

Put on Joy

☒ Several years ago I was in attendance at a church when a lady began dancing and spinning around wildly during the praise and worship time. I'm not opposed to this kind of expression, but people don't usually start waking up until the second or third song, and this worship service was just getting started!

This lady also was in the choir, and I had always been taught that the choir has to keep it together and not become a distraction. This lady's behavior was definitely distracting! I thought, If I were the music director of this church, I would not let her do that. She should go find a private place to worship because this is neither the time nor the place to act like that!

I kept recalling the Scripture that says, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40, NKJV). She certainly was not in order.

But as I stood there judging her, the pastor's wife leaned over to me and said: "Do you see that lady up there dancing? Two days ago she lost her baby during childbirth, and here she is giving God praise. She is such an inspiration to our church."

The conviction I felt was enough to shake me back to reality. Suddenly I realized that I had been so focused on this woman's responses that I didn't see what was happening in the atmosphere.

This woman was overcoming the deepest possible grief. She had lost her baby, and as she danced, she kept the enemy away from her mind. Her praise brought relief from her pain.

That was significant enough. But something more was happening that day. When I looked around the room, I saw others were

weeping and finding freedom from their burdens too.

Emotions are a natural part of life, but negative emotions, if left unchecked, can establish a stronghold and leave the door open to the enemy. The Bible says that the enemy has come to steal, kill and destroy. And he wants to steal your joy.

There have been moments in my life when I have had to fight sadness or depression. But Jesus said, "I have come to give you life and life more abundantly" (see John 10:10).

Abundant life is full of joy, but this joy must be activated in us. What are the secrets for activating joy? How do you get it and keep it?

GIVE GOD PRAISE

Psalms 149:6 says, "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand."

Joy is a force activated by faith—faith that is expressed, first of all, through praise. Most of the time we wait until we become glad before we give God the praise He deserves. But the psalmist wrote, "This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:24). He made his decision to give God praise because he understood that in order to be glad he had to rejoice.

Likewise, you are not going to have joy until you begin to praise God. Joy and gladness are activated through praise!

Although both joy and happiness are vital to a fulfilling life, they are not the same. Happiness is based on circumstances; but joy is activated by faith.

So often the little issues in life can add up and rob you of joy. It may not happen over night, but it will happen gradually if you meditate on negative thoughts. Feeling unsatisfied with where you are in life or comparing yourself to others will cause you to lose joy.

The enemy is subtle, patient and willing to wait for us to fall into the trap he has set for us. He knows that if he paints the picture bleak enough and gets you to start talking about how bad it is, you'll soon be convinced that your situation is impossible.

Psalm 8:2 declares, "Out of the mouths of babes and unweaned infants You have established strength because of Your foes, that You might silence the enemy and the avenger" (The Amplified Bible).

Another translation says, "Nursing infants gurgle choruses about you; toddlers shout the songs that drown out enemy talk, and silence atheist babble" (The Message). When the enemy tries to depress you with negative thoughts, instead of agreeing with him, drown him out with praise.

FIND SOMEONE TO BLESS

The enemy will try to convince you that nobody understands what you are going through and that nobody cares about you. Remember, the devil is a liar! You may be the answer to someone's prayer. Sow seeds of compassion and love in the lives of others and watch them come back to you. When you begin thinking about someone else instead of focusing on your own problems, you will feel strength flooding your spirit because joy is being activated in you.

Galatians 6:9 says, "Let us not lose heart and grow weary and faint in acting nobly and doing right, for in due time and at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen and relax our courage and faint" (The Amplified Bible). Verse 10 says, "So then, as occasion and opportunity open up to us, let us do good [morally] to all people [not only being useful or profitable to them, but also doing what is for their spiritual good and advantage]. Be mindful to be a blessing, especially to those of the household of faith."

There was a time when I was feeling discontented and had

fallen into the trap of comparing myself with other people. I began to feel pitiful about the things I couldn't change, and I didn't realize the enemy was trying to steal my joy.

Around this time I was asked to contact a young girl and encourage her. She had been raped by her father repeatedly, and was hated by her mother for having him arrested and put in prison. The abuse this young girl had suffered led her to become promiscuous, and she had formed a habit of cutting herself.

None of the little frustrations in my life could ever compare to the tragedy this girl faced, and when I heard her story, immediately I felt convicted. I called her and left a message on her answering machine.

I told her that God loved her and had a plan for her life. I shared with her that she was special to Him, and that He had sent people to take care of her and get her the help she needed. When she called me back, she was so amazed that I had taken the time to help her. What she didn't know was how much helping her was really helping me at the same time.

As I began to exhort her, the Holy Spirit took over and ministered things to her that were beyond my own wisdom. God used me to speak things into her life that I didn't know in the natural.

By the time I hung up the phone, my joy was back! All my issues seemed insignificant, and I felt empowered.

I realized that if my circumstances had changed I would have been happy, but reaching out to someone else activated a deeper joy that blessed her and strengthened me. Happiness will benefit you, but the force of joy will transform not only you, but also everyone with whom it comes into contact.

Your joy will quickly return when you start speaking words of

blessing and encouragement to others. There is something powerful in what you say.

SPEAK FAITH

Start confessing what God says about you and speak those things that are not as though they were (see Rom. 4:17). Don't allow sickness and disease or anything else to touch your body and rob you of joy.

Second Corinthians 5:7 says, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (NKJV). Faith activates joy. Faith stirs up joy. When you are down and you make a decision to speak faith over your situation, joy shows up.

My husband, who has always been in good health, starting having trouble with pain in his abdomen. When his doctors couldn't find anything wrong, he started to worry. The pain, although slight, lasted for weeks and began to alter his moods.

I can be a very stubborn person sometimes, and although that's not always good for a happy marriage, it serves me well when it comes to believing God. When my son suffered a seizure on the first day of our recent promotional tour, I beat the devil back with everything in me. I beat him down so bad he's still limping! >{? My son has not had any more seizures to this day and will not have another one. I can be very determined in my faith, so when I saw my husband succumbing to sickness, I got very mad. Very mad!

One day, when Danny wasn't feeling well, I said to him, "You know, Babe, maybe what you have is the beginning stages of an ulcer. That's not so bad. Maybe you should ask the doctor about that possibility?"

I realized his faith was lacking when he responded, "I hope not because ulcers can be terminal!" With this remark my "kill all things fear" button was pushed and my "where is your faith?" tirade began.

“Terminal, how can you say that? How could you even let that word come out of your mouth? We are people of faith and power, and we have authority over sickness and disease,” I preached. “You’ve got to start operating in faith that God is able to heal you.

“Don’t allow fear of what it might be to...create a stronghold in your mind. You have the authority to resist this attack on your body.”

Standing on my “my faith is better than your faith” pedestal, I told him: “You better get some faith, Mister, or the devil won’t be the only thing you should be afraid of!”

I felt so full of power and authority, as I shouted to my husband. I walked into another room and began to think, I can’t believe his lack of revelation. I don’t think he’ll ever change. When is he ever going to have the faith that I have? “Never,” I said to myself.

Suddenly, Danny, standing in the doorway, interrupted my thoughts. “Uh, honey,” he said. “You are right; you are completely right. Thank you for reminding me that God is in control. I will put my faith into action and I will be careful what I let come out of my mouth.”

The next day my mouth was still agape when my husband told me that he’d gone out and bought a book titled 30 Days to Taming Your Tongue (Deborah Smith Pegues, Harvest House). Here I was, proudly displaying my faith for healing, when all the while, I was seriously lacking faith in God’s ability to change my husband. Sometimes we can have strong faith in one area and weak faith in others, especially when it comes to our relationships. Some days we may wake up feeling great, and joy is automatic. Other days we may struggle and wonder where our joy has gone.

It hasn’t gone anywhere. Joy is always available. It’s in you, just waiting to be stirred up.

What are you waiting for? Don't waste any more time being gloomy. Activate the force that is waiting on you to set you free from depression, heaviness and worry. Activate the force of joy!

Read a companion devotional.

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