

In Step

The Pursuit of Joy

MAY 7, 2023

The pursuit of happiness should make us happy, right? It turns out that in the long run, it doesn't. The pursuit of joy, though, is a different story.

MESSAGE NOTES AND HIGHLIGHTS

- The pursuit of happiness often doesn't make us happy in the long run.
 - If Pursuit = prioritizing our time, energy, and/or resources and if Happiness = feeling good and positive in the moment, it leads to people who are dissatisfied, discontent, and unhappy.
 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. | Galatians 5, vv.22-23
 - "Joy is the experience of knowing that you are unconditionally loved and that nothing—sickness, failure, emotional distress, oppression, war, or even death—can take that love away." | Henri Nouwen, *Here and Now: Living in the Spirit*
 - Joy comes from the experience of unconditional love and is cultivated in deep, meaningful connection.
 - The opposite of joy is fear.
 - Pursuing joy looks like slowing down, and resisting avoidance.
 - Pursuing joy looks like appreciating God's gifts, and resisting discontentment.
 - Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. | 1 Thessalonians 5, vv.16-18
 - Pursuing joy looks like sticking with it and persevering, and resisting shortcuts.
 - We develop a willingness to stick with things...We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments... | Galatians 5, v.22 (MSG)
 - Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. | James 1, vv.2-4
 - Pursuing joy looks like seeing and honoring the image of God in everyone, and resisting objectification and dehumanization.
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What's something you've pursued that you *thought* would make you happy, but either didn't make you happy or didn't last very long?
2. When you're feeling discontent or dissatisfied, what factors do you think contribute the most to feeling that way?
3. Which of the following descriptions of joy do you feel are present in your life, and which need the most growth?
 - Pursuing joy looks like slowing down, and resisting avoidance.
 - Pursuing joy looks like appreciating God's gifts, and resisting discontentment.
 - Pursuing joy looks like sticking with it and persevering, and resisting shortcuts.
 - Pursuing joy looks like seeing and honoring the image of God in everyone, and resisting objectification and dehumanization.