

OK, here's a basic assumption embedded in our episode today: people who listen to podcasts and study the Bible thoroughly are typically very analytical in their problem-solving and also very focused on high achievement. Yeah...they are always looking for the best answer, working to discard what doesn't work, and finding great satisfaction from a great result at the end. Analytical people. Achieving people.

But, from university students to top executives, are most of these achievers and analyticals routinely operating in *joy*? The joy of the Lord? Enduring, consistent joy? Paradoxically, my observation is that these amazing people who are so used to analyzing their way to success, discarding what doesn't work, and achieving great results—well, they can have a real problem. Their skills sometimes fail them in this—they don't succeed at finding daily, consistent joy—even though they have tried to do just that. Yeah, maybe tried over and over again. So the enduring thing is actually their *failing* to live in joy consistently. You know, like the plea in the song “You Say,” ...“Am I more than just the sum of every high and every low?”

“If only,” you might be thinking. That's right, you're already thinking “if only,”...because you're thinking analytically! Yeah, saying to yourself, if only there was a great recipe, a path for consistent joy! Well, let me just say this. If there isn't an exact recipe, the Bible has the closest thing to it. So let's just go ahead and call it a “recipe.” But one big problem is, people who want the finished result of consistent joy often don't like the necessary ingredients for joy. Nevertheless, let's take a closer look and see if we really want to give this “consistent joy thing” a shot...or just complain about our lack of joy the rest of our lives. Heh.

OK, right off the bat, we first need to bend our will all the way to greater dependence upon the Holy Spirit. That's because *joy* is a fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 say this: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, *joy*, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” That's right, joy is the fruit...and the Source of that fruit is abiding in Jesus through the Holy Spirit.

But many of those who claim Christ don't truly claim the Holy Spirit! While they may *say* they are trinitarians—that means believing that God is manifested in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—they deny it by their words, actions, and spiritual life. They are essentially “binitarians” who deny the full power of God. They can't be helped by this recipe, because they've cut off the possibility of the fruit of joy...at the root!

On the other hand, many Christians are full-fledged in their pursuit of Holy Spirit impact on their lives. But for some, *they're* not seeing the fruit of joy. Or perhaps the joy they *do* experience is fleeting—it's not consistent, it's not enduring. So what's happening *there*? Well, we surely need to consider two things: our wills and our minds—yes, the two very most valuable tools used a whole lot by achievers and analyticals!

So, what happens when our wills and our minds are not in alignment with God's approaches? Well, we obviously need to get aligned. And the Apostle Paul nailed two how-to practices for that...in two different epistles. First, let's look at Romans 12:1-2, specifically for Paul's pointing to issues of the will and the mind.

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” There you have it: the prescription for believers to present their body as a living sacrifice and not be conformed to this world. Then there's the prescription of the renewal of believers' minds. Here's the thing. Analyticals and achievers are so accustomed to using their wonderful minds to fix so many things that they simply want to control outcomes. The fact is, before that prescribed renewal of minds, believers' minds are *not* in alignment with the Spirit...their minds are actually robbing them of joy! Yeah, they are worrying over events, issues, and obstacles—to their great detriment—when all they really need to do is to reside in the Holy Spirit's joy. Not convinced? Then here's what Paul wrote to the Philippians (4:4-9)...listen carefully for his direction for our will and our mind!

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with

thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

OK, so our wills are to focus on rejoicing! *And* we are not to be anxious about anything! *And* we are to pray! Then Paul gets to our thinking, our minds! This is all about renewing our minds with focus on Paul’s fantastic list. So, you want *analytical answers* and *achieving answers* to lack of joy—well then, here you go! And Paul finishes by saying that the God of peace will be with you! Yeah, peace...and its cousin, joy!

But then you might say, this is all trite, shallow, not real world. After all, we all have real challenges, trials that rob us of joy. Well...can the Bible change your mind on that? You see, the Bible never diminishes the fact of life’s challenges. But here’s what James says about that (1:2-4): “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Yes, *if* we have renewed our minds, *then* we literally *count it all joy* when we have trials! And we will then lack in nothing, *including joy!* Whoa! ...But, you might say, James never has been one of my favorite books of the Bible. I get it! But do you truly want to be conformed to Christ? Then how about Hebrews 12:1-2?

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Yes, Jesus Himself set the example, focusing on the joy set before Him and so endured the Cross! This is key to a “joy recipe”—focus on the coming joy set before us and endure the trials. In so doing, you are being conformed to Christ!

Then, there’s my favorite promise of them all for the “here and now,” something we already explored in a previous episode. You see, Romans 8:28 teaches us that, if we love God and are called according to His purpose—and, of course, the loving, serious believer *is* called—then “all things work together for good!”

Wow, you talk about an incredible joy-generator! No matter what troubling events or difficult obstacles we’re facing, God’s will and God’s mind is such that we are promised that all things work together for good! For the analytical...for the achiever...this verse should work to disarm all your reservations, your worrying, your concerns! God’s approach is so far superior to what we can possibly analyze or achieve on our own—and that allows us to rest, to abide, to joyfully anticipate in what God has prepared for us!

In that previous episode about “Romans 8:28 and the Pony,” the conclusion to the story was that a young man was in a huge pile of manure, so he was expecting something exciting—a pony! Have you exercised your will as Paul taught, and have you renewed your mind such that, no matter what the circumstances look like, you’re expecting a really cool pony? Yeah, have you moved your expectations to a God-recipe?

So, an awesome recipe for every believer’s consistent joy is really quite straightforward. First, the fruit of the Spirit is joy. But is your strong will blocking that fruit? Next, do not be conformed to this world and its worries and concerns. And, present your body as a living sacrifice. Then, specifically ask the Lord to continuously renew your mind...yeah, not just once but for all circumstances! Then rejoice in every circumstance! Stop being anxious, trust God. As Paul instructed the Philippians, think on all the right things! Then count trials as joy, knowing that God is working all things together for good!

Hey, you know what the condensed version of God’s recipe is? Here it is. Completely turn your analytical mind and achieving will to analyzing *how* God is doing all His great work rather than *whether* He is! Look, God’s intention for us is a life filled with joy! Follow the recipe—yeah, then *you will bask in consistent joy!*

A&A: Application & Action

1. As an analytical or an achiever or, most likely, an analytical achiever (!), have you found that it seems to be a bit of a curse in the late nights as you wrestle with issues you have no way of solving? Is that a past problem for you or a current problem for you? Discuss the recipe.
2. How does one successfully submit one's will and mind into the better hands of God's will and mind? Describe your process for doing so. Be specific.
3. Do you find *manure* or do you find *cool ponies* dominating your thinking? (See the "Romans 8:28 and the Pony" episode.) If manure, how are you going to go about changing that? If ponies, describe how your will was transformed and your mind was renewed to that? Be specific.