

Mailing Address:
PO Box 797
Molalla, OR 97038

Pastor Dale Satrum



Phone: 503-829-5101
Fax: 503-829-9502

Foothills 2008 Resolutions
“Enjoying More of God’s Presence”
(Part 1)

How many people would love to experience more happiness in 2008? What would you say if I could guarantee you that 2008 could be the most joyful year you’ve ever experienced? You’re thinking that’s impossible!

What would you say if I told you God cares about your happiness? I’ve heard some pastors teach that God doesn’t care about our happiness; He cares about our holiness. Is that really true? As a parent, I care about my children’s happiness. Doesn’t God care about mine? Our problem is that we just go after happiness in ways that don’t work. What’s the secret?

- God’s presence in your life will be your key to experiencing more joy in 2008.

*Ps. 16:11 “You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is **fullness of joy**. In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.” (NASB)*

- God is the ultimate source of joy and pleasure. To enjoy more of God’s presence is to experience more joy in life.
- There are plenty of things in this life that give us joy. (examples) The problem with all of them is that they are tied to circumstances. God’s presence is NOT connected to the circumstances of life.
- This is the wonder of Jesus’ birth: Called Immanuel – “God with us”. The amazing truth that the presence of God has been restored to mankind.
- How is it possible to enjoy more of God’s presence in my life this next year and as a result, experience more joy? Can we corporately resolve to experience more of God this year? Can we be a church that is filled with Joy because we are filled with the reality of God’s presence in us? Let me give you 5 presence producing resolutions.

I. I Resolve To Enjoy More of God’s Work

- When I am serving the Lord out of obligation, I lose sight of God’s presence and as a result, lose my joy.

*Deut. 28:47 “Because you did not serve the **LORD** your God **joyfully** and **gladly** in the time of prosperity,..” (NIV) Israelites were rebuked for their lack of joy in serving God.*

*Ps. 100:2 “Serve the **LORD** with gladness...” (NASB).*

1 John 5:3 “This is love for God: to obey his commands, and his commands are not burdensome...” (NASB)

- A. Serving the Lord out of obligation will kill your joy
1. Have you ever served the Lord out of obligation rather than love? There's no joy in obligation. WHY? Because you're doing something because you feel you have to instead of wanting to. You do this long enough, it robs your joy.
 2. How can I be enjoying God's presence if I'm not enjoying what He's asked me to do? If I look at His work as a burden rather than a privilege?
 - It's a lot like parenting when we ask our kids to do something for us and they can do it out of obligation or love. (explain) good attitude or bad.
 3. I have struggled with this issue many times over the years. Sometimes I fall into this rut in serving the Lord. I get into this joyless rut / I start going through the motions (doing what I'm supposed to out of guilt / fear / pressure - obligation).
 4. As a result, God starts feeling more distant / He starts becoming more of a task master in your mind / The focus is more on the task at hand rather than who we're serving.
 5. I see a lot of believers who serve the Lord out of obligation. How can I tell? There's no joy! Serving the Lord should be filled with gladness not misery! It should be one of the greatest joys of our lives! It should help connect us with God. (misconception: More miserable you are the more spiritual you are.)
 - If I'm going to enjoy more of God's work this year I must realize...

- B. Serving the Lord with joy connects me to God's heart
- How do I develop more joy in my serving this year?
1. Don't forget WHO you're serving. We serve in the context of a relationship. We are partnering with Jesus. We're not just doing things FOR him but WITH Him. He doesn't send us off doing tasks alone. He asks us to join Him.
 - In the nursery / kids church / reaching the community / If all you do is serve the form...the particular ministry – you'll lose your joy.
 2. Don't forget WHY you're serving. We serve not just because we're commanded to; we serve because we're called to. Commands can seem like obligations, but a calling has to do with destiny! You and I are destined to serve God's purposes! (We're designed for this. Explain SHAPE – Our calling connects us with God.
 3. Don't forget WHAT is needed in serving...GRATITUDE. When I lose my spirit of gratitude I lose joy in what I'm doing and then I lose my connection with God.
 - I sometimes struggle with this. I get so focused on where we need to be, I forget to rejoice in where God has brought us. (explain looking at the web page)
 - Can we resolve to enjoy more of God's work this year?

II. I Resolve to Enjoy More of God's Word

- When I'm not discovering and enjoying what He has recorded in His word, I lose sight of God's presence. God's word is a joy producer in our lives.

*Ps. 19:8 "The precepts of the **LORD** are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of*

the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.” (NIV)

Ps. 119:48 “I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and I meditate on your decrees.” (NIV)

A. Neglecting the Word of God will hinder your joy

1. Here we have at our fingertips one of the greatest joy producers around and yet we often neglect it. How can God’s word produce joy? God’s word reveals to me who God is / explains God’s ways / explains God’s heart / explains life.
2. How can I enjoy more of God’s presence if I don’t want to know more about who He is / what He says / or what’s important to His heart? If I neglected these things in my marriage, we wouldn’t have a very close relationship. (works spiritually too!)
3. Neglecting God’s word adds to an already confusing life. This life is perplexing / confusing / sometimes doesn’t make sense / filled with pain and suffering / and a future that seems uncertain. How do we make sense of it all? How do we have joy if we’re constantly confused? (fearful)
4. God’s word will not answer every question about this confusing life, but it will answer many questions! It will give us God’s perspective on this world. It will give us a framework in which to interpret life. It gives us joy!
5. This is why people end up blaming God instead of turning to Him...Confusion does this. (Story in Oregonian: God is Dead – Share)

B. Understanding God’s Word produces joy

Prov. 16:22 “Understanding is a fountain of life to the one who has it.” (NASB) I used this verse last week, but it applies to our relationship with God as well.

- Can we resolve to enjoy more of God’s word this year? How?
 1. Get a readable version: At the back table we have Bibles
 2. Get a time: Make the time don’t wait for the time.
 3. Get additional insight: Take the Foundations class / home group / Bible study
 4. Get accountable: Make this decision and tell someone else about it
 5. Get sharing: Talk about what you’re reading and learning with someone else.

As God’s word becomes more alive to you, so will the presence of God in your life, and as a result, so will your joy!

III. I Resolve To Enjoy More Of God’s Works

- When I stop thinking about all God has done, I lose sight of God’s presence and as a result, lose my joy

Ps. 92:4 “For you make me glad by your deeds, O LORD; I sing for joy at the works of your hands.” (NIV)

*Ps. 77:12 “I will meditate on all **your works** and consider all **your mighty deeds.**” (NIV)*

A. When I lose sight of God working around me, I lose sight of my joy.

Ps. 27:13 “I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” (NASB)

1. Not seeing God at work is connected to experiencing despair emotionally. When we don't see God, we feel alone / feel abandoned / overwhelmed by life / lost / insecure /
2. Seeing God at work around me gives me confidence / security / and joy knowing He is involved in my life in observable ways. It's not all up to me.
3. It's a lot like how a child feels when their parent is visibly involved in their lives. (Example) I remember the very first time I went Deer hunting with my Grandfather – As long as I could see Him I was fine
4. It works this way for us spiritually. We're fine as long as we see God at work around us.

B. Seeing God at work around me is a choice

1. We can choose to see God at work or we can deny His reality around us. Some people choose to believe in luck / chance / fate / random goodness – OR you can believe in the truth of God at work in your life.
2. 10 years ago when we started Foothills. (Share going to the Elementary School only to learn we couldn't afford the janitor fees – explain)
3. I can't even begin to tell you how often I see God intervening in my life. How much joy and confidence this gives me.
4. How often have you just blown off something as luck/ near accident avoided / unexpected money /
5. How often have we even taken for granted all the beauty around us God has blessed us with? (Sunsets or sunrises / the snow / the mountains /
6. Choosing to see God at work around me connects me to His presence and produces joy in my life.

IV. I Resolve To Enjoy More Of God Even In Wounding

- When my circumstances overwhelm me, I lose sight of God's presence and my joy *Hab. 3:17-18 "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior."* (NIV) Even though all my circumstances are horrible, I will still be joyful in God! (Author described a worst case scenario!)

A. When my circumstances block my view of God, I lose my joy

1. Sometimes pain can be like a solar eclipse. Have you ever experienced a total solar eclipse? The last one here in Oregon was when I was in 8th grade on my birthday. Feb 26, 1979 -Explain –Sometimes, this is what our circumstances do to us. They eclipse our view of God!
2. Sometimes our painful circumstances can create spiritual and emotional darkness. around our soul - We lose sight of God / His presence / His goodness /

3. Life is just going to be filled with pain. I guarantee you that you will have some painful things happened to you in 2008. It's just part of this life. No one gets to have a "Get out of pain" Free Card.
4. The critical issue isn't trying to avoid all pain or living in fear and dread of the next painful circumstance that waits for you, BUT, what we do in the midst of it

B. Seeing God in your circumstances is a choice

1. Often, it is only in the dark times where we learn that our joy in life is not rooted in favorable circumstances but in our relationship with God. How is this possible? How do I choose to see God when I can't see Him at all?
2. I choose to believe the eclipse is temporary. The sun will shine again! I know the sun is behind the shadow. The darkness will not last forever.
3. I choose to believe the Lord cares about my life. These circumstances are not punishment / or evidence God doesn't care / my fate in life.

Ps. 35:27 "...May they always say, "The **LORD** be exalted, who delights in the well-being of his servant."(NIV) The Lord delights in your well-being! This doesn't mean everything is always well.

4. I choose to believe that this life is NOT all there is. I have something so much better to look forward to. All my hope is not fixed on planet earth.
5. I choose to believe God is fair and He will someday settle all accounts. I may not get all the justice I want in this life, but justice will come.

For some, the wounding has already come. For others, it's on the way. It is the presence of God that is the constant in our lives. Can we resolve to stay focused on the truths of our relationship with God rather than the darkness of circumstances?

V. I Resolve To Enjoy More Godly Worship

- I lose sight of God's presence and lose my joy when I withdraw from worship. Worship is supposed to be a joy producer.

Ps. 100:2 "Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs..." (NIV)

Ps. 98:4 "Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;...(NIV)

Ps. 33:1 "Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him." (NIV)

A. Worship is an intentional choice to focus on the presence of God

1. It is just a fact. Those who worship more have more joy than those who don't. WHY? Because those who worship are in the presence of God more than those who don't. God's presence = joy!
2. Many people look at worship as a feeling rather than a choice. Worship happened because I felt worshipful. I had a good feeling / good emotions during the church service or during the singing.

3. Worship is a choice to pursue the presence of God regardless of how I feel. Any time I am pursuing the presence of God it is worship. It's not limited to only Sunday mornings. My entire life is worship as I stay focused on Him.
4. Music though is closely tied to worship because music has such a unique way of expressing the depths of the human heart. Sometimes a song can say something to God so much better than I ever could.
5. But even on Sunday mornings, we all have to make a choice. You can come in here and be spiritually disengaged or you can choose to pursue God. Your joy this year will be tied to your choice to pursue worship...to pursue God.

B. Genuine worship results in genuine joy

1. WHY? Because in His presence there is FULLNESS of joy. Do you want to enjoy more of God's presence this year? You can start today.
2. Resolve to enjoy more of God's Work / Word / Works / Wounding / Worship