

June 27 – Leaders Guide - John 16:16-24 Indestructible Joy

1. It was Blaise Pascal who said – “all of us seek joy, the will never takes the least step but to this object. It is the motive of every action of everyone of us”. Would you resonate with this statement? Why or why not?

This is simply a question to get the group reflecting on the topic at hand. Encourage everyone to engage – as this will help conversation going forward. It will also be the thread flowing through to the final question.

2. We so often experience joy and sorrow as mutually exclusive, you either have joy or you have sorrow. This is the case because we locate our joy in circumstance and / or things that change. Joy in anything that changes will eventually be diminished and we will be sorrowful. How has this been your experience?

This question again is a reflection question. It could if you let it take up a good portion of the discussion. Let the conversation flow so far as it begins to bring to an awareness the fleeting reality of our pursuit of joy and an awakening yearning for something more.

Read John 16:16-24

3. (21) How does Jesus’ illustration of the woman in labour help us understand the unique nature of Christian joy – that is - it is a joy that we can have in the midst of sorrow?

Joy in our circumstances, joy in things that change means that we are either joyful or sorrowful. The woman who has just gone through labour has sorrow, has pain, it’s not gone it’s simply that the pain and sorrow isn’t controlling her thoughts and determining her actions the joy of new life is.

4. Jesus intends the illustration of the woman in labour to point us to the source of true joy – that is the results of the resurrection. The resurrection is the glorious assurance of our salvation, that our sins have been forgiven, that death has been defeated, that a new humanity, a new creation is inevitable. J.C. Ryle spoke of this assurance being the engine of our joy – he wrote – “assurance goes far to set a child of God free from a painful kind of bondage, and it ministers mightily to their comfort. It enables them to feel that the great business of life is settled, the great debt is paid, the great disease is healed, the great work, a finished work, so that all other business, diseases, debts and works are by comparison, small”. How practically does joy in the assurance of our salvation help us deal with sorrow - to have joy in our sorrow?

These excerpts are taken from the sermon that may help your group reflect on this question:

In Tim Keller's book – walking with God through pain and suffering – he speaks to how this joy in sorrow works - He likens it to a furnace with a thermostat – when it gets colder outside – the temperature kicks the furnace higher by means of the thermostat – similarly – sorrow and grief drive us more into God – more into the assurance of our salvation – more into his love – this joy doesn't come after the sorrow – the sorrow drives you into joy – enhances the joy – and then the joy enables you to actually feel your grief without it sinking you – it'll draw you away from numbing the pain or avoiding the pain - in other words this joy will lead you on a path to emotional health.

Now every time I consider Christian joy – this joy in sorrow – I can't help but think of the life of Haratio Spafford – he was an American Lawyer who lost everything in the Chicago fire of 1871, and then 2 years later lost his three daughters as their ship sunk on the way to England – and as he travelled by ship to get his wife in England who had survived and bring her home – he penned the words to one of my favorite hymns – It is well.

When peace like a river attendeth my way – when sorrows like sea billows roll – whatever my lot – you have taught me to say – it is well – it is well with my soul.

My sin oh the bliss of this glorious thought – my sin not in part but the whole – is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more – praise the Lord praise the Lord Oh my soul.

Now how can he possibly express in the same hymn – the same breath - the agony of deep sorrow – and the joy - the bliss of a glorious thought.

He has found a joy that the sorrow presses him into – in his hour of sorrow he beholds Jesus' hour – he beholds the one who laboured for him – beholds the glorious assurance of salvation – did it make the sorrow go away – no – but he could now face the grief the agony the loss without it pulling him under – without it marring his inner being – hardening – embittering him

5. Refer to the other times where Jesus uses the term hour in the gospel (2:4; 12:27; 13:1). Take note that Jesus uses the same word here to refer to the woman in labour (vs. 21). How does this image impact our view of what Jesus did on the cross for us? What does this tell us about what happens in Jesus' death and resurrection and how it relates to our joy? (see Hebrews 12:2)

Again these excerpts are taken from the sermon that may help your group reflect on this question:

It would seem from the wording – from the flow of the text – that Jesus invites us to see the illustration of the woman in labour as a picture of what he's doing on the cross – this is confirmed by Jesus' use of the word hour – when her hour has come – that's not normally how you would speak of going into labour – but this is a key word in John – a word pregnant with meaning – a word he uses more than any other word to refer to his impending death – it is my hour...

What's he saying? – he's saying - On the cross I labored for you – I was in agony for you – as I looked forward to the joy of new birth – the joy of your coming to new life in me – the joy of you being adopted as a child of my heavenly father – the joy of an entirely new future for the world – as Hebrews 12 – puts it - for the joy that was set before him Jesus endured the cross – he went through labour on the cross for us –

you and I – the dawning of a new creation was the joy that was set before him.

6. If Pascal was right, that the motivation of every one of our actions is to pursue joy, how can pursuing the joy Jesus offers us lead us to live in anticipation of the marriage of heaven and earth in all we do and say and pray?

Again these excerpts are taken from the sermon that may help your group reflect on this question:

If our joy is located in reveling in the implications of the resurrection – his love – his forgiveness – his grace - we will be eager to be drawn into worship – to deeper relationship with God in Jesus.

If our joy is located in the new creation – the marriage of heaven and earth – a future where our world is shot through with the justice peace beauty and grace of the living God – we will pursue that joy by yearning in word and deed to see God's peace and justice and beauty reflected in the world around us even now.

If our joy is located in that glorious future that Jesus will bring to consummation upon his return - that joy will be the engine of our prayers – vs. 24 – in that day – in light of the resurrection – you will ask in my name – in line with my character – in line with my work – your kingdom come – your will be done – on earth as in heaven – may heaven and earth become one.