that person tempted you to allow your emotions to spin out of control, but it is your choice to allow them free reign or to bring them into submission.

Let us knock out this victimization mentality and choose today to stop blaming our lack of discipline on others, giving them the open door to steal our joy in this way!

But there is another extreme to this.

I have been in some Christian circles where emotions were almost viewed as evil. But God created our emotions. Even Jesus expressed emotion: sorrow, joy and even anger.

And we experience Him and life of the Holy Spirit in our lives through our emotions.

It is very dangerous for a believer to shut down all emotion, because among a host of other dangers, it shuts down the ability for the Holy Spirit to work and move in our lives. We cease to experience Him in the way we were meant to.

Directing our emotions is taking this gift God has given us and channeling it in a healthy direction so that the Holy Spirit can function in us and through us to influence those around us for His glory!

If we want to keep our joy, and if we want it to grow in our hearts and spread to all those around us, we need to begin doing these four things today.

Lock the entryways that the enemy uses to steal our joy, and then begin creating an environment in which joy will grow and thrive in our lives! {eo}

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