

TRANSFORMED

BEING EVERYTHING GOD WANTS ME TO BE

"Naturally Joyful"

January 29-February 4, 2012

PRAYER:

Begin with a few moments of sharing thanks and praises in prayer.

Enjoy this Opener: *You know it's going to be a bad day when...*

1. *You wake up face down on the pavement.*
2. *You put your bra on backwards and it fits better.*
3. *You see a "60 Minutes News Team" waiting in your office.*
4. *Your birthday cake collapses from the weight of the candles.*
5. *Your twin sister forgets your birthday.*
6. *Your horn goes off accidentally and remains stuck as you follow a group of Hell's Angels on the freeway.*

Is it possible to stay positive in a negative world? What can we do to remain optimistic when everything is falling apart?

This is where joy comes in. **Read:** Galatians 5:22; Philippians 4:4

What is the difference between joy and happiness, and why is the former preferable to the latter?

As Christians we can be the most joyful people in the world. Why? Romans 5 gives us three reasons.

Read: Romans 5:1-2

Paul explains that the result of experiencing the grace of God is that "we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." So for a Christian, no situation is completely hopeless. The first reason we have for being positive is Christians have hope!

Read: Romans 5:5a It has been said that a person can live forty days without food three days without water, eight minutes without air, but not one minute without hope. We have to have hope. Researches at Cornell University studied 25,000 prisoners of war from World War II. They concluded that a person can handle almost anything if he or she has hope.

Many people think they have hope but it's not based on anything solid. It is an artificial, pump-yourself-up hope.

What are some wrong things people might put their hope in? Why would these things be wrong?

Christians have a reason to be joyful. We can rejoice because we rejoice in hope.

Read: Roman 12:12 Paul is talking about our hope in Christ. The hope we have in Christ is the first reason we can rejoice, even in difficult situations.

Secondly, we can have joy because God has a purpose in every situation.

Read: Romans 5:3 Why does Paul say we rejoice "in" our suffering and not "because" of our suffering?

Do you recall a time when you went through suffering, yet God made a way or you recognized that He was leading you through the suffering for a purpose? Christians can be joyful in tough times because they always have hope and because God's purpose is always greater than any problem.

Read: Romans 5:11 Thirdly we can be joyful in any circumstances because God is always with those who believe in Him, no matter where we are or what we are facing.

Read: Isaiah 43:2 This scripture is saying that if you are a Believer, God is with you and nothing can overwhelm you. Nothing can destroy you. The devil can't, other people can't, and God won't. No matter what you go through in life, you will never go through it alone. That is a reason to be joyful!

Plan for Action:

Joy is like a muscle. The more you exercise it, the stronger it becomes.

Here are four exercises that will help us develop inner joy.

1. Develop that attitude of gratitude. **Read:** Thessalonians 5:18; Psalm 28:7
2. Cultivate inner joy by giving. **Read:** Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:7
3. Develop inner joy through service. **Read:** Mark 8:35; Ephesians 6:7-8
4. Share Christ with others. Luke 15:10; Romans 10:1

How can this group pray for you this week?

To view the complete teaching from the Sunday services go to CentralCommunity.org/media

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