



## Can't Live Without It Week 1 – JOY Spiritual Formation & Discussion Guide

We hope you'll use this guide to take the teaching from Sunday's service and reflect on it with a few friends or a group. If you have questions or want to talk more about how to take your next spiritual step, contact us at [info@wschurch.org](mailto:info@wschurch.org).

### Scripture:

"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup>He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. <sup>3</sup>You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. <sup>4</sup>Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

<sup>5</sup>"Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>Anyone who does not remain in me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. <sup>7</sup>But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! <sup>8</sup>When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father.

<sup>9</sup>"I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. <sup>10</sup>When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! <sup>12</sup>This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. <sup>13</sup>There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup>You are my friends if you do what I command. <sup>15</sup>I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me. <sup>16</sup>You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. <sup>17</sup>This is my command: Love each other."

John 15:1-17

### Reflection Questions:

- What is one thing you cannot live without? Why?
- What stood out to you from Sunday's service? How did you sense God encouraging and challenging you through the songs, the message, and being with others as part of the church? (The message's main points and scripture are listed below if it helps you think back.)

- How much joy are you experiencing lately? What would the people closest to you say?
- Do you agree that it is often easier to be sad than to be glad? Why do you think we trend toward discouragement and focusing on the negative?
- Eddie mentioned some reasons why we may have less joy:
  - We didn't experience it in our family of origin – stern, legalistic, or glass-half-empty examples
  - Unresolved guilt – hidden sin, we don't believe we deserve joy
  - Unrealistic expectations – we are surprised by challenges and suffering
- Read John 15:1-17. If you have time, read it several times and in several different translations.
  - Does it surprise you that Jesus shared these words with his friends just before he knew he would die?
  - How would you describe Jesus' attitude and emotion in this moment?
  - What stands out to you from this Scripture? Is there a word or phrase that comforts you? Challenges you?
- Eddie shared two keys to experiencing joy:
  - **Trust Jesus and remain radically connected to him.**
  - **Radically shift your focus from yourself to others.**

Is there one of these that you sense you need to focus on this week? What would that look like?

- Read this quote from the message:  
 "You will *not* find joy in self-indulgence. You will *not* experience joy by devoting your life to yourself. You will not find joy in self-serving dreams or in your favorite form of pleasure. You will **ONLY** find lasting joy where Jesus said you can find it: in him."  
 How do you react to that today?
- How can you stay connected to God? What has helped you before? What might help you today?
- Read Jesus' words in Matthew 16:25 – "If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?" This seems backward. How can you save your life by giving it up? What do you think Jesus is inviting us to do?
- Is there anything else from this teaching that you want to explore more?
- Take time to pray as you close your time of reflection or discussion, asking God to help you act on what he has asked you to do.

### **Join us for 21 Days of Selfless Living!**

Starting today (September 17<sup>th</sup>), we are embarking on a journey to become more like Jesus by becoming more selfless. Learn about how to be part of it at the 21 Days of Selfless Living page at <http://www.wschurch.org/21days>.

### **Message Main Points and Scripture:**

- Handel's *Messiah*
- JOY
- **It is easier to be sad than glad.**
- Galatians 5:22 - "The Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives... joy."
- **we didn't experience it in our families of origin.**
- John 15:11 – "Jesus said, 'I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!'"
- **unresolved guilt**
- Psalm 32:3-5 – "When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

- **unrealistic expectations**
- John 15:8 - “When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to my Father. I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love.”
- Hebrews 12:2 – “Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.”
- **trust Jesus and remain radically connected to him**
- John 15:1-4 - “I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn’t produce fruit, and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more. You have already been pruned and purified by the message I have given you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.”
- Nehemiah 8:10 – “The joy of the Lord is your strength!”
- **radically shift your focus from yourself to others**
- Matthew 16:25 - “If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul?”