

Message #128

Luke 24:49-53

Years ago a friend of Dr. Warren Wiersbe said, “Most Christians endure the Christian life; they don’t really enjoy it.” I think if we are all honest, we must admit there are times when we find ourselves just enduring but not enjoying our rich Christian heritage. Many of God’s people are tired, worn down and depressed.

When the disciples first hooked up with Jesus Christ clear back in Luke 5, it was an exciting and joyous time. They had some pressures, but those early days were thrilling. They were traveling with Jesus and going to new and exciting places and they were seeing and experiencing new and exciting things.

During those early days, the disciples were watching, listening, learning and ministering. There was a real joy and vitality to them and they had a real living, spiritual dynamic to them. But somewhere along the way, they lost it.

What started out to be a team of dynamic disciples ended up being a team of beaten down depressed men locked in a room. What was once a vibrant, personal commitment to Jesus Christ that was very public, ended up being a fearful commitment to Jesus Christ that was very private.

At one time these disciples were on the streets of cities, joyfully witnessing for Jesus Christ, but now they were quiet and depressed and disillusioned and they had locked themselves in a room. There was no more excitement, no more worship, no more joy. They were just enduring their Christian life and certainly not enjoying it.

In that very context, Jesus Christ came to His disciples. He did four things:

- 1) He personally appeared to them. Luke 24:36
- 2) He personally taught them. Luke 24:44
- 3) He personally empowered them. Luke 24:49a
- 4) He personally challenged them. Luke 24:49b

The final thesis Luke presents is a formula for happiness in any dispensation. Luke’s final thought is this:

GREAT JOY COMES FROM KNOWING AND OBEYING THE WORD OF GOD, WHICH LEADS TO RECEIVING THE POWER AND BLESSINGS OF GOD AND WHICH LEADS TO WORSHIPPING AND MINISTERING FOR GOD.

There are five key steps that Luke presents here:

STEP #1 – The key to being a joyful believer is knowing and obeying God’s word. **24:49a**

Jesus Christ specifically told His disciples that He would send the “promise of My Father upon you,” which was a promise of the Holy Spirit, and that they were to stay in the city of Jerusalem until it happened.

So each disciple was responsible to hear the word of God and obey it. Each disciple had the responsibility to stay in Jerusalem until they received power. That was the word of God to them at that time.

Now of course we are not specifically today told to stay in Jerusalem or Kalamazoo or anywhere else. But the main point is still true. If we are going to experience joy, we must know the word at the present time and obey it.

If the disciples had tried to go out from Jerusalem at that time, it would have been a clear disobedience to the word of God and that will never cause a believer to experience great joy.

It is important that we know and obey the word of God consistent with what God is doing at the present time. Some of the most miserable and fickle people of God are those who don’t understand this point.

For example, God is not now performing signs and wonders miracles so if you are a believer who is looking for that, you will not end up joyful because you won’t see it. God is not now going to part seas or lakes so His people can walk to the other side. His miraculous power right now is using His word to save people. Knowing the word of God and the program of God is a key to joy.

I think of the most destructive things that can happen is to thrust some new, unpowered, untaught believer into a position of spiritual war and leadership. The believer must first learn the word and will of God or they will end up ruined, miserable, legalistic and depressing.

STEP #2 – The key to being a joyful believer is having God’s power. **24:49b**

Each disciple had been with Jesus Christ for over three years and during that time, the Holy Spirit had been with them but not in them (John 14:17).

There are two very important points brought out here about having God’s power:

- 1) Each disciple would receive God’s Spirit and power authorized by Him.
- 2) No disciple was to begin any ministry without that power.

That is so important to see. Jesus does not tell them to get busy; He tells them to wait until the Holy Spirit comes in them to give them the power of God.

Sometimes the key to happiness is found in waiting on God. Waiting on God is NEVER a waste of time; it is often a wise and valuable use of time.

A key to joy is being in tune with the Spirit of God. God gives His Spirit to every believer and a critical key to joy and happiness is yielding to that Spirit. It will probably take us a while, but eventually the believer will learn that I am not happy not yielding to the Holy Spirit and I don't make much of a difference if I am not yielded to the Holy Spirit.

Certainly we know that the fruit of the Spirit is love and joy and peace (Gal. 5:22). If one is not living life in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, one cannot possibly have those things.

People may be involved in all kinds of Christian action and still not have the power of God enabling them. There was a person in a church who was in all the action of the church. If the doors were open that person was there. But this same person did not even have enough power of God to shut their mouths. In fact, when the Scriptures teach that a person who goes to worship is to go to hear and not speak, this person never had enough power to even do that (Ecclesiastes 5:1-2).

The key to joy is having the power of God and the power of God comes through obeying the word of God.

STEP #3 – The key to being a joyful disciple is following God's leading. **24:50a**

Jesus Christ led His disciples out to the Bethany area. According to Acts 1:12, this area was specifically located on the eastern slope of the Mt. of Olives. This was about a Sabbath's Day journey from Jerusalem.

According to Rabbinical teaching, a Sabbath Day journey was about five furlongs. A furlong was about 600 feet, which means they traveled a little over 3/5ths of a mile. **This was a very interesting place to lead these disciples because this was the very place where they had abandoned Jesus (Luke 22:39/Mark 14:26, 50).**

So the very spot that had once been the spot of abandonment and fear is now the spot of great joy. In fact, this will be the very spot to which Jesus will return one day (Zech. 14:4).

Great joy does come from following Jesus Christ. It is a willingness to go where the Lord wants us to go; wait where the Lord wants us to wait and do what the Lord wants us to do. This is what brought the joy back to the disciples, they were following the Lord.

Before joy returns, Jesus Christ may lead you right back to the very spot of failure. But if He leads you there, He will bless you if you follow His leading. It has been well said, "God will never lead you where His grace will not sustain you."

STEP #4 – The key to being a joyful disciple is having God's blessings. **24:50b-51**

Nothing on this earth can supersede having God's blessings. Receiving the blessing of God is very special and very sacred in God's estimation. We may recall from the story in Genesis 27 that when Isaac blessed Jacob by mistake, the blessing was so sacred that he could not go back on his word (27:34-40). A blessing consisted in calling upon God to bless a person or place both physically and spiritually (27:28-29).

Think of the thrill of this moment. God the Son is Personally praying for the blessings and prosperity of the ministry of His disciples. No wonder these disciples ended up rejoicing. Just imagine that you are there and Jesus Christ Personally pronounces the blessings of God on you and on this church. What a moment.

Now in Ephesians 1:3, we learn that we have already been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. If you have Jesus Christ in your life, God has pronounced His very special blessing on you and your life, and that can bring joy right back into your life.

Many of us have prayed and asked God to pronounce a blessing on TCBC. We have asked Him to provide and protect and prosper this ministry. When you see God answer this prayer and move, it is a cause for great joy.

Now according to **verse 51**, as Jesus was blessing His disciples, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. **Luke describes this as a temporary parting, not a permanent separation.**

This is so important to see. **The very place that had been a terrible place of humiliation (Luke 22:39) was now the very spot of exaltation.**

God's grace is in the business of causing people and places of humiliation to be turned to people and places of exaltation.

When Jesus Christ raptures the church, we will be caught up into the clouds (I Thess. 4:17) and when He comes to establish His Kingdom and reign on this earth, He will again come in the clouds (Matt. 24:30; Acts 1:4) and we will come with Him (Rev. 19:14).

STEP #5 – The key to being a joyful disciple is participating in God-honoring worship. **24:52**

You will not end up happy and joyful if you stop worshipping God. It was reverent worship that produced this. It was not a band, it was not entertainment; it was the reverent worship of Jesus Christ.

Those were the final five steps Luke presents as he brings his gospel that he wrote to Theophilus to its conclusion.

Notice the two results:

Result #1 - The disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy. **24:52**

They had been in Jerusalem prior to this, but they did not have joy (24:17, 41). But their joy was back. They had been carefully taught the word and will of God and they had worshipped God and the joy was back.

When you are depressed, go to church and hear the word of God and enter into reverent worship.

Result #2 - The disciples were continually publicly praising God. **24:53**

Frederic Farrar, the head of Westminster in the late 1800's, said, "Praise is the fruit of joy."

When joy is in the heart, there is a natural tendency to worship God.

Notice they are not hiding anymore. They are not afraid of Jewish or Roman leaders. They are publicly at the Temple praising God and testifying of the truth of Jesus Christ.

Their praise was centered on a wonderful Person, who was once laid in a manger in Bethlehem, but was now sitting on a throne in heaven.

It is ironic that Luke began his letter to Theophilus with a godly man in the Temple (Luke 1:9) and he ended his letter to Theophilus with several godly disciples back in the same Temple.

In between these two episodes in Luke is a remarkable story about a remarkable Person. His name is Jesus. He was the God/Savior/Messiah/King. He is the One who dramatically changed history and He can dramatically change your life.

He can and will put the joy back into your life if you will believe on Him.

There are six realities:

1. Christ is alive.
2. Christ is God.
3. Christ completed His redemptive mission.
4. Heaven is a real place:
 - a. Atmospheric Heaven: Us
 - b. Stellar Heaven: Sun, moon and stars
 - c. Throne of God
5. Jesus will come again.
6. You may go to heaven and your sins may be forgiven if you believe on His name.