

So, what is joy? Where does it come from? What is the difference between happiness and joy? The dictionary says that “joy is the emotion evoked by well-being, success or good fortune”. I asked my husband, Ben, for definitions and I prefer his descriptions: **Happiness is a feeling easily swayed by circumstances. Joy is a sustained deep gladness of the heart that is unaffected by circumstances.**

I like to think of it in visual terms. Happiness is like a small creek (or crick where I come from). In times of heavy rain, the water will have a torrential flow, but during times of drought, it is dry, parched ground. Joy is like a well way down DEEP in the earth. It never runs dry. It is not affected by the storms of life above. Psalm 1 says *“Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night That person is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.”* That is JOY. A tree with deep roots that are nourished and sustained by God.

We live in the country and sometimes during hurricanes we lose large trees. Consistently, the fallen trees are the ones with shallow roots. Psalm 16: 11 says *“In God’s presence is fullness of JOY.”* Do you hear those two simple principles? Meditating on his word and spending time in his presence? It’s been said that “God’s presence is always the gift you don’t know you need most until you’re in the most need”. (Ann Voskamp)

What kind of joy enables us not only to survive, but thrive in the midst of storms and struggles? When we root ourselves in Jesus and the reality of who God is and who we are in Jesus and who Jesus is in us, what joy floods our souls and overflows into our lives! Like the tree planted by the water, those roots go deep into a source sustained by God himself.

The Bible tells us in Hebrews 12:1 *“therefore, since we have such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. For the JOY set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

Prayer—Dear Jesus, thank you for being the source and sustainer of JOY. Thank you that your mercies are new every morning and that your faithfulness is great. Fill us afresh each day with your joy. In your name I pray, Amen

Think: Perhaps you are one who has not felt happiness or known joy in a long time. Then it is time during this season of fasting and prayer to get deeply rooted in Jesus and to allow him to fill your cup with joy. Consider fixing your eyes on Jesus. He longs to fill your cup!