

ENCOUNTERING JESUS

from the GOSPEL OF JOHN

July 30, 2017

Day 1: Read John 15:9-11. From reading these few verses, what is Jesus telling us about how we can have joy? If we remain in His love by obedience to his commands, our joy will be overflowing! It is conceptually simple, but practically difficult. The Message describes remaining in Jesus' love this way; "Make yourselves at home in my love. If you keep my commands, you'll remain intimately at home in my love." Say you have guests in your home and you tell them, "make yourselves at home," what do you mean by it? Guests will almost certainly respect your home because they value the relationship you have together. Since they value the relationship, they seek to respect the home. As we make ourselves at home in Jesus' love, we will be obedient in the freedom that He gives us there. Think about it. Consider making yourself at home in His love. Does that change how you view your relationship with Jesus, how you view obedience?

Day 2: Read John 15:9-11 again. If I obey, then I will have joy, right? Not necessarily. The Pharisees were obedient to the letter of the law, but in Matthew 23, Jesus calls them "whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity." How joyful does that sound? The Message states verse 10 this way. "That's what I've done-kept my Father's commands and made myself at home in his love." The more our hearts are changed and we become like Jesus, the more intimately at home we are in His love. Our obedience is not something we must do in order to just get the benefit of joy. Joy flows from a heart that is being transformed. Do you think this is true? Is this how you have experienced joy?

Day 3: Read John 15:1-12. Joy comes from remaining in the vine. As Jesus remains in the Father, He implores us to remain in Him. In fact, it is a command. In order to bear fruit we must remain in Him. The evidence of this 'remaining' relationship is joy. Sometimes it is easier to understand joy when we see the opposite of it. Consider the attributes of a joyless leader. Describe why it is difficult to follow that kind of leadership? In a broader sense, how would you describe joylessness? Here are a few behaviors or

attitudes: quick tempered, irritable, sarcastic, controlling, pleasure chasing, self-focused, etc. You know the question is coming. Where are symptoms or areas of your life where there is a lack of joy?

Day 4: Read Eph. 3:18-19 Begin today with this verse as a prayer: "Jesus, let me understand how wide, how long, how high, and how deep Your love is. Let me experience Your unfathomable love. Make me whole in the fullness of life and power from Your Father." This is what abiding in His love is like: Knowing, experiencing and being fulfilled in it. Keep this in your heart as you go throughout your day. Find ways to remind yourself of it. Repeat the prayer knowing that the more we find ourselves at home in his love, the more we will naturally imitate Him. Then we will begin to take on His heart, mind, and attitude. Remember lack of joy in our own lives becomes a place where transformation can occur. A place to follow and obey. Look at the how you live. Ask yourself, what would it look like to have joy where I am currently joyless? Pray that the Spirit would show you a perspective of joy through following.

Day 5: Read Ps 16:11. You are not alone. As a follower of Christ, we are promised the presence of God. Consistent with the Psalmist writing in Psalm 16, Paul writes in Galatians 2, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." He is not only with us, but living in us. How does that idea change your perspective? He is certainly aware of our heart and our motivations. Is obedience merely a means to an end? What does Jesus want for us? To become more like Him. Why? As I become more like Him I begin to live as I was created to live. So reflect on Sunday's message and the past few days. Where are you experiencing joy, missing joy? Remember Jesus' words In John 15: "Remain in me, and I will remain in you... you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me." Make a point to share something you learned with a friend or in your small group.