

Broken Cisterns: Filling Our Heart with Joys that aren't God - Week 5

Acknowledge Our Misplaced Affections:

Where can we look to (try to) find joy outside of God? (What does the world look to for joy?)

Physical Satisfaction: Food, Sex, Comfort, Addictions (Alcohol, Drugs, etc.)

Entertainment: Movies, TV, Recreation

Experiences: Bungee jumping, Family time, Disneyland

Rest: Retirement, Vacations, No work/responsibility

"All that we call human history — money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery — is the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy."

Mere Christianity, C. S. Lewis

Romans 1 does a great job of highlighting the exchange we like to make as sinful people.

Romans 1:21–25

[21] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

[24] Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, [25] because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (ESV)

I think we could really substitute any of the idols we have talked about in this class so far in verse 22. "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for lesser glory of things like control, food, entertainment, and money."

"We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in the slum because he cannot imagine what

is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

The Weight of Glory, C. S. Lewis

1 Corinthians 10:1–22

[1] For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, [2] and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, [3] and all ate the same spiritual food, [4] and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. [5] Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. [6] Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. [7] Do not be idolaters as some of them were: as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.” [8] We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. [9] We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, [10] nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. [11] Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. [12] Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. [13] No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. [14] Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. [15] I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. [16] The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? [17] Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. [18] Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? [19] What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? [20] No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. [21] You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. [22] Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? (ESV)

There is a lot going on here. Paul is creating a strong symbolic parallel between the idolatry of the Israelites in the desert and the Corinthians in their participation with pagan rituals of their culture. The Corinthians

wanted to make what they were doing (enjoying pagan idol worship) into no big deal because they had grace. Paul is helping them understand as Christians they had no business playing around with substitutes to God. Paul ends where we began weeks ago rooting his argument on the fact that our God is a jealous God. Note in verse 7 Paul identifies the idolatry as eating and drinking and playing. Not that these things themselves were bad but when framed in the pagan culture and worshiped as gods they were certainly idols. (Numbers 25, 23k)

We are looking to broken cisterns to bring us joy...

Jeremiah 2:12-13

[12] Be appalled, O heavens, at this;
be shocked, be utterly desolate,
declares the LORD,
[13] for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living waters,
and hewed out cisterns for themselves,
broken cisterns that can hold no water. (ESV)

The solution is living water!!!! The presence of Christ.

John 7:37-39

[37] On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. [38] Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" [39] Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. (ESV)

Appreciate the Gift as a Gift:

As sinners we take good things God has given us as gifts and we make them into more. God gives us food. He gives us taste buds. He makes the whole process of eating a blessing to us. We get pleasure from it. What we should do is see food as a blessing from God. We should enjoy food in such a way that acknowledges God as a giver of a good gift. But we end up looking to that food to bring a joy into our lives that God alone

can give. ...I'm sad, food will make me feel better. ...I've had a hard day. Wine will bring me peace. ...I'm uncertain about tomorrow. Money can assure me. We look to the gifts to bring what only the giver can truly bring.

In Steve Hoppe's book *Sipping Saltwater* he describes our lack of balance in this way as like a pendulum. In the center is the balanced perspective that these joys are gifts to be enjoyed properly and seen as evidence of the goodness of God. However the pendulum can swing into looking at these gifts as either a god, wanting them to provide more than God intends them to, or as garbage, which is also not an accurate view of what God intends.

What gifts has God brought into your life this week?

What might tempt us to treat those gifts as more (or less) than gifts for a good God?

The gifts of God are meant to manifest into worship of God...

1 Timothy 4:1–5

[1] Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, [2] through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, [3] who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. [4] For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, [5] for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer. (ESV)

1 Timothy 6:17–19

[17] As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. [18] They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, [19] thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. (ESV)

Worship the Giver of Real Joy:

John 15:9-11

[9] As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. [10] If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. [11] These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (ESV)

Psalms 16:11

[11] You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (ESV)

Psalms 4:6-7

[6] There are many who say, "Who will show us some good?
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!"
[7] You have put more joy in my heart
than they have when their grain and wine abound. (ESV)

Why is finding God as a meaningful source of joy so difficult for us?

Sometimes we struggle to feel joy. We can't see what God is doing in our present circumstances and we cannot imagine how it would bring about good and so we don't believe these verses. They are more of a distant reality than a present one. I think in part this is because we have rooted our hearts in wrong places. When I look to safety to bring me joy, and God brings trials to build trust, my wrongly rooted source of joy is disappointed. It is hard to muster up joy when my hope is not met. When I'm looking for the wrong things from the wrong places I will easily be disappointed. We need to root our affections in right places.

Testimony:

I was having lunch with Calvin Robertson this week and he was sharing with me how God had really been growing in him the ability to truly experience the feeling of joy in God. I asked him to share what God has been doing in him, with us this morning...

In Mike Mason's book "Champagne for the Soul: Rediscovering God's Gift of Joy" He embarks on a 90 day experiment of learning to grow his joy in God, like and muscle. I think he is on to something there. I think after looking to idols to bring joy into our lives our joy muscles have atrophied

to see what God is doing as joyous. We are looking for fast and simple. We are looking for God to do what we want when we want and how we want and anything less simple won't make us happy. But God doesn't want us to be so easily satisfied. He has something far better for us than we can imagine. God has something far more satisfying and far more long lasting. When we look to God's word to reveal how God is a source of joy we can realign our thinking , we can strengthen our muscles to understand what true joy is. We can sharpen our focus to see how God alone is the only source of meaningful joy.

How have you found God expanding your ability to see him as your source of joy?

In Two Weeks:

Review, Reflect and Pray