

Choose Joy

Written by Lillian Chebosi
Tuesday, 09 June 2020 14:36

Volume 10, Issue 29: Choose Joy

This piece is made of extracts from the work of Kay Warren from her "Choose Joy" study plan in the YouVersion Bible app, which is derived from her "Choose Joy" book. The outstanding thing about this devotional on joy is how Kay beautifully illustrates the truth of how life is more of a set of parallel train tracks, joy and sorrow running inseparably throughout our days, and how it is possible to choose a life of joy while still recognizing sorrow.

Kay defined joy as the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of our lives, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright, and the determined choice to praise God in all things.

Life is much more like a set of parallel train tracks, with joy and sorrow running inseparably throughout our days. Everyday of your life, good things happen. Beauty, accomplishment, pleasure, fulfillment, and perhaps even excitement occur. That's the track of joy. But everyday of your life also holds disappointments, challenges, struggles, and perhaps even losses for you or those you love. That's the track of sorrow.

Most of us try to "outsmart" the sorrow track by concentrating our efforts on the joy track, as if by our positive outlook or outright denial of reality, we can make the sorrow track go away. That's impossible, because joy and sorrow will always be present together.

No matter how "positive" we think, or how hard we try to visualize only happiness, the sorrow track remains. And in the strange paradox of the universe, at the exact moment you and I are experiencing pain, we are also aware of the sweetness of loving and the beauty still to be found.

One of our toughest challenges in life is to learn how to live on both of those tracks at the same time. But there's hope! Consider what's it's like to stand between two sets of train tracks and look into the horizon. Those parallel tracks come together as we look ahead. They are no longer distinguishable as two separate tracks.

Choose Joy

Written by Lillian Chebosi
Tuesday, 09 June 2020 14:36

That's the way it will be for us too. During our lifetime, we "stand on the tracks" looking for signs of Jesus Christ's return. We watch for the sights and sounds that will alert us that his appearance is very close. One day, in the brightness of His coming, we will meet him face to face. And when we do, the tracks of joy and sorrow will merge. The sorrow will disappear forever, and only the joy will remain.

Jesus was a man of joy. Luke 7:34 says, "the Son of man came, enjoying life." I love that. He didn't come bent over in pain. Jesus came eating and drinking and loving life. He was a vibrant, compassionate man, a man of both sorrow and joy who could enter fully into life with all its brokenness.

It is possible to choose a life of joy while still recognizing sorrow. Jesus, knowing full well what was ahead of him, chose to laugh, to tell jokes, to roll on the ground with children, to build rich relationships, to have meaningful work, to experience joy. Jesus' life is an illustration of the two train tracks converging into one. He shows us how to see joy, a joy that sometimes comes in darkness.

Don't miss joy. Don't miss the reason for your existence. But if you are going to experience joy in this lifetime, there's only one possible way: you are going choose it. You will have to choose it in spite of unbelievable circumstances. You will have to choose it even if your worst nightmare comes true.

This isn't what we want to hear. We want to believe that if we get our act together, we finish the huge project, our health clears up, we get a raise, or we can just get things right, then we can finally be joyful. But that's just not how it works. So ask yourself, "What unchangeable circumstances stand in the way of me choosing joy? What fears of the future keep me from choosing joy?"

Then pray something like this, "God, thank you for making joy my purpose in life. Thank you for Jesus Christ, whose life as both a man of sorrows and a man of joy gives me permission to seek a life of joy for myself. Thank you for your Holy Spirit, who graciously gave me the gift of joy as part of my spiritual inheritance, my birthright. I courageously choose joy, because happiness will never be enough. I choose joy!"

Choose Joy

Written by Lillian Chebosi
Tuesday, 09 June 2020 14:36

Choose Joy by Kay Warren.

For His Glory,

Lillian Chebosi