

Center of Your Joy

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James Bronner: Once you've done what you can do, then pray and depend on God to see you through the rest.

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(Music Playing)

And now, for Center of Your Joy.

James Bronner: Welcome to brothers of the word, because brother, you need the word. Today, I'm going to be talking about the Center of Your Joy. The Center of Your Joy. So, if you're tuning in today and you're not operating in the fullness of the joy of the Lord, I admonish you to keep watching because we want you to operate in all that he has for you. To dwell in the joy of the Lord. It probably brought back memories and you all are familiar with the popular song by Richard Smallwood. It's called the Center of My Joy. It goes a little something like this, you don't have to play on this, I'm just going to do a -- just a reminder. Jesus, you're the center of my joy. All that's good and perfect comes from you. You're the heart of my contentment hope for all I do. Jesus, you're the center of my joy.

I really didn't come to sing for you today, I'm going to let Brother Ivan finish it as it should be at the end of my message but I just wanted to remind you of that song. I read something that really shook up me that applied to non-Christians as well as Christians and it's one of the causes for this message. According to a government study, it said that antidepressants have become the most commonly prescribed drugs in the country. They prescribe more than drugs to treat high blood pressure. More than drugs to treat high cholesterol. More than asthma and headache medications. In this study, the CDC looked at 2-1/2 billion drugs prescribed in doctors' visits in 2005. Of those, a 118 million were for antidepressants.

Even though we've all sing that song that I just did, in the church, is something missing with our joy. It's not where it should be, and I personally know good friends within the past six months, there have been three young people that are new,

that are in the church, under the ages of 25 that have tried to commit suicide in the past six months.

We went to one of the fellows just three days ago, so I've come to talk about the Center of Your Joy today. I want to give you some keys today to restore and help you keep your joy. The whole process of dealing with life's problems can be bore down into just two simple steps that I'm going to talk about today. Those are, do what you can do then pray and trust God to do the rest. Do what you can do, then pray and trust God to do the rest. I'm going to spend about 90% on that first part of it for two reasons, the first reason is, most of the time, for people who are lacking that joy, they haven't done what they couldn't do. That's the first reason. The second reason is, there's not a lot of steps to that second part of praying and trusting God.

00:05:01

You know, if I tell you to trust me, I can't go down 10 steps, you guys got to trust me, you know? It's really something. So, trust is something that just has to be done. Ecclesiastes 2:26 says, "For God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, knowledge, and joy. But to the center, He giveth prevail together and to heap up that he may give to Him that is good before God." If you notice here, if you're good in God's sight, you should have joy but along with that joy comes knowledge and wisdom, and that lets you know that you have to use some wisdom to keep your joy. He put those together for a reason.

So, I'm going to impart some wisdom to you today. This won't be a very emotional message but it's going to give you keys that you can use in your everyday life to help keep your joy. There are three areas when we do all do counselling that people primarily come for help in and they come for counselling in that have caused their joy to diminish.

I'll give some quick tips on doing what you can do in each one of these three areas. This sermon is going to be like a cliff notes on these areas. Many of you all may remember back in the school day, I must admit, I'm guilty of it myself, the teacher all signed a book report for you to do and a book might be 200 and some pages and you get busy playing outside and watching TV and playing games and talking on the phone and you've realized you're a couple of days from this book report being due and you

all think about it, “I got to get me that cliff notes.” So, I hate for my mother to hear that testimony, but I had to use that myself also and you just get this little short book. For those who don’t know what that is, it’ll take that 200 and some page book and may knock it on in the 15 pages and give you the plot and the main characters and stuff and that’s what cliff notes are.

I’m going to give you a cliff notes message today on these three areas. Here’s a brother point, “God won’t do what you can do, and we can’t do what He can do.” Let me repeat that for those who have missed it the first time. “God won’t do what we can do, and we can’t do what He can do.” He’s not going to work for you every day. You might get off sleepy in the morning but He’s not going to go to work and do your job for you that day. God can do some things, He can cause the grass to grow out in front of your house but He won’t mow the lawn for you. You got to get out there with the lawn mower and mow it yourself. For He’s already given gifts and talents to be used and He’s not going to do what He’s designed and given you the ability to do. But with all of your abilities, God can still do something in a snap of a finger in an instant, in the twinkle of an eye that’s more than we can do in all of our energy and talents and efforts.

So, let’s jump in to what you can do. That’s first area out of those three is the area of relationships. Here’s what you can do in that area, stop and think right now, what were the things that you used to do while dating that caused you to smile, to laugh, to look forward to with that other person before you were married? So, if you have relationship issues today, I want you to get back to doing those things on a regular basis that you used to do that caused joy when you were single. When you really stop and think about it most, what you will remember that caused most of the joy and happiness and love feelings when you were just dating is in three main areas.

The first area is, intimacy. This may include kissing, holding each other, holding hands, snuggling, fondling, padding, and even some of you sex, we can admit that. When I think it’s a shame though that people have more fun with sex outside of marriage than they’re having in marriage, when God designed sex for marriage. But it seems like the people outside of marriage are having it more frequently and having more fun and variety than the people in the marriage and I don’t think God intended it to be that way. The Bible talks about these

even stolen waters are sweet. But I think you should enjoy your marriage bed more than the world. Think about it, how often do you kiss now and how often did you kiss before marriage when you were dating? How often do you just hold each other? How often did you do it before marriage?

00:10:00

I'm going to give the married people under the sound of my voice some homework for tonight. That homework is to go home and have some good passionate old-fashioned sex tonight. I want you to imagine and do a fantasy like you're dating again and call him your boyfriend and your girlfriend. If you feel guilty about it, you can repent afterwards but I want you to go back and act like you're partaking on some stolen waters. I'm sure a lot of the men in here, I see them getting excited and they're not going to forget this homework, and they might not have liked doing homework at school. This might be the first homework assignment in their whole life that they like doing. They're not going to forget that.

They're going to go home, "Honey, you know, pastor said, we got to do our homework. We don't want to flunk this thing." That was the word of the Lord, he was preaching when he said that, that was the Lord speaking. So that's your homework for tonight, married couples. Married couples. The number two thing that when you think about the old days before you were married that you used to like to do is going out. Two of the reasons the world loves so we can, first of all they love to go out and have fun. Second, (00:11:12) ought to go to work on the weekend. They even named a restaurant TGIF, Thank God it's Friday because people love the weekend. God gave me this revelation, we need some TGIF in our marriages. We've eliminated the two good things about the weekend that people look forward to when we get married.

We've stopped going out and we work at home on the weekend. We've turned Saturday which is the sabbath into a stay at home and work day. Families clean and do laundry and grocery shopping, ironing, et cetera. On the sabbath, God never intended it to be so. The fourth commandment is to rest on the sabbath and that's Saturday. We've removed the TGIF feeling from the weekend because of it.

My wife and I, we some seven children, and we pretty much go out every single Friday night even with seven children. When I'm at work on Friday's, I get a sigh of relief just thinking about that night, to know that I'll be able to leave all of the pressures of work and all the pressures of the kids and everything that's going on and just spend some time with my sweetheart on that Friday night. We reserve that time every single Friday, so I don't answer calls on those Friday. I don't answer texts or I don't answer emails of you. Call me, that's why I'm not answering on Friday. I'm out with my baby on Friday.

It's a shame that couples, they schedule everything else in their life, but they don't schedule quality time with each other. Do some of the things that you used to enjoy when you were single and not the ungodly stuff. Now, that's something I -- I see some people thinking about, "Pastor, we can do some stuff we used to do. I'm going to roll up a fat one tonight, we're going to go back. Pastor said it's all right." Not the ungodly stuff. The top four things that my wife and I just personally that we like to do, we do movies, we do dinner, we do bowling, and we hang out with friends and we typically try to delimit our hanging out with friends to one of those weekends a month because it's really a private and a personal time, our intimate time. So, we really only do that once a month.

If your money gets tight, you can find cheaper activities like if you like movies, then you can go to the dollar movie. The three-dollar movie theater in Atlanta. I got it all in bookmark in my phone if you need to know where they are. Now, when we go bowling, I always use coupons so we can get discount and bowl for a dollar game. One date night, I took her out, I told her we were going somewhere new, and she, assuming we were going to a restaurant and I drove out to a distant area and she just kept quiet, just wondering, I pulled in this foreign parking lot to her and I got out and took her in and I had set up a one hour massage at one of the best masseurs in the city and I just dropped her off for an hour and came back and got her and we went to dinner after and that's how we celebrate it, the date night.

So, just get creative with it and get outside of the box. If you don't want to spend a lot of money on food, just go to a nice restaurant and get water to drink and get your salad and put some chicken or fish on it and enjoy a cheap meal but you're

getting the ambience of the place, the environment, and the atmosphere of it. It can be under \$20 for the both of you, so, just get creative with it. If you don't want to spend money on a babysitter then work out an exchange day system with another family that you trust where you keep their kids one night and they keep your kids the next night.

00:15:05

We haven't been able to work that system out because it just don't seem fair to anybody. They drop off two at our house on Friday, we bring seven on Saturday. They said, "Something's not right with this system, pastor. Something's not right about this." Now, for those still not wanting to date, thinking about money, I can tell you this. There's going to be beating. Now listen to this, it's cheaper to date your spouse than to divorce them. That's the brother part. It's cheaper to date your spouse than to divorce them. If you think dating is expensive, try divorcing and see how that hit your pocket book. The third area that people commonly do single is communication. How many of you used to just sit on the phone with a loved one before marrying? Just listening to them breath and not even talking about anything. Just communication.

After people married, they don't even want to asked how the other one's day went. They just like stopped communicating and my tip in this area is to limit your negative talk to set times and don't talk about negative stuff outside of that time. You may say our set time is 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. and that's when you discuss issues or problems and complain or any argument. Just keep it limited to that window and over time, you can begin to narrow that window is smaller and smaller, and if you talk about your problems and argument and complain all the time, who would want to communicate like that? Now, a lot of people, they wonder why their spouse doesn't seem to want to talk to them but they say they'd go on the phone with a friend and they would just like talk all day. Well, let me tell you why.

It's because when they're talking to you, it's problems and issues and complaining, but when they're talking to their friend, it's pleasant communication. It's something almost relaxing to them, it's just almost like shooting the breeze so it's a different feeling of tension there, so have enjoyable conversation in your relationship. The number two big area that people come for

counselling on is the area of finance. Many people have the joy stripped. This weekend when they saw those (00:17:19) million numbers that they didn't hit on that record-breaking lotto. The first tip I have in the area of finance is, you must create and operate on a budget. Here's a brother point, money loves to travel. Where it travels is up to whoever plans the trip. So, it is best if you plan the trip.

The easiest (00:17:43) budgeting tool that I found is that mint.com, like the peppermint.com. This mint.com. They also have smart phone apps on all of the major phones, their websites and apps are totally free and they will help you make and track your budget. They will also suggest ways that you can save money but also tell you what the average family spends in each budget area. So, you can have an idea of where you are out of line at.

God told the pastor, the following statement in order to keep his finance from being a burden on them in the future. God said this, keep your basic expenses at a certain percentage of your income. He gave them that percentage for him. He said, "For whenever your expenses equal your income, then, you need the money and anything that you need, you are automatically attached to." So, control, and that was the pastor's instructions from God and don't you know if he's a high earner, don't you know we need the same thing in our lives and in our finances?

In order to do this, you must have a working budget. Number two tip in the area of finances. You must make major purchases within your means. The most common major purchases are homes, automobiles, and vacations. Financial expert, Dave Ramsey recommends the following limits on major purchases. For homes, he recommends your monthly payment not exceed 25% of your monthly take home pay. For automobiles, it should be he recommends used at least two or three years and cost no more than 50% of your income for one year. For vacations, he recommends to make them a budget line item, save up for them and have them paid for before you take the trip. Not on a credit card or using borrowed funds, and we leave on vacation today, my family and I, and it will cost me about thousand dollars for seven days in a cabin with a pool and a fishing stream with it. But that's for a family of nine, and I rarely spend over a thousand dollars for a vacation. If we take the kids somewhere, it's usually within driving distance.

00:20:02

If just my wife and I go, we average under a thousand dollars for the two of us including everything from airfare, to the hotel, to the food and everything. So, that's our budget. Number three tip in the area of finances, automate your savings and put aside an emergency fund. Emergencies will happen, everybody repeat after me, emergencies will happen. They happen to the pastors even, so I can tell you, emergencies will happen. If you don't prepare for emergencies, then, when they happen, your stress levels will go up and your joy will suffer because you weren't prepared and now, you have to try to figure out how to handle this emergency and it'll put undue stress on you.

Even when someone dies, sometimes the biggest strain on the family is not losing the person but it's paying for all the expenses of the funeral and the other bills. Money doesn't replace the person, but not having money will add to the sorrow and the strain of the moment. Most experts recommend saving 10% of your income but whatever percentage you decide to save, have it automatically put into another account before you even see it so you can't even touch it and you will forget about it. It's almost like you get a 10% raise, you know, three months later, you don't even feel that raise, so, same process you do for your savings and emergencies. That way, when emergencies come up, you will have the money there.

The number three area that people come for counseling all heavy is the area of health, and here's what you can do in this area, what you can do. First tip is, exercise. Modern researchers shown this is the most influential health habit you can do besides stopping to smoke. They recommend 30 minutes a day, six days a week for optimal health. Number two tip in health is, eating better. Here are my tips for eating better. Eat less meat and more fruits and vegetable with at least a salad or some raw vegetables every day. Cut out soft drinks and replace with water. You should drink enough water daily where your urine is light colored and light smelling. Eat as little fried food as possible. The last one is, don't eat until your stomach is tight. We like to -- especially when we go to an all you can eat place; we like to get our money's worth, we just eat, and we have to just loosen a few notches on our belt. But you should stop before you're fully tight on your stomach.

Number three tip on health is to rest. Folks in this country are overworked and overstressed. Lack of rest will rob you of your joy. Increases your stress, run up your blood pressure. My father used to say, and I'll make this a brother point, "The only thing you can do right when you're tired is to rest." Most experts say seven to nine hours a day is the optimal amount of sleep, but very few Americans get that now. Three types of rest that you need. You need that seven to nine hours of day of sleep, secondly, you need one day of rest from work, which is the sabbath that God created. The last is, you need at least two vacations per year lasting at least three days, not including travel time for each vacation. If money is tight, you can use hotwire.com and they will give you at least the four-star hotel for under \$78 a night somewhere in driving distance and you can stay for four nights for about \$250.00 or you can save up and afford that.

Once you've done what you can do, then pray and depend on God to see you through the rest. We talk about faith but it is in difficult times of life that our faith really gets tested. I was studying one time, I wanted to develop a six pack and I have researched the fastest way to do that. What the fastest way I found that this book recommended is said that you get to one of those balls that you balance on and that way, you can go and extend back further then flat and come up. You can relate that to life, that sometimes God will send situations in your life that'll throw you off balance, that you have to get your balance. Your finances will get low and you'll have to bring your joy back in the balance, and your focus. You might get hit with something in your health, you'll have to use your core muscles. That's called the core to bring yourself back into balance and what he's doing is, strengthening your very core.

Your spiritual muscles have to be strengthened by the circumstances of life that you don't know you have faith until it's tested. So, some of these situations are sent to strengthen us at our core. After you've done what you can do, pray about it and leave it in God's hand and I'm the technology director at our company and people call me everyday to fix the computer problems.

See, I don't personally like it when the person call me and it happens a lot and then when I sit on to fix it at their desk, they want to tell me how to fix it. I felt like, "If you know how to fix it, you don't need to call me." As soon as I said that, "Why don't you try this right here on that and see if that will work." They've been there struggling waiting for hours, but as soon as I sit down, they want to tell me how to fix it. The second thing they like to do is just breath down my neck. As soon as I sit, they go right up on my neck, just watching over to make sure I do it right. Now, it's hard enough that somebody (00:25:37) already without somebody just breathing on the back of your neck. Of I don't like that, I don't think God likes it. He don't want you to tell, we have problem, we will pray about it, I'll tell God how to fix the problem. Don't you know that He is God? This problem, it might be new to you but it's not new to God, He's seen this problem millions of time before. You can't tell God how to fix your problem when He created everything, nor does He want you breathing over His neck asking when is this going to happen, when is it going to get fixed. You know, the clock is ticking here. God knows what He's doing, He knows timing, He understands your problems and what you're going through. Glory, glory.

The joy of the Lord is supposed to be our strength, and many of us have lost our joy because we're not spending the proper time with Him and He gave me this revelation this morning. He acquainted it just like to the physical. When you stop eating food in the physical on a fast and those that do 42 can relate to this. When you begin to fast in the physical, your physical body becomes weak, same in the spiritual. Jesus said that He wants to come in and (00:26:56) with you, and (00:26:59) means eating and drinking and His food is the food of the Spirit. The first three being love, joy, and peace. When you are not (00:27:07) and communing with Him, you're fasting from the spiritual food and your spirit becomes weak and you don't have the strength to go through the issues of life and you become weak in spirit from the spiritual food fast, even as the natural food (00:27:25). You need strength to get back into the joy of the Lord.

Begin to (00:27:33) with him, to praise and worship and studying his Word. The joy of the Lord is supposed to be your strength. How can you have joy if you're not spending time with Him. Listen at this last brother point from James Kurtz. It says, "If we worry, we don't trust. If we trust, we don't worry."

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its grief, but it does empty today of his joy.” Let me repeat that, as I close. “If we worry, we don’t trust. If we trust, we don’t worry. Worry does not empty tomorrow of its grief, but it does empty today of its joy.” I leave with you today that faith ends where worry begins. At this time, as heads are bowed, we’re not going to do the regular altar call for salvation, but you’ve heard this message and you realize that you don’t have the fullness of the fruit of the joy that is promised to you in his Word.

That you haven’t been operating in the joy of the Lord for one reason or the other. I want you to come to today to get your joy restored, to make a new commitment, to (00:29:01) with him. That you may abide in the joy of the Lord. The problems and chaos of this world may have had you sad and in tears and feeling depressed, like you need an antidepressant. But Jesus wants to be your joy. He’s already paid the price but yet, we’re still suffering and carrying baggage that He’s already paid the price to carry for you. So, if you want to lay down that baggage today and say, “Lord, I know I’m supposed to have trust you, but really, if I’ve been worrying about it, I haven’t been trusting you.” Do you really trust Him? Do you really trust Him? I want you to be honest with yourself. This is not for anybody else; this is for you. Be honest with your own self. Do you really trust Him? So, if there is anybody that have been struggling with your joy, and brother Ivan sings it.

00:30:02

Let it minister to your Spirit and just feel the (00:30:07). We’re just going to anoint you as you singing and just pray that joy will be restored in your heart.

(Music Playing)

Oh, Jesus, you’re the center of my joy and all that’s good and perfect comes from you.

You’re the heart of my contentment, hope for all I do.

Oh, Jesus, you’re the center of my joy.

When I’ve lost my direction, you’re the compass for my way.

You’re the fire and light when nights are long and cold.

In sadness, you are the laughter that shatters all my fears.

When I’m all alone, your hand is there to hold.

Jesus, you’re the center of my joy.

And all that's good and perfect comes from you.
You're the heart of my contentment, hope for all I do.
Jesus, you're the center of my joy.
You are why I find pleasure in the simple things in life.
You're the music in the meadows and the streams.
The voices of the children, my family, and the home.
You're the source and finish of my highest dreams.
Jesus, you're the center of my joy.
And all that's good and perfect comes from you.
You're the heart of my contentment, hope for all I do.
Jesus, you are the center of my joy.
Jesus, you are the center of my joy.
Jesus, you're everything, everything, everything.
Jesus, you're the center of my joy.
You're my joy.
You're my music, you're my soul, you're my joy.
Jesus, you're the center of my joy.
Jesus, you're the center of my joy.
Hallelujah.
Oh Jesus, you're the center of my joy. Hallelujah.

00:35:00

Male:

This week, I want you to just take a thing with you, count it all, joy, restore your joy in God, our savior. Restore your joy in Him and watch Him work everything (00:35:43). Just spend a few moments with Him each day this week and watch God move on your life. Sacrifice some time this week and watch God restore your peace. Commune with Him. The very things that you have been asking for, watch God move on your behalf. You got to give something in order to receive something. God is not going to do things that we can do for ourselves. He is not a genie that we can just wish upon and it happens. But we got to put forth effort. We got to give out our being, we got to give out of our need, we got to give in spite of our circumstance. (00:36:48) all joy in Jesus name. If you got to (00:36:53) against your brother, if you got an (00:36:55) against your sister, you're holding up your joy. If you've got an (00:36:59) against somebody else, your mother, your father, you're holding up your joy. Forgive them and move on. In Jesus name. Amen.

James Bronner:

I thank you today for tuning in to brothers of the word, because brother, you need the Word.

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(Music Playing)

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