



Intro – video of “Joy”

What IS Joy? What is that feeling that expresses itself with a smile, or a laugh, or even tears?

Here’s a thought for us today: Joy comes from **fulfillment**.

When we finish exams. When we finish weeding a garden. When we finish our work for the week. When we see a good friend after many years. When we get married. These are all things we wait for. Things that take time. And at the end there is a sense of fulfillment, or completion.

But here’s something else to consider – Joy is not always about feeling **good**. Joy often comes with pain. The birth of a child. Running a marathon. Surviving a terrible tragedy. Studying for exams... Often, joy comes **through** pain and **with** pain, and even **because** of pain. **Joy** can sometimes even be the result of **suffering** for what is **right or good**. This is what James calls “**pure joy**”... Look at verses 2-3:

- **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.

Where does this joy possibly come from in times of trial? How can we feel **pure joy** in those times? Well, it depends on your definition of joy.

We have this **human worldly joy** when **WE** complete something. But what James is talking about is the sense of joy we have when **GOD** completes something. In these trials, when our faith is tested, it produces perseverance. And then...

- **4** Let perseverance **finish its work** so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

When we face trials, and we persevere, God is completing a work in us. God is completing us and maturing us.

**III** – I like to finish things.  
I like finishing my dinner.  
I like finishing building things.  
I like finishing a good distance run.  
I like finishing the gardening. The ironing. The dishes.

I don’t particularly like **doing** those things, but I always like **finishing** them. When I’m in the middle of those difficult things, it’s not always fun. The joy comes with completion. But it’s a worldly joy. A joy that passes. An up and down joy. The joy that comes from ME completing something is **temporary**.

But when **God** produces perseverance in us through times of trial, and when **God** matures us in our faith, then we experience **pure joy**. Not a worldly joy. Not a joy that puts a smile on our face or a tear in our eye. Not that sort of temporary, up and down joy. But a **deep** sense of joy that comes

only from a relationship with God. What does this relationship look like? Well, in your trials, if you find yourself lacking wisdom, verse 5:

- “You should ask God, who gives generously”

This is the sort of relationship we have with God. This is where pure joy comes from. Security in a relationship with God who **gives generously when we ask**.

- I really like buffets.

I love walking up to the buffet tables with all the food to choose from. I approach with great anticipation. But I cannot express my disappointment when I get there and certain things have run out. My joy vanishes! Where are the prawns? Where is the chocolate mousse?

We don't get that disappointment with God. Because in all our trials, he is generous. Have you run out of wisdom? Ask him. You will be surprised that it's there when you need it!

But we must believe and not doubt. Verse 6. We are in a relationship with a God who has never ever broken a promise. Even though we often let him down, he never breaks his promises to us. And he doesn't find fault with us, verse 5, even though we've disappointed him.

There's the pure joy. Security. Confidence. Provision. Not an “up and down” worldly joy that plays with our feelings. But a deep pure joy that has the security of a solid, unwavering relationship.

- I really love sailing as well.

Not that I do it very often these days. But when I'm sailing along and smoothly moving through the water, I know that there is this big keel in the water that is holding me upright. The keel sticks down deep into the water and keeps me upright – that's where my security comes from. Without it, a boat would just roll over. Back and forth. It could NOT stay upright. It needs the keel.

That is joy. It's got nothing to do with a smile on your face or a tear in your eye. It's about security. Confidence. Not from yourself – from God. GOD is doing the work. GOD is completing a work in me. God is the one holding me upright. NOTHING can capsize me. That's my joy is. My joy is in my secure relationship with Him.

**Joy** comes when we complete our work.

**Pure joy** comes when God completes his work. Maturing us. Completing us.

The people James was writing to were probably facing quite severe times of trial. Poverty most likely. And persecution. So these words would have been a great encouragement. God is their strength. Their security.

But can this **pure joy** be experienced by someone who isn't being persecuted, or isn't facing suffering and trials? Can I have this pure joy?

The truth is that every one of us is facing trials. There are trials that come from outside, like persecution and poverty. But there are also trials from within – and James calls that “temptation”. It's actually the same word for “trial”. Just used in a different context. Trials from outside. Trials from inside. So while you may not be facing the trials from outside like persecution or poverty, you will certainly still be facing the trials from inside – the trials of temptation. Temptation is when, according to verse 14,

- “we are dragged away our own evil desire.”

All of us face trials. From outside or inside. But we can find **pure joy** in those trials through our relationship with God who is working in us to mature us.

- **Africa**

I mentioned last week that I travelled with Paul, from Compassion Australia, to Tanzania about 6 years ago. We saw such poverty. It was horrifying. Unbelievable. But the thing that still struck me the most was the joy of people in the churches and projects. They weren't **happy**. They were **joyful**. They had a foundation that was immovable in Jesus. Their world was so fleeting. Day by day. Meal by meal. A child dies. Another is born. But the joy was always there. This deep, deep security that came from Jesus being in their lives.

For us, we often measure joy by the smile on our faces. And that's determined by how healthy we are. How wealthy we are. How things in THIS LIFE are going for us. But that joy comes and goes. Pure joy that comes from a relationship with Jesus is with us through poverty and riches, through sickness and health.

James says in verse 16:

- **16** Don't be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters. **17** Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Every GOOD gift, everything that is meaningful, everything that will bring you PURE joy, comes from God. And what does it look like? Everything from God comes back to one thing: An eternal and secure relationship with him.

**III** – Have you noticed that when you buy some things these days, there are usually **two** sets of instructions. There are the detailed instructions, and then there are the “quick set up” instructions. One gives you every possible detail. But the other one just gives you the basics. It outlines the key stuff to get started.

It's very tempting to go after the instant joy of the world. Where is the quick joy that I need now? Let's read the quick set up guide. I'm sad. I want to be happy. What can I go and do **now**? We look in the mirror and see the sad face and we run off trying to find the quick set up solution to a happy face. And we may find it. But it will be temporary.

But what James says is this:

- **23** Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror **24** and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. (*that's the quick set up solution*) **25** But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.

The answer to finding pure joy is not about putting a smile on our faces. It's about looking intently into the Word of God. And not forgetting it. And following it. Living it.

Here's a question for you: How serious are you about God's word? How intently are you reading it? Every day?

This is where you will find pure joy – joy that will last – look intently into God's Word. Let God speak to you. Listen to him. What happens when we do that is that our relationship with him deepens. And THAT is where we find pure joy.

His word is our anchor. Our foundation. Our strength. Our stability. Our assurance. Seeking pure joy is not about seeking happiness. It's about seeking relationship with the God of all.

Let's pray.