

Finding joy in times of trial.

- Let's start by taking a few steps back and see the bigger picture... when we read Scripture, what is God constantly busy doing with His children?

Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Filippense 1:6 (1983)

Ek is veral ook daarvan oortuig dat God, wat die goeie werk in julle begin het, dit end-uit sal voer en dit sal voleindig op die dag wanneer Christus Jesus kom.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Korinthiërs 3:18 (1983)

Ons almal weerspieël die heerlijkheid van die Here, want die sluier is van ons gesig af weggeneem. Ons word al meer verander om aan die beeld van Christus gelyk te word. Die heerlijkheid wat van ons uitstraal, neem steeds toe. Dit doen die Here wat die Gees is.

- God is busy doing a good work **IN** us. We are not in heaven yet, that's still coming! For now, God is working **IN** us, building character and not necessarily comfort. Many of us would love God to do things **AROUND** us – when we must choose between two difficult processes, the one that

requires change and growth IN us will always be the more difficult one. But that's exactly what God is doing – He is forming the image of His Son in us, His church, so that, as more trial and tribulation hits the planet, what people will see coming out of us in our comments, our responses, our posts, our tweets our WhatsApp's, will be the character of Jesus!

James 1:2-4 (NIV)

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Jakobus 1:2-4 (1983)

My broers, julle moet baie bly wees wanneer allerlei beproewings oor julle kom, ³ want, soos julle weet, as julle geloof die toets deurstaan het, stel dit julle in staat om te volhard. ⁴ En die volharding moet end-uit volgehou word sodat julle tot volle geestelike rypheid kan kom, sonder enige tekortkoming.

- The Bible is clear that we must consider and count it all joy when we face these times of trial. So, we are instructed to say, "Thank you Lord!" when trials of many kinds come our way. Why? Well, once again, because God is busy working IN us. He wants you to grow to a point of maturity, being complete in the image of Christ, and lacking nothing! Doesn't that sound great! That sounds like a place of blessing and victory and security in Christ! But the road there is THROUGH trial and not AROUND trial.

- Now we get to the big question of the morning: Is it possible to experience joy in times like this? And the answer is yes! Yes, yes yes! How? Well, it starts off by having the right perspective on the situation, then thank the Lord for what's happening and then handing over fear, anxiety and worry to God...

Philippians 4:4-6

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Filippense 4:4-6

Wees altyd bly in die Here! Ek herhaal: Wees bly! ⁵ Wees inskiklik teenoor alle mense. Die Here is naby. ⁶ Moet oor niks besorg wees nie, maar maak in alles julle begeertes deur gebed en smeking en met danksegging aan God bekend.

⁷En die vrede van God wat alle verstand te bowe gaan, sal oor julle harte en gedagtes die wag hou in Christus Jesus.

- We can state with confidence that it is NOT God's will that His children live in fear. We've got to use the strategy God gives us to get rid of it and replace it with His joy & peace.
- In John 15 Jesus speaks about us being connected to Him. He is the Vine, we are the branches. He closes off by saying this...

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” – Joh 15:11

- The joy which Jesus gives us is not the same as the world gives. The world will provide temporary joy through material possessions, financial security, exciting / adventurous activities etc. But these things may disappear in an instant – then what are you left with? Nothing. And your life starts falling apart.
- We need the joy of Jesus. We need the joy only God can give us – and it’s based on who He is, His supernatural presence in our lives, trusting in Him and standing on His Word.

**“And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”
– Nehemiah 8:10**

- Let’s wash our thinking with this Scripture.
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Warm-up: What would your favourite family holiday look like?
- During this time of “lockdown”, what has been positive for you about not having life as “normal”?
- What gives you great joy, or really makes you happy?

- Do you feel joyful all the time?
- Describe in your own words what you think the difference is between the joy the world gives and the joy Jesus gives.
- Do you sometimes feel worried? About what?
- Let's thank Jesus for our challenges! Each one prays a short prayer saying: "Lord Jesus, I want to thank You for (name the challenge). Help me to persevere through it!"
- Now let's give our worries to Jesus. Let's pray this prayer: "Lord Jesus, we now give you all our anxieties and worries. We trust You for Your peace in our hearts and minds. Amen."
- Pray for each other.
- Pray for our church.
- Pray for South Africa and our leaders.
- Pray for the world.
- Pray for a friend who does not know Jesus.
- Send an encouraging message to someone!