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THREE SECRETS TO PROTECTING YOUR JOY

By Richard & Tanya Curren

It can sound so simple – you need to protect your joy. Yet it can be SO incredibly hard to do as we give and give and are pulled in a million different directions! So many external pressures arise that can pile up emotionally, mentally and even physically that we can find ourselves losing our peace and joy. Even our relationships, which are supposed to bring us joy, can become strained and difficult as we deal with different personalities and expectations.

All of us want to be happy, which is totally normal. But if your happiness depends on your circumstances, it will flee when your money runs out, when you experience a health crisis, when you can't "fix" a circumstance happening in your family or when you experience a massive crisis of faith.

There is a big difference between pursuing happiness and experiencing joy.

Happiness is based on your current emotion or feeling. True joy is the confident – never ending – assurance of God's love and presence in your life! Joy is having complete dependence on Christ, no matter what circumstances you are facing.

If you are looking for something to read in your Bible, check out Philippians. It is Paul's joy letter that he wrote to the Philippian believers. This book of the Bible is also considered a joyful book because it shows the importance of joy in the life of a Christian.

Recently, we were discussing Paul and ALL he faced as he served Christ. Imagine being very wealthy, extremely educated, having a great reputation and yet in your same lifetime being beaten, jailed, ship wrecked and going broke. This man experienced lots of highs and WAY more lows! And yet, he is the one that teaches us about joy and how to have it in every situation in life!

Think of your life and then think of Paul's. Can you truly say that you are able to retain your joy throughout every situation? In our lives, this is something we have had to work on, and even now we daily continue to focus on what we are thankful for and seek to protect our joy amidst the trials we face!

When we got married, we had \$50 in the bank and I (Tanya) brought about \$5,000 worth of credit card debt to the table! (Rick was thrilled about that...not!) So we started off with basically nothing. Throughout our 17 year marriage, we've had great highs – Rick had a job that brought in great money and we traveled extensively, we have a healthy and amazing son who does everything with us and we have had the funniest and most wonderful times making memories that will last forever. But throughout our marriage we have also had some extremely hard times that brought us to the point of despair – I was in a coma and experienced some of the worst pain imaginable, our son, Pierce, was in the NICU, we went from making great money to making almost nothing, we had a 401K – now we don't and we've experienced many relationships that have caused us deep pain.

So how did Paul – and how do we – get through ALL that life brings and still retain our joy?

How do we get through daily life with peace and an unshakeable joy as we feel pressure with our relationships, a seemingly unending super-tight budget, as we try to balance work and family, as we try to please others while maintaining our sense of self...as all of these things are swirling around us and we have to divide our time and energy and still have some for ourselves, here's the question:

HOW DO WE PROTECT OUR JOY?

3 Secrets To Protecting Your Joy

1. THE SECRET TO CONTENTMENT

Philippians 4:11-13

Here Paul is teaching us his secret! Think about it – if we hear of a bestselling book that gives secrets to success, we'll run out and buy it so that we too can be “in the know”! Or, have you ever found yourself up late at night watching infomercials because you can't sleep and you buy something you really don't need just because the salesperson promised it would change your life? (Hello...Ab Roller, anyone?)

Well, this is a million times better than any product or “secret to success” book you can own! Right here in Philippians 4, Paul is telling us that the secret to contentment - whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want – is knowing that he can do ALL things through Christ who gives him strength. The secret to contentment is having the strength of Christ in your life! This is why it is so important that you put ALL of your focus on Him. View your life from God's point of view. This will greatly help you rise above any situation you face and will help you focus on your purpose. When you are laser focused on your purpose, your priorities will fall in order and you will have an inner contentment that you can't get from any other source.

2. THE SECRET TO KNOWING JESUS

Philippians 3: 7-10

It may seem like a dramatic statement, but after Paul obtained a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, he called every other accomplishment in his life as “garbage.” That meant that all of his credentials, knowledge, wealth and money meant nothing to him compared what it meant to him to have an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus. Wow! Now that is someone who passionately loved and pursued Christ! What an amazing example!

This doesn't mean that you have to throw all of your life's accomplishments down the drain or belittle what you've done. But it is an excellent life example of how we should pursue a personal relationship with the Lord at all costs. No amount of money, no other person and no possession should get in the way of us knowing Jesus.

The secret to knowing Jesus is pursuing Him. James 4:8 says, “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” These are not just suggestions in the Bible, these are promises for YOU! We know that many people are experiencing a lot of stress, both with work and money situations as well as having strained family relationships. Stress can lead to so much frustration that it can distract you from pursuing Christ and seeking His peace. In fact, Satan loves to use stress to make you feel distant from God. If you find yourself consumed with stress and are focused on things you cannot change, we encourage you to set healthy boundaries, make a plan for where you will spend your time, focus on your purpose, pray about the words you say to others and scenarios you may face, and ask God for His unending wisdom. The more you plan in advance and the more you pray and release situations to God, the more peace you will have.

The more peace you have, the deeper your relationship is with Jesus. And the deeper your relationship grows, the more you know Him. The firmer and deeper your roots grow, which brings you unshakeable faith. It is a beautiful and lifelong process, so don't get discouraged along the way. Just daily choose to follow these steps and you too will gain the knowledge and understand the secrets to protecting your joy!

3. THE SECRET FOR PEACE

Philippians 4:6

Paul encourages us here to be anxious about nothing. When we choose to give God our anxieties through prayer, He promises that His peace, which “transcends ALL understanding, will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus.”

This is an amazing promise! You can't get inner peace and joy anywhere else or from anything else! If you are someone who is seeking peace, don't rely on Prozac, Ambien or Xanax to give it to you. Instead, meditate on this Scripture until it becomes a part of your continual thought process. It will become engrained into your thoughts and you will be able to cling to it as you face trials and difficulties in life.

The more you meditate on your surroundings, circumstances and things you can't change, the more anxiety will creep in and overtake you. But when you daily choose to focus on the things you do have and stay positive as you give your burdens to the Lord, the more joy you will experience.

How do we do this? In Philippians 4:8-9, Paul teaches us that we do this by focusing on, "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if ANYTHING is excellent or praiseworthy – think about these things." Then the peace of God will be with you!

Here's the bottom line: if you want to worry less, pray more. It's that simple! The more you pray, the more you develop your relationship with God. The more you rely on Him instead of external sources. Therefore, you will know Him more; you will have more peace, which will bring you contentment. Ultimately, you will know and understand the secrets for protecting your joy!

Paul's instructions are tried and true. They aren't just fly-by-night, slick salesman type of rules. If you listen to his wisdom and incorporate his insights into your daily life, you will live the life God intended for you to live. We are passionate about this happening in your life! Just like Paul passed his knowledge to us, pass your knowledge to your family and children. It is so important that we teach our children solid, Godly principles and concepts! We don't just want joy for ourselves; we want them to have a life of unshakeable joy and peace! As God reveals things to you and you lean on specific Scriptures, share them with others. This is how your legacy and fingerprints live on, which brings huge changes to our world!

We want to leave you with this blessing from Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which transcends ALL understanding, WILL guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

God bless YOU and have a very joyful and happy New Year!

In His Love,

Rick & Tanya

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Richard R. Curren III is the co-founder and President of Boundless Limits International, Live Guilt Free and Best Life Strategies. He is a regular co-host of WATC TV's *ATLANTA LIVE*, an inspirational television show broadcast internationally. He is the co-author of **ON COURSE: Strategies For Successful Living** and its companion **ON COURSE: Life Application Study Guide**. He is also the producer of several inspirational videos including "*IT'S ABOUT TIME!*", which has been broadcast on television worldwide. He is also the developing producer for Scaly Adventures, a positive influential outreach to children using animals and nature to explore the wonders of God's creation. Rick's passion is to speak and motivate others to live to their maximum potential physically, mentally and spiritually. Through their events and publications, Rick and his wife Tanya inspire others and show that every person has boundless potential to change our world. He is a former United States Army Officer. Rick serves on the Board of Directors for the So Help Me God Project as an Advisor and is a founding Board Member. With a passion for health and fitness, he is a 2nd Degree Black Belt in Korean Olympic Tae Kwon Do, and serves as an Associate Instructor for Palmetto Martial Arts School.



Tanya Curren is the co-founder of Boundless Limits International, Live Guilt Free and Best Life Strategies. She is a regular co-host of WATC TV's *ATLANTA LIVE*, an inspirational television show broadcast internationally. She is also the co-author of **ON COURSE: Strategies For Successful Living** and the **ON COURSE Life Application Study Guide**, which has been distributed worldwide. In 2004 Tanya Curren was in a life threatening coma for 8 days as a deadly infection ravaged her body. Given two hours to live, she survived only to face the ordeal of a painful three year recovery. She is the author of **Broken Places, The Proverbs Devotion Guide, Embracing Change & Conflict**, and several other audio CD's. Tanya and her husband, Rick, are developing producers for Scaly Adventures, a positive influential outreach to children using animals and nature to explore the wonders of God's creation. In her conferences and seminars, Tanya shares with others the life-lessons she learned through her journey to restoration. Tanya travels and speaks at local, regional and international venues, and is passionate about guiding others to have a personal, real relationship with Jesus Christ. As an active homeschooling mother, she resides with her family in the mountains of South Carolina.