

THE JOURNEY

Bible Reading Schedule

March 8	Deuteronomy 5, 6, 7	Mark 12:1-27
March 9	Deuteronomy 8, 9, 10	Mark 12:28-44
March 10	Deuteronomy 11, 12, 13	Mark 13:1-13
March 11	Deuteronomy 14, 15, 16	Mark 13:14-37
March 12	Deuteronomy 17, 18, 19	Mark 14:1-25
March 13	Deuteronomy 20, 21, 22	Mark 14:26-50
March 14	Deuteronomy 23, 24, 25	Mark 14:51-72

Jesus in Gethsemane [Mark 14:32-42]

Why did Jesus take Peter, James, and John along with him to pray?

- He needed their support He was testing their endurance
 He knew they needed to pray for themselves show them real prayer

What do you think was the hardest part of this experience for Jesus?

- Being let down by his friends submitting to God's will
 Preparing for the cross Judas' betrayal

In what area do you struggle with a willing spirit and weak body?

- Diet prayer family time
 Bible Study chores / projects exercise

What is more of a struggle for you personally?

- Finding God's will for my life standing alone with the help of others
 Doing what I know God wants watching someone I love struggle

When you pray, what do you normally pray for?

- Health and healing people who need God church leaders
 Whenever I pray God's will for my life unsaved

If you were facing a crisis, what three friends would you ask to say with you? What if they fell asleep?

SEEK_{HIM CONSTANTLY}
 SERVE_{HIM FAITHFULLY}
 SHARE_{HIM BOLDLY}

The Hard
 Work of
 Joy

Joy is the feeling of grinning on the inside.

▶ Joy fills me with God's **character**

Sin is an enticement to a joy that does not exist

I have told you these things so that you can have the same joy I have and so that your joy will be the fullest possible joy. John 15:11

▶ Joy is a source of spiritual **strength**

Joy adds spiritual vitality to life.

Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." Neh. 8:10

▶ Joy is the best **witness** to the Christian life

The greatest argument for Christianity is joyful Christians.

Joy is very infectious; therefore, be always full of joy. Mother Teresa

Spiritual Disciplines create opportunities for God to work

Find a Joy Mentor – Friends double our joy and divide our grief.

Surprised by Joy – Joy is the simplest form of gratitude

Psalms 28, 36, 105, 111, 113, 117, 135, 136, 146, and 147
 Psalms: 18, 21, 30, 32, 34, 40, 41, 66, 106, 116, and 138

Today is a HOLIDAY –devote one day to acts of celebration and giving

John 15:1-11 (NCV)

The Vine and the Branches

¹ "I am the true vine; my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch of mine that does not produce fruit. And he trims and cleans every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce even more fruit.³ You are already clean because of the words I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I will remain in you. A branch cannot produce fruit alone but must remain in the vine. In the same way, you cannot produce fruit alone but must remain in me.

⁵ "I am the vine, and you are the branches. If any remain in me and I remain in them, they produce much fruit. But without me they can do nothing. ⁶ If any do not remain in me, they are like a branch that is thrown away and then dies. People pick up dead branches, throw them into the fire, and burn them.⁷ If you remain in me and follow my teachings, you can ask anything you want, and it will be given to you.⁸ You should produce much fruit and show that you are my followers, which brings glory to my Father.⁹ I loved you as the Father loved me. Now remain in my love.¹⁰ I have obeyed my Father's commands, and I remain in his love. In the same way, if you obey my commands, you will remain in my love. ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you can have the same joy I have and so that your joy will be the fullest possible joy.

Sin promises more than it can deliver. It assures us of pleasures it never imparts. Sometimes it does deliver some pleasure, but it conceals the boomerang effect that will surely come. It also obscures its addictive power, invariably leading us beyond our original limits. When we first sin a specific sin, we are under delusion, and it will lead us step by step until we are enslaved to it.

Finding Joy

To begin, happiness is always fleeting. It comes and goes. It has to. Just as night and day alter, happiness too fluctuates. Happiness depends upon circumstances. When things go well, we are happy. When we get what we want, when the sun is shining, when our boyfriend finally pops the questions these are moments of happiness. These moments are lovely - we cherish them in memory. The only wrong with this kind of happiness is when we depend upon them to feel good.

Joy is different. It doesn't come and go. It doesn't depend upon outer circumstances. When things are difficult, when our hopes are not fulfilled, it is still possible to feel joyful. Joy arises from within, not without. It is an attitude of mind that can be developed and nurtured. It represents the growth of the individual from a child to an adult, willing to take responsibility for the way they choose to respond. Joy is not a knee jerk reaction. It a positive decision we make about ourselves and others.

In a sense joy is a practice. It is not necessarily an emotion. Joy, being constant, is deeper than emotion; it is an orientation towards life and towards the people in your relationships. It is built upon actions, it is a way of being with oneself and others, no matter what happens. There are steps we can take and can practice daily, which allow joy to be present. Joy is a decision we make each day.

In order to find joy in our lives and our relationships, certain things have to be developed and others to be relinquished. A famous saying describes this beautifully, it says, "When we are children we play with toys. When we grow up, we want the real thing."

The real thing is joy, not happiness.

Here are two, easy, beginning steps you can take, (and continue to practice), to find joy in your relationships.

1) Give Up Blaming The Other Person.

As time goes by it is very easy to find many things disappointing and wrong with the person you are with in a relationship. When we are upset, we attribute it to their behavior, something they've said or done wrong, or something they haven't done that we feel they should have. This is putting our well being in the hands of another. It is one of the most significant ways we destroy our own peace of mind and also undermine the other person.

Realize that each person has the right to be who they are at this moment.

No one made you their judge and jury. If you are upset or unhappy with their behavior, that is your response, it does not necessarily mean that something is wrong with them. You are creating your own unhappiness by blaming and disapproving of them.

Give it up. Just observe their behavior. Get to know them. Watch how they live their lives and what their patterns are. This does not mean you have to join them, stay in the relationship or get into a dance with them. In fact, this may be the wrong person for you, but give up feeling they have disappointed you. They were not put on this earth to please you. They were put on this earth to be who they are, to change, grow and find wisdom.

Say to yourself, this person has a right to be who they are, and I have a right to be who I am as well. They are not harming me by being who they are. This is their life they are leading. I have not been put on this earth to fix them.

In truth, it is your own expectations which are causing you upset.. When we do not put heavy expectations on the other, but are willing to simply discover who they are, blame dissolves more easily.

2) Learn The Art Of True Giving

There is a huge difference between really giving to another, and giving so you can get something back in return. When we give in order to get something back, (and secretly wait for it and demand it), this is nothing more than manipulation, and it quickly kills our joy.

Joy is based upon true giving. When we learn to give truly, it is almost impossible to be upset or sad. The giving itself is its own return.

True giving means, giving with no strings attached. It means giving something to the person that they need or would like, (not something that pleases you). In this form of giving, we take time to really know the person, and become willing to meet their needs. Some fear to give, feeling that they will be drained or stripped bare. The opposite is true. The more we give, the more we have. We have a sense of fullness and kindness, which is the basis for the development of joy.

There are many things that can be given besides physical objects. Many people need time, attention, acknowledgment, the chance to be right about something. Make a list of all the things you can give another. Also make a list of the things you'd like someone to give you. In this way you'll start to become more sensitive to what a person is really needing, and how best to give it, so they can receive it easily.

Practice giving freely. Do it in little steps at first. Let the car behind you pass you, let the person go first at the check out counter. Give someone a hand with their bags, open the door for someone at a building. Practice being there for another. The more you do it, the more your joy will grow.

(c) Dr Brenda Shoshanna/2005

"Joy, must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and Pleasure. Joy has indeed one characteristic, and one only, in common with them; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again...I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world. But Joy is never in our power and pleasure often is." C.S. Lewis