

PATHWAY TO JOY

CHAPTER 8 | TEACHING SEGMENT 1

(PLEASE WATCH THE STORY SEGMENTS CONNECTED TO THIS CHAPTER)

OUTLINE

WHEN WE ARE EMPTY AND LOST,
JESUS WALKS WITH US FROM SORROW TO JOY

PREMISE:

- Find the pathway to JOY in times of sorrow
- UNDERSTAND the principle of secure attachments that build safety

1. SEASONS OF LIFE

A. Finding joy

- At times in life we realize we've become empty; our joy has fled, we have lost ourselves. We're going through the motions but not enjoying life to the fullest.
- As we go through losses and challenges, we sometimes find later that even though we're now in a different stage of life, we've gotten stuck and died in that old season.
- There's a common saying that most people die before their death. Their emotions have dried up, their ability to process information is no longer functioning, and laughter and joy seem lost.
- We're going to learn how to regain our joy!

2. FROM DEATH TO LIFE

A. The story of Lazarus (John 11)

- When word came to Jesus that Lazarus was sick, He didn't immediately answer their summons but instead arrived on the fourth day after Lazarus' death.
- Mary and Martha were angry and upset, asking, "Where have you been? If you had been here, this would not have happened." How often have we done the same, asking God, "Where are you? Why are you not showing up?"
- Why did Jesus wait? First, the Jewish people believed it was impossible for anyone to be resurrected on the fourth day. Jesus waited until then to prove that He is able to override any impossibility that life throws at us.
- He can resurrect our dreams, even years past the "due date" when we thought it would happen. Don't give up on that dream or that miracle! God is actively still working on your behalf.
- Just as Mary and Martha didn't understand why Jesus had to wait, we don't always see why God is delaying the process. Yet in the delay, we find the pathway to joy.
- John 11:35: "Jesus wept." This powerful verse indicates that Jesus wanted them to understand that He too could share their deep grief and emotion.
- Not only was Jesus grieving with them, but His tears also indicated His grief that the people who knew Him best didn't acknowledge His power and authority.
- Isn't it true that no matter how many times we've read Scripture or seen miracles, in the middle of our problem we're still questioning, "God, are you really going to show up this time? Can I trust you today?"
- God can handle our doubts and fears. He didn't dismiss their grief but asked them, "Who do you believe that I am? Do you think I can do this?"

3. PATHWAY TO JOY

A. Seeking comfort

- When we need comfort, we look for someone safe to connect with in our pain (see page 132). It's in those moments that God wants to connect with us. In John 11, Jesus joined them and was present in their grief.
- It's a pathway to joy, rather than a destination.
- It's in times of sorrow when we seek to regain that joy by attaching our emotions and mind to someone we perceive is greater than us and can calm our fear.
- Religion often teaches that we must be faith-filled and perfect to come to God.
- But in the story of Lazarus, none of them were perfect. They didn't trust His word.
- When Jesus wept, He showed that He was (and is) fully present and human in the midst of pain and sorrow. With His tears, He validated their loss. With His actions, He moved them from a place of mourning to joy.

B. Building secure attachments

- Psychologist Dr. James Wilder (page 133) explains how secure attachments help us create a proper view of our external circumstances and build a healthy response of our nervous system in response to joy through bonding.
- Until that safety of mind is achieved, our mind is connected to either a bondage, an addiction, or a person who isn't good for us.
- In a study on how babies attach to their parents based on the frequency of touch, results indicated:
 - If the mother has connection with the baby, it creates safe bonding so that when the infant grows up, he has a safety attachment which he can also give to those around him.

- If the parent is not present, the brain continues to search for someone to love and care for them.
- If the baby can't find that, he goes into a distressed mode and attaches to toys or another person and can't disconnect from them immediately.
- Later in life, they have an unsafe attachment style and are either anxious when they attach to a friend or spouse or become possessive of the person who is part of their life.
- Jesus comes along the journey to create that safety attachment inside us.

C. Joy vs. happiness

- The pathway to joy is like a camping analogy. First thing we do in camping is to set up a base camp, a place of safety to come back to while we explore.
- Our nervous system seeks to return to its natural state of joy. Where are we currently living? Is it at peace or in worry? If at peace, then we go back to that place of joy. If it's worry, we need to find someone else to attach to.
- Dr. Wilder emphasizes that our nervous system is designed to "rest in a state of joy, not in a state of upset." A state of upset causes increased stress levels, which leads to fear and anxiety; fear steals our joy.
- Happiness is temporary, external, and based on short-lived experiences; joy is internal, part of our brain's wiring.
- If we say, the joy of the Lord is our strength! but are full of sadness and defeat, it's because our brain has not had a chance to create a place of safety; we haven't experienced a safe connection.
- If Jesus had answered Mary and Martha's summons and healed Lazarus immediately, what would have happened in their minds?

- Joy would probably not have been established because they would have immediately received their happiness; they would have been satisfied with the outcome. That instant gratification would not have connected the neuron of the brain properly to create the pathway to resilience and the revelation He was offering.

D. The character of Christ

- By walking the pathway of sorrow onto the pathway of joy, their faith was reconnected to Christ's character rather than with faith in His miracles.
- We all seek to know Christ's miracles, but do we seek to know His character?
- His character is what He seeks to establish inside us; His character is unfailing. What He said He will do, He will always perform.
- The reason we begin to doubt is because of the short intervals of happiness with which we usually view our life. The more we see only the happy moments, the more we push away the pain and sorrow.
- To push down pain doesn't mean it will go away; suppressed pain will create even more. It is important to acknowledge the pain to the Lord and ask for His healing.

**** PLEASE CONTINUE TO CHAPTER 8 – TEACHING SEGMENT 2**