

Sunday

Week 4. Freedom From Apathy

Apathy is a state of disinterest – a loss of interest in life and its adventures. The opposite of apathy is enthusiasm.

In the world of today, with images of war etched atop those of the World Trade Center aflame, the true state of our vulnerability has gained a new reality.

Now, more than ever before, it is clear. No one is safe unless we are all safe. Our only hope for lessening fear in the world is to choose to rally together as a family of one among a family of nations and determine to make the world a safer place for everyone.

Thus, enthusiasm's true meaning becomes ours.

"The world is still waiting to see what God can do with a man wholly consecrated to His service."

John Knox

Enthusiasm means "one with the energy of God." Thus the word derives from the concept of being inspired and possessed by God – the same as being empowered by the Holy Spirit.

"You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you . . ." (Acts 1:8)
This power is the hallmark of having received the Holy Spirit.

"Enthusiasm," according to writer George Matthew Adams, "is a kind of faith that has been set on fire."

So, to give all you've got – holding nothing back, this is what Ralph Waldo Emerson inferred when he said, "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."

Even the most apathetic can experience the power of the Lord when we decide to "let go" and yield to the power of the Holy Spirit, remembering that Jesus is the only person on earth who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

So, what can we use as a trigger to move our thinking from apathetic thinking to enthusiastic thinking?

Consider beauty.

When we're apathetic we miss so much of the beauty that flows from the people, the places, the things that surround us. We just don't see it.

Yet it's there for our enjoyment. In fact the universe is in the habit of creating beauty. There are flowers and birds in song, snowflakes, smiles, acts of great courage that make us tingle, laughter, a job well done, the smell of coffee.

God is good.

So, you're free to drink deep of the shining glories that surround you. Drink deep of the beauty which nourishes your soul. Drink deep of grace that is so amazing.

God is great.

Thus, you will never be heard to utter the lament of Saint Augustine, "Too late have I loved you o Beauty, so ancient and so new, too late have I loved you."

Monday

Week 4 – Day 1

Morning Prayer

Theme: Ask God to heal our families

Today pray that your family members will become people of kindness.

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Meaning In Food

I can remember the scene so vividly as if it were yesterday. Leonard, my best friend, and I were 10 year old boys at the Mothers Cottage in the orphanage where we grew up. One Sunday afternoon, after cooking stolen fudge in the Roses Springs woods, we mosed over to the Log Cabin woods and beneath a huge beechnut tree we ate fudge and talked about what we would be when we grew up. I already knew I would be a doctor. He wasn't sure. The shining moment, however, was the promise we made to be friends forever. And, now, sixty nine years later, we still talk on the phone once or twice a year, evidence that our friendship still has meaning in our minds, cemented by the fudge.

Wrapping UP

Let the day's events stream through your mind. Let them teach you. List five things you did today that were good. Thank God for each.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Make a list of six things you intend doing tomorrow. Ask for the Holy Spirit's help.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Tuesday

Week 4 – Day 2

Morning Prayer

Theme: Pray that God will heal our work communities

Today pray for a coworker who is dealing with health problems (either themselves or in their family). Pray that God will pour out his power and majesty and bring them peace.

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit The Holy Spirit As A Source of Meaning In Food

As an eater, it's hard not to think of the table as the domain of Jesus, for, like Jesus, as we eat the bread and share the wine, we join with all humanity in affirming life with every mouthful.

Through eating we acknowledge that our choice of food is a fundamental act of love and nourishment – a true celebration of our existence.

Thus, the very act of holding hands and giving thanks contributes to the meaning of life, as an extension of our caring, and as we eat in peace and grace, we celebrate the covenants that bind us together.

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Wednesday

Week 4 – Day 3

Morning Prayer

Theme: Pray for the healing of our living communities

Today pray for all the local organizations that help the poor and needy of your community. Ask God to deliver his blessing upon their work.

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit As A Source of Abundant Life

Jesus said, “. . . come, follow me.” (Luke 18:22)

When we come, there is actually only one thing we can dedicate to God, ourselves (see Romans 12:1).

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.

When we give God ourselves – He will make of us a Holy Experiment – a case of one – and His experiments always succeed.

Immediately, when we surrender, our creativity erupts like a continual source of abundant life as the Spirit of God perpetually springs up like a well of water. Thus, our job is to go out into the world to show others how creative and original God can be when we come to Him as He asks.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you give yourself (body, mind, and soul) to God.

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Thursday

Week 4 – Day 4

Morning Prayer

Theme: Pray for the healing of our nation

Today ask God that we become a nation of deeper compassion as we open our hearts and minds to the pain and suffering of the world.

Evening Prayer

Theme: Changing what is, through the power of the Holy Spirit The Holy Spirit As A Source of Divine Friendship

The totality of life.

Read Psalm 124.

It presents the reality of faith from a person who digs deeply into troubles and discovers that God is there, on our side. Thus, faith develops out of tough times, not easy times.

It's easy to fantasize about Heaven, about how wonderful it will be, about how majestic life will be there, praising God and loving Jesus. The Psalmist looks the other way, into the troubles of history, the anxieties of personal conflict, into daily worries, and finds there the action of a God in deliverance.

In truth, within the content of our lives we find that God is cosmic and sovereign and, in the times of our troubles, God has the first word and the last. So, the Kingdom of God is at hand, don't be afraid.

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Friday

Week 4 – Day 5

Morning Prayer

Theme: Pray for healing of the world

Today think about an area of the world currently in conflict (the Middle East, Afghanistan, Darfur). Pray for healing in that area. Ask God to do what man cannot.

Evening Prayer

Fundamental Friday(A review of the Spiritual Foundations of Change)

Principle #4 - The body, mind and spirit are linked. (Your physical health is influenced by your spiritual and mental state). (Luke 10:27; Col 3:8-10; Rom 8:5)

As a person you have a body, a mind, a brain, a soul, and a spirit, but you are one person, a person with character and will.

Soul refers to the way your personal spirit reasons and thinks and influences your mind toward action by the body. All actions invoke your will, but, your will, without the power of God's will, is weak and ineffectual.

Practically speaking, here are five mechanisms that you can practice to smooth out the integration of these functions toward greater effectiveness, advancing you to higher ground spiritually.

#1. Engaging in a repetitive physical activity such as the walking while moving a ball from one hand to another, an activity that interrupts prior thought patterns.

#2. Becoming immersed in contemplative prayer as a regular daily routine.

#3. Surrender. "Total abandonment" to God.

#4. Developing and implementing a project of your personal vision, get to work on something special.

#5. Becoming deeply engaged in a project of intentional compassion – service to a person or group in need.

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Saturday Eating Realities

Week 4

Take Notice!

You have been eating a low calorie, low fat diet, rich in fiber and protein.

You have been eating in a structured way – 3 averaged sized meals and 2 snacks a day.

Hopefully you are eating more fruits and vegetables while limiting your intake of pleasure foods (deserts, sweets, chocolate).

So, go back and review your 2 week food diary and compare it to what you are eating now.

Go shopping for Diet #3 items.

Start Diet #3 on Monday

Remember to chart your weight daily.

Saturday's Message

Week 4 "Real Joy" Philippians 4:4-7

Real Christian joy is not dependent on the circumstances of life. The Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians is a clear example of this truth. When Paul wrote this beautiful letter, he was confined to a prison in Rome. But even under those dire circumstances, the Philippian letter has been called "The Epistle of Joy." William Barclay is writing about Paul's letter to the Philippian Christians when he affirms: "Again and again the words joy and rejoice recur. 'Rejoice' writes Paul, 'and again I say unto you rejoice.' Even in prison Paul is directing the hearts of his friends – and directing our hearts – to the joy that no man can take from us."

In the Scripture lesson upon which this message is based (Philippians 4:4-7), Paul writes:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice . . . The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Someone has wisely called these verses "Paul's prescription for real Christian joy" which never runs out of date.

What are some of the spiritual lessons which Paul teaches in Philippians 4:4-7?

1. Paul teaches that one who would be blessed by real Christian joy must "rejoice in the Lord always." This means rejoice all the time because your life is anchored in faith in Almighty God. This is not easy but Christ never promised that it would be.

Peter Marshall used to preach a sermon which he called "Singing In The Rain." His main point was that real joy never forsakes the real Christian. This is what Paul is saying when he writes: "Rejoice in the Lord always."

I believe that real joy would characterize our lives and we would rejoice in the Lord always if we could always keep in mind what Christ has done for us. Because of His great love, He willingly suffered death for our sins. The prophet Isaiah – even before Christ was born – paints a word picture of this for us when

he says: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed."

Because of our sin Jesus went to the cross. Because of His cross we can find release and forgiveness. When we realize this great truth we cannot help but "rejoice in the Lord always."

2. Paul says that the person who would experience real, lasting Christian joy must "have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let his requests be made known to God." Any feelings of anxiety should be erased when we realize that we have a loving Heavenly Father to whom we can make our requests known. Through prayer with thankful hearts we find peace of mind and heart – real joy. No wonder the hymn writer proclaims:

What a Friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer.

In a world of turmoil like ours today, being faithful in our prayer life is the only way we can make sure that we have no anxiety about anything.

3. Paul describes real Christian joy when he says: "And the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your heart and minds in Christ Jesus."

Real Christian joy comes through Jesus Christ. When we are rightly related to Him through faith He keeps us in perfect peace.

Real Christian joy is beyond all human understanding. Abiding joy is a gift of God and finite minds will never be able to mentally understand such a gift of God.

How wonderful it is to know God personally, love Jesus Christ supremely, live for Him daily, and rejoice in Him always!

Reverend Phillip R. Morrow Sr.