

Joy Really Is a Choice

I just wrote a check for my son to take voice lessons. He plays electric, acoustic and bass guitar, and he is working toward being a music leader at church in the future. He's well on his way, and I can hardly wait to see the progress he makes with his voice coach this year.

Paul lets the Corinthian believers know he is their coach: "We work with you for your joy" (2 Cor. 1:24, NIV). Paul's the one who sang worship songs from prison, so he's an expert in the field of practicing joy in the most painful, dark, hopeless places.

Paul coached me.

Four years ago this month, my husband, Matt, came home from Uganda and had a severe reaction to his malaria medication. I cried myself to sleep for the first eight months of his horrible illness. Now Matt is much better, although symptoms still come in and out like the tide.

Paul instructed me to rejoice in the Lord: "I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).

I was a good student, and I did rejoice. It was hard.

Joy is something we choose to sign up for and practice. Rejoicing in the Lord is something we can be coached in and get better at.

My son, who has been singing baritone in choir for two years, came home and told us his voice coach thinks he is really a tenor. "My song goes all the way up to an E," he said. Matt said, "You can do it, son. She'll work with you until you can sing that high."

"Work," Paul says to the Corinthians. "I will work with you for your joy." Work it is. Complaining and depression and hopelessness are much, much easier to reach. They're the low, comfortable notes of the song.

Rejoicing will stretch you higher than you think you can reach.

Consider what an incredible relationship we have entered into with the Lord that one of his greatest concerns is teaching us to enjoy Him. What kindness. We are made for a magnificent joy, and to hope for this is the first lesson.

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