

Experience Joy

Scripture used: [Hebrews 12:1-3](#)

OVERVIEW

This week, Pastor Hurmon continued our Lenten sermon series on Joy. Inspired by Kay Warren's book, [Choose Joy](#), written in the wake of her adult son's suicide, and a [Forum Episode](#) on KQED that examined "the role of joy during times of crisis." As Kay Warren writes, "Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be all right and the determined choice to praise God..." regardless of our circumstances. Focused on the Bible verse [Hebrews 12:1a](#), Pastor Hurmon provided concrete ways that we can throw off everything that hinders so that we might run the race of life with perseverance.

KEY POINTS

1. *Acceptance*: In order to experience joy, we first need to accept the reality that life on Earth is broken and will be hard, even painful. Our entire creation is broken and suffering is part of the human experience. Like us, even Jesus experienced pain. Like Him, we need to keep our eyes fixed on the ultimate joy that exists on the other side of suffering.
2. *Perseverance*: In order to experience joy in this world, we need to recognize that God is sovereign. The Bible is honest that not every human life has a happy ending. (Read [Hebrews 11:35-40](#)). God alone knows if it is best to remove brokenness or better to use brokenness. As Dr. Edith Eger, a Holocaust survivor, psychotherapist, [and author](#) has written, "I can't say that everything happens for a reason, that there's a purpose in injustice or suffering, but I can say that pain, hardship, and suffering are the gift that helps us grow, and learn, and become who we are meant to be."
3. *Gratitude*: You cannot have a joyful heart without having a grateful heart. And you cannot be a grateful person without experiencing joy. Since there is a reciprocal relationship between gratitude and joy, we need to cultivate joy by experiencing the present moment with gratefulness rather than waiting for a perfect moment to experience joy.
4. *Throw off Guilt* : With all the suffering in the world, we need to remember that we must choose to let go of guilt as a hindrance to joy. Again, Dr. Eger offers us hard-won wisdom. "Sometimes we think that if we move on from loss or trauma...we are somehow dishonoring the dead or the past. It is ok to laugh, to have joy." We are encouraged to dance! We are encouraged to move forward and to celebrate the life and love that we have already experienced rather than to ruminate over our losses over and over again.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - As a group, challenge yourselves to sit in silence for 5 minutes to become fully aware in the present moment and notice what happens. What can you see? What can you hear? Become aware of the feeling of having your feet solid on the ground, the weight of your body supported by the chair, the inhalation and exhalation of your breath. Afterwards, share out your experience with one another. How might taking quiet time to sit in silence every day help us to cultivate gratitude? How might this practice lead us to more joy? Will you commit to practicing gratitude throughout the week and reporting back to the group next week? What might living out that commitment look like or involve?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Reflect on [Hebrews 11:35-40](#). Grapple with the reality of suffering. How difficult is the teaching that suffering is part of being human for you? Does this teaching align with what you have been taught? Does this ring true with what you have experienced and witnessed? Share examples of how God has used brokenness rather than removed brokenness in your own life.
- 3) **DO** - *What is hindering me from experiencing joy?* Reflect and pray on this question. Ask God for the grace to throw off all that is weighing you down and the wisdom to know when to pray "God save me" and when to pray "God give me the strength to endure." Be sure to sign in for our Good Friday and Easter Sunday services. Invite your loved ones to join us online as we rejoice in our Risen Lord who conquered death!