

CELEBRATION | *If Joy Was A Colour*

What a fun worship experience that was! And we're actually going to follow it up with a fun spiritual practice now too. I'm going to throw some questions out to you, and I want you to try to find your real answers, ok? Whatever it is for you.

First, If Joy was a colour, what colour would it be?

- Don't have to know a why, just what is your instinct? Think about it for a second.
- If other people are there watching with you, share your answers if you like.

Next: If Joy was a food, what food would it be?

- Not just your favourite food... but what food says JOY to you?
- (Can you picture that food, right now in your mind?)
- Again, go ahead and think – pause the video if you need to.

Finally: If Joy was a place, where is that place?

- Maybe it's a place you visit often, that just makes you feel happy... maybe it's somewhere you've never been, but long to go...
- If joy was a place, where do you imagine that place would be?

I know that for me, just thinking about those weird little questions, causes me to smile. And I'm pretty sure that if we were in the same room right now, and I heard your answers, they would also make me smile. Joy is pretty contagious.

I don't know where you feel you live on the personality spectrum, whether you consider yourself a naturally really joyful person, or if you tend a little more towards the curmudgeonly end of things.

The Bible tells the story of a prophetic governor by the name of Nehemiah, and at a time when Israel was coming out of one of the hardest seasons in their national history, Nehemiah gave this unexpected instruction to the people of Jerusalem:

***"Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."* – Nehemiah 8:10**

It's wild, right? To think that Joy and Celebration are spiritual "disciplines" – they're holy work that we NEED to engage in on a regular basis, lest we become unhealthy and weak. If you don't exercise the muscle of celebration, your joy will atrophy. It'll disappear.

So we're here in the dog days of summer, but we don't want to get TOO weak! So we're going to practice some joy-filled reflecting.

I want you to think on a big scale first. In the scope of your whole life, what are some of the very best things that have ever happened to you? What has brought you great big joy? I'll give you a minute to think.

Have you got something in mind? Take a minute to feel the feelings of it, and then say a quick prayer of thanks to God. For whatever the memory was, for the fact that you can re-celebrate it in your heart today. Take a minute to do that now.

Ok, now let's move the lens a little closer in. **What about just in this past week – where did you experience joy in the past 7 days?** Not perfect circumstances. Not a perfect life. What's been simply good (for your insides)? Try to find that memory

Now part of what helps move a little dollop of joy into a deeper realm of celebration is saying it out loud, and even more so when you say it out loud **to** someone else. So if you are taking the service in with anyone else right now, turn and share with them what moment came to mind for you – and say why. If nobody's there with you right now, pull out your phone and send a quick text to a friend. "Hey I just wanted to tell you something that brought me joy this week." We'll give you a little longer for this part.

Ok now one more zoom in even closer. **Where have you caught a glimpse of joy already just today?**

James 1:17 says ***"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows."*** Maybe the fact that you heard birds singing on the back porch as you drank your coffee was a holy gift from God. Maybe you got to sleep in, maybe the sunlight came through the back window just right. Can you find some genuine joy in even the simplest of moments?

Take another minute, and either share with whoever you're with, or text another friend with this one.

No matter what difficult things might be present in our lives at any given moment, deep joy and life and hope and glimpses of God's goodness and light are ALSO always going on at the very same time. And we don't want to miss them, because harnessing those moments of light through joy and celebration are exactly the strength we need to get us through the mud of life.

So this week, as you go about the highs and lows of whatever life brings, don't forget to enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, to practice joy, and even celebration with one another, in the midst of it. Because the joy of the Lord is our strength.