

Joy Study guide

Study 1: Joy rooted in the past

Passage: Isaiah 51.1-16

1. When was the last time you had a really joyful experience - what happened?
2. What are the stories from the OT that are being describe in this passage?
3. What truths do you think the author wants us to recall from these stories?
4. Why is it good for the Israelites to remember these stories while they are in exile in Babylon?

Joy is gift that is rooted in the past, in stories the reveal God's faithfulness and character.

5. Share a story from your past that reminds you of God faithfulness/character?
6. After sharing your stories with each other, how (if at all) has this affected your mood? Do you feel more joyful?

Pray together

Study 2: Joy connected to the future

Passage: Revelation 21.1-7

1. What's coming up this week/month/year that you are looking forward to?
2. Make a list of all the promises God will do in the future from this passage.
3. How do these promises give us reason to rejoice?

Joy is gift that is connected to what God is yet to do, based on the evidence that he has always been faithful in the past (refer to previous study).

4. Dream together, can you describe what this future may feel like, look like, smell like... Does this drawing change your mood, raise hope or give you a sense of Joy for the future?
5. Sometimes because this future hope is very different to our current experience we struggle to be sure of it. Looking back at the story of Jesus, we can we be reassured of this promise, because of what he has done. Look at John 3.16.

Pray together

Study 3: Joy in the present

1. Share what you have learnt so far about joy being rooted in the past and connected to the future hope.

Passage: Philippians 1.12-30

2. Paul is in prison at the time he writes this letter, imagine what life in prison might have been like for Paul?

First Century prison was a hostile experience, dark, cold, damp, cramped, smelly, with limited food and water. Yet Paul is able to 'continue to rejoice' Phil 1.18.

3. Remembering that Joy is rooted in the past, what story/stories is Paul's Joy rooted in?

4. Why is Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension such a firm foundation for joy?

Joy is a gift from God, but it more often than not comes when we take a risk, a risk to believe that God will be faithful in the present as he has been in the past and will be in the future.

5. Paul had very real hardships, where might we be experience hardships of our own?

Biblical joy is not a denial of our current struggles, but it embraces loss and pain and takes the risk to hope in God restoring all things.

6. How can we fan the gift of Joy in our lives whist we undergo very real struggles of our own?

Pray together