

Going Deeper

Your weekly guide to understanding God with others

Times of Refreshing - Part 3

TIM PIESSE

Introduction

We all know that choosing joy is not always as simple as it may sound. If you look at your life circumstances right now, it might be easier to spot where trials and tribulations are than it is to find joy. But we need to remember that joy does not happen in an instance, nor does it exist in the absence of trials. In his letter to the early church, James teaches the believers - then and now, to consider it pure joy in times of trials. The good news is that the joy of the Lord is in us. It may not come out naturally, but we do have it within ourselves. When we choose joy in times of trials of many kinds, we will have a rich experience in life, faith and God.

Read

Acts 8:1, James 1:1-4

Discuss

1. The context of James 1:1-4 can be found in Acts 8:1. The church in Jerusalem was scattered after five years since the day of Pentecost, yet James wrote to them saying "consider it pure joy". What kind of trials do you think they were facing? How would you feel when someone - with good intention, say that to you when you and your loved ones are facing trials? What do you think you need more in those situations?
2. According to James, why do we need to consider it joy in times of trials? Why is choosing joy easier said than done? What are the obstacles in your life today that often hinder you from joy?
3. James 1:3 says "...the testing of your faith produces perseverance". Share an example of a trial you have faced. What did you learn about faith from it? Did it bring about perseverance or did you just want to give up?

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4. Pastor Tim Piesse teaches us that joy is found in gratitude and generosity. It is about acknowledging what we have as a gift, and to use it for the benefit of others. Have you experienced or witnessed this kind of joy - in gratitude and generosity?
5. Read Nehemiah 8:10. What is your understanding of “the joy of the Lord”?
6. Pastor Tim Piesse teaches that the joy of the Lord is in us, and he also challenges us to live it out. Do you know someone who does this well? What do they do? How do you feel when you are around them?

Respond

Choosing joy during times of trials can be a challenge. We learn from the sermon that joy starts with gratitude and generosity. We have to start celebrating small triumphs without denying the challenges. We are also taught to be grateful for the imperfect gifts, and to start practicing generosity with what we have. Knowing that the joy of the Lord is your strength, and it is in you, what small triumphs have you had in the past week that you have not celebrated? How are you going to practice generosity this week? Find 1 small way to do so. Trust that you will find joy in doing so.