

LIVE JOYFULLY

Dear Friend:

When I was a kid at camp, I learned a song you may have heard. Like a typical camp song it has 90 verses (ok, maybe I exaggerate; it only had 75 verses). I cannot remember the name of the song, but one of the verses says, "I got the joy, joy, joy, down in my heart, down in my heart to stay." Nice verse isn't it? God does want us to have his joy down in our heart no matter what the circumstances. God's joy in our heart is important, Nehemiah 8:10 says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." When life gives cause for weak knees and a weeping heart remember this: the joy of the Lord is your strength – this is how you get through those times. But... how do you get the joy and maintain it? Paul has the answer in Philippians 4:4-10.

First, always look for reasons to rejoice. Not everything that happens to us in life is a reason to rejoice. A broken marriage, a cancer diagnosis, the death of a child. Remember, though, I Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In everything give thanks." I woke-up with a burden on my heart, a very long day ahead that won't wrap-up ministry until 9:00 PM and no lunch break built in. I was whining to myself (not rejoicing) then I remembered: Cathy Cooley, my friend, is having life-threatening heart surgery today. Nothing I face today is a matter of life or death. Cathy is facing life or death. Paul instructs us in Philippians 4:5 to let our gentleness be evident to all, this is another way to get God's joy and maintain it. If I practice gentleness, joy comes easier. Paul's third instruction about maintaining joy is found in Philippians 4:6-7... pray, pray, pray through your whole day! The result? The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your heart and mind. When God's peace guards your heart, rejoicing is a natural response. May you live joyfully today and everyday.

In Christ's Love,

Pastor Mike

Prayer Requests: Cathy Cooley (heart surgery recovery), Harry Kring (praise for successful surgery), George Winland (hand surgery)