

# JOY

MIND GAMES

WEEK 3 GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY CHAD BRUEGMAN

## START

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

**What was the last movie that really impacted you in a good way, and why?**

## SHARE

Welcome to our new series entitled, "Mind Games."

Every day we experience an entire spectrum of God-given emotions. Think about your day so far. How many different emotions have you experienced? In a given day it is possible to feel happiness, frustration, sadness, joy, optimism, regret, anger, insecurity, fear, and anxiety. It's fascinating, the roller coaster of emotions we can experience in just one day. There are many factors at play with our emotions. For instance, if we are tired or worn out, we might be more susceptible to be easily frustrated or angered. If we are feeling joyful and well-rested, we might be more likely to be gracious and patient with others. Not always; but more likely.

Now if that wasn't complicated enough, let's add the powerful influence of our thought life. We all have a wide-range of thoughts that go through our brains and half the time we don't even understand where they are coming from. Some of us think the best in situations, while others tend to believe that the sky is falling and think the worst. Thoughts are powerful and what you believe about God, yourself, and other people is more important than you might think.

We are told throughout scripture that we are loved, valuable, and we are worth being pursued by a loving God. We can either think about the truth of what God says about us or we can believe lies. In 2 Corinthians Paul tells us to literally, "...take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." We shouldn't let our thoughts push us around. We can take control and make sure that those thoughts line up with the Word of God. If the thoughts you're having aren't true, send them packing and cling to what God says is true! Make them obedient to Christ.

This week Chad talked about the beauty of one of the most misunderstood words in the Bible: joy. A huge misconception about following Christ is the false notion that if we follow Jesus, life will be easy and all our prayers of comfort and promotion will be answered. Many times, life can get more difficult as we identify ourselves as Christians. As we talk about joy this

week, we are going to look at what God really said about true joy and what it should mean to us. Joy is not the same as happiness, it is not an emotional state, but a choice regardless of what we are experiencing in life. It is a fruit of the Spirit; it can grow in us much like patience, love, and kindness. It can be cultivated in our lives.

As a reminder, we have talked about our thoughts and emotions and how powerful they can be. We talked about how emotions can be like a warning light on the dash of a car, letting us know that something is going on inside us that we need to pay attention to. These emotions are God-given and a gift from God. They are not meant to lead us, but to inform us. Life would be complete chaos if we allowed emotions to lead us. The word of God tells us that we are to take captive those thoughts and be sure they line up with what is really true about our identity or true about the situation we are currently in.

**Let's read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

**As a follower of Jesus, why is it we wage war differently than people who don't follow Christ?**

**What do you think the differences are between being happy and having joy?**

**When it comes to joy, how do we need to fight for that?**

## **GROW**

As Chad pointed out in his message, sometimes we are unable to control our circumstances, but we can control our thoughts. Sometimes this may seem impossible, especially when the circumstances might seem beyond repair, profoundly devastating, enraging or completely overwhelming. However, we serve an all-powerful God, and the Bible tells us in Philippians 4:12, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength." We are not left to fight this battle alone!

**Let's take a look at Galatians 5:22-23 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

Can you imagine *always* being joyful? Because joy is not an emotion that we have to work to maintain, this is not as impossible as it may sound. Notice the direction Paul gives us right after he tells us to always be joyful; he says, "Never stop praying." Our constant communication with the Father aligns our hearts to His promises. Without being close with the ultimate creator of joy, we don't stand a chance in cultivating the fruit of joy in our lives.

**Let's read John 16:16-22 and Hebrews 12:2b**

The disciples were incapable of understanding the change that was about to occur. Their confusion hindered their ability to fathom what Jesus was trying to communicate concerning the future. Jesus knew this, and He chose to focus on what the disciples would be left with after they saw their best friend, their mentor, their Messiah, die on the cross. They would be left with joy.

**We have access to joy through the Spirit, why do you think it is called a "fruit?"**

**Can you recall the last time you truly had joy? If so, describe the circumstances.**

## MOVE

We were not promised a life of ease, and we have all experienced the heartaches that life brings. There will also be trials and hurts that we will encounter in our future. The good news is that the joy of the Lord is not contingent on circumstances. As Christ followers, we are freely granted access to joy, even in the most trying and depressing times of our lives. Even when we experience seasons of life that are without trial and struggle, we have an opportunity to walk in not just happiness, but in joy. Our journey in life gives us countless opportunities to rely on the Lord, and find joy that would otherwise be hidden.

Let's read this quote from C.S. Lewis:

*...an unsatisfied desire which is itself more desirable than any other satisfaction. I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and Pleasure. Joy (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic, and one only, in common with them; the fact that any one who has experienced it will want it again. Apart from that, and considered only in its quality, it might almost equally well be called a particular kind of unhappiness or grief. But then it is the kind we want. I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world. But then Joy is never in our power and pleasure often is.*

*Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life*

**Read James 1:2-4 and John 16:33**

**In what ways are joy and our relationship with God related?**

**How can examining what Christ has done for us on the cross lead us into a deeper and richer understanding of what true joy is?**

**Currently, would you consider yourself a joyful person? Why or why not?**

**If you don't feel like a joyful person, what do you think needs to change in order for you to start cultivating joy in your life?**

## PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other, and asking the Lord to reveal further to us the mystery and beauty of joy in our own lives. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

## TO GO.

**1 Peter 1:8**

Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory...