

Romans 5:1-11 "Joy's Location"

1. Where are some of the places we locate our joy as human beings?

This would simply be a question that will get people thinking about the topic and warm up to discussion.

While there will be many ways this conversation could go you may as a leaders want to press in with a few questions or comments to bring some realities to the surface.

1. *Most of the things we find our joy in are good things – they are gifts from God and should be enjoyed – but when we make good things ultimate things we run the risk of and idolatry that ends up marring us for we were designed to worship God alone and will flourish when our “loves” are rightly ordered.*
2. *Most of the things we find our joy in are mutable – they change. As a result our sense of joy rises and falls with those changing circumstances.*
3. *What we find our joy in orders and directs our lives – we carve out time for it – spend money on it – push other things aside for it – sacrifice relationships for it...*
4. *God has designed us as creatures who were meant to be driven by what brings us joy, the question must be where is true, lasting, deep joy to be found.*

Read Romans 5:1-11

2. (vs. 1-2) What are the benefits of the good news of Jesus that Paul invites us to make the foundation of our joy? Which one stands out to you the most and why?

We have peace with God – everything that we have done to contribute to the brokenness of the world is forgiven – everything we have failed to do has been addressed – we have a new past.

We have access to God – a new relationship is brought about – we are adopted as children of the living God – we are under grace – meaning that there is nothing we can do to make God love us more – nothing we can do to make God love us less. We have a new present

We rejoice in the hope of glory. We rejoice that God's goodness, character, and perfection will one day be fully revealed. We rejoice that our world will one day be released from the bondage of death and decay. We rejoice that when we see Jesus face to face we will be transformed into his likeness. We have a new future.

3. In what ways does suffering expose where we have located our joy?

Suffering is part and parcel of life. Suffering however becomes far deeper and more complex when it touches on something that we have located our ultimate joy in.

In the sermon Tim invited us to pay attention to our anger, our fears, our doubts, our grief, our response to criticism all of which can show us where we have located our ultimate joy.

4. We rejoice in suffering because suffering gives us the opportunity to press more into the joy we have in Jesus. What are some of the ways you think we can press more into this joy practically?

The simple act of recalling the truths of the gospel in the midst of suffering can be a profitable exercise.

Often when we are suffering we desire to be away from Christian community but having others around us to in prayer – in praise – in word – remind us of what is true of us in Jesus can be profitable.

When we are suffering it tends to fill our entire view – anything that moves our attentions to what we have in Jesus – as Horatio Spafford writes in his hymn it is well – though Satan should buffet, the trials should come – let this blest assurance control – and then goes on to reflect on the love of God that led Jesus to lay down all for us...

5. (vs 3-5) How does suffering change us? Consider a trial or difficulty you have encountered – do Paul's words bear out in reality?

There are potentially many answers to this question but here are some themes that might be important to touch on.

As suffering builds endurance we are more able to face future suffering.

As we face suffering we are giving deeper understanding, compassion, and empathy toward others who face similar situations.

Suffering can expose where we have located our joy – affording us the opportunity to press in more to the joy that we have in Jesus- such that we live more out of who we are in him.

Suffering can expose our sin – to own responsibility for our choices. If such exposure leads to repentance and faith we are engaging the primary driver for change in the life of faith.

6. We know that suffering doesn't always produce such realities – Paul expresses that such things come out of suffering because we are flooded with God's love by way of the Holy Spirit. Why is an assurance of God's love key to how we come through suffering?

Just as there is nothing more effective than suffering at exposing where we have located our joy there is also nothing more effective than suffering for leading us to question the goodness and love of God. Yes suffering can deepen our faith, but it can also erode it. Paul is inviting

us to press into the objective reality of God's love displayed for us at the cross. As we reflect on this truth we come to see more and more that "nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord".

Read John 16:16-22; Hebrews 12: 1-3

7. From these verses where was Jesus' joy located? How did that joy order and direct his life? How will it order and direct our own lives should Jesus' joy be made our joy?

The illustration of the woman in labour guides us. While in agony she is looking toward the joy of new birth. Jesus is locating his joy in looking forward to the joy of our coming to new life in him, the joy of an entirely new future for the world.

This joy guided and directed everything that Jesus did – it animated his love – steeled him in the face of opposition – led him to serve the least – led him to lay down his all for us.

The first dynamic of discipleship – is that when Jesus' joy becomes our joy – it directs and orders our lives in similar way – we become more like Jesus in light of his joy becoming the center of our joy as well.