

Spiritual Practice | Joy & Laughter

If you're new around here, one of the things we regularly do when we gather like this are what we call "spiritual practices". They're just simple activities where sometimes we concentrate on our breathing, or posture, or engage in a physical expression of prayer. Sometimes we take time to reflect, or even journal our thoughts. Sometimes we are guided by our imagination or a piece of artwork, to see something about God and ourselves in a fresh way. They're all forms of practicing together how to better embody our faith.

Today, we want to practice something many people find hard to experience, and that's JOY. Believe it or not, joy is something that can be practiced. We can actually choose joy, even when life is hard, because joy isn't based on our circumstances. We sometimes get "joy" confused with "happiness", which actually comes from the root word "happen" because happiness is tied to our circumstances. But joy is not a feeling based on what ***happens*** to us; it's a disposition that comes from within, rooted in a deep belief that there is a better and more true reality than the circumstances we're in. Joy comes from trusting, as the Bible says, ***"that the present suffering is nothing compared to the coming glory that is going to be revealed to us."*** (Romans 8:18) or that, ***"we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love God, who have been called according to God's purpose."*** (Romans 8:28) or that, ***"nothing can separate us from God's love in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** (Romans 8:38).

When you think about it, we have so many reasons to live with a deep and unshakeable joy. But it requires us to focus less on whatever is going on around us, and instead lift our eyes and hearts to swim in the waters of God's reality – what Jesus called, *"the Kingdom of Heaven."*

So as a way of taking the focus off of our circumstances, and to help us practice joy, we're going to do something I was never allowed to do in church growing up. We're going to laugh. That's our practice today!

Laughter is scientifically proven to alter our brain chemistry and our overall mood. And, as we all know, it's contagious. Seeing someone else laugh will usually make us laugh. So as a simple, maybe even silly of a practice as this might be, we're going to take a moment and just try to laugh together. And if you currently find yourself needing to experience more joy in your life, I invite you to throw caution to the wind, let your guard down, resist insecurity or self-consciousness, and just... give in to the laugh. Let's give this a try:

[VIDEO: People laughing hysterically – [example video compilation](#)]

***On your feet now—applaud God!
Bring a gift of laughter,
Sing yourselves into his presence.***
Psalm 100:1-2 (MSG)

PRAYER: God, we know that joy is so much more than simply laughing at a funny video, but I pray that this moment will trigger a reminder in each of us to lean into the true power of joy – real joy that comes from You. Help us to live beyond our circumstances, and to live in the reality of Your joy-filled heavenly kingdom. Amen.