

FRESH JOY: Finding Joy in the Midst of Loss, Hardship and Suffering



SESSION 1-CHAPTERS 1 AND 2

CHAPTER 1 – The Superpower of Thankfulness

James 1:2 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds.”

Why are we to consider trials “pure joy?”

Praise and thanksgiving doesn’t change our circumstances, it changes our _____ (list several things).

Here is the flow of Greek words of “thankful.”

Eucharistia: thankful

Charis: grace

Chara: joy

Looking at the movement of these Greek words, ask: “When we’re thankful and turn our eyes toward Christ, what revelations does it give us?”

Page 22 – It says: “Thankfulness is a cultivated discipline.” How do we cultivate a heart of thankfulness?

Page 23 “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Prov. 4:23). To prepare for storms, and they will come, how do we prepare our hearts?

GROW YOUR JOY

Out of the 4 things Heidi lists, which one will you cultivate?

Happiness demands a certain outcome but joy embraces and accepts the everyday rhythms of life. What things, expectations or results do you need to let go of so that you appreciate and enjoy what you have?

S.T.O.P

“The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy” (Psalm 126:3). Ask yourself: “What great things has the Lord done for me?”

CHAPTER 2 – God’s Upper Story

It’s heartbreaking when God doesn’t answer our honest and desperate prayers. We would love our prayers to always be answered with “yes.” What would it look like if God gave us automatic supernatural power to have all our prayers answered the way we want? What havoc might we wreck?

There are many places in the Bible where God’s answer was “no.” Can you recall a time when your plea for something came with a resounding “no?” How did you respond?

Page 34 – “Every intersection of crisis demands a choice.” How do you work through your hardships without becoming bitter?

Our God of the “upper story” works everything out for us to fulfill our very best life, and he longs for us to trust him in the good and bad things that come our way. If you believe this, what Bible verse, truth or experience has helped you to trust God?

GROW YOUR JOY

As difficult as it is, to move toward joy we have to accept our “lower story.” Through the example of David in the Psalms and Jesus before he went to the cross, what will help you to accept your present difficulties and move on to receive joy?

Page 36 – “Our words have the power to unfold a future filled with blessings. We always have the choice of defeat or victory.” What do you want your future to look like? Joy emerges and grows when we choose to move forward and declare victory. What words of victory do you declare today? Speak them out loud.

Page 36 - Because God’s answer to Jesus at the cross was “no”, history’s biggest unanswered prayer unleashed the greatest miracles and victory. Looking back at your unanswered prayer, what unexpected miracle or surprising joy was revealed through your pain?

S.T.O.P.

“Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!” (John 14:14)

How will you come to terms with this when God does not answer your prayer?