
THANKFUL

Joyfilled Thanks

Cynicism and Dropout are enemies of joy filled thanks in the believer's life.

Barna, the world's leading Christian research organisation, suggests that 70% of young people will leave the faith before they are 30 years old.

I believe God wants to encourage us towards a move from cynicism and dropout to joy-filled thanks and endurance.

Joy Filled Remembrance

"... since we are surrounded... let us...let us...run the race marked out for us"
(Hebrews 12:1).

The Christian faith is not an individual race, where you are in competition with those around you. The Christian faith is a team race, where you are in partnership with those around you.

If we are doing this right, there shouldn't be a single person in this building who feels isolated or lonely in their pursuit of God.

Chapter 11 describes the 'Hall of Faith', filled with mothers and fathers who "were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised" (Hebrews 11:39).

Our Riverlife history is full of heroes of the faith.

We are not in this race alone! And better yet, we are being cheered on by not only every past saint in this congregation, but also of all history, and they're cheering "I did it, so can you!".

Joy Filled Endurance

What is the secret to run the worlds fastest marathon? Training elevation? Good Genes? Genetics? Diet?

More importantly, what is the secret to enduring in the faith?

1. Throw Off Weight

"...throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles" (Hebrews 12:1b).

2. Fix Your Eyes

"...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before Him He endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2)

Joy enables us to endure because it gives us a new perspective and objectivity when facing trials.

Joy is a spiritual work, not something we can work up in our humanity. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit of God working in believers.

Joy is seeing the sovereign plan of God work out through your life.

Joy Filled Thanks

Joy is a gift of God through Jesus and is one of the most important consequences of the experience of salvation.

Seeing Jesus as our forerunner, our older brother, and our pioneer, allows us to walk in His footsteps. However, Jesus' life was not without trials, suffering and pain.

Toxic optimism is fake joy and positivity in all circumstances. But joy from the Spirit, is real joy and thanksgiving despite the circumstances.

JOY – Jesus Over You

Richard Foster wrote, "The decision to set the mind on the higher things of life is an act of the will. That is why celebration is a Discipline. It is not something that falls on our heads. It is the result of a consciously chosen way of thinking and living. When we choose this way, the healing and redemption in Christ will break into the inner recesses of our lives and relationships, and the inevitable result will be joy."

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever felt yourself turn cynical? When was that? Why did you feel this way?
2. Have you ever felt like dropping out? Perhaps from a task, or a friendship or perhaps even a career? When was that? Why did you feel this way?
3. "The Christian faith is a team race, where you are in partnership with those around you." Who are your 'running buddies', helping you run towards Jesus?
4. Hebrews 12 talks about a "great cloud of witnesses". Who are those that have gone before you?
5. Having joy filled endurance can be hard work. Where do you need the Holy Spirit to help you endure in the season you are in?
6. 'Toxic Optimism' is the idea of fake joy and positivity. True joy is choosing to worship and give thanks to Jesus despite the circumstances. Have you experienced toxic optimism in your life?
7. JOY - Jesus Over You. How can you choose to place Jesus over your life this week?