

JULY 23 & 24



CHIP UHRMACHER,
INTERIM CEDAR FALLS
CAMPUS PASTOR

INTRODUCTION

This Wednesday, 33 individuals were baptized through our Cedar Falls Campus. What joy to celebrate! Throughout the Bible we see celebrations. Praise for God's goodness and love. Joy in the birth of our Savior and rejoicing on His resurrection day. Likewise, the life of Christ followers should be filled with joy—feeling the pleasure of God in our souls. This weekend, we explore finding every-increasing joy that comes from obedience to God and sharing His love to those in our circle of influence.

DISCUSSION

1. Discuss in your group the difference between *happiness* and *joy* according to the Bible. Can they exist independently of each other? What does joy look in the life of a Christ follower?
2. Many hold the notion that if they work harder, they will find more success, and with success will come happiness and joy. According to **Galatians 5:22**, this notion a misconception. Where does joy come from? How do we attain it?
3. Christians are not exempt from suffering. Read **James 1:2**. Despite our circumstances, what does God continue to extend to us as followers of Christ, and what do we gain?

THINK ABOUT IT

Joy is to be pursued and expressed. Joy can sustain us through trials and is contagious to others. It is given to Christ followers as a gift and cannot be earned from working harder. However, like many other spiritual rhythms, it should be practiced, and with practice comes rewards. In his research, Shawn Achor found the key to happiness is a positive brain. He says, "If you can raise somebody's level of positivity in the present, then their brain experiences what we now call a happiness advantage. Your brain at positive performs significantly better than at negative, neutral, or stressed. Your intelligence rises, your creativity rises, your energy levels rise."

DO SOMETHING

1. What is your current level of joy? Prayerfully reflect upon an area in your life where your obedience to Jesus may be restricting joy in your life.
2. For two weeks, end each day with a journal entry of three things you are grateful for and spend two minutes writing in detail of one positive aspect of your day. Daily celebrate the good in life.
3. On three different days this week, send out a positive email or text message. Thank someone for being part of your life, praise someone for an act of kindness or send words of encouragement.