Session 11 The Promise of Joy and the Illusion of Happiness (Jn. 15:11)

 *“Let me drink from the river of Your pleasures as I delight in Your beauty.” (Ps. 36:8; 37:4)*

1. Introduction
	1. John 13-17 is the greatest teaching by the greatest teacher in history. It is a most important passage for God’s people in the generation in which Jesus returns, when many will be troubled by dark emotions such as fear, shame, bitterness, grief, etc. Jesus promised to strengthen His people with supernatural joy to enable them to have a vibrant heart that overcomes sin and dark emotions.

11“These things I have spoken…that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (Jn. 15:11)

*Paragraph A: I love to say this sentence almost every session. I think Stuart and I have done about fifty sessions on John 13 to 17, and we plan to do about a hundred total for another year to two years. We are taking it phrase by phrase, verse by verse. It is the greatest teaching given by the greatest Teacher in human history. These five chapters are a very, very important passage of Scripture in the generation the Lord returns, because remember He gave these five chapters, Jesus did, on Thursday night, before He died on Friday. And two days earlier, I have said this at almost every session so most of you know, He gave the famous teaching on Matthew 24 and 25 on the end times.*

*So on Tuesday, He described the incredible crisis that is going to happen in the generation the Lord returns. Though there will be the greatest revival in history as well, that is not my point to go into all of that tonight. However, on Tuesday, He said, “Let not your heart be troubled.” He said that in Matthew 24:6.*

*Now, on Thursday, He picks up the same theme, “Let not your heart be troubled.” He is actually continuing the conversation from Tuesday. There will be so many dark emotions in the human family across the earth, but there is one reliable pathway to have a vibrant spirit even in that hour of the greatest time of darkness and crisis of human history.*

*He gives this significant promise that is beyond measure in its importance, but we are kind of so familiar with it that a lot of people do not take it as a promise to put their name on. They say, “Oh, that is cool. Let’s put it on a poster.” You know, “These things I have spoken, that My joy will remain in you, and your joy will be full!” That is phenomenal. This is an absolutely necessary, significant promise.*

*My prayer tonight is that you would take this verse, John 15:11, and put your name on it, and say, “I am going to begin to believe God for this in reality.” Because, the difficulty that has happened in the last number of years is escalating and is going to escalate far faster. It is going to be a far deeper situation of dark emotions, fear, despair, bitterness, betrayal and all of these things in the earth. However, we can have a vibrant heart.*

*Again, my point of sharing this is so that you would look at John 15:11 and say, “This is for me, for real, and I want to walk in it today, not wait until then!” Interesting, this is the first time in the Bible that Jesus promises joy. He says, “It is My joy, but it is going to become your joy!” We will look at that in a few moments.*

* 1. Many define *joy* and *happiness* in different ways. I speak of *“divine joy”* as that which is imparted to us only as we relate to Jesus. I speak of “*natural* *happiness*” to describe the good feelings we have related to favorable circumstances—relationships, possessions, achievements, positions, etc.
	I value “natural happiness,” but the intense pursuit of it is an illusion rooted in idealism.

*Paragraph B: Many people—social scientists, psychologists, and counsellors—define joy and happiness in all kinds of different ways. There is no actual standard definition of what joy is versus happiness. So tonight I am going to tell you how I use those two terms in this message because different articles will use those terms differently. I am speaking of divine joy that is supernaturally imparted to us as we relate to Jesus. Supernaturally imparted divine joy, that is the promise. It is essential that we get this into our heart in a growing way.*

*Then I am speaking of natural happiness, and that is the good feeling that we get when we have favorable circumstances. You know, the big money thing happens or the award comes or the phenomenal new relationship or that things are just good in that situation. There is that good feeling which I call natural happiness. Now I actually do value natural happiness, but here is the problem: the intense pursuit of it is an illusion. It is not real, and it is rooted in idealism. It is deeply entrenched in the heart of every human being until they intentionally move in the other direction with faith and a pursuit to encounter divine joy as a lifestyle.*

1. Review: Two truths, one command, and two promises (Jn. 15:9-11)
	1. In John 15:9, we see the *two most important truths* andthe *most important command* in the Bible.

9“As the Father loved Me, I have loved you; abide in My love. 10If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love…11These things I have spoken…that My joy may remain in you…” (Jn. 15:9-11)

*Roman numeral two: Now this is going to be a review from Session 7 in our last semester because I am really giving you the context of verse 11, because you have to read 9 and 10 to understand some of the power of verse 11. Some of you were not here for Session 7, so I just want to give it to you quickly. In John 15:9, we see what I consider the two most important truths in the Bible. Now that is a big statement, like, “Really? The two most important truths?” I have thought about this for quite a while. And in this one verse, verse 9, it is the most important commandment in the Bible.*

*Let’s look at it, verse 9. Truth number one: “in the same way the Father loves Me,” the way that God loves God—That is a remarkable truth that has significant implications on our lives, though many believers do not think much about it, but that is where it starts. He said—Truth number 2: “that is the intensity of how I love you!” We are not going to understand the intensity of how He loves us in a vacuum of not having some understanding of how the Father loves Him because that is the comparison; that is the basis. That is a big subject. and we looked at it in quite a few sessions this semester.*

*Then He says in verse 10, “If you keep My commandment.” No, no, no, I am still in verse 9. “As the Father loved Me” truth one; “I have loved you” truth two; “Abide in My love;” that is actually a commandment to abide in His love. I consider it to be the most important commandment in the Bible.*

*Verse 10, “If you keep My commandment”—here is a promise—“you will abide in My love.” He is using the phrase, “abide in My love,” with two different emphases, which we will look at in a moment.*

*Verse 11, He said, in effect, “I have told you these two truths [in verse 9], this commandment [in verse 9] and this promise [in verse 10] so that My joy would grow in you and it would be your joy!” Jesus is connecting the impartation of joy to the truths and the promises in verses 9 and 10. Though they are really quick phrases, they are filled with meaning and significance. So we cannot start in verse 11 because it will not work because He gave us the teaching so that joy would be inspired and imparted to us.*

* 1. ***Truth #1***: ***The Father’s love for Jesus*** (15:9a) points us to the reality of how God loves God.
	2. ***Truth #2***: ***Jesus loves His people*** (15:9b) in the same intensity that the Father loves Him.
	3. ***Abiding in love***: There is a human part (15:9c) and a divine part (15:10b) to *abiding in love*.

*Paragraph D: This phrase, “abide in love,” we see it in verse 9, and we see it again in verse 10. You might not catch this at a quick read. He is using the same phrase, but He is making two different points of emphasis and He is not saying the same thing. This reality of abiding in love has two sides. There is a human side which is His point in verse 9, but then there is a divine side which is His point in verse 10. I put it on the notes so that you can review it later because, if this is the first time you have ever heard that, you may be saying “I am not fully following this.” That is why I like to give notes so that you can say, “Okay!”*

* + 1. ***Human side***(15:9c): Jesus commanded us to engage in the human part of *abiding in love*—
		by staying focused on searching out the two truths in 15:9a, and on talking to Him about them (saying, “Thank You, show me more” of specific truths) with a spirit of obedience (15:10a).

*Let’s look at the human side. That is the commandment which I consider to be the most important commandment in the Bible. What Jesus is doing is commanding them to stay focused and to search out the two truths. He said, in other words, “I want you to abide; I want you to live locked in on what I just told you about the way the Father loves Me and the way I love you. Lock into those two truths! Study them out, but more than studying them out, get those two truths into your mouth and into your conversations with Me. Thank Me for them and ask Me to show you more! Regularly talk to Me about those two truths!” That is how we walk out the command to abide in love.*

* + 1. ***Divine side***(15:10b):The Spirit imparts living understanding of God’s love that tenderizes the hearts of disciples so that they feel love from Him and love for Him and others. This speaks of a breakthrough of the heart—that we abide in or live in the conscious reality of God’s love.

*Paragraph 2: Now there is a divine side. This is not a command to stay focused and to enter into conversation with the Lord about those two truths. This is actually a promise of a breakthrough of the heart. He says in verse 10, in essence, “If you stay with it, you will abide in Me. The breakthrough will come! There will be a new understanding that will come to you, and you will abide in it.” If you abide in it by focusing on it, there will be a breakthrough, and your heart will be tenderized, and living understanding will come. You will feel love from God and feel love to God, the breakthrough. You will abide in it. That is a promise. And so what He is saying in verses 9 and 10 is not the same thing. He is making two different points.*

* 1. ***A command*** (15:9c): Jesus commanded us to ***abide in His love*** or to live focused on understanding and expressing it as we search out the two truths in 15:9a, b and speak to Him often about them.
	2. ***Promise #1*** (15:10b):Jesus promised that we ***will abide in His love****.* This is a promise of the Spirit granting a breakthrough in the hearts of obedient disciples so that they increase in understanding and even in feeling love from Him and love for Him and for others.
	3. ***Promise #2*** (15:11)*:* Jesus promised that His disciples would supernaturally ***receive His joy***.
1. Empowered by joy that transforms (Jn. 15:11)
	1. Jesus promised to strengthen His people supernaturally with His joy which enables them to have a vibrant heart that overcomes sin and dark emotions. Joy in this age is a down payment of eternal joy.

9“As the Father loved Me, I have loved you…10keep My commands…you will abide in My love… 11These things I have spoken…that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”
(Jn. 15:9-11)

*I am just basically saying it all again here. I put it into the notes so that you can read it a little more carefully and slowly if you want to, and I think you really want to. I mean, I cannot think of anything in my spiritual life more important than the truths in these three verses right here.*

*We are talking now about His joy. I am saying it again: Jesus promises. This is a promise from the Son of God. This is not a peripheral promise. This is a very important, reliable promise from the lips of Jesus. Then He goes on with, “I will strengthen you with supernatural joy!” And when those dark emotions and dark thoughts of sin and the emotions of bitterness and fear and shame and all of these things that we have talked about in the other sessions, when these begin to emerge in the earth and even in your own life, “I promise you,” Jesus is saying, “You can have a vibrant heart even in the presence of those dark emotions if you will do what I have told you in verses 9, 10 and 11.”*

*I am going to read it again! I put it in the notes again because I want it right in front of you. I want you to get so familiar with John 15:9, 10 and 11! He said, “As the Father loved Me, I have loved you,” two truths. He said, “Keep My commandments, and the breakthrough will come; you will abide in My love. You will live in the conscious reality of My love, and it will actually touch your heart and tenderize you.”*

*“These things I have spoken to you”—in other words these things in verses 9, 10, and 11—“because I want My joy to remain in you and I want your joy to be made full!”*

* 1. ***These things***: Jesus was emphasizing that the truths in 15:1-10 were essential to empowering them to receive joy. “These things” refers to 15:1-10 with a special emphasis on what He said in 15:9-10. Our ability to receive God’s joy is anchored in our understanding of and our on-going conversation with the Spirit—about how the Father loves Jesus and how Jesus loves us (15:9). The combination of experiencing His love (15:9) and walking in obedience (15:10) results in joy (15:11).

*Paragraph B: When He says in verse 11, “These things,” it is important to understand that He is really talking about verses 1 to 10. He is really talking about all ten verses because, in John 15:1, they left the Upper Room, and He is beginning a new conversation with them in John 15. In John 14, they leave the Upper Room, and in John 15, they walk a ways towards the garden, and He stops and gives them another teaching. And so He said, “These things” meaning verses 1 to 10. I want you to get verses 1 to 10, but I want you to have a special emphasis on verses 9 and 10 because 9 and 10 are what He is highlighting even more than the other verses. I mean, I want all of them.*

*Our ability to receive God’s joy—and it is really important that we receive God’s joy—is anchored in our understanding—and I am just repeating what I have already said—it is anchored in this ongoing conversation with Jesus about how the Father loves Him and how Jesus loves us. By our being anchored in those two truths and continuing in that ongoing conversation—again, I am just repeating myself—the combination of being anchored in that reality and talking to Him about that, verse 10, with a spirit of obedience, in verse 10, it results in joy in verse 11.*

* 1. The overarching theme of John 13-17 is found in 14:1 when Jesus commanded the disciples not to allow trouble to dominate their heart (14:1). There are human dynamics involved as indicated by His command to ***“let not…”***Jesus promised to release His joy (15:11) and peace into the hearts of those who continue not to allow trouble to dominate their heart (14:27).

1“Let not your heart be troubled…believe in God, believe also in Me…27My peace I give to you…
Let not your heart be troubled…” (Jn. 14:1, 27)

*Paragraph C: The overarching theme of these five chapters—I mean, there are a number of themes, but there is one theme that I think is the overarching; it kind of weaves in and out of the entire five-chapter conversation and teaching that He is giving them—is the commandment not to allow trouble to dominate their heart. He told them in John 14:1, “Let not your heart be troubled.” That is actually a command to the believer to do the human part. Jesus is saying that when trouble begins to rise up in your heart you have to talk to Him about what He teaches you in these five chapters. You have to talk to Him about them. You have to resist the trouble and talk to Him about His truths and promises, and joy will eventually emerge which has more power than the negative trouble in your heart.*

*There is a human dynamic involved. With some folks, they just see this as a cool verse. They do not understand that it is a very important commandment. The trouble He is talking about in context is the grief they will have when He gets killed and when others in the apostolic company get killed. When loved ones suddenly die, there is grief. He is talking specifically about that. He is talking about shame: Peter betraying Him and all of them stumbling that very night and the shame they would deal with. He is talking about the pain of the bitterness of being betrayed. He said, “You are all going to be betrayed!”*

*He is talking about fear, the different crises as the nation is shaken, and lawlessness, so bitterness, fear, shame, grief. Jesus said, in other words, “When those things rise up in you, do not just ride the storm out. Put your foot down and say, ‘Jesus, You said this. I thank You this is true. Show me more!’” Jesus says, in effect, “If you will enter into a conversation with Me, My joy will have a dominate power over that trouble.” This is my simple little way of saying this: Thank Him for the truths and ask Him to show you more. You will talk more if you start with that little phrase. You will end up saying more to Him. My point is that it is not enough to just underline the promises. They have to get into our mouths and in conversation with Him, and then, if we do that, the joy will have a dominate power over the trouble that is arising in our hearts, the grief, pain of bitterness, the fear, the shame. Jesus said, as it were, “It is critical that you do what I am telling you here!”*

* 1. John 13-17 tells how to engage our troubled hearts to overcome *fear,* *shame,* *bitterness, grief, etc*.
	In these 5 chapters, Jesus gives us line-upon-line insight into God’s heart (about 25 truths and promises) that equip us to overcome painful, dangerous, or dark emotions and/or mindsets.
	The main emphasis is not how to become safe physically and financially but to be safe spiritually.

*Paragraph D: He is telling us how to engage our heart to overcome those negative emotions in these five chapters: John 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. He gives us line-upon-line insight into God’s heart. There are about twenty-five truths and promises in those five chapters. You could say thirty. It just depends on how you organize them, and you can organize them in different ways. However, there are about twenty-five truths and promises, and we want to anchor our lives in those. We want those truths and promises to be often in our conversation with Him.*

*You will notice in John 13-17 that the safety He is talking about is spiritual safety: not falling away, not caving into fear. The safety that most people want Jesus to talk about is physical safety. He does not talk much about physical safety or financial safety. There are things to say about that, but that is not His emphasis in these five chapters. He would say, “I will tell you something is more dangerous than them killing your body: you losing your soul!” He is talking about the way to spiritual safety so that our inner man is vibrant in the darkest hour of history, yet the hour of history which has the greatest revival far surpassing the book of Acts taking place.*

* 1. Jesus is the best teacher on how to overcome a troubled heart. If we engage often with the truths and promises in John 13-17, we will have joy. Many sincere believers are confused as to why they do not have joy. I would ask them how often these truths regularly get in their conversation with Jesus.

20“…give attention to My words…21Keep them in the midst of your heart; 22for they are life to those who find them…23Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” (Prov. 4:20-23)

*Paragraph E: Jesus is the best teacher on how to overcome a troubled heart. I mean these twenty-five or thirty truths and promises—think about yourself—this is not a put down—think about yourself. If you are a normal believer who is sincere, you do not really spend much time in John 13 to 17, not really. And, you do not talk to God about those truths that much. Jesus is saying, “I really want you to engage with me on these truths.”*

*Do you know many sincere believers that I have talked with over the years who are confused why they do not have joy. I mean, shame dominates, rejection, fear, and all kinds of phobias, and all kinds of things in their minds, and their hearts are addicted to things, and they ask, “Why?”*

*I say, “I want to be nice about this, but how often do you talk to Jesus about these twenty-five to thirty truths?”*

*“Well, not much. I just want Him to give me joy!”*

*“No, He tells you that we have to do our part of it!”*

*Now this is really intense: Solomon in Proverbs 4. I want you to notice the vigorous intentionality of this passage, and I am applying it to John 13 to 17. Solomon said, “Pay attention to my words”—especially to the words of Jesus! I mean direct!—“Keep them in the middle of your heart!” The way that you do that is by keeping them in your conversation with Him. When I cease to talk to the Lord about these things, they cease to be in the middle of my heart. Solomon says, “They are life to you. If you find these, they are life!” Keep your heart with all diligence because, if you connect with God on these truths, life will spring out of your heart in the hour of the greatest darkness in human history.*

* 1. ***That My joy may remain in you***: Jesus promised to strengthen His disciples by imparting His joy in them to enable them to have a vibrant heart in the face of pressures and temptations (15:11 [2x]; 16:20, 21, 22, 24; 17:13). Joy is a feeling of pleasure or delight that things are good or are working for our future good—according to how God defines good. We experience joy as the truths of God’s Word is the lens by which we define good and view our life both in this age and in the age to come.

11“These things I have spoken…that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (Jn. 15:11)

*Paragraph F: Well, He starts with this statement, “My joy would remain in you,” and it is so significant. It is the first time Jesus ever promised joy, and this is His first statement. He gave a hint about it on Tuesday when He spoke about eternal rewards in Matthew 25:21. He said, “You will enter into the joy of your Master when He rewards you for your faithfulness.” And so He mentioned joy on Tuesday, but now He is promising it in this age during the darkest hour of history.*

*Well, what is joy? I don’t know whether there is a precise definition which is the official one, so I looked it up in the dictionary. And I like the dictionary’s definition, “Joy is a feeling of pleasure or delight,” and this feeling of joy of pleasure and delight is that things in your life are good or they are working for future good.*

*When we say things in our life are good or that they are working for our future good, you have to say “according to how God defines good.” Because our natural thing is that if we get favor, get a lot of money, and people like us, we think, “Things are going good!”*

*The Lord might say, “Well, not necessarily. That is not exactly My definition of good. I give you those things here and there.” You see, what good is, is when I see humility growing in my heart. When I see purity and passion for God growing in my heart. I see the trouble here, but it is producing something in me, and the Lord says, “You are getting it!” and I can say, “That feels good! I do not like the trouble I am in, but I like what I can see, even the little bit that is happening and what the Bible says that is happening in me.”*

*We experience joy—catch this now! I urge you to look at Paragraph F a little bit later on your own. As the truths of the Word become the lens by which we define what good is and how we view our life, we can have joy. When I define what good is and view my life through the lens of these promises in John 13 to 17, then I can have joy. When I view my life through the lens of natural happiness and what other people think happiness is, my life is not that great. I am troubled. I am anxious. I am worried. I feel left behind, and lonely, and filled with shame.*

*The Lord says, in effect, “View your life through the lens of what I call good because humility is growing in you and that is good! That will bless you forever in a way that you cannot even imagine! Be thankful that I am setting your life up for success and that you would have purity, humility, generosity and gratitude.” Those virtues will live forever and even in the age to come, the generosity, the gratitude, the humility, the purity, the servanthood we had in this age will still matter to us in the age to come. They are eternal.*

*You could win all of the trophies and awards, but none of those will go with you. You could have the biggest bank account, and none of it is going with you, but if you grow in generosity, it will go with you. If you grow in mercy and kindness towards people, you will take that with you in the age to come.*

*Anyway, it is reading my life and evaluating it through the lens of the word of God, defining what good is through John 13-17 which is where joy begins to emerge.*

* 1. Some are confused about biblical joy, thinking of it as temporary “euphoric high” paralleling what occurs with drugs. Jesus said that His joy “remains”—it is more than a temporary “euphoric high” but it is to “remain” as a regular part of a believer’s life. Some think of joy mostly in terms of the Spirit making them laugh at a church service or when jumping with joy to an upbeat worship song.

*Paragraph G: Now some people are confused about biblical joy. They think of biblical joy, I mean, but I have asked people over the years what it is, and it is, “Well, I do not know!” It is kind of unspoken, but it is like this euphoric, temporary high, like, “Wow! Joy hit me! It is amazing! Whoa! I was just so overwhelmed!” That can happen too, and I have had a couple of those in my life. They do not last very long, but I like them! However, that is not the biblical way to think about joy, it being mostly a euphoric, temporary high. You know they are looking at the guy on drugs—who is like, “Wow! I am really enjoying it!”—and they are saying “I want joy like that!”*

*The Lord would say, “No, no, that is not what we are talking about.” Jesus called it a “joy that remains,” while a temporary euphoric high on drugs or other things may last a couple of minutes or an hour or two. Jesus said, in effect, “No, the joy I am talking about remains. It is not an occasional, temporary high.” Now, “remains” does not mean it is twenty-four hours a day. It means that it is regularly a part of your emotional makeup. There are times in the day when you will not feel it, but it is this steady, regular part of our inward life which has this sense of well-being about it.*

*Now some people, when I say the joy of the Holy Spirit, think about when the Spirit hits them in a service and they laugh. They say, “That is joy,” and actually it is, but that is not the main biblical definition of joy. I have had that happen to me a few times where the Spirit came on me, and I just started laughing, and it was intense and lasted a few minutes, and I thought, “Where did that come from?”*

*Or some people think of joy as being when they jump for joy during an upbeat worship song during a worship service, and for eight or ten minutes they are screaming and jumping, and that is joy. Well, not really. That is more fun, and I think that is fun. However, joy is something far deeper than laughing for seven minutes or jumping during a song. It is something that can carry us through the most difficult and painful hours of life. It is a strength in our inner man, and it is bigger than just a short-term thing. And I am only saying that, and I’m not putting down the laughing or the jumping, so do not dismiss joy as just being those short five-or-ten-minute things. It is much deeper and a much bigger subject than that.*

* 1. David wrote of the fullness of joy at God’s throne (Ps. 16:11). God’s throne is the epicenter of joy in the universe; those near to it are filled with joy and experience pleasures (spiritual and physical). David prayed to drink from the river of His pleasures (Ps. 36:8). This occurs as the Spirit reveals the Father and the Son to us. The Spirit reveals the things of Jesus’ heart to His people (Jn. 16:14).

11…In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (Ps. 16:11)

14“He [the Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” (Jn. 16:14)

*Paragraph H: King David wrote of the fullness of joy being at God’s throne. I mean, this is so remarkable. Look at Psalm 16:11. He is talking to the Lord, saying, “Lord, in Your presence is the fullness of joy! As a matter of fact, at Your right hand at Your throne is where pleasure reaches it fullness forever!” What?*

*This is so important. Here is what David discovered. I mean this must have been so surprising, and probably a lot of folks in his generation thought he was really losing it when he said this. However, it really indicates how significant joy and pleasure are in God’s eternal plans. His throne is the epicenter of joy and pleasure. Physical and spiritual pleasures in the age to come will reach a place beyond anything that we can imagine, and they will last forever. My point is that joy is not a peripheral thing. It is a significant reality in God’s eternal plans and in His personality. Jesus is making the most remarkable statement. He says in verses 9 and 10, “That joy I will impart to you if you will do what I tell you!” Well, verses 1 to 10, but particularly in verses 9 and 10. “If you will do these things, the joy that is at My Father’s throne, which is at the very epicenter of joy in the whole universe, will be in your heart, beloved. I promise you!” Beloved, this is intense!*

*David prayed—and we have it on every one of our handouts at the very beginning—David prayed that God would let him drink from the river of God’s pleasures. What a phrase! What is the river of God’s pleasure from which David was drinking? The way I like to say it is that the river of pleasure is when God reveals God to the human heart. When God, the Holy Spirit tells me more about Jesus, there is a pleasure which is the strongest and most power pleasure available to the human frame. When God reveals God to the human heart.*

*Jesus says it, and we will look at it in detail down the way in John 16 when we get there, which will be some many weeks from now. He says, in essence, “The Spirit will take what is Mine, and He will supernaturally mark your heart with it.” He will give it to you! He will inspire your mind and your heart. He will illumine your mind and inspire your heart. He will tenderize you. You will have a buoyancy, you will have a vibrancy on the inside that nobody will be able to explain or understand except for the people who walk with Jesus that way.*

* 1. Joy is found in discovering that ***“He is enough for me”***—that is, to relate to Him and live for Him.
	*“God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.”* **John Piper**

*Paragraph I: Joy is found in discovering He is enough! When I began to understand, little by little, over the years, and not that I perfectly know it, but when I began to understand, “Wait! You are enough!” I mean I could have no ministry, no friends, no money. I don’t like any of that, but still something on the inside is alive! And when I say that He is enough, I mean that we could relate to Him and live with Him forever! Knowing that, I can deal with some problems, if that is true. My favorite John Piper quote— I love this quote, and I put it here and in handouts all the time—“God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him” (John Piper).*

* 1. ***God’s joy in us includes***—1) the *pleasure of interacting with Jesus* (Ps. 16:8; 36:8; Jn. 3:29; 16:14);
	2) *a* *sense of well-being* with confidence in His leadership—a quiet spirit (Rom. 8:28; 1 Pet. 3:4);
	3) our *hope of future glory* inliving and ruling with Him forever (Rom. 5:2; 8:18; 1 Cor. 2:9)— knowing that He esteems our small acts of obedience with eternal rewards (Mt. 25:21; 1 Cor. 3:14);
	4) *God hearing and delighting in our prayers* that are in His will (Prov. 15:8; Jn. 16:24; 1 Jn. 3:22); 5) joy that results from *loving and helping people to love* Jesus (1 Thes. 2:16; 2 Jn. 12; 3 Jn. 4).

9…“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Cor. 2:9)

*Paragraph J: Well, let’s look at God’s joy. I don’t want to spend a lot of time on this, though this deserves an entire session. When I look at what Jesus says about joy and the apostles, I have five different realities of life that cause joy emerge and grow in our heart.*

*Number one, the pleasure of interacting with Jesus which we just looked at that. When God reveals God to us, when the Spirit reveals Jesus, that is drinking from the river of His pleasures. That is so intense.*

*Number two, there is another source that causes joy to emerge in our heart and grow: a deep sense of well-being because we have confidence in His leadership. Though we don’t understand why it is so hard, we don’t understand why things are delayed, good things, but we know His leadership and His resumé prove He does everything for our good! So a good sense of well-being, and another way of it—Peter called it having a gentle and quiet spirit. A quiet spirit meant a spirit free from anxiety. That is what a quiet spirit means. It does not mean talking really softly in a whisper, “What is your name?” “I cannot hear you!” If your voice is like that, that is okay, but some people think having a quiet spirit means they whisper. No, a quiet spirit means not agitated with fears and anxiety. And Peter, when he said this, he called it: “It is uncorruptible beauty when you have that sense of well-being.” And it is very precious to God, not precious but very precious! Look at 1 Peter 3:4.*

*Number three, another source of joy is the future joy. It is the passage that says in 1 Corinthians 2:9, “Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it has never entered into the imagination of a human the glory that God has prepared!” When I begin to understand that that is my trajectory for billions of years—I may have seventy years, eighty years with periods of difficulty and pain, but I have billions of years of joy that is the trajectory that we are on—it is the hope for joy!*

*Number four, Jesus said, “When you say something”—prayer is what He said—“to My Father, and He answers you, and you know that the Genesis 1 God actually hears you and values what you say, you will have joy! You will say, ‘Wait! He heard me! Wait! The Genesis 1 God actually delights in what I said to Him when it agrees with His word!’” Jesus said, “You will have joy!” and that will be another source of joy.*

*Number five, the fifth source of joy—and again, in one of these sessions I want to do an entire session on all five and really break it down with lots of verses and really amazing stuff—the joy that results from loving and helping people to love Jesus. Meaning that when I know that in my weak frame and in my weak way I can contribute to somebody loving Jesus more and that is the most important thing to God. It is the first commandment; it is first! If I can inspire you to love Jesus a little bit more, well, John, the apostle, said “I have no greater joy than seeing my children walk in the truth.” Knowing that my labors help them do what God called the most important thing to Him, loving Him. Beloved, you can help people! Maybe we are not that good at saying it or doing it or anything, but we get to be a part of that. That brings joy, and I think, “Wait a second, when I stand before the Lord, He is going to say, ‘You helped some people love Me!’” Oh, I tell you that is a glorious thing beyond measure!*

* 1. ***Your joy may be full***: Our experience of God’s joy comes as regular momentary impartations of the Spirit. In time, His joy becomes the lens by which we view our life so that it progressively becomes “our joy” or part of our mindset and emotional make up. His joy sparks our heart until joy becomes more dominant in our heart than dark emotions. Our joy can grow to the “full maturity” that God ordained for this age. Our joy now is not full in the absolute sense since it will increase in heaven.

*Paragraph K: He says, “Your joy may be full.” I am looking at this word, “full,” full joy, and He says, “that it would remain and that it would be full.” Again, when Jesus talked about it remaining, it is not twenty-four hours a day, all day and every day. However, it means that it is a regular part—it is not an exceptional part that you fill for eight minutes twice a year—it is a regular part of your daily spiritual life with Him, and it will come to fullness. And when it comes to fullness, that means that it will come to full maturity.*

*Now it does not come to fullness in the absolute sense because in the age to come your joy will be far greater. However, it is the fullness for which God ordained in this age, and so coming to fullness means your joy will come to maturity. I want you to notice something here: His joy that remains in us becomes our joy. Now, well, whose is it? Is it Yours or is it mine?*

*Let’s read this sentence here in Paragraph K: in time His joy becomes the lens by which we view our life so that it progressively becomes our joy. What I mean by this is that it actually becomes part of our mindset and our actual emotional makeup. It is not just that He is touching us for a few moments to inspire us. It is actually our emotions and our mindset that are being formed through the lens of this joy. It is literally in us, and it is ours!*

*Now, the way I have understood it over the years is that God releases little moments of inspiration. I read the Word—not every time or all the time—I will read the Word and for two or three minutes or four or five minutes I will feel like, “Whoa! That little inspiration! I love this feeling!” Then it kind of goes away, and then later on in the day I will talk with Him a little bit more and get a little bit more later on in the day.*

*The Lord would say that if we keep staying with that, those momentary inspirations of joy that happen throughout the day here and there, those little flashes of glory on our heart will actually become part of our own mindset. It will change our mindset and our emotional makeup, and it becomes our joy.*

* 1. There are human and divine components involved in receiving God’s joy. The ***human side*** includesconversation with God around biblical truths and promises, plus setting our primary life goals in agreement with that which *lasts forever* and with that which *God calls great* (Mt. 5:19) such as walking in love, purity, humility, generosity, gratitude, faithfulness, etc. The ***divine side*** consists of theSpirit’s activity inspiring the mind and heart of a believer with understanding and peace. Joy is associated with the confidence that our pursuit of greatness is in agreement with what God calls great and rewards eternally—a greatness without regard to temporal circumstances or achievements.

*Paragraph L: There are human and divine components involved in receiving God’s joy. Now, I have already said it like five times, but remember my main spiritual gift is repetition. It really is, but it is not really a spiritual gift. There is a human side to this joy, meaning some folks just say, “Do it for me, God! Give me joy!”*

*He would say, “Well, there is a divine side, but there is also a human side.” A lot of folks are just waiting on God to sovereignly make them joyful, and decades go by, but it never happens because it was never supposed to happen that way.*

*The human side, I have already talked about it: studying those truths i.e. how God loves God, how God loves us, abiding and focusing on it with a spirit of obedience. That is very important, but here is another part that I want you to catch. It is when we change our primary life goals. It is not just that I am enjoying Him in the Word and believing His promises, but I shift my primary life goals. Now, I have secondary life goals, like when I first met the Lord my primary goal was to have an anointed ministry and to have a godly family, have good friendships and to have plenty of money and just love God! The Lord would say, “Those are good, but I want your primary life goal to be to walk in the anointing of the grace of God to love Me. And those other goals are good but make them second intentionally.”*

*When our primary life goal shifts to what lasts forever—humility, love, servanthood—and it agrees with what God calls great, which I have listed here, we begin to make those our life goals even more than those other things, which I really like too, by the way. However, if those other things are my primary life goals, there are too many interruptions in them. If that is where my primary life goal is, I am going to constantly have pain where I could have victory over that pain, but I will not because the Lord says “No, make those number two.”*

*Joy—at the end of paragraph L, and this is another one of those strange sentences that I want you to think about later—joy is associated with the assurance in our pursuit of greatness, because God called us to be great. Matthew 5:19, He said that some in the kingdom of God will be great. That is God calling their lifestyle great. And you want that! That is not something you want to lay aside if God promises you that you can have a lifestyle He calls great in the age to come. You want that lifestyle. I mean, He calls it great in the age to come when you stand before Him. The assurance that the pursuit of our greatness is in agreement with what God calls great and with what God rewards eternally. That is where joy comes. When I begin to align my life up and say, “I want what God calls great and what He anoints and what He rewards forever!” This is a greatness without any regard to temple circumstances or even achievements. Now I like nice circumstances and I like achievements, but if I that is where my joy is, it is not going to work; it will not last. It will betray you at the end of the day.*

1. “Natural happiness” and “Divine joy”

*Roman numeral four: Well, let’s compare, for just a few moments, natural happiness and divine joy. If you remember, on page 1, divine joy is the part that the Holy Spirit imparts, and natural happiness is when favorable circumstances are there and I have that good feeling.*

* 1. We naturally seek “the illusion” of gaining deep satisfaction via having favorable circumstances.
	*There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person, and it can never be filled by any created thing.  It can only be filled by God, made known through Jesus Christ.”* **(Blaise Pascal)**

*Paragraph A: Now all of us, all eight billion humans, naturally seek the illusion, and it* ***is*** *an illusion. We seek the illusion of gaining deep satisfaction through favorable circumstances. It is innate in us, more money, more friends, more favor, more comfort, more pleasure, easier life, happy! However, it is not true, though. It is not true. Again, I value that good feeling, but it is an illusion if we pursue that intensely.*

Blaise Pascal was a scientist, an inventor and a theologian who lived in France in the 1600s. He made this statement, and you hear it quoted quite a bit. He said, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every human being. It can never be fulfilled by anything created.” Money cannot fill it. Fun relationships cannot fill it. I mean, those things are nice, but they cannot fill that God-shaped vacuum. “It can only be filled by God made known through Jesus Christ.”

* 1. Nothing can fill the “God-shaped vacuum” in our heart that was designed by God to be fulfilled only in context to a deep relationship with Him. A person can have a great family, amazing friends, abundant finances, good health, and a growing ministry but still lack a deep sense of joy. I am grateful for temporary good feelings related to favorable circumstances, but I know that they are temporary, and I do not trust them to give joy and strength to my heart (Neh. 8:10)

10“Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Neh. 8:10)

*Paragraph B: Nothing can fill that God-shaped vacuum but here is the point I am making: the sooner you can conclude that—many believers fifty years later have still not concluded that—the sooner we conclude that, the sooner we get on the trajectory of genuine divine joy growing in our heart. As long as we think the happiness will come through favorable circumstances, the setbacks will have us constantly saying, “God, how could You? Where are You? You said this!”*

*He would say, “Wrong conversation! Wrong conversation! Shift over to what I call great and to what I call good! Make that your primary pursuit!”*

*A person can have a great family, amazing friends, abundant finances, unusual achievements, good health and a growing ministry but still lack a deep sense of joy and peace within their inner heart. I mean the earth has plenty examples of that. In an interview that Tom Brady had in 2009, that somebody typed out and sent over to me, they asked him, “Well, you have won three Super Bowl rings.”—well he has seven now but he won 3 back then—And Tom said, according to this transcript that I received as I did not see the video, Tom said, “Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and think there must be more? I think, ‘God! There has to be more than this!’”*

*The interviewer asked, “What do you think it is?”*

*And Tom Brady said, “I sure wish I knew!” Now Tom Brady has won seven Super Bowls, and there has been nothing like it. He and his wife are worth nearly $700 million dollars. I mean, they are as handsome as movie stars, famous everywhere they go, achievements beyond everyone in sports history, very few people can even get close to that. “I hope this is not it!”*

*“Well, what do you think it is, Tom?”*

*“I do not know, but I wish I knew!”*

*You know, I am grateful, and I need to keep saying it, for the temporary good feelings, and when money increases, and friends emerge. I love that, but here is the thing: I know that they are temporary. I do not look at it cynically, “Oh yeah! That money will probably go somewhere else…” I say, “No, it is what it is! I am happy it is here, and it is fun,” but that happiness is a temporary happiness. You could have billions of dollars and that will not make you happy, but at the first it is kind of cool, you know. I mean, test me again!*

*I do not trust in favorable circumstances to give me strength to face the crisis of the generation the Lord returns. I do not have any confidence in the natural happiness or joy which comes from things going well. I have confidence in supernatural joy, and that is the only thing I have confidence in.*

* 1. I feel urgent to expose this illusion in light of the false voices that are deceiving many (Mt. 24:11). Some of these false voices are social commentators who promote false narratives about how the human heart works and how people are fulfilled. The false message promoted by many marketing teams and social commentators dominate the global conversation today. The message marketed most is that *“you must wholeheartedly pursue what you think will make you happy*.”

11Then many false prophets [social commentors] will rise up and deceive many. (Mt. 24:11)

*I feel a real urgency to expose the illusion of natural happiness. It is always kind of a downer subject because most people are deeply addicted to and fixated on natural happiness. And within the body of Christ they claim all kinds of Bible promises that promise them natural happiness, which is always going to happen in the season down the road. And what I say is that it is an illusion, in terms of: I respond with “Well, I mean, you will have some of those nice things, and favorable things, but that is not going to bring you inward peace, I guarantee you.”*

*The reason I feel an urgency to expose this is because I am alerted by the prophesy in Matthew 24:11, “Many false prophets will deceive many!” Some of these false prophets, these false “voices” as I have said over the years, are social commentators. They are promoting a false narrative about how the human heart works. There are all kinds of people giving their narrative of what is happening in society, and why it is happening, and how the human heart is happy, and how people are fulfilled. These false messages are dominating the global conversation today. The message that is marketed the most, and I mean it does not take a lot of insight to see this, here is the message that is marketed the most through marketing teams and social media: “You must wholeheartedly pursue what makes you happy! You must pursue it with all of your heart!”*

*That is a lie. You do not need to pursue that. You need to pursue what God says is great and good. That is what you need to pursue with all of your heart.*

* 1. The result is multitudes who are constantly seeking to change their circumstance—they change jobs, occupation, houses, cities, ministries, friends, and now their gender in pursuit of being happy. Only one Man has the one reliable pathway to joy and fulfillment–He shared it in John 13-17.

*Paragraph D: The result is billions constantly seeking to change their circumstances. They are willing to change their jobs every new season, change occupations, change the house they live in, not that it is wrong to change your house, change your city. Well, praise God a bunch of you did, because none of you were from Kansas City, and I am glad you are here!*

*They want to change their ministry. They want to change their friends! Now they want to change their gender! I am saying this respectfully, meaning people are wanting something to make them happy, but the problem is when they go to the new job, the new city, the new friends, the new whatever, they bring themselves with them! They bring the problem with them, which is a heart that is not connecting with Jesus in a way that gives them joy.*

*Only one Man has the one reliable pathway to joy, and it is right here in John 15, but we will call it from John 13 to 17. Only one Man has the only reliable way. Why do we need to spend the next years going from disappointment to disappointment to setback, raising our fists to God, “How dare You! I thought You were a God of love!”?*

*He would say, “You just have the wrong definition. I am setting your life up for spiritual success so that you will have humility, kindness, and mercy which you will bring with you to the age to come. You really do not understand I am working for your good!”*

* 1. I urge you to let go of *“the illusion of natural happiness”* and make a decision not to look for deep fulfillment in favorable circumstances. I made a very conscience decision to shift my focus from looking to happiness in good circumstances to finding genuine joy in my relationship with Jesus.
	The shift started in 1973 when, at age 18, I witnessed the anguish of my 17-year-old brother who broke his neck, leaving him totally paralyzed for the next 33 years (he died in 2007).

*I urge you to let go of the illusion of natural happiness. Make the decision, “I am not going to look for it in favorable circumstances. I want favorable circumstances, and when they come, I will say, ‘Wow! Amazing!’ but I am not locking into it.”*

*I made a very conscious decision, and I will just give a few little points on it, and then we will end with that. I’ll tell a little bit of my journey. I made a very conscious decision to shift my focus from looking for happiness in favorable circumstances. There was a season when I did not know I was doing it. I did not set out to do it, but after a couple of years of this season, I thought, “I am not going to believe that other thing anymore. It is just not real!”*

*It actually started—I mean this sounds so surreal—but it was almost fifty years ago, when I was eighteen years old. Some of you know my personal family story that, when I was eighteen years old, my seventeen-year-old broke his neck in a high school football game. He was totally paralyzed. Totally paralyzed, I mean he could not move his shoulders. He could not clear his throat. He only had one half of one lung working, so one lung did not work and one lung only work a half. He could not clear his throat for thirty-three years. I took care of him for a number of years and was his total caregiver, and there were others were for a number of years, and we all worked together for a number of years over the thirty-three years and number of seasons, but that is not the real point that I am making.*

*My point is that it happened in 1973; he was seventeen, and I was eighteen. They brought him to a rehab center in Denver, CO called Craig Rehab Center. And Craig Rehab Center at that time had the reputation that it was the best rehab center in America, though I am sure there are a few other places which claim that. They had eighty-eight beds, and they only let young people in because they only had eighty-eight beds. A lot of people have spinal cord injuries in the course of a year. However, they told us—because I asked them why—they took in mostly fifteen to twenty-five year olds, and that was about it. They said, “There are only eighty-eight beds, and most people do not have a really long life span if they are totally paralytics, so we need to help the young ones because the older ones are not going to live that long, and we just do not have the room.”*

*It was like, “Wow, that is pretty intense!”*

*However, my brother lived for thirty-three years, though they said he would live for eight years and at most twelve, but he lived thirty-three. Here is my point: I was there with him twelve hours a day for about a total of nine to ten months. And so I was in this three-story building, twelve hours a day, with eighty-eight beds, and every couple of weeks some twenty-year-old would go home after his treatment. He would get his treatment, and he learned how to go and live with his new injury, and so another kid would come in who was newly paralyzed. So about every two to three weeks I was running into another absolutely traumatized twenty-year-old. I mean, the trauma of being an athlete and active—a lot of them were athletes, but not all of them and whether you were an athlete or not is not the big point, but active—to where they could not move is so absolutely traumatizing, not only to the child but to their families. Everyone is in trauma those first few months.*

*I was there for about nine months, two different trips that covered nine months total in that first year. So I am every couple of weeks running into a new family who are all horror stricken and absolutely devastated. I was an on-fire young believer at eighteen. I had met the Lord at age fifteen. I was witnessing, and I was there for twelve hours a day, so I started a few Bible studies on the different floors. There were three floors, and I was witnessing to a lot of nurses and new family members. I am saying this kind of tongue-in-cheek, but I kind of became like the unofficial chaplain of the rehab center. The nurse on floor three, “Hey Mike, there is a new family. Could you talk to them?”*

*I would say, “Sure, I’ll do my best!” So I would go and talk with them. For the next number of years, many years, I had so many conversations because I was in rehab centers with people who were paralyzed, and so many conversations with families with family members who were paralyzed. It is a world that if you do not know about it you do not know about it. It is a devastating world of difficulty, and I could go on and on and on about it, but that is not my point.*

*My point is that I was eighteen and I was thinking, “My goodness!” You know, I had a scholarship at college and was playing football, and I was accepted into and going to go to med school. So I was going to go in that direction, just a happy Christian going to witness to people as a doctor and just kind of bee-bopping along having fun! Playing a little college football, so that was kind of cool, and that was my trajectory. And my point is not that I gave that up—that is irrelevant—my point is I thought that is what it was about and I saw kid after kid, day after day, saying, “Wait a second! I don’t even know what life is about!” And I couldn’t even hardly figure out what was going on here.*

*Then, it got worse. Eight months later, my father, who was forty-five years old, suddenly died of a heart attack. And so what happened was my mom was devasted. She was thirty-eight years old, and she had seven children from age ten to nineteen, basically all teenagers. She had seven children, and she did not have a high school degree. She had no job and no insurance. She has a paralyzed son, and now she is widowed with seven kids that are all teenage kids. She was devasted. My sisters were devastated.*

*And so I said, “I have to figure it out,” and I did not mean just philosophically—it was very philosophical—but I had to figure out what is real so that my brother could have actual joy and my sisters and my Mom could. So what could I tell these other family members? How can I do it?*

*Some people were saying, “Oh, how could you give up your scholarship?” That was irrelevant. That was so irrelevant at that time. I was having a trauma about what is life about.*

*Then a little while later, one of the top surgeons of that rehab center was paralyzed, in a plane accident I think, but it was an accident, and he was paralyzed. The top guy or one of the top guys. I thought, “My father dies; my brother breaks his neck! Nothing is sure about tomorrow!” I was still eighteen, and I thought, “I have to figure out what is an answer that will bring something to my brother that is meaningful, something to my five sisters, my brother, and my absolutely devastated mother.” Also to all of these families I was interacting with who also had paralyzed family members. I was just thinking, “Oh man, I don’t know what the answer is!” I mean, I could tell them to pray and to get forgiveness and thought that was good so they would go to heaven when they die. That is good, but I needed to accomplish something a little bit more. I needed to get a little bit more!”*

* 1. My life paradigm began changing. I had two prophetic dreams about the judgment seat of Christ at ages 18 and 23. The first dream stirred me to study Ecclesiastes and Revelation to see “eternity.”

12Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13each one’s work will…be revealed by fire…14If anyone’s work…endures, he will receive a reward. 15If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he will be saved. (1 Cor. 3:12-15)

*Paragraph F: So what happened is that I had two prophetic dreams about the Judgment Seat of Christ, one when I was eighteen that year and then when I was twenty-three. I didn’t even know about the Judgment Seat of Christ. I have the verse right here which the Lord spoke directly to me, and basically the message was, “If you do what I call good and wise, you will have a reward, 1 Corinthians 3. If you do not, you can still be saved, but you will suffer the loss of what you could have had.” Crystal clear in a dream, and I had two of them when I was eighteen and then again at twenty-three. I was at the rehab center, twelve hours a day, and I had this dream. My father dies. All these people in crisis and I thought, “Judgment Seat of Christ! I do not even know what that is!” Then I started reading, and I mean this sounds so strange, but it is true, and I love it.*

*I began to study Ecclesiastes and the book of Revelation night and day. I was so drawn to Revelation and not for the end-time battle plan but for eternity. I wanted to see eternity. I would study the book of Revelation and the book of Ecclesiastes. Some of you are not familiar with Ecclesiastes, but I read it hours a day and in commentaries. People would come visit from Kansas City to the Rehab Center and say, “Hey Mike, what are you studying?”*

*“Ecclesiastes!”*

*“Oh my goodness, isn’t that a little dark?”*

*I said, “No, no, it is helping me!” I didn’t set out to change my paradigm of life. It was the pain and anguish and the need that I had to have something I believed in that could help me and help them too. I had to have something I believed in, and those dreams were shifting me, along with Ecclesiastes.*

* 1. Solomon seemingly had everything including a powerful intellect, abundant prosperity, the highest position of power in the nation, accomplishments that brought him fame and admiration including “sexual freedom” (700 wives and 300 concubines), and yet he said, *“All is vanity”* (Ecc. 1:2).

2…“Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. 3What profit has a man from all his labor…?
8…The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.” (Ecc. 1:2-3, 8 )

1I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with…pleasure”…2What does it accomplish?...
4I made my works great, I built myself houses…8I also gathered for myself silver and gold…
11I looked on all the works that my hands had done…all was vanity… (Ecc. 2:1-11)

11…He has put eternity in their hearts…14whatever God does [values], it shall be forever…
that men should fear before Him…15and God requires an account of what is past. (Ecc. 3:11-15)

13Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments…
14God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing… (Ecc. 12:13-14)

*Paragraph G: Solomon had everything. He had the most powerful intellect, was called the wisest man on the whole earth. He had prosperity beyond what you could imagine. He had the highest position of power. He was the king of the nation. Accomplishments which brought him fame and admiration. He built the Temple which was one of the wonders of the ancient world. He had “sexual freedom” with wives and concubines, but he said, “Here is one thing that I have concluded: everything is all vain!” That is, “It means nothing in my inward man!”*

*I was captured by that story. I never knew it, so I began to read it and study it and thought, “What does this mean?” And he said in Ecclesiastes, “Everything is empty!” He meant everything outside of doing the will of God, which God will remember in the age to come. That is what he ends up saying, “That is the only thing that matters ultimately!” He said, “What profit has a man with all of his labors? I have accomplished everything! My eye is not satisfied with seeing nor my ears with hearing,” meaning there is no sensual pleasure that could satisfy me. In effect, “I have the best instruments, the best music, I have more sexual da-da-da-da, I have more drugs, food, everything stimulating me, yet nothing satisfies me! I said in my heart, ‘I will test you, O heart, with pleasure.’” He built all of these things and did all of these things. Verse 11, “It was vanity!”*

*Here was his problem—Ecclesiastes 3:11—that he did not know on the front end. His turmoil was this: God put eternity in his heart. God put a longing for something that lasts past the grave, but he did not know that at first, so he was trying everything: money, power, pleasure. Nothing worked, because it is all going to go away in a few minutes.*

*And then God showed him, “I put eternity in your heart!” And once you know that eternity has been put in your heart, then nothing else will satisfy you. It is like the billionaire who died, and a man asked the pastor, “How much did he leave?”*

*And the pastor said, “Everything!”*

*You will leave everything except what God calls wise and good. Not only do you bring it with you, but that pursuit and the confidence that God is pleased. That this will have implications forever creates joy in our heart.*

*Here is the conclusion—Ecclesiastes 12—of the whole matter. It is at the end of the book: “Fear God, and obey Him!” God will bring every work into judgment and into evaluation. Every secret thing the Lord will bring into openness before Him on that day. If that secret thing is sinful and evil, it could be repented of and be under the blood, if you declare war on it and call it sin. However, a lot of the secret things are noble things, where you obeyed God in secret, and He is going to bring it to light.*

* 1. For God’s promise of joy to be true—it must be attainable for all people; it must result in enjoying God; it must be connected to goodness that last forever; and it cannot be stopped by our enemies.

*Paragraph H: I am going back to my story. I said, “I have to come up with an understanding.” For God’s promise of joy to be true, it has to work for paralytics. It has to work for devastated widows that have seven kids with no insurance, only a high school education, and total despair. My mom was in such utter despair! Though she got saved on her deathbed–praise the Lord! It has to be attainable for everyone or it is not the real thing yet. And so I began to search out what paralytics can do to have a heart that is vibrant like Wes Adams did. Wes Adams had the most miraculous lifestyle of anything I have ever seen. Sixty plus years a paralytic. I knew that guy for forty years. I cannot get over Wes Adams. I know there are some of you who do not know who he is. He went to be with the Lord recently.*

*It has to be able to bring joy in the heart of a person who has suffering circumstances. They have to be able to enjoy God with everything wrong or it is not the true joy. It has to be connected with goodness: in other words, eternal rewards, the New Jerusalem, “eye has not seen, ear has not heard,” something that lasts forever, that is good. And it has to be something that no human or demonic force can stop. I said, “If I can locate that, then I got it! I got it!” Those were kind of my four criteria.*

*I have told this story a few times, and I love this story. A few years ago three brothers had graduated from IHOPU, and they came back and were now in ministry, and things were going well. I got together with them, and we were having a fun time, and I asked them to tell me this and that. They were excited saying, “This is so amazing!” They were all in their mid-twenties then, now maybe a little bit older. And their ministry was going well. And then they asked me the question, the fatal question, “Don’t you wish you were a young adult again?”*

*I said, “Absolutely not!”*

*They said, “Really? No! It is so cool!”*

*And I said, “Well, not really. Here is why: you think life is a party on a cruise ship but the Bible, the New Testament, presents life as a war and a marathon race. I have already settled that, but you have not yet! You are going to run into a number of challenges or you will eventually. The sooner, the better, because you think it is a cruise ship and a party and it is just going to be fun! That is a total illusion. The sooner you break your agreement with that illusion, you will be on the pathway of a life of joy!”*

*They said, “Dude, that is intense! My goodness!”*

*I said, “No, actually! You owe me! I am saving you a lot of time if you will listen to me right about now!”*

*They said, “Don’t you wish that you could be young again?”*

*I said, “Why would I? The marathon run!” because that is the race that Paul compares the Christian life to the marathon run. I said, “Here I am, running a marathon, and I am on mile 20, and you are asking me if I want to go back to mile 6! No!!! Absolutely not! I have 6 more miles left, and I can see it! I do not want to go back to 6!!”*

*They said, “Man! We will pray for you!”*

*I said, “No, no, I will pray for you!” Because I have already settled it. I have gone through that tunnel of disillusionment and little by little I figured it out. It took a couple of years, but I changed my dream and my paradigm of life. I did not do it on purpose, but there was just so much anguish around me. I had to have real answers that would work for them too or it was not real. So that was that pursuit that I went on.*

* 1. As I began to grasp that God sees, esteems, and eternally rewards my love and obedience and as
	I experienced more of His love and better understood my life with Him in the age to come, then God’s joy began to increase in my life in a more consistent way. Thus, I determined to make my main life pursuit to grow in the grace that would empower me to love God and to be faithful to Him.

*Paragraph I: I began to grasp—because it was not just one day, but over a couple of years—that God sees, esteems, and rewards my love and obedience. Now my love and obedience is pretty weak, but He loves it, and He rewards it and remembers it! I said, “Wow! I could give someone a cup of cold water in my weak frame, not be anointed, and just help someone a little bit, and the Lord says He will never forget that!” I said, “Wow! That makes every day important.”*

*Then as I grew a little bit more in knowing that He loved me and as I understood my life through the lens of His kingdom and who I would be with Him forever, I said, “I like this!” What happened? Joy began to increase little by little in my heart. Now this was some years ago, but I have stayed with it. I determined to make my life pursuit to grow in grace, but let’s put it this way: I made my life pursuit to find genuine joy that would work in me when things were horrible and would work in others too. I set my heart to determine what that was.*

*Beloved, it is wise! I want to urge you tonight, begin breaking your agreement with the illusion of happiness and set yourself to agree with what God calls good, with what God calls wise. They are really heart virtues: humility, kindness, mercy. It is not about accomplishments. Again, I like those, but you do not bring those with you.*

*Amen! Let’s stand. My prayer tonight is that you would soberly believe the promise, “I will give you My joy and it will be yours and come to fullness!” The day you begin to believe John 15:11 for your life is the day that you will be on the right trajectory to be equipped to stand strong in the midst of anything.*

*Father, here we are. We come before You, and we say that we love you, Abba. We love Your leadership. We love eternity.*

*We are only on the earth for seventy, eighty years and then we are seventy or eighty billion years as the beginning of the age to come. It is worth it!*

*Here we are, Lord.*

*Would some of you make a decision tonight? Maybe it is the first time or maybe you are remaking it. You are going to shift your paradigm of life to this, and you are going to believe John 15:11, that joy is yours if you get into that trajectory. Talk to Him about the way God loves God and the way God loves you! Stay with it and abide in it.*

*If that is you, and you want prayer, I want you to come up and stand on this first line. You are saying, “I don’t fully understand it, but it sounds right.” I tell you, it is an intentional decision. Nobody will make it for you. The Lord helped me because of all of the crisis. I did not do it on purpose. I kind of did it accidently and figured out I was doing it as a few years went by. And I was helped because I saw the Judgment Seat of Christ in those two dreams. And I had anguish all around, and I mean I hated that anguish, but it changed my life. It set me on a whole new path spiritually.*

*Father, I ask You for grace for this shift. I ask for faith to believe for joy—John 15:11—that we could have joy in time if we stay with it. I ask for faith to believe in joy! Lord, release the Spirit of grace all over this room.*

*I know that many all over the room are deciding, and you do not have to come up here to make that decision.*