

The Joy in the Journey: Four Choices That Guide Us

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Happy, but Hollow
Week 4

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Philippians 4:1

Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

Stekete en Kyrio agapetoi

Kyrio agapetoi: 'in the Lord, beloved' or 'in being the beloved of the Lord'

1. Choose the right identity.

No identity should be more fundamental in your life than 'agapé-toi' - 'loved by God'!

Not just the catch phrase 'Jesus loves me', but *actively choosing to live in the reality of that statement every single day.*

- John the disciple calling himself 'The disciple that Jesus loved'.

A person not living in the identity of 'beloved of the Lord' is more likely to:

- Constantly seek the approval of men, even be ready to do immoral things to gain it
- Lose sleep over a negative comment on social media
- Never encourage or lift up others. With light shining on them, there's less shining on you
- Stay in abusive relationship because you believed the lie that you don't deserve better

A person who chooses the identity of 'beloved of the Lord' is more likely to:

- Forgive and not hold grudges, since they live in the awareness of having been forgiven
- Not sin, because you don't want to hurt the one who loves you beyond anything else
- Be generous with praise of others, since you know you're already affirmed yourself
- Not care what people say about you, or who cancelled you.

'Beloved', same word (but in the plural form) used when the Father said of Jesus:

Matthew 3:17

"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Note not just what the Father says about Jesus, but when he says it. This is before Jesus has performed a single miracle, preached a single sermon, raised anyone from the dead.

Sons who did not get affirmed by fathers.

You are not loved because of what you have produced. Not affirmed because you have earned that affirmation, but because you are a son or daughter of the most high.

Every other religion strives for affirmation by it's deity, and their final goal is to achieve it through sacrifice, fasting, asceticism etc. But this vague, distant goal of other religions, is the starting point of Christianity. You don't have to strive to achieve affirmation - you are already affirmed by God!

Philippians 4:4 (NIV)

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

2. Choose joy.

"*Always*" - means a matter of choice, not circumstance.

Charlie Kirk reference. Even in hard times, joy is a choice.

- 'Dance!' story

Philippians 4:8 (NIV)

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

3. Choose the right thoughts.

We have already stated that neither joy and nor worry are random emotions, but actually choices that we make. Now Paul is taking it all to a new level: my thoughts are a choice!

Many times we think we are slaves to our own thoughts, that we cannot control them. But the Bible says otherwise:

2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV)

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Martin Luther: "*You can't stop a bird from flying over your head, but you can keep it from building a nest in your hair*"

The process is about allowing our thoughts to come in line with what is already a reality in our heart: that Jesus is with us, that nothing is impossible, that God is full control.

Philippians 4:17 (NIV)

Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account.

Philippians 4:18 (NIV)

I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

Philippians 4:19 (NIV)

And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

4. Choose generosity.

The whole Epistle to the Philippians is a thank you note to a church that had shown generosity to the kingdom of God and the spreading of the gospel. At the same time it's the letter that focuses on joy more than anything.

Generosity and joy go hand in hand!

Scientific research examples

"And my God will meet all your needs" — when we give generously to all of God's work — we also qualify for the promise that God will 'meet all your needs' — spiritually, physically, socially, financially, professionally.

5. 4. Choose not to worry.

Philippians 4:6 (NIV)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Philippians 4:7 (NIV)

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Worry is not an attack we cannot escape, it's a chosen response to a problem. Worry isn't inevitable. If it was, the Word of God would not ask us to not be anxious about anything.

We all have challenges, problems and difficulties, they can't be avoided in this fallen world. But it is possible to live in all this without worrying.

When you choose gratitude before frustration every day, you open yourself for the peace of God to guard your heart and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

- Surrender past, present, future.

Even in the worst of circumstances, you still have a choice.

Cesspool story, ps Chen, cue keys:

- A man called pastor Chen
- In 1968, he was arrested
- Placed in a small cell
- Prison sewers
- Raised his hands and started singing
- Stench of sewers was turned into the scent of roses
- Welcomed by 5000

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