

# MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW | JOY

KYLE RILEY | JUNE 12, 2022

Alright, Traders Point, how are we doing? I love it.

Hey, so good to be here with all of you. I just want to take a moment to welcome everybody at all of our campuses—everybody who is joining online, glad you are tuning in with us today.

And before we get rolling we have to celebrate because our West campus has moved into their brand-new building! West campus, we see you. We love you. We hope this has been a day of excitement so far. And we just need to celebrate.

We felt God leading us to the west side a number of years ago. So we went. And we found a middle school. And they were gracious to us and allowed us to use that space. We did set up and tear down every single week thinking this will only be for a year, maybe two. It's been five.

And in the midst of those five years we have just seen God's faithfulness over and over again as we showed up. Many people showing up very early and staying very late setting up and tearing down. We've seen people give of their time, their talents, and their resources. We've seen an entire church being extremely generous, which allowed us to acquire this building.

We want everybody to know that we know that church is not about a building, but church is God's people. The building is just a tool. A tool that we can use to allow God's people to gather, to grow closer to Jesus, and then to go out into the community and to make a difference.

Nonetheless, we are so grateful for God's faithfulness and your generosity over the years that have allowed us to do this. So, one more time could we just celebrate God's faithfulness through the years in that way.

If you are new here, you are just joining us, right now we are in week two of a sermon series called *What the World Needs Now*. And we have been walking through the fruit of the Spirit, which can be found in Galatians, chapter 5. So if you've got a Bible or a device with a Bible on it go ahead and scroll or turn there. If not, no worries. All of the verses will be up there on the screen next to me.

But as you do that, I just want to quickly remind you, or maybe even inform you of what Galatians is. So, Galatians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to a group of churches in the region of Galatia, which would be modern day Turkey—there were about four churches. And he actually started these churches. So, Paul is the founding pastor and he's writing back to these churches.

He would visit these churches, and on a lot of his missionary journeys, he would stop there, he would encourage them, and he would teach them—he actually had relationships with them.

So, in this letter Paul is writing them and he said some very encouraging things in this letter. He said some very challenging things to them in this letter. He speaks a lot of truth, and he even calls them out on a few things.

I don't know if you have anybody in your life who isn't hesitant to call you out. Maybe a friend or a family member. Maybe it's the person you're sitting next to. If it's that person, don't look over at them, just keep looking at me and smile.

Paul is that guy. He's that guy, who, because he had established relational equity with them he could share some very hard truths with them. It's because he lived with them. He ate meals with them. He shared time with their families. He sent kids Venmo on their birthday; he gave them money. And he just continued over and over to not only share God's Word with them, but to share his life with them.

He shared some very hard things, but they needed to be challenged because the people of Galatia started to fall back into this legalistic, this religious way of life. They were depending on God's law to be saved. And Paul is saying, "Hey, look. I want you to remember that it is God's Spirit that now leads you. You are free in Jesus."

As we get to chapter 5, Paul kind of lays out what freedom in the Spirit actually looks like. And he says that there are these two options that we have as followers of Jesus. One: he reminds them that there is a sinful nature that all of us have and he kind of paints a picture of what it looks like to follow that sinful nature. He said, "If you follow this sinful nature it will result in these things." And he would list this whole list of things including anger and jealousy and sexual immorality and lust and a number of other things. As we look at the world today, 2000 years later, not much has changed. There is still a lot that we are wrestling with when it comes to that.

But then he would go on to say that there is actually a different way. Yes, there is this tug of war that we have, but as followers of Jesus, we ought to be led by the Spirit of God and the Spirit of God actually produces these qualities in us as we submit to Him. And He lists these nine qualities in verse 22. Let's take a look at them. He says:

*"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control..."*

This is what is known as the fruit of the Spirit. And I think it's important for us to know what this is and also what it is not. It is not just a list of some virtues that we strive toward. Paul is not giving us a checklist per se.

This isn't a thing that we say, "Hey, if I do this I will be considered a Christian." It's far different than that. What this is is what is supernaturally sprouting from our lives as we abide in Jesus and as we are led by His Spirit.

And I think it is easy for us to look at a list like that and kind of give ourselves a score and say, "Well, I think I'm about seven out of ten of those. I'm shooting about 70 percent. I haven't fully submitted every area of my life to Jesus, but I'm good on a number of those."

It's almost as if Paul knew that would be the response of both the Galatians as well as us today, because he says, "Actually that's not the way it looks when you follow Jesus." He would go on in verse 25 to say this:

*"Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives."* Paul, himself, would say, "I'm not a perfect person." And neither are we. We aren't perfect, but we are called to submit ourselves to the Lord's leading and the Spirit is supposed to lead every single part of our lives. We cannot pick and choose what this looks like.

It's also important to know that this isn't something that we actually work for. We can't white knuckle our way to good moral behavior. We can't consider ourselves the masters of morality.

Personally, I'm out on all of that. I tried it and it is exhausting. Ultimately, it just led to hypocrisy. There was a point in my life, though, when I came to realize that as I was following Jesus, there was this gap between what I said I believed and what my life actually looked like. There was this discrepancy where I was proclaiming one thing, but I was practicing something totally different. It was incongruent.

But the more that I began to fall in love with Jesus, the more I realized that following Jesus is actually about letting Him close that gap over time. There was this gap between what I proclaimed and what I practiced. But the more that I submit to His Spirit, the more the Spirit closes that gap.

And that's what God has called all of us to do as we live in line with the Spirit's prompting. We are to be led by the Spirit in every single part of our lives.

Today, we are going to cherry-pick, if you will, from that list of fruit. You can just cringe at my bad joke; I'm used to it. It's okay. Today we're going to talk about *joy*. We're going to talk about joy.

And I don't know what comes to mind or even who comes to mind when you think about joy, but when I think about joy, man, I think about my wife and my three kids. We have three kids: six, four, and six months old—all girls. You all pray for me, okay. Pray for your boy. It is a lot. If we get a dog, it's going to be a boy. No doubt. I need some more testosterone in the house.

When I think about joy it's impossible for me to not consider their smiling faces, to not hear their laugh. Sure, they have their episodes like any other child, they whine and cry a lot. They cry when I tell them they cannot watch another episode of *Bluey* and a host of other things that I tell them they can't do. But at the core of it, they are so joyful.

It's almost as if the Spirit of God has been convicting me over the past couple of months as I look at their lives. I almost have this holy envy of what they have: the laughs, the smiles.

I kind of like parallel that with my life. And God has been convicting me, "Does your life look like that? Kyle, the relationship that I've called you into should look very similar to the disposition that they have. The way that they see the world. How joyful they are."

And I think that God is calling all of us to have that same disposition as we talk about what joy should look like in our lives. But before we get there, I think it's important for us to actually make a distinction between something very important.

I have the privilege of sitting down with a lot of people doing what I am able to do. And I'm walking people through the highs of life, but also the lows of life. In those low moments when we get together and talk and have conversations to just process what is happening: relational issues or an experience that has caused some hurt and some pain, at some point in the conversation these words will come out, they will say, "Pastor Kyle, at the end of the day, I just want to be happy. I just want to be happy." And I get that. I get the sentiment behind it.

If we're honest many of us have either thought that or we have said it out loud at times. But I think it's important that we make the distinction between our worldly view of happiness and the biblical view of joy, because there is a vast difference.

Our culture feeds into this. Our culture is obsessed with happiness. You go to the nearest bookstore, and you go down the self-help aisle, you will be overwhelmed with the amount of books that start with *Five Ways to...* alright?

I mean, you look at everything the media, the TV commercials—it's all centered in this packaging: If you just buy this product, if you get this service, then your life will be so much better, and you will have happiness.

The vacation packages. The Amazon shopping. The in-store shopping—if you're still doing that in 2022. The alcohol and drug companies. All of them feed into this lie and are centered on the fact that, "Hey, happiness starts here." And the danger is that we have a tendency to believe that, and it may even be true for a time, but it's temporary and it's fleeting.

I want to pose the question:

What if God wants us to experience something more? Something that isn't temporary. Something that is eternal.

When we look at the Bible we see that God doesn't just want us to experience happiness, He wants us to experience joy, which is vastly different from happiness, which leads me to this important point if you're taking notes:

Happiness is a feeling. Joy is an attitude.

Happiness is a feeling. It comes and it goes. It changes and it is conditional. Some of our happiness is determined by the weather. I mean, you are a joy to be around when it's sunny and 70. But let it be gloomy, you turn into Eeyore really quick. It's situational. It's conditional. But when the Bible talks about joy, it talks about it being this attitude. It's a posture of the heart positioned on the presence of God.

One of the greatest examples we have of somebody who has this attitude is a guy named David. David, throughout the Psalms would express a number of emotions but one of the themes in the Psalms is that of joy.

I want us to look at Psalm, chapter 16 because we'll get a front row seat of why David has this attitude. So if you have a Bible, turn to Psalm 16. In verse 8 this is what King David says. He says:

*"I know the Lord is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me. No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice. My body rests in safety."*

As we look at that we have to ask the question: Why is David's heart blessed? What caused him to rejoice? And we clearly see that it was the fact that he knew that the presence of the Lord was always with him. That's what joy is about.

Joy is an attitude that we have based on the God who we serve. I don't have a slide for that one. That one is for free. Joy is an attitude that we have based on the God who we serve. And it's the reality that we know that no matter what, God is present in our life. I think that the reason that some of us can't experience the true, the deep, the intimate joy that God wants us to have is because we have believed the lie that God is not present, especially when it comes to pain and loss. That He's absent from our heartache. He's absent from our losses. Somehow He is distant from the hardships of life.

But my Bible says that the Lord draws near to the brokenhearted. Hello. My Bible says that God does not change, that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever more.

Come on. If I was in a Baptist church I'd have them cue the organ right now. My Bible says that He has promised to never leave me nor forsake me. My Bible says that His love is unconditional.

So despite all the heartache and the pain that we go through, we have to hold tight to the fact that God is present with us through that pain, which means that no matter how devastating the news, no matter how dark the situation, no matter how damaging the pain, God is with me. Nothing catches Him by surprise. He is sovereign. He's omnipotent. And He's omnipresent. And His very Spirit lives inside of me, to give me grace and joy.

I love this killer quote by Dr. Tony Evans. He says:

*"Joy is internal stability in spite of external circumstances because of the knowledge that God is in control."*

I love that.

Some of us think that God isn't in control when life doesn't go our way, when life doesn't pan out the way that we had expected it to. When you didn't get the job that you just knew that you were qualified for. When you didn't get into the school of your dreams. When that person walked out of your life unexpectedly. When you got that unexpected diagnosis. Or when your adult child calls you and tells you, "I'm no longer a Christian." We think that God is not present in our moments in the valley. But what we see is that God is always present with us.

But we have this misconception that God's presence is connected to our prosperity.

That when things are going great in life, God is there. But when things are not going so great, "God, where are You? God, are You truly there? Are You truly present in my life?"

All we have to do is look at David. He said, "I know that God is always with me. He is always beside me and I'm not going to be shaken because He is right here with me through the pain."

And I don't know about you, but I want joy like that. Joy that is anchored in the fact that God is with me no matter what, because His presence never changes.

Which leads us to this clear distinction:

Happiness is based on circumstances in our lives. Joy is based on certainty in our Savior.

There is a clear distinction in that. Certainty in our Savior. Certainty that He is who He says He is. That He is for us. That He is with us. Certainty that He isn't just with us now, but He is with us forever. He promises that we will spend eternity with Him.

And David goes on to actually explain this very thing. He says this in verse 11, he says: *"You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence,"* and what? *"... the pleasures of living with you forever."*

You want to know some of the most joyful people? It's those people who know that they will spend eternity with God. They cling to that promise. And that allows them to see past the here and the now to a day where there will be no more pain and no more tears and no more suffering and no more heartache.

I have a neighbor and his name is Terry. Terry, on the surface level, is very different from me. Terry is in his 70s. Terry is a little heavier set. An older white guy.

Terry loves to walk his dog three or four times a day. And does so, often in overalls with no shirt on underneath them. There's a picture for you.

Terry has been married to his wife for over 30 years and they have beautiful grandkids who oftentimes will play with my children.

And I have had a chance to just build a relationship with Terry over these past couple of years. There is just so much joy in him. Recently Terry shared with me that he has stage three Pancreatic cancer. We just got to talking about what that means for him. How he is handling it. And he shared some very honest things that he is concerned about. He's concerned about his family. What this means for his kids and his grandchildren.

I just asked him, "How are you handling all of this?" And I'll never forget what he shared with me, "Kyle, it's very hard. The treatments are very painful." Then he said, "No matter what happens, I know what is on the other side of this for me." And then he shared these words, which struck me to my core. He said, "This cancer may take my life, but the Lord has my soul." I walked away encouraged and a little bit convicted because I was like, "Do I walk through life with that same kind of heart posture?"

I see Terry come home from chemotherapy treatments and stuff. And in his limited ability he'll still get out and walk his dog, still has a smile on his face, and I'm like, "Man, I want that kind of joy."

I think it's also important that we make the distinction of what joy is not. This does not mean that we suppress our feelings, that we put on a big smile, and we just pretend to



be happy. If anything, I would encourage us that there are actually healthy opportunities to engage our feelings. And we should lean into them. But, we don't surrender to them. Our feelings are indicators, but they are not dictators. They are gauges, but they are not our guide. Our feelings are meant to help us process how we are looking at the external happenings around us. And what we do is we take those feelings, whatever they are in the moment, and we ask, "What is this feeling trying to tell me?" Whether it's sadness or fear or worry, we say, "What is this feeling trying to tell me?"

And then we ultimately submit it to God and align it with Scripture and allow His joy to accompany that feeling. And then we make a distinction on, "Should I lean into this? Is it telling me the truth? And how far should I press into it?"

The reality is you can have both a feeling and have an attitude of joy at the very same time. You can experience sadness but still have an attitude of joy at the very same time. I've seen it happen.

I have officiated funerals where there is weeping and worship at the same time. Where there is sorrow and celebration at the very same time. I've watched a mother get up and ball her eyes out as she is weeping and sorrowful over the fact that her child is no longer there but at the very same time she is praising and rejoicing over her child's lifeless body.

We ask how can you do both of those things? They are not mutually exclusive. One is a feeling, and the other is an attitude.

It doesn't mean that we casually walk through our lives singing "Hakuna Matata," kind of numb to what is happening around us in the world. It means we lean into the feelings, but we have an attitude of joy that's based on the promise of our Savior that He is with us now and as we go into eternity. So what joy does is it gives us eternal perspective. It helps us to process how we see life in light of eternity.

One of my favorite theologians has this quote. He says:

"God, would You stamp eternity on my eyeballs?"

I love that. You want to pray a bold prayer, you pray something like that, "God, would You stamp eternity on my eyeballs?" Meaning, "The lens through which I see life is constantly being informed by what You are doing behind the scenes. That there is something beyond the here and the now.

"God, would You help me to possibly see what is going on in the world? Acknowledge that this world is broken, but don't let me be broken by it. God, would You help me to love people unconditionally, with joy, the same way that You love them because You created them, and You died for them? Help me to love them even when I feel like they don't deserve it."

Hello somebody. Come on. We got really quiet in here. You all are like, "I'm out on that one."

It's about us constantly seeing eternity. We have this eternal perspective and that's what our joy is based on. It is an eternal joy. And this joy, coupled with love, is what has

marked the church for thousands of years. I don't know if you know that. It is what sets the church apart.

After Jesus was taken back to heaven, there was an early church that faced extreme persecution: beaten and whipped and flogged and even killed over their faith.

And it was the joy they had in the midst of that that frustrated those who were persecuting them. They were like, 'We're trying to kill them, we're trying to stamp them out, we're trying to make them suffer and they just keep multiplying and they are joyful in the process.'

Paul would write some of his most joyful letters, mainly Philippians to the people in Philippi, while he was in jail, shackled in chains.

I think of American slavery, which was a cruel act. I think about how the enslaved Africans would often steal away in the cover of night, in secrecy, out into the woods. And they would build what was called hush harbors where they would put up these wet blankets that would help muffle sound and they would tip pots onto their side to catch the sound.

And in these hush harbors, man, they would dance, and they would sing, and they would preach, and they would rejoice, and they would weep in the midst of chaos and pain.

They were experiencing and expressing an extreme amount of joy.

I think about Christians in the Civil Rights Movement during Jim Crow and the segregated South. They were marching on and on singing "We Shall Overcome" with smiles on their faces. And as they were arrested for protesting they were singing hymns in their jail cells.

I think about the underground church in countries where Christianity is illegal. And if they are caught meeting they face death or jail. And yet, here they are meeting with joy over the fact that they get to gather with other believers and experience the joy that Jesus has for them.

I often ask myself, "How could these people express joy in the midst of chaos and pain?" And it's because for thousands of years joy has never been a feeling, but it's been about a focus. It's been about what we have been gazing at, what we have set our eyes onto. Yes we engage in the here and the now, but our eyes are focused on something and Someone so much bigger.

So my question for you today is:

What are you focusing on?

What are you gazing at as you experience the happenings of life? Are you focusing on circumstance or are you focusing on the fact that God has a presence and a promise both here and now, something that is constant, no matter what we experience in this life? There is so much joy that comes from that. And it is something that God deeply desires for all of us to have.

But if God desires all of us to have it then why is it still absent in so many of our lives? I think there are a number of reasons. I've already talked about how pain and suffering oftentimes cause us to be distracted from the joy that God wants us to have.



But I think that Satan actually uses a more subtle tactic to steal our joy. And I've come up with a list of.... This isn't an all-encompassing list, but I think this is a list of very prevalent things that try to steal our joy starting with:

- Comparison

Maybe a reason that some of us don't have joy in our own lives is because we're too busy comparing it to other people's. I know I easily fall into that trap, constantly, where I will compare my life or what I have or my giftings to somebody else's and I allow that to steal my joy.

As Craig Groeschel says, "The fastest way to kill something is to compare it to something else." And a lot of us are killing how special our own lives are, our own jobs, our own families, our own relationships. We're killing how special our own kids are because we're comparing them to someone else's kids.

But God wants us to have joy, not comparison. Not in what we lack but in what we have. I think another one is:

- Perfectionism

This is a subtle one because it can be easily disguised and masked as ambitious, "I'm just committed to excellence." Right? But the truth is, many of us struggle with trying to live up to a standard that God never set. We don't embrace God's gift of limits.

So, we spin our wheels striving for perfection missing out on the joy that exists in simply just being enough.

Some of you think that who you are and what you do isn't enough and it's robbing you of your joy.

Another one is:

- Bitterness

This is usually tied to an experience with something or with someone. Maybe as a result of that experience, somebody hurt you or maybe they back stabbed you or they walked out of your life, so you've guarded yourself and you're jaded. And now the lens in which you view the world is shaped by that experience. And it's made you cynical and joyless.

Another one is:

- Worry

I think this is keeping so many of us from joy. And usually it's tied to a lack of control.

Any control freaks in here? Yeah, you're just going to leave me up here by myself? That's okay. Go ahead and lie in church. That's fine.

Joy is connected to our trust in God. And there are things that keep us worried, things we can't control. It keeps us from worshiping with joy.

I think one last one is:

- Shame

And this is a big one. So many people wrestle with the guilt of falling short and making mistakes or not living up to expectations. Some of us have no time to be joyful because we're too busy beating ourselves up.

You need to know that Jesus nailed both your sin and shame to cross. Stop trying to take it down.

We need to rest in the forgiveness that He offers and find joy in the fact that we don't have to be living in shame anymore.

Maybe you can resonate with a few of those things or maybe there are several of them where you would raise your hand and say, "Kyle, I struggle with a lot of them." And that's okay.

But what I want you to know today is that God has called you to something so much more. He doesn't want you to just experience happiness, He wants you to experience deep, intimate joy that only comes from a relationship with Him.

I think it's impossible for us to actually feast on the fruit of the Spirit, or being led by the Spirit, without creating a space for us to really abide in Jesus and allowing the Spirit to move in our lives. So similar to last week, I just want to create a space for us to just be and to reflect on who God is and what He has done in our life and what He wants to continue doing in each and every one of our lives.

Maybe this is the first time all week where you can stop and just be in the presence of God, because if you're honest, you've been spinning your wheels all week, you've been constantly on the go, going from one thing to the next—busy. And you haven't created a space just to be still and find joy in the presence of God.

So I want all of us at all of our campuses to just take this moment right now to close our eyes. Close our eyes and take a deep breath in and exhale. And I'm going to lead us as we take this moment to first reflect—to reflect on the character of God.

I want you to focus on His goodness. Think how good God has been to you, the things that you often take for granted, the things you have, His presence in your life. We serve a good Father.

Think about His mercy. The things that you deserve that God didn't give to you. And things that are actually a blessing, mainly eternity with Him. Think how merciful our heavenly Father is.

Think about His grace—how God gave you things you didn't deserve. The blessing in those things. His unmerited, unearned grace. Reflect on that.

Next we're going to repent. This isn't a scary word. This is actually a gift that God has given us. The ability to just come before Him and to be real. Some of us just need to confess today.

Maybe you need to confess what has been robbing you of your joy. Maybe it's one of the things on the list or maybe several of them. Bring it into the light. Name it: comparison, perfectionism—maybe you are just worried out of your mind, and you are anxious. Maybe you wrestle with a deep sense of shame, and you just need to embrace the grace that is available and the forgiveness of Jesus. You just need to ask God to help you turn from whatever it is that is causing joy to be robbed from your life.

Next we're going to rejoice. I want you to take the time to think about His love for you, His unconditional love that should bring you so much joy. I want you to find joy in His

presence, His presence that is with you now but also, because of Jesus, there is a presence that we get to spend with Him forever.

Remind yourself that, as David said, that God is always with you. Rejoice over that. Find joy in it.

Lastly, we're going to just rest, be reflective, be repentant, be rejoiced in how we get to just rest. Begin to rest in what Jesus has done, in who He says we are. Rest is something that is so foreign to us, especially how we live. We're so busy doing and we struggle to just be.

You just need to rest in who God says you are, not your mistakes, not your roles, not your titles but in who God says that you are. You are chosen. You are loved. You've been redeemed. You are His. Rest in the finished work of Jesus. Find joy in His abundant grace.

God, we thank You for these gifts, that we get to reflect on who You are, we get to repent, that we get to rejoice, and we get to rest. God, that You give us space to be with You, to be reminded of Your presence. Thank You for the gift that that is.

God, we completely surrender everything to You because we truly want to abide in who You are and to be led by Your Spirit. So, God, I pray that You would help us as a church to allow Your Spirit to actually sprout this fruit of joy in our lives.

God, if we're honest, when people think of some of us they don't think of us as joyful. We say that we follow Jesus, but we don't exhibit the joy that comes with following You. God, I pray that supernaturally, by Your Spirit, You would give us this call, that we wouldn't have to work for it but we would just completely surrender every part of our lives to Your Spirit and that we would find ultimate joy, not in what we do but in who You say that we are and the fact that we get to abide with You now and forever. That should bring us so much joy.

Jesus, we thank You it's in Your name we pray. Amen.

I'm going to ask all of us at all of our campuses to go ahead and stand to our feet as we get ready to enter into worship.

There is a moment of joy in the Bible that oftentimes gets overlooked. And it's the crucifixion of Jesus. When we think about the crucifixion of Jesus, He's hanging on the cross, beaten and bruised, bloody, struggling for breath, joy is not one of the things we think about. We don't think that He experienced joy in that moment.

But do you know that Jesus had joy when He was on the cross? Actually, the book of Hebrews talks about this. And it says:

*"Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne."*

Jesus experienced an extreme amount of joy when He was up there on that cross. He didn't find joy in the event. No, the event was actually bloody and painful. He didn't find joy in the feeling because it hurt. No, what Jesus found joy in was the outcome. He found joy in the outcome of what this meant for you and for me. That we get to spend eternity with Him, forever and ever.

Thinking of that outcome allowed Him to stay nailed to that cross and to go into a grave. He didn't see His circumstance; Jesus saw something totally different. When Jesus was hanging on that cross, He didn't see His circumstance. You know what He saw? He saw you. All of you. Every bit of you. Every bit of you.

Prideful you. Arrogant you. Lonely you. Lying you. Insecure you. Cheating you. He saw all of who you are. But do you know what else He saw? Redeemed you. Rescued you. Restored you. Revived you. Rejoicing you.

And it brought Him great joy to picture what you could be if you would just embrace the joy that He wants to give you. Jesus died so that you could have joy. And some of us haven't experienced that joy, but I want you to know that Jesus died so that you could have it.

Church, as we go through our lives we have what the world needs, not in an arrogant kind of way but we know that it all comes from our relationship with Jesus.

We wake up each and every day responding to the gospel, responding to the Good News. "There is nothing I can do to earn it, but God's presence is always with me, and I get to celebrate with Him forever in eternity." And it's a pure, authentic, Spirit-led joy.

Father, we thank You. We thank You for who You are. Father, we thank You that we get to experience joy, not us putting on a fake smile, not us putting a filter on social media that causes us to pretend that we have happiness, but we have deep rooted, intimate joy that only comes from an encounter with Your Son, Jesus.

And, God, through this encounter we can be authentic about who we are, we can be authentic about our hurts and our pain and our trials. But we also hold fast, we cling to the fact that You are present with us both now and forever in eternity.

So with that perspective in mind, God, I pray that You fill this place, fill all of our hearts with joy, joy that goes out into the world, out into our city, out into our communities so that when people see us they see You in us. And they may say, "I don't believe what they believe yet, but I want what they have."

And it's a Spirit-led joy that only comes from an encounter with You. We're so glad that we met You. So change our hearts, change our minds so that we can express the joy that You died to give us. We thank You and we love You, Jesus. It's in Your name that we pray. Amen.