

Joy.FULL – The Subjugation of Joy

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MAIN VERSES

Will this Thanksgiving be just like every other year where you see all of the little turkey cutouts at Food Line or Harry's Teeter and you see all the commercials and the parade comes on and you're reminded that you're supposed to act a certain way? You're supposed to think a certain way. As we discussed last week, you're supposed to have an attitude of gratitude. You go to church or fellowship and a pastor teaches on a series about gratitude and thanksgiving. And on Thanksgiving Day, when you sit down with your turkey and your family, you have an attitude of thanks. Yay! Thank you, God. And then you eat the turkey and the family goes home and Thanksgiving break is over. Kids go back to school. You go back to work. Stress comes into your life. Anxiety comes into your life. Family gets sick. Parents aren't doing well anymore. Financial crisis in your home, back to reality and we forget about everything that we were just supposed to be doing.

The Thanksgiving Cycle

Will this Thanksgiving be like every other year in your life? Or will you continue not just with an attitude of gratitude, not just with thinking a certain way, but putting it into practice for a goal to be molded as a new creation in Christ, to be molded as a new creation in Yeshua?

You're supposed to be thankful. You're supposed to be filled with joy. You're supposed to be giving thanks in all circumstances, even when it's hard. No one said you had to give thanks for all circumstances, but in all circumstances, just like Daniel. I think it was two weeks ago when we discussed after Daniel was sitting amongst all the other governors and they signed into power, he watched the king do it. Anyone who worships any other god will be thrown to the lion's den.

What did Daniel do? He went back to his room and he prayed - we'd all be praying, oh Lord, oh Father. And then it says he gave thanks. Knowing that he's fixing to be ripped apart by lions - cat food - he gave thanks in all circumstances. Out of his move of gratitude blossomed the faith

to enter into the lion's den. The next morning the king came amazed, signed into law that everybody will worship and give thanks and show gratitude to the God of Daniel, for he is supreme.

From Attitude to Practice

A little bit of gratitude can go a long way. It may start with an attitude, it ends in a practice. It ends with actually doing something. So the name of this series was the Joyful Series. Talk about joy! We've been speaking about having joy, and we're commanded to have joy. We're commanded to rejoice. Joyfulness and gratitude are attributes of a believer, just like generosity is, and love and kindness are the fruit of the Spirit.

And we know what joy is. We know that joy is a byproduct of gratitude. You cannot have one without the other. It's impossible. You can have happiness, but that will not endure. That will not produce long-lasting joy. Joy is something that only comes with contentment and gratitude.

Understanding Joy and Gratitude

We know that you have to practice gratitude. It's not only an attitude. And you must also practice joy. And we're in a season right now where it's appropriate to make a change in your life to say that I will be thankful, I am going to be thankful, I am going to be grateful to my God for the things that he has given to me. Even when things happen that we don't understand, as Paul said, give thanks in all things.

We also understand that gratitude, showing gratitude, is a form of worship. When you say thank you to God, it's not like saying thank you to your friend, it's not like writing a thank you note and mailing it to him. When you say thank you to God, you are positioning him as not only the one who gives blessings, gives all good things in life, creator of everything, but the one who continues and sustains creation. All in that phrase, God, I thank you. You are the patron. You are the father. You are the creator. It is a form of worship.

Joy Is a Practice

Joy is a practice. It's interesting. Have you guys ever heard that phrase before? I read that in a book recently. How do you practice joy? Well, you practice the things that produce joy. It's not just joy. You can't just have joy. You practice other things such as gratitude. If you practice gratitude and if you practice being content, then you can practice joy. Then joy begins to be

cultivated into your life and you nurture it and you guard it and you say, "You know what? Today I'm not going to be dissatisfied with the cards that I was dealt today. I will be thankful."

And because you are thankful, you're not going to feel entitled to anything in your life because, as you guys know, if you feel entitled to anything, it's impossible to be grateful for it. When you're grateful for something, you're content. How many of you guys know you cannot have a bad life if you're thankful for it? You can't. You can't speak that word. You can't say, "My life is horrible. My life stinks." Why? Well, if you're grateful for it, then you can't say that. You can say, "My life is hard. My life is difficult." No one can have a stinky life if they're truly grateful.

I've been on this journey of becoming joyful along with you guys, studying, putting these things together. Has this series at least sparked something in you to reflect on the last few weeks? It's important. We know that joy cannot be culminated. It cannot reach. Joy cannot be culminated unless it is cultivated. It's not something that just poof happens. It's something that you engage on fertile ground, that you nurture, and that grows into your life.

Cultivating Joy

We all want to be joyful, but not all of us understand the things that we have to do, the dirt that we have to till, the seeds that we have to plant, the water we have to pour in order for joy to be cultivated into our lives. But yet, we're commanded to rejoice. How do we do this?

Someone would be quick to say, the Holy Spirit, of course. If you have the Holy Spirit, you will have joy. And as much as I want to agree with that statement, as much as I really want to agree with it, if you have the Holy Spirit within you, you're going to be joyful. Guys, I know a lot of people who have the seal of redemption on them. They have the Spirit. Some of them are joyful; some are mad little people, cranky all the time, complaining all the time. This turns me to the scripture in [John 14:26](#).

Yeshua speaking, he says, but the helper - the what? The helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things. He will do what? Teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

The Spirit's Role and Our Responsibility

The Holy Spirit's going to be a helper. He's going to do it for you. He's going to help you. The Holy Spirit is going to be a teacher. He's going to be an instructor. He's going to teach you. The

Holy Spirit is going to cause you to remember. He's going to be a reminder to you, listen, this is how Yeshua walks.

The Holy Spirit is going to enable you, grant you the empowerment to walk out as a new creation in Messiah, but only if you engage. If you don't want the help of a helper, the helper is not going to do much for you. All right? You guys know what I'm talking about? If you do not care about being taught, being reminded, or being helped by the Spirit of God, it can be in you, all ready to go, just sitting there at the starting line, engine revved up, ready to take off. But if there's no driver in the driver's seat, if there's no one there to say, "Yes, God, I want to use this thing that you have placed in me to empower me to walk like your son walked," it's just going to sit there.

Helper, teacher, reminder. So yes, you will have joy in your life because of the Spirit that's within you, but only if you allow the Spirit to empower you. The Holy Spirit reaches its climax only when you're willing to engage.

I came across something that was interesting in that I don't know why I didn't think about it when I was putting the series together - the fruits of the Spirit, right? [Galatians 5:22](#), "But the fruit of the Spirit is love," right? We got love, we know what love is, right? Sometimes we don't want to love, but it's a fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit will, if engaged, allow you and empower you to love your neighbor and your enemies like Yeshua loves you.

The Fruits of the Spirit

So second, joy. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. Yeah, if the Spirit is within you and you're walking in a life after the Messiah, joy is going to be in your life. The Spirit can empower you to live a joyful life. Why? How? Where does joy come from? It comes from gratitude. That's where that reminder comes in. The Holy Spirit's going to remind you what you have to be grateful for in your life. The Holy Spirit's the one that went to Daniel and said, "You better pray, you better give thanks to God just like you always do, just as your custom is. God is using you, and even if the lions eat you up, you better still thank God for using you in his life to develop his plan and his mission on earth."

Peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Holy Spirit, teach me. Against such there is no law.

Do you guys know what happiness means? You guys know what the opposite of happiness is. Easy questions, not a trick question. What's the opposite of happiness? Sadness, of course, right? So if you're happy and if you're not happy, then you're sad, right?

Absence. Can you be happy and sad at the same time? Real simple question. Not a trick question. Generally, it's very difficult to be happy and sad at the same time. One typically has an edge on the other. Light and darkness.

Can't be light and dark at the same time. You can have dark corners and the closet is dark—it's right there, a little section where the light doesn't hit. You can have a little bit, but you're not going to be filled with light fully unless all the darkness is gone. The opposites can't mix. Do you guys know what the opposite of joy is? Close. Close. Fear. Fear. Fear is the opposite of joy. You can't have one without the other. You can't have one with the other. You can't be fearful about things that are in your life and also be completely grateful for them. You can't be fearful of the things in your life and be completely content for them. You can't be fearful of the things in your life and have joy and rejoice over them.

Fear Not and Rejoice

Remember when the angel visited Zachariah, Mary, and Joseph, right? First thing he says, fear not. Don't fear. Okay. Don't fear. And then the angel goes on to give them some of the greatest news they ever heard. And then at the end he's like, "Now you gotta rejoice." Because that just gave them the news that the Savior is coming, the Redeemer is coming, the Son of God is coming, Yeshua is coming. Don't fear. Have joy. Joy. Why is fear connected with joy? Joy is the most vulnerable emotion that we have.

Now I'm going to take an exit ramp off the interstate. I do that from time to time. Buckle your seatbelts, enjoy the view. If you're not interested in the sightseeing, that's fine. We'll get back on the interstate here in a few minutes. You guys remember, I think about a year ago, we did a message here called, "You Sunk My Battleship." It's not a very popular message, but the entire point of the message was talking about vulnerability. Vulnerability. And how we as people in the states have problems with vulnerability. Who likes vulnerability? Who likes being vulnerable? Yeah, I thought so. Ain't nobody likes being vulnerable. No one likes being vulnerable, right?

Why We Avoid Vulnerability

And so the message was talking about how sometimes we do things to try to numb vulnerability in our lives, right? Why don't we like to be vulnerable? What's wrong with being vulnerable? You get hurt. If you're vulnerable, you get hurt. Someone might say something, right? Someone might say something that you're ashamed of. Someone might think something. Someone might go on Facebook and message someone else. Someone might give you a weird

look if you're vulnerable, right? It's amazing how much we think that we're the only ones in the world that are vulnerable. We walk around, clothes aren't fitting that well, and you want a big, big sweater to cover everything up because you feel like you're the only one after Thanksgiving that has a muffin top. No, that's not true. Everybody is scared of being vulnerable.

The Mission Requires Vulnerability

And that's kind of the exit ramp. I love this because guess what? Yeshua wants you to be vulnerable. We don't like to hear that. Yeshua wants you to be vulnerable. Why? Because you cannot accomplish the mission that God has for you if you're scared of being hurt in battle. Scriptural example. Remember when Yeshua sent out the 72? First time he sent out folks? See here. In Luke chapter 10. What's that verse say? Go, I'm sending you out. Why would he say that? If a lamb walks into a pack of wolves... Is it vulnerable?

Do not take a purse or a bag or sandals and do not greet anyone on the road. When you enter a house, first say, peace be to you. If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them. If not, it will return to you. Stay there eating and drinking whatever they give you for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them the kingdom of God has come near to you.

Don't take no purse. Don't take no money. Don't take a bag of clothes. Don't take your shoes. Don't take nothing. And go to these towns. And when you walk into town, be vulnerable. Peace be to you. And if they're peaceful people, then your peace will rest on them. And you will be welcomed. Yeshua doesn't want vulnerable people who are scared of running out of the trench. You gotta go, you got, that's the objective right there. I don't want to run out of the trench. Barbed wire, explosions, bullets, I don't want to go into battle for you. I'm scared. I might get hurt. You know what? Don't even take any body armor. Take your boots off. Don't take no ammo. Go. It's daunting. Yeshua sends all of them out armed with vulnerability. That's all they get.

Vulnerability When Praying for Others

That's the vulnerability when praying over somebody. Let's get real. Let's just talk about real things. You guys know as believers, we're supposed to be willing to pray for someone like, on the spot. Not like, "Hey, we're going to have a prayer meeting in an hour, so prepare yourself." I'll sit near the back. Maybe no one will have an issue back there. I won't have to pray for them.

No, you're supposed to be willing despite your vulnerabilities, despite your assumed introversion, despite your fear of people, despite your fear of what people are going to think of you. You're supposed to be willing to say, you know what? I'm going to put my hands on this person, a brother or sister in Yeshua, and I am going to speak words over them, speak words of healing over them, lifting them up to the Father.

How many of you guys scared to pray for folks? Sometimes? Maybe? Sometimes a little nervous? Sometimes? I don't know this cat. At conferences sometimes? I don't know this guy. Ah! Father, the Holy Spirit's teaching me, reminding me. Remember that guy who prayed for you years ago? Remember that guy who prayed for you? Get over there and do your job. Vulnerability.

Fear and Rejection

What if I mess up and say something wrong? What if you do? Be vulnerable and pray for someone. Fear of rejection. What if someone mocks you for being too religious? You guys ever scared that God doesn't have your back when you go into a situation? Everyone's going to say, "No, that's fine," but it's a real fear amongst believers. God's not going to have my back even though I know I'm doing what I need to be doing. I know I'm completing the mission that he gave me. What stops us?

We all want to be joyful, full of joy. I believe it's God's will that his followers are filled with true genuine joy. It's one of the fruits of the Spirit. But guys, joy is vulnerable.

Joy Is the Most Vulnerable Emotion

Getting back on the highway here. Joy is the most vulnerable emotion we have. Here's why—have you guys ever gotten really, really, really, really, really excited about something? It could be anything. Jason, a drone. It could be anything. Really excited about something that you're going to get. Maybe it's getting married or having kids, or maybe you get that new car, maybe you got that new Xbox, whatever. Whatever it is, you ever gotten really excited, right? And you see something you're grateful for, and you say, whoa, what a blessing. This is such a blessing. And then you start doing what the book I was reading calls "Dress Rehearsing Tragedy"—imagining something bad happening to this thing you just got really excited about.

Don't know what I'm talking about? Okay, is Jonathan Mayhorn here? What's your dream car? Older car. Really? You can't just get any? The one. The 1960s one. The what? A Mach 4 Mustang? Okay, so it's a 1988 BMW M5 or a Mach 4 Mustang?

Catastrophizing Your Blessings

Let's say you got it. Under 100,000 miles. All original. It still has the original paint. Some poor soul bought it, stuck it in the garage, covered it, drained it, and then had a stroke. It's been sitting in the garage for 30, 40 years, whatever. It's yours now. Your dad surprised you. It's your dream car. Is this going to be your daily driver? No? It's your dream car. Why don't you want to drive it every day? It's not practical. What could happen? Anything? Someone might hit it. Someone might wreck it. A truck in front might kick a rock up. The more you drive it, the more likely something bad is to happen, right? So your fear has now interfered with you rejoicing or enjoying your vehicle on a daily basis.

Don't want to go on a cruise because the boat might sink, and you might die, and your whole family might drown. Anybody? Who's gone on a cruise? Anybody had that thought before you got on the cruise? I was told I might go on a cruise next year. Every time I think about it, I'm going to die. Maybe I just don't want to go on a cruise. I might die.

A Parent's Worst Fears

Any parents? You ever put your kids to bed, maybe in the crib, and you see them there, and they're falling asleep, and you have your hands on them, and you just fed them, and they're just so beautiful, and you're just so grateful that God has given you this child in your life, and you begin to feel the joy of having this child and this blessing in your life. Any parents? And then you imagine the most horrifying thing ever happening to this child. Something so graphic, something you never even thought you could imagine happening to this child. Is this just me? Is this just me?

That was fear taking your joy. I thought I was the only one who did that. I came downstairs after putting Ben to bed crying. Jenny's like, what is wrong with you? I mean, the thoughts are unimaginable. Things you would never naturally think about that your subconscious created to make sure you were scared. I thought I was the only one, guys.

The Subjugation of Joy

Why do we do that? That brings me to the title of this message: The Subjugation of Joy. What is it that conquers joy in your life? What is it that takes the joy away? Why does your joy get stripped away? Why can't you stand over a crib and enjoy the feeling of the blessing that God's given you?

Not practical to drive your Mach 4 every single day. Why not? Sunday driver, everyday driver. Dr. Brené Brown, she's a researcher with a PhD, and she says that in that moment of picturing something you didn't think you could ever picture in your brain happening to your child, that is your barometer for vulnerability. And she kind of connects it back to being vulnerable. That's how you know how great your fear of being vulnerable is.

Man, what do you mean I'm vulnerable? I'm just sitting there in my nursery all alone. I'm not vulnerable. I mean, what are you talking about? I'm holding my child. When we lose our tolerance for vulnerability, joy becomes foreboding. In other words, on a subconscious level, as humans, if we are so scared of being vulnerable, maybe if I enjoy something too much, something bad is going to happen. Or maybe if something bad is going to happen, because something bad is bound to happen. Like marriage is going great, finances are good, health is good, parents' health is good, kids are good. What's going to happen? What's about to happen in my life? Right? Something's gonna happen and as long as I'm not rejoicing over it, maybe it won't hurt as much. These are things that happen in our subconscious, guys.

Vulnerability and Fear

Fabricating fear is one way that we numb vulnerability. You guys with me? I know we jumped off the deep end. You guys with me? Talking about real stuff. Is that okay? Real stuff. Fabricating fear is one way that we numb vulnerability. Matt, that's ludicrous. Maybe some of y'all don't have the problem about picturing things happening to the most beloved person in your life, your child. But for those of you that do, what would cause you to do that? You didn't intentionally do that. It just happened. Your subconscious was triggered by you being joyful and being grateful for your child. Why did it throw those images in your head? Why did you get scared? Why did you imagine that happening to your child? And there's nothing you could do to save them. Because we fabricate fear to numb vulnerability.

Addiction and Numbing

Other ways that we numb vulnerability—very obvious. Addiction, drinking, smoking. You guys ever been stressed out? Something in your life, maybe work or a job, right? Might get fired tomorrow. Very stressed out and you blink and you're in front of the fridge. It's open, all the food. How did I get here? Anybody? Eating those Twinkies and ice cream, right? I'm just gonna have a few cheese and crackers. Whole block's gone in a minute. How did this happen? That's how we numb vulnerability.

Social media—good Lord. Social media. I was watching a study, I think it was a TED talk, and they were speaking about how social media has become the new numbing agent. More so than drinking, smoking, eating Twinkies and deep fried Oreos, right? Let me put it this way. Something bad happens in your life. A conflict happens in your life. Let's just say that. Conflict, something that causes you stress, anxiety. And the first thing you do is hop on Twitter or Facebook and put it out there. Oh, so this just happened. Or maybe passive-aggressive quotes in conflicts. That's good stuff. Oh yeah. Well, if somebody didn't do this, and you never say who it is because you just want to put it out there, right?

Some people actually think that they're trying to connect with other people to make themselves feel better. You're not connecting with other people when you post on Facebook. Do you guys realize that? There is no connection there. If you wanted to connect with someone, you would call someone up on the telephone and say, "Hey, Brad, I just lost my job. I'm feeling really bad about this. I got financial issues, man. I got some problems in my marriage. I need to connect with someone. Do you have 10 minutes of your time to talk to me? I need some empathy from you." Empathy is the antidote for shame, by the way—for vulnerability. When you have someone with you, it strengthens you. That's what human connection does. That's why fellowship is so important because we support each other here, right? When someone prays for you over here, it's a lot different than someone typing on Facebook, "I pray for you, bro."

How we know when we use social media as an agent to numb vulnerability is that when we have conflict in our life or some tragedy in our life, we feel vulnerable if that's the first thing we go to. People who do that are not looking for connection. They're just numbing vulnerability the same as drinking, the same as smoking, the same as eating Twinkies and deep fried Oreos. And they're wanting to feel empowered because it feels good to feel empowered. It feels good to feel empowered by people getting on your team by giving you likes and comments. Nobody knows what I'm talking about. No one likes to get likes, right? Likes to have a comment or two. I'm with you, bro. Yeah. Darn right, you're with me. Yeah. It's just as bad as going to the bottle, smoking a cigarette, eating a whole pack of Twinkies.

The Cost of Numbing

There are dangers when you numb vulnerabilities though. And I'll get to the point here in just a minute, but I feel like I have to build it up because I know there are some of you that are relating right now to the things that I'm saying. And it's important that we identify them, especially if we're wanting to have a life that's in pursuit of being joyful. When you numb fear and when you numb vulnerability, you are forced to also numb joy. You have to. It's a numbing

agent. Whatever you do is a numbing agent. You got to numb both, right? Fear is vulnerable. Joy is vulnerable. You have to numb both. Man, I don't numb joy. I love joy, really. So I want you guys to picture your go-to agent right now. Whatever you use, and you guys know what I'm talking about. There's some couple of you guys looking at me like I know you numb. Everybody numbs when they get vulnerable.

Is it the bottle? Beer? Liquor? Is that what it is? Is that what you use to numb when you're going through a really bad time in your life? When you smoke cigarettes? Smoke a cigar? I mean, something. Maybe you overeat a lot. Yeah, man, I never knew. You never try stuff like dipping Nutty Buddy bars into Nutella, right? Unless you're going through a bad time in life, right? Maybe it's something like that. Maybe you're outspokenly dramatic on Facebook, right? So that's what you do when you're vulnerable, when you're having a hard day, right? When you feel like you can be attacked, you feel vulnerable, right? Around the wolves, right?

So let's say something fantastic happened. You got the car, right? You got the job. You got the baby. You got married. You got stuff that's going to bring you joy and you're grateful for it. Yay! How do you respond to that? Let's go get drinks. Man, I want to go smoke a cigarette. This is great. But you smoked it. Let's go eat. This is awesome. Man, let's celebrate and go get some ice cream and Twinkies. If you numb vulnerability, guys, you use the same vices to numb joy as you do fear. The object is to take away those vices because you want to be able to endure fear to accept joyfulness in your life. That's what's stopping 90% of the people in the world right now from living out a truly joyful life. What's the antidote? What's the antidote? How do we stop wanting to run to the vices when we're scared? How do we stop running to the vices when we're joyful?

Hey guys, don't get me wrong. There's celebratory stuff that you can do if you're happy. Of course, you throw a party. You're supposed to rejoice at Sukkot, right? Rejoice! But what prompts that? What's the antidote? It's gratitude. Gratitude.

Gratitude as the Antidote

When you are faced with those moments of imaginary fear—you guys know what I'm talking about? Imaginary fear, anxiety, stress, right? Your teenager didn't return the text message 20 seconds ago—dead. You guys know what I mean, this is real stuff, right? Dead. I mean, can we call the cops? We need to call the cops. Honey, we need to call the cops. He doesn't even have it read yet. He always has his phone on him. Instantly, why do we run to that? When we are faced with those moments of imaginary fear, fear of loss, fear of devastation, fear of something

horrible happening in our lives, you have a choice. You can be scared, you can run from joy, you can run from being vulnerable, or you can have the courage to lean into it. When you're faced with those moments, and I want everybody to listen, take this home with you. When you're faced with the moments in your life where you're not focused on God's grace and mercy and his well-being for your life, when you're not focused on the reality of the situations, when you're not focused on your child is safe and sound in his crib right now, you're right there. A shark is not going to—I mean, what in the world? But we might go to the beach sometime this year. When you're faced with the reality of the situation, right, and you forget it, that should be a reminder. Red flag, an alert, barometer—beep, beep, beep, right? That should be a reminder for you in that moment to be grateful. I'm enjoying this moment with my child. Something might happen one day. Something might happen and I might lose something of great value in my life. Might, could, maybe. But right now, I am gonna soak up the joy that this child has given me and I am going to be grateful for the opportunity to stand over their crib and to hold them and to say thank you God for allowing me to be a parent. Thank you God for allowing me to have the parents that I do. Thank you God for allowing me to have a house. Thank you God for allowing me to have the job even if it's not for much longer.

Gratitude and Joy

Thank you, God, for allowing me to have the blessings that you have given to me. Although I may lose them, I'm not going to let that keep me from saying thank you and being grateful. Because if fear can keep you from saying thank you, fear will never allow you to be joyful. Period. It can't happen.

You see what the magnitude of ingratitude does. Sometimes we're not gracious and we don't even realize it. We've got fireworks going off, alerting us—now's the time to be grateful right now. But we get distracted. We get distracted.

Next time you have a fear of losing something in your life, look at me—I want you to know that this is an alert, it is a reminder for you to say thank you for the things that you have, for you to say thank you for that thing that you think you might lose, that you're imagining you're losing, to say thank you. And then after you say thank you, right, do a little experiment. After you say thank you, I want you to consciously examine yourself to see if you feel a little bit of joy in your life for having that. I'm serious. See if you can feel it.

That is how you cultivate joy. That is how you practice gratitude for the purpose of cultivating joy. If you're unwilling to say thank you, if all you do is run from vulnerability, if all you do is

say I'm so sad, I don't want something to happen—I'm so grateful and I'm so joyful that God has given me [fill in the blank].

Scripture and Courage

Isaiah 43:2. God speaking about Israel, and he says, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you."

You guys like passing through waters? I like floating on water. I don't like passing through water. There's sharks in water, giant octopuses and stuff. The Bible talks about—what was it—Leviathan. Not behemoth. Big old thing. Babylonian myth. That was a big old fish. Just horrible. No, that's in the water.

"When you pass through the water, I will be with you. And through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fires, you will not be burned, and the flame will not consume you."

Now, guys, I believe that scripture can be literal and metaphorical. I believe what God is saying here is when you pass through those situations in your life, when you think that there is no option but to die, you're going to die. There's no other option. Everything's going to go to Sheol. It's over, right? I'm going to lose my job, lose my kids, lose my house, lose my family, lose my marriage, lose my...

When everything is going to go away and I'm scared, God is sitting here telling his people—the ones who are in covenant with him—"I'm here. I'm here. I'm here. I'm here. Why do you allow fear to overtake you when I have you on the mission and I gave you the tools? I gave you the Spirit. This tool, if you use it, if you use it, you have no reason to be scared of the waters and the fire and whatever else in your life. I will be with you."

David's Vulnerability Before God

You guys want to see someone who intentionally placed themselves in a vulnerable position for God? David.

You guys know the story, right? 2 Samuel 6, starting in verse 12, talking about David dancing. Michal got all mad. Dancing, all right. Let's read it.

Verse 12: "So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the city of David with rejoicing. And when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fowl. David danced before the Lord with all his might. David was

girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of trumpets."

So what David did—and it wasn't a unique thing—was actually what happens with any type of enthronement ceremony. With ancient Assyria and Babylon, I think the king would take off his royal garments and lay them aside to put himself at a lower status before his king, okay? David took off his royal robes, put on a linen ephod, and danced before the Lord. He stepped out of his position as king, if you will, and lowered himself before the Lord. So everything was great. He had a great time, right? Went home.

Verse 16: "And David returned to bless his household, but Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David and said, 'How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of the servants, female servants, as one of the fellows shamelessly uncovers himself.'" Wasn't wearing nothing. He stripped down to just a linen ephod, right? She was accusing him of being selfish. "Oh, you just wanted to do whatever you want to do, right? You're king. What are you doing? You are the king, right? What do you think you were doing out there jumping around? All the female servants looking at you like a servant yourself. Who do you think you are?"

I heard a pastor say at one point, and he said the two things that Satan will use to destroy a marriage is number one, he will distract the wife. Number two, he will discourage the husband. That right there. Men, would you be discouraged if your wife did that to you, said that to you? Honestly, I was just serving God. I was out there dancing. Who do you think you are? How dare you? What do you think? You've embarrassed me. You have embarrassed yourself.

What was Michal focused on? She was distracted. She wasn't focused. This was a ritual, cultic ritual. Bringing the ark to the city of David. What are you focused on, Michal? Distracted.

David had every reason to be discouraged. Look what David says. David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord." You'd think David didn't realize when he started taking off his robes that he was making himself vulnerable. But he understood what he needed to do. He needed to lower himself and dance with all his might before the Lord. Even if he looked like another servant, he didn't care if he looked vulnerable. He did it anyway.

Man, wouldn't that be cool if you had that much courage, that much faith in God, when he led you to do something? You just did it, even though, man, I know someone's going to be mad at this. My wife is going to have a cow.

Living Out Joy and Gratitude

David chose to be vulnerable as a servant to God. And that leads us to [Colossians 2:6-7](#). It says that Thanksgiving is mentioned alongside this life in Messiah that we have. It states: "So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing"—this is like the fuel—"overflowing with thanksgiving, with gratitude."

When people see you having a joyful life, people are going to want to know: How do I become joyful? And you have to be willing to put yourself out there and share. You want to know how to be joyful? I can show you. I can introduce you to my King. The blessings that he gives, the redemption that he gives, the forgiveness that he gives, that is something that causes me to be so thankful that I can't help but to be joyful.

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace, and love—joy in the Holy Spirit."

So I want to review a few things on how we can practice joy in our lives. Just a few things, a few reminders, okay? My hope is that you will allow the Spirit to do its job in your life and that you will not be so distracted that you will allow the Spirit to be a helper in every area of your life—specifically gratitude and joy. That you will allow the Spirit of God to be a teacher in your life—specifically of gratitude and joy. That you will allow the Spirit to be a reminder in your life—specifically of gratitude and joy.

Number one: examine your thoughts and refocus if necessary. Our thoughts and what we meditate on are the number one things that get us in the way of being joyful in our lives. Do I need to go over the examples again? All that takes place in here.

[Philippians 4:8](#): "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things in your life."

What are you focused on? What are you meditating on throughout the day? Are you meditating about the things that God has blessed you with or are you meditating about the things that you might lose?

Number two: Practice generosity. Of course, everyone thinks of money as the first generosity. Money! Of course, money is like the climactic way to show generosity because what makes money? Money is fueled by your time and energy. That's why it's so hard to be generous with money because you put a lot of time and energy at work to bring home money, right? Be

generous with money. Be generous with other things as well. Oh good, he's giving me out. I'm not giving you one out. Money is the climax of what you can be generous with. That's time, energy, money—all right there. That's it.

But you can also make an effort to love people, to be kind to people. Put a smile on someone else's face. Be that person for someone going through this fear, running from vulnerability, saying "Oh Lord, what's going to happen?" Be that person they need to call and have 10 minutes of empathy from you.

Yeah, I can connect. Tell me what's going on. What happened? I'm here for you. Man, I've been through something similar like that. I know what it feels like. I hate that you're going through that. Man, be generous with your time, your energy. Do something to make other people happy. And you guys know this. Whatever you plant, you're going to sow. You'll reap the benefits of that. [Acts 20:35](#), and remember the words of the Lord Jesus that he said, it is more blessed to give than to receive. For some of us, it's easier just to write a check. There you go. All right. Talk to others. Be that support. Allow God to use you to fill a need in someone else's life. Be generous with everything that God has given to you. Practice gratitude.

Lean Into Vulnerability

When you're in those times where you feel vulnerable, lean into them. I dare you. Lean into them. Let that be a cue. Let that be a reminder for you to say, what are you going to say when that happens? Thank you. That's the cue. [Psalm 34:1](#), "I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth." Step four, we don't talk about that too much. Take time to be sad when you need to be sad. Scripture instructs us in this, right? Remember that there is a time to weep, a time to laugh, a time to mourn, a time to dance. In [Ecclesiastes 3:4](#), we can't be happy all the time. Sometimes things happen in our life that make us unhappy. Scripture doesn't say you can't be unhappy. Scripture doesn't say you can't be sad. Scripture says to rejoice and be grateful in all circumstances.

Daniel, great example. I'm sad. I'm probably going to become cat food tomorrow. But God, thank you regardless for the things that you have given to me in this life. And thank you for any blessings that you are choosing to give me in my future. No one says you can't mourn. No one says you can't be sad. There are times to do that. Make sure you take those times. Embrace those times. And don't forget the source of your joy. So [Acts 2:28](#), they're quoting Psalms chapter 16, and it says that, You have made known to me the paths of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence. So you're quoting David here, and David's saying that, God, you're going to

be the one that fills me with joy. All good things come from you. Allow me into your presence and fill me with your joy.

What Are You Willing to Do?

What are you willing to do to be joyful in your life? I mean, don't get me wrong. Some of us don't like struggles. Some of us don't like to do things that are sometimes hard. We'd like easy, path of least resistance that goes in every single aspect of our lives you would not believe. What are you willing to do to experience true joy in your life? Are you willing to give gratitude in times that you feel sad, that you feel fear? Are you willing to, before you go for that vice, recognize that it's a vice and say, just try it. Say, thank you, God. Are we willing to be generous? Are we willing to be content with the things that we have in our life, even if they're not the things that we think we should have?

The Danger of Ingratitude

It's amazing. I was reading a book, *The Garden of Gratitude*, and Rabbi Shalom Arushi, he made an interesting connection. He says that Amalek did not appear until Israel questioned whether God was in their midst. "Amalek did not appear to fight Israel until Israel was standing there. Is God even with us anymore?" Showing the ultimate ungratefulness to God. My life stinks. Remember that? My life stinks. I'm not grateful for nothing. Is God even here? Does God even love me? Has God even given me anything? As you sit in your house with your car, with your kids, with food in the pantry. Has God even given us anything? Is He even in our midst? The author goes on to say, "Yes, you're going to question? You're going to show that much ungratefulness to the Father? Amalek." Remember what we said last week? God fulfills measure for measure. If you have an unfounded complaint of ingratitude, God will take care of that. He will make it valid. He will make your ingratitude valid. Is God in my midst? We're going to send Amalek, and then you're going to cry out, and you'll see that I'm in your midst.

Black Friday and Gratitude

Gratitude's hard. I thought about not doing a message today and just showing—I stayed up for at least an hour getting videos together. I was just going to show all of the fights and riots from Black Friday in a slideshow. That's all I was going to do today. I was going to put it up as the conclusion to the Joyful series about gratitude, joy, and graciousness. On the day that you sit around and you thank God for your family, that you thank God for the food that you just stuffed in your belly. How many of you guys did what I asked you to do last week and you ate until you

were kind of full? Anybody do that? Right? And then you remembered and you were content? Did you feel any joy in that moment when you sat there holding this, holding the belly and saying, wow, I'm so grateful? Anybody? Did you feel anything after you did that? Joy. Joy. And then we go and open the paper and we say, oh, look, we can save 20 bucks if we buy this thing that we didn't need, that we don't need. Look, man, this is 15. That Blu-ray is only \$13 instead of 20. There's limited supply, man. We got to get there. We got to go now. We got to go now. So you get out there, seven o'clock at night, standing in the car. It was kind of warm, but regardless, guys, are you grateful for the things that God has given to you?

Closing

Hey guys, I'm Matthew Vanderels, pastor at Founded in Truth Fellowship, and I really hope you enjoy this message. If you would like to see more messages and teachings like this one, please subscribe to our YouTube channel by clicking [here](#). You can also visit our website to find out more information about our ministry and what we do right here. And if this message has been edifying to you, please consider supporting us and the ministry through our secure online giving portal [here](#). This will ensure this message along with many others will continue to reach those who find themselves far from God. If you'd like to write us, you can do so at Founded in Truth, P.O. Box 38042, Rock Hill, South Carolina, zip code 29732. You can also check out our Facebook page at facebook.com/foundedintruth. I pray that you stay blessed. I pray that you guys stay encouraged. And I pray that you stay fit. Founded in Truth. We'll see you guys next time. For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at Foundedintruth.com.

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