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March 2015

Choosing Joy

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” Philippians 4:8 (NIV)

In his New York Times bestseller, *The 4:8 Principle: The Secret to a Joy-Filled Life*, Tommy Newberry focuses on that key verse and the relationship between what we choose to think upon and the amount of joy we experience. He maintains that “negative thoughts do not come from God. God is positive to everything except sin.” I cannot vouch for the theological accuracy of that statement, but I think there is at least a measure of truth in it.

An honest confession is good for the soul, so here goes: In my teen and young adult years, I had a rather strong tendency toward a melancholy disposition and a deep-seated inclination to play the blame game in life. Then it dawned on me that I had a choice to make. I could choose to stay depressed, or I could choose 4:8 thoughts.

For each of us, life is full of choices. Many of them are rather insignificant while others are far more consequential. Numerous books have been written on the topic of personal choice, including *Happiness is a Choice and Choose Joy: Because Happiness Isn't Enough*.

Life isn't always easy for any of us. Perhaps you have heard of Bill Allison, who described his entire ministry as “a mountain top experience,” saying, “Either I've been on the top of the mountain or the mountain has been on top of me.” You may even have run across the book titled *I Try to Take One Day at a Time, but Sometimes Several Days Attack Me at Once*. Haven't we all encountered these experiences?

I agree with James McDonald that “gratitude is the attitude that sets the altitude for living.” Each day, I write down five blessings I have experienced that day for which I am thankful. As Newberry says, we could “write down five things that make our lives really stink right now, but what good would that do us?” When I am asked, “How are you?” I like to answer, “Better than I deserve,” or “I have more blessings than problems.”

There have actually been studies conducted that have shown that the more joy we have in our lives, the more productive, creative, and energetic we tend to be on the job. I believe that we will be better equipped to minister to the real needs of our students if we model the joy-filled life.

So may the joy of the Lord be our strength today and always!

--Bob Triplett

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