



CORNERSTONE REFLECTION GUIDE

OCTOBER 6, 2024

Title: Cultivate Joy: Claim Joy

Preacher: Rev. Chelsea Peddecord

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:5-10

In Nehemiah 8, we find the people of God celebrating and praising God with the completion of the wall in Jerusalem. However, when the priests read the Law, they became convicted of the sin that had resulted in their captivity, and their joy quickly turned into despair as doubt and fear crept in. In a similar way, we can allow insecurities, cynicism, worry, and anxiety to turn blessings into burdens and rob us of our joy. What if I'm not good enough? What if I'm not ready? How am I going to do this? What will others think?

As followers of Christ, our joy does not depend on us or someone else. Nor is it dependent upon or deflated by our circumstances. Just as Nehemiah told the people of God, the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). No matter what may be going on in our lives, we can **claim joy** and know that God is still at work.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about this sermon? Was there an idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. How do you define joy? How does it differ from happiness or pleasure? Where does our culture usually turn to find these things?
3. How can we cultivate the spiritual fruit of joy in our lives? What might hinder it?
4. Toxic positivity involves ignoring problems and suppressing difficult emotions. How can we avoid toxic positivity while cultivating joy within us and around us?

5. James 1:2-4 reminds us to count it all joy when we meet trials of various kinds. What practical steps can we take to claim and sustain joy, especially during difficult seasons?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

In October, we are focusing on cultivating a life with God where **joy** can grow within us. Throughout this month, we invite you to join us in praying this simple prayer, from Romans 15:13, each day:

*God of hope,
Fill me with all joy and peace as I trust in you,
so that I may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

Before you pray, spend a few moments in silence to quiet your mind. As you pray, think about what these words mean for you. In what areas of your life do you need God's joy, peace, and hope?