

## GOD'S ROUTE TO JOY

“The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it’s the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when he discovers that someone else believes in him and is willing to trust him with his friendship.” ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Our image is not rooted in self at all for we are beautiful reflections of God, His handiwork and design. When we fail to understand *who we are in Christ* and search for affirmation from all the wrong sources, it “stunts” our Christian maturity and hinders fellowship with the Lord and others.

Negative self-image is epidemic. And it is a serious problem because it blocks us from intimacy with God. God doesn’t love and want you for His own because of your successes or because you have it “*all together*”, or because of all the things you have accomplished or for your appearances. No! God want you—*the real you*. He loves you just as you are and through the work of the Holy Spirit helps you to make changes that will enhance your life.

The world gives us a false understanding of happiness and contentment. It projects man’s ideas, man’s definition, which is often colored to fit the occasions. We need to pursue the truth from the proper sources—God’s perspective—from God’s book—the Bible—from a biblical basis. Left to our own devices and way of thinking can take us down the wrong path. We need to come into the presence of God on a daily basis. How can we hope to know His heart and receive His instructions for our lives unless we give Him our undivided attention and ample opportunity to speak to our hearts?

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 says, *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*; good advice to daily follow and live by.

**Oscar Wilde** once said, “Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else’s opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation.”

When Satan tells you a lie(s), stop and ask God right then, **WHAT IS MY TRUTH? WHO AM I?** Then in obedience, listen to the answer given by the Holy Spirit. You can learn to be happy in a situation even if you can’t be happy with a situation when your esteem comes as a result of knowing God and His love. As we know Him intimately, He changes us. Let this truth settle deep within your heart.

For the Christian, our identity—*who we are*—is rooted In Christ Jesus. As we die to self, we live and breathe and have our being in Him. Apart from Him, we are constantly seeking for satisfaction—to fit in—find validation—compare ourselves to others. When we strive to live from the world’ perspective, we cannot embrace true peace; “The peace of God.” It will elude us, and failure is just around the corner if we try to live our lives from the world’s perspective. It becomes a bondage that weighs heavy upon us.

As a child growing up, if the image of Christ is absent or distorted, we are uncertain of love and the love of God is hard to grasp—to accept. The results—all relationships suffer.

Negative self-image creates emotional bondage. The pressure to look good at any cost is enormous. Negative self-image produces the need to build walls to protect ourselves. It is destructive and designed to tear us down, not build us up. It goes hand-in-hand with unhealthy boundaries.

And because we don’t want our weaknesses exposed, we start wearing masks and we live our lives projecting a false image. We may look like we are “living it up”, but we are dying on the inside.

Therefore, the truth remains, that no matter what our circumstances or life experiences have been, our freedom is in Christ. Our hope is in God who tells us in Psalm 103:4 “I have redeemed your life from destruction and crowned you with loving kindness and tend mercies.” Psalm 61:2-3 “I am God your rock, your shelter and a strong tower from your enemy.”

### **HOW DO I GET ON THE ROUTE TO JOY?      KNOW YOUR TRUTH!**

- You are highly esteemed because God created and chose you. You are His redeemed!
- Love is the key—not self-love, but accepting God’s love—He looks on the heart.
- In order to change our view of self, we need to change our thinking; line up in God.
- God deals with us individually, so don’t compare (2 Corinthians 10:12-17).
- We can rid ourselves of negative self-image (Hebrews 12:1). This scripture implies initiative and action on our part. Partner with God.
- As a good Father, God has established guidelines for living and blessings. Our future is in Him.
- God esteems us, and we no longer depend on others to define us. Our esteem comes as a result of knowing Him and His love.
- The process (on going) of building a godly identity often requires a renewing of the mind.

- It is not enough to just believe in God, you must get to intimately know your heavenly Father. It is through an intimate *one-on-one* relationship with God that you will be transformed.
- Identify the lies Satan has spoken to you and ask God, through His Word and personal revelation, to bring truth to your thoughts (Proverbs 23:7).

God knows who I am and I know that my identity is in Him. I will no longer worry about image. Others do not have the power to shape my identity, for I choose to walk in the *truth of who God says I am*.

### **CHANGE YOUR THINKING:**

#### **PURSUE THE RIGHT PERSPECTIVE**

#### **RENEW YOUR CONCEPT OF GOD**

God is the loving Father who so loves us that He “gave His only begotten son” for us (John 3:16). He accepts us, approves of us, and embraces us with the same heartfelt love as the father in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-24).

What is often considered a loss now leads to a gain later. Force yourself to see life from God’s point of view; His perspective. It will change everything.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Let go of past mistakes. Don’t give in to hopeless thinking. Accept what can’t be changed.

Stop comparing. Lose the “always” or the “never” from your thinking. Learn to say NO!

Change your “self” talk to “God” talk. Talk character, not physical appearances. Refocus!

Start using your gifts. Daily take time to sit in his presence. Pray and stay intimate with God.

Count your blessings—slowly one at a time. Wear a smile; smiles are contagious.

Remember, there’s only one person you can change—YOURSELF!