



Free to Enjoy Today | Shawn Johnson | 3.18.18
LG Weekly

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer the following question:

If you could live in any fictional book, which would you choose?

SHARE

As we set sail into the new year, we all have hopes and dreams for how this year is going to be different than the last. Some of us start this year apprehensive of what is to come since last year was full of difficulty and trouble, while others are optimistic and driven to make the most of what's next. What do you think God thinks of your plans, aspirations and resolutions? What do you think His hopes and plans are for your life?

At Red Rocks Church, each year we seriously pray that God would give us a very specific verse which would encourage every person towards living a more full, rich and surrendered life to God; a timely word that would spark a fire and ignite the body of Christ to live to its fullest potential.

The apostle Paul challenged and encouraged the church in Galatia with this, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." Galatians 5:1

Red Rocks Church, we need to stand firm and not allow ourselves to go back to what once enslaved us. Jesus set us free to live in freedom with him. The boundaries God has put in our lives through God's word is for the sake of our freedom. Though it seems counter-intuitive, God puts boundaries in our lives to keep us free. He is not trying to hold something back from us, but wants to give us abundant life here in the present!

We all desire freedom and we all need it. God promises freedom and wants all of us to experience it in and through Him. Freedom from addiction. Freedom from selfishness. Freedom from fear. Freedom from anxiety. Freedom from comparison. But it will take courage to trust God at his word and in the leading of our lives. It will take self-discipline and accountability to take on that which wants to enslave us. It will take a willingness to trust God who perfectly provides all we need to live a holy life through him.

We can live free through Christ who set us free!

This week Shawn preached about joy and that we are set free to enjoy today.

Read 1 Samuel 17:38-40

The Philistines sent out their infamous warrior Goliath, an intimidating man in both stature and character, to fight the Israelites. Day after day, Goliath would slander Israel and their God, challenging someone to come and fight him (1 Sam. 17:8-9). Israel was terrified and no one offered to challenge the Philistine warrior.

David shows up to the battlefield and is outraged by Goliath's insults so he volunteers to fight Goliath. However, David is a shepherd, not a warrior. He has no armor, no sword, and no shield. So, Saul promptly orders David to be fit in his armor.

Although the armor was made specifically for Saul, whose stature was greater than Davids, the young man goes ahead and tries on the armor anyway. For a moment, David tries to walk forward in Saul's armor. He tries to fight the way Saul would fight and wear the armor Saul would wear. But it wasn't a good fit for him physically or spiritually.

David was most effective for God's kingdom when he took off Saul's armor and walked in the manner to which he was called. He trusted in God's ability to gain victory through him without

someone else's armor. When David steps up with a sling and 5 stones, trusting God fully for the outcome, and defeats Goliath and the Philistines.

God has gifted and wired each of us with passions, dreams, and abilities that are unique to our calling, for His glory. When we get caught in the trap of trying to live someone else's purpose, we miss out on what God has purposed in His heart for us. This is where we forfeit our calling and miss the joy of the Lord that has been set before us today.

In our modern world, we are constantly on and always connected, so the opportunity to compare is always right in front of us. The invitation of the Gospel is not an invitation of comparison but an invitation for something more significant. The invitation to live a life free in Christ and in Christ alone.

Are you trying to walk in someone else's armor? In someone else's calling? Share with the group how comparison might be pushing you to conform. How envy might be leading you to abandon your calling.

Each and everyone in this group is uniquely designed to bring gifts to the table that are needed in their home, workplace, and even in this life group. Go around and share with each other what you see in the other people in this group that is a gift. Lift each other up by identifying gifts and assets you see in one another.

GROW

Read Psalm 51:12

Some often think of freedom as an expression set apart from bondage. We are set free from shame, addiction, fear--just to name a few. But freedom also means to be set apart FOR or TO something. Free to participate in and enjoy very good gifts from the Lord. Joy is one such gift.

In reality, life can be difficult and seasons of drought deplete us of the very life in our bones. We search for freedom from the trial--for a way out. The beautiful thing about joy is that we have the freedom to live in its abundance even in the difficulty.

In Psalm 51, David is experiencing shame and guilt in the aftermath of an affair with Bathsheba. He's repentant and searching for restoration. Joy isn't something we often think we might find at our rock bottom, but in fact, there is freedom to have joy each day no matter what we are going through. If you're lacking true joy and enjoyment in Christ today, it's time for a restoration. To remember what Christ did for you on the cross and the price he paid for you to have freedom. To have joy no matter what circumstances you find yourself in (James 1:2-4).

What is stealing your joy today? Is it comparison or worry, as Shawn talked about? Or could it be shame like David? What is robbing you of enjoying today?

Do you believe God paid the price for you to live in freedom, and if you do, do you also believe He can set you free today? How might God want to work in your life today to restore joy? For example, with shame David found restoration in confession. In worry, we find freedom in trust. How might you overcome the very thing that is stealing your joy today?

MOVE

It's easy for many of us to get wrapped up in the "what ifs" and "buts" of life. To focus on the negatives of tomorrow, but it takes work to focus on the positives of today. God knew how difficult this would be, so Scripture is full of people's stories who are learning how to experience joy in the midst of trials.

Read Philippians 1:18-20

Paul wrote this letter to the church in Philippi from prison. He was suffering because of the Gospel, yet he knew that God would be magnified in and through his pain. Warren Wiersbe shares this about Paul in Philippians 1:

"Because of Paul's chains, Christ was known, and because of Paul's critics, Christ was preached. But because of Paul's crisis, Christ was magnified!"

Paul rejoiced in his circumstances, no matter how dire they were, because he knew it created the opportunity for the Gospel to go forth and Christ to be glorified. Furthermore, he found

hope in such a place and was able to find joy there. He didn't worry about tomorrow or "what if" in pity as he sat in chains. No. Paul claims in verse 19 that he knew "this will turn out for my deliverance." He had hope for tomorrow!

No matter what might be going on today, tomorrow is a new day and faith claims victory over the circumstances. Chains may feel like a limitation, but they are actually an opportunity for Christ to be glorified. This is where we place our hope for today and tomorrow!

What does it look like to rejoice in today and have hope for tomorrow? Share some practical examples of living with joy in your difficulties.

What do you need to start doing today to live in the freedom TO have joy? How might life look different based off of this decision?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying with and for each other. If you are in a coed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to share more freely.

TO GO

"The joy you radiate in the midst of your everyday life is a witness to the goodness of God. When you walk in greater amounts of joy, people are naturally drawn to you, and more importantly, the Jesus in you." (Margaret Feinberg)