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A powerful, anxious surge of fear turned Tom's mind into a whirling turmoil. The physical hardships of the previous months, the loneliness, the spiritual drain he had experienced – all of it fed his fears and stretched him to the breaking point. His father, who needed him more than ever, was dying, and Tom was hopelessly lost in the Peruvian jungles. Tom stalked back and forth like a tiger, ready to explode. The guides urged him to sit down, but he couldn't. He had lost his spiritual poise.

But he hadn't forgotten how to pray. As he prayed, relief came and his mind was suddenly filled with various promises from the Scriptures:

I will never leave you nor forsake you.

Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God.

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Tom felt as though a warm blanket of peace were being draped around his shivering soul, the fear retreated, and he sensed that someone somewhere must have been praying for him. He was later to learn that at that precise hour, two dear praying women at Asbury had been strangely burdened to pray for "young tom Willey. He must be in danger somewhere."

Tom Willey did make it out of the Peruvian jungles, and eventually won to Christ his father on his deathbed.

Discussion Questions

- 1) What do your peace and joy gauges look like? What challenges are you personally facing or feeling right now? Read the story about Jesus asleep in the storm tossed boat. What insights did you get from His ability to beat peace in a storm?
- 2) Do you believe you have victory in Christ over the worst case scenarios? Do you believe He is really in control in what feels like helpless situations? Do you believe you'll get to the other side?
- 3) There are four ways to cooperate with the Holy Spirit. Review them. Which ones do you need to practice that would help you experience more of His peace and joy?



SERMON NOTES: WEEK ONE



HOPE & HELP FOR HARD TIMES

FINDING PEACE AND JOY IN YOUR PAIN, PROBLEMS AND PRESSURE

Peace and Joy is Always Possible in Christ

Missionary Tom Willey, twenty-seven, a graduate of Asbury College, was serving in the interior of Peru in the Amazon Basin. It had taken many treacherous days to trek into the jungle by train, car, mule, boat, and on foot to work among the Campa Indians. He had been accepted out of curiosity if for no other reason, but he had high hopes for a harvest of souls. Tom had little difficulty adjusting to jungle life, and he plunged into his work with relish. He seemed to maintain an attitude of contented joy.

One day a radiogram arrived, informing Tom that his father was gravely ill and not expected to live. Tom's father was not Christian, and the young missionary, who had been deeply burdened for him, felt he must return home at once in the hope of speaking one more time to his dad about the Lord Jesus.

Tom boarded a boat and headed upstream toward a trail out of the jungle. But once on the trail, his Indian guides became lost and Tom found himself winding around and around inside the jungle on trails leading nowhere. At every junction, hopeless decisions were made regarding the best fork to take, but the guides had lost all sense of direction. Hours passed, night passed, and then another day.

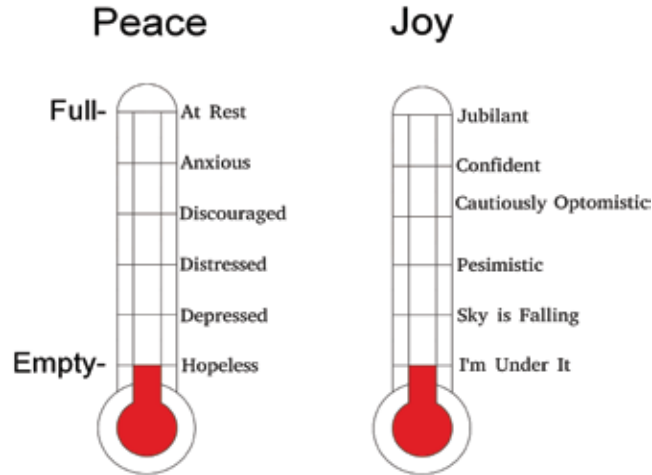
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Peace and Joy are Always Possible in Christ

November 1/2, 2008

All of us go through hard times where life can feel hopeless and we feel helpless to change it. It is easy to lose something in those hard times that we desperately need to hang on to so we can endure them victoriously. What is that? Peace and Joy!

What do your peace and joy gauges look like today?



1. Jesus Christ wants to continually fill our hearts and minds with peace and joy in good times but especially in hard times. He knows that His peace and joy hold us up when real life situations pull us down.

John 14:27 - I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid. John 15:11, Proverbs 17:22

2. Jesus proved that peace and joy was possible in even helpless situations. *Mark 4:35-41*

Why was Jesus at peace when His disciples felt like they were perishing?

- 1) He wasn't afraid of the worst case scenario—physical death
- 2) He knew who was in ultimate control of all things
- 3) He knew He would get done what He set out to do—get to the other side.

3. Standing in biblical faith produces peace and joy even when situations rock your boat big time.

- 1) I do have eternal life in Christ. Even in the worst case scenario I have victory in Christ. *Romans 8:35, Romans 8:37-39*
- 2) He ultimately is in control of all things concerning me and I can access His strength through the Holy Spirit. *Romans 8:26-28*
- 3) He will accomplish what He wants in my life as I trust in Him. I'll get where He wants me to go, do what He designed me to do and He will provide for all my true needs. *Romans 8:31-32*

4. It is the Holy Spirit who gives internally what we so desperately need to be victorious in hard times. *Romans 8:11, Galatians 5:22*

How do we work with the Holy Spirit to be filled with peace and joy even in hard times?

The Four "P's of Practical Peace and Joy

1) Praise Continually: *Psalms 34:1-3, Psalm 59:16-17*

2) Pray Honestly with Faith: *Psalms 57:1-3, Philippians 4:6-7*

3) Pause in His Presence: *Psalms 34:4-8 - I prayed to the Lord, and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears. Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces. In my desperation I prayed, and the Lord listened; he saved me from all my troubles. For the angel of the Lord is a guard; he surrounds and defends all who fear him. Taste and see that the Lord is good. Oh, the joys of those who take refuge in him!*

4) Practice Positive Focusing: *Isaiah 26:3 - You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!*

Romans 8:6 - So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace.

Philippians 4:8 - And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

Peace and Joy are always possible because of who we have within us regardless of what situation we are in. Hard times don't have to be hopeless because you are never helpless with the Holy Spirit in you.

Romans 14:17 - For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.