

Experience Joy

Scripture used: [Hebrews 12:1-2](#)

OVERVIEW

He has risen! This week's message closes the series of "Choose Joy" that Pastor Hurmon Hamilton began a few weeks back. Each week we've come back to the question, "Can you experience joy in the midst of great suffering?" The lessons that have followed in the previous weeks have proven that experiencing joy is possible no matter what the circumstances but it needs to be an intentional choice. This week on Easter Sunday, Pastor Hurmon tweaks the question to, "How do I reclaim my joy in the midst of tough times?" The answer to this question is drawn from [Hebrews 12:1-2](#) which calls us as Jesus followers to "fix our eyes on Jesus." In our scripture, Jesus endures the cross with inner confidence and finds joy despite the shame of the cross. This takes great belief and faithfulness -- the key elements that enable us to choose the same joy Jesus experienced, even in the midst of great suffering.

KEY POINTS

1. *Faith & Faithfulness*: Faith is a posture, an attitude, whereas faithfulness is a series of actions. Jesus understands what it is like if you're fighting with pain or guilt, however he sat down before the cross and accepted all our sins so we can know that God will be with us to help us make it through our most difficult seasons. By putting our faith in Jesus, we are trusting Him and, and because of Jesus' resurrection, our ultimate victory is assured. By following Jesus, our walking in faithfulness opens up our world to experience all the amazing things Jesus has in store for us.
2. *Die to Self*: The first thing that we learn from Jesus when we decide to follow him is die to self. Pastor Hurmon shared about the more superficial elements that die when hardships occur in our life, which helps us process our values. For instance, the hardship of the pandemic has led many people to a new level of authenticity. Isolation has led to a period of deep introspection, which has, on the bright side, led people to evaluate their values. Letting go of selfishness and materialism is part of the process when we die to self.
3. *Live for Greater*: This key of faith and faithfulness takes us to [Hebrews 12:2b](#) where we focus on the lines "for the sake of the joy," which teaches us that joy for Jesus was gaining the forgiveness of our sins. We are Jesus' joy! One way we can replicate what we see in the way that Jesus dies is to live a life of radical generosity toward others. We don't have to be wealthy to be generous; we just have to have the heart to be there for people when they need us most. Another way to live for greater is to be kind. Despite living in a brutal world, Jesus exuded radical kindness, including displaying kindness toward the people who crucified him. To be filled with Jesus' spirit is to live a life of radical kindness.
4. *Trust Fully*: Trusting fully isn't to trust the whole world, or letting ourselves be a doormat to be taken advantage of. Rather, to trust fully is to trust God as the Creator and what He has in store for us as we follow Him. Whatever season we are going through, whether filled with grief, joy, or both, God has plans for us in the midst of the season we are in and on the other side of our difficult season.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - The act of Jesus's crucifixion was selfless, and it brought him joy. These two things are not in conflict. Reflect on your actions of faithfulness and whether they brought you joy. What motivates us to have a deeper relationship with God? Is it, "for the joy"? Do we feel comfortable following Jesus knowing that He desires joy for us? If our primary motivation has been something else, why do we think that is?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Reflect on [John 19:30](#). As we think about what Jesus did on the cross, how did Jesus illustrate full trust in the Father? How has trust affected your life and your journey with Jesus? What may be holding you back from trusting more and leaning into trust in your faith? Remember that faith and faithfulness are aspects that lead us to having a closer relationship with God.
- 3) **DO** - Recite this prayer and think about your commitment or recommitment to Jesus. "Jesus, I accept your amazing love, grace, and forgiveness poured out through your death and resurrection. Now, Living Lord, help me to RECLAIM MY JOY as I die to self and live for greater. Amen!" Thank you for joining us this Easter Sunday and join us next Sunday as we start a new series next Sunday entitled "Grow."