

## ***Session 11 The Promise of Joy and the Illusion of Happiness (Jn. 15:11)***

*“Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures as I delight in Your beauty.” (Ps. 36:8; 37:4)*

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

- A. John 15:9-11 is one of the most important passages for the Body of Christ at a time when so many believers are being weighed down with fear, shame, depression, and other dark emotions that dominate their life. Jesus promised to give joy to His people as they engage with Him consistently.
- “As the Father loved Me, I have loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love...<sup>11</sup>My joy may remain in you, and your joy may be full.” (Jn. 15:9-11)***
- B. Jesus promised His people divine joy which includes a deep sense of well-being, security, and confidence in His good leadership over our lives. In this message, I used the terms “*divine joy*” that comes by relating to Jesus and “*natural happiness*” that is sought in blessed circumstances. By natural happiness I refer to gaining deep satisfaction through favorable circumstances, relationships, possessions, achievements, positions, etc. I appreciate “natural happiness,” but the intense pursuit of it is so often an illusion that is rooted in idealism, leading to disappointment.
- C. Illusion is defined as “***a thing that is wrongly perceived or interpreted by the senses.***” (New Oxford American Dictionary)
- D. Nothing can fill the “God-shaped vacuum” in our heart that was designed by God to be fulfilled only in context to a deep relationship with Him. A person can have a great family, amazing friends, abundant finances, good health, and a growing ministry but still lack a deep sense of joy.
- “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person, and it can never be filled by any created thing. It can only be filled by God, made known through Jesus Christ.” (Blaise Pascal)***

### **II. REVIEW: TWO GLORIOUS TRUTHS, A COMMAND, AND A PROMISE (JN. 15:9-10)**

- A. In John 15:9, we see the *two most important truths and the most important command in the Bible*. Jesus declared that His love for His disciples is as intense as the Father’s love for Him (Jn. 15:9).
- “As the Father loved Me, I have loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love...<sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken...that My joy may remain in you...” (Jn. 15:9-11)***
- B. ***Truth #1:*** The Father’s love for Jesus (15:9a) points us to the reality of how God loves God.
- C. ***Truth #2:*** Jesus loves His people (15:9b) in the same intensity that the Father loves Him.
- D. ***A command:*** To abide or live focused on (15:9c) understanding, experiencing, and expressing God’s love. This includes engaging in conversation with Jesus around the two truths in 15:9a, b.
- E. ***A promise that we “will” abide in His love:*** Jesus promised a breakthrough of love in the heart of those who obey. They will live in the tenderizing influences of His love via an increased insight into His love for them and an increased impartation of God’s love in their heart for Jesus and others.

### III. THE KINGDOM VIEW OF OBEDIENCE: SUPERIOR PLEASURES OF THE GOSPEL

- A. It is essential to cultivate a kingdom view of obedience. The enemy works to obscure this reality. The greatest pleasures available to the human spirit are the spiritual pleasures that come to us as **God reveals God** to us. We are freed from the **inferior pleasures** of sin by experiencing the **superior pleasures** of the gospel. When we feel the superior pleasures of the gospel (even a little), we are liberated from the dominion of dark emotions related to the inferior pleasures of sin.
- <sup>14</sup>He [the Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. (Jn. 16:14)*
- B. We can live fascinated in the pleasure of loving God that overflows to loving people. Holiness or obedience equips us to enjoy life with God—it does not keep us from spiritual pleasure. The power of holiness sets us free from vain imaginations and the dullness of lust and bitterness.
- C. It takes spiritual understanding to see obedience as the way to liberty, greatness, and joy. Many see holiness as drudgery. His holiness is the most pleasurable quality of life in existence. It is how God lives. Jesus never apologized for calling His people to obedience as if it was “a negative burden.” God’s truths and commandments are the “user manual” for the human heart.
- <sup>3</sup>...His commandments are not burdensome. (1 Jn. 5:3)*
- D. Obedience to Jesus is the only reliable pathway to true spirituality, emotional rest, and lasting joy. Being yoked to obey Jesus’ leadership is the place we find emotional rest from the weariness of “option fatigue” and the fear of missing out, perpetually guessing what will make us happiest and how to be successful in men’s eyes. The yoke of self or sin is hard to bear; its penalties are severe.
- <sup>29</sup>“Take My yoke upon you...find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>My yoke is easy...” (Mt. 11:29-30)*

### IV. EMPOWERED BY TRANSFORMING JOY (JN. 15:11)

- A. Jesus was informing—even alerting them—that “these” truths in 15:1-10 were essential to empower them to receive joy. One distinguishing aspect of Christianity is that God’s people can have joy.
- <sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken...that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (Jn. 15:11)*
- B. **These things I have spoken:** Jesus is referring to what He said in 15:1-10 with a special emphasis on what He just said in 15:9-10. Our experience of God’s joy is anchored in our growing in our understanding and conversation about how the Father loves the Son and how the Son loves us (15:9-10). The knowledge of these truths and promises empowers us to overcome a troubled heart (14:1, 27). Many are confused why they do not have joy. There is gold in each phrase in 15:1-10.
- C. Jesus wants us to know that His joy is available to us but only on His terms. We can experience His joy as we abide or engage with His love (15:9c) and walk in obedience (15:10). The combination of confidence in His love and walking in obedience results in an exhilarating quality of life called joy.
- D. **My joy:** Joy is a deep sense of security and confidence in His good leadership over our lives, etc. This joy is not the “natural happiness” that is sought in favorable circumstances and relationships.

## V. NATURAL HAPPINESS AND DIVINE JOY

- A. Many use and define the words *happiness* and *joy* in different ways. I use the term, *happiness*, to describe the good feelings we gain from favorable circumstances and relationships and *joy* for that which is supernaturally imparted to us by God.
- B. Again, I appreciate “natural happiness” but the intense pursuit of it is so often an illusion that is rooted in idealism that leads to pain. I urge people to let go of the “illusion of natural happiness.” I slowly released my earnest pursuit of “natural happiness” by experiencing pain.
- C. I determined to make my main life pursuit to grow in the grace that would empower me to love God and to be faithful to Him. As I began to grasp that He sees, remembers, and rewards my love and obedience and as I understood and experienced more of His love (abiding in love; 15:10) in context to growing in a closer relationship with Him and in understanding my life with Him in the age to come, then God’s joy began to increase in my life in a more consistent way.
- D. ***That My joy may remain in you:*** Jesus had joy from eternity past. David wrote of the fullness of joy and pleasures in context to God's throne (Ps. 16:11). In other words, the nearer somebody gets to God, the more joy that they encounter. God’s throne is the epicenter of joy in the universe, and those nearest His throne enjoy the greatest measure of joy available. He is the very fountain of joy.  
***<sup>11</sup>...In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Ps. 16:11)***
- E. God is the author of pleasure. He created us to enjoy physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual pleasures. For all eternity, we will experience all of these pleasures in the age to come. Many only think of pleasure in context to fleshly pleasures that are associated with sinful desires.
- F. David prayed to drink from the river of His pleasures (Ps. 36:8). We do this as the Holy Spirit reveals the beauty of God to our spirit. In the generation of the Lord’s return, the Spirit will emphasize experiencing the superior pleasures of Jesus’ beauty.
- G. The greatest of all the pleasures that are available to the human spirit are spiritual pleasures that come when God reveals God to the human spirit—that is, when God, the Spirit, reveals God, the Father and the Son, to our heart.
- H. God created in us a deep desire to be fascinated—to be awestruck, filled with marvel and wonder. This capacity to be fascinated was intentionally designed in us by God when He created us.
- I. The secular entertainment industry has identified and targeted this God-ordained longing in the human spirit. They have exploited it to their profit and to the ruin of many.
- J. Without a sense of marvel with God, we will live spiritually bored. A spiritually bored believer is far more vulnerable to the enemy’s temptations. If we do not answer the longing for fascination in the right way by encountering Jesus more and more, then we will seek to answer it in a wrong way. Living with a sense of awe in our relationship with God equips us to resist temptation.

- K. Our greatest spiritual pleasure in this age is only available when Jesus is our greatest treasure. We gain the greatest treasures now and in the age to come by living for Jesus' pleasure.
- L. Jesus promised us that the Spirit would glorify Jesus in us by taking the things that belong to Jesus and making them known to us (Jn. 16:14-15). The Spirit takes the things that Jesus is thinking and feeling, and He reveals them to us. This is divine "entertainment" at its highest.
- M. The Holy Spirit *searches* all things, even *the deep things* of God's heart—the way God loves God. We received the Spirit that we might *know the things* that are given to us by God (1 Cor. 2:10-12).  
*<sup>9</sup>...eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."* *<sup>10</sup>But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. (1 Cor. 2:9-10)*
- N. Paul was preoccupied with being fascinated by the knowledge of Jesus. It was the key to his life vision. He said, "I count all things loss for *the excellence of the knowledge of Christ*" (Phil. 3:8).
- O. In comparing sin with experiencing God, C. S. Lewis wrote this staggering statement:  
*If we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that **Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak.** We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a shum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.*  
—C. S. Lewis
- P. **Your joy may be full:** Our experience of God's joy comes as momentary impartations of the Spirit. In time, His joy becomes the lens by which we view our life. His joy marks us progressively so that it becomes our joy or part of our mindset and emotional make up. His joy sparks our heart until joy becomes more dominant in our heart than dark emotions (despair, fear, rejection, lust, anger, etc.).
- Q. The Lord releases small measures of insight and inspiration from the Word to us. They tenderize our heart for a few moments. These subtle flashes of glory upon our hearts are to be a regular part of our relationship with God. Over time, this holy influence changes us, empowering us to live holy.
- R. **Rejoice unto joy:** We are commanded to rejoice in Him or thank Him for His good leadership over our lives in what He has given us and promises to give us (Phil. 4:4; 1 Thes. 5:16-18). Rejoicing in the Lord is an activity of faith that eventually causes joy to increase in us over time.  
*<sup>16</sup>Rejoice always...<sup>18</sup>in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God... (1 Thes. 5:16-18)*  
*<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! (Phil. 4:4)*
- S. **Repent unto joy:** Sin hinders our walk with God, and this leads to our joy being lost or diminished. This joy can be restored by repentance. David lost the sense of joy after he sinned in context to Bathsheba, then he repented and prayed, "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation" (Ps. 51:12).  
*<sup>12</sup>Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit. (Ps. 51:12)*