

The Trouble with Joy

By: Chris M. Coursey

How ironic that joy can share the same sentence as trouble! What comes to your mind as you think about joy? Maybe it's a smiling face, warm feelings or the absence of sadness? Many people don't realize it, but joy is a basic emotion as is sadness, shame, disgust, despair, anger and fear. Not only is joy an emotion but a relational experience. We experience joy when people are glad to be with us. Joy means we are the sparkle in someone else's eyes. Upon recognition of our presence, our personal people's faces light up, their tone of voice conveys authentically, 'I'm so glad to be with you!' They are absolutely delighted to be in our presence and it shows. Joy is the only emotion infants will seek on their own - not anger, nor fear and definitely not despair. Joy is the youngest emotion recorded in Scripture. (Luke 1:44) Joy is also one of the reasons Jesus gave for speaking to us. (John 15:11) Amazingly enough, neurologists have discovered a part of the brain that grows according to the amount of joy in one's life.

Joy as an emotional state is what we are supposed to set our nervous system's 'thermostat' at more than any other emotional state. When joy is not 'the norm' then depression, anxiety, anger and worry become our nervous system's standard. This means our natural state transforms into an 'unnatural' state, so to speak. Joy becomes a mere daydream, a word without experience rather than a consistent reality in our interactions, conversations, worship and daily life. In fact, addictions, compulsions, conflicts, depression and divorces can all be traced to the lack joy in one's life. Addictions in particular are one of many artificial ways people attempt to reach a joyful state.

So, what does joy have to do with trouble? Joy is contagious. Like Jesus, His presence had a powerful impact on the people around Him. The Bible asks us to follow Him and experience His joy. If you decide to pursue Jesus and drink from the wells of salvation, your life will never be the same again. Are you ready for this kind of 'trouble'?