



## Part 4: More than Surviving

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### **Matthew 5:10-12**

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### **Persecution is only a blessing if it's because of our:**

1. Right Actions
2. Association with Jesus

**Biblical Promise:** Living for Jesus now reaps tremendous reward later.

### **Paul thrived in survival mode.**

<sup>23</sup> I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. <sup>24</sup> Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, <sup>26</sup> I have been constantly on the move.

I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers.

<sup>27</sup> I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. <sup>28</sup> Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup> Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?

<sup>30</sup> If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. <sup>31</sup> The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, *who is to be praised forever*, knows that I am not lying. – 2 Corinthians 11:23-31 (emphasis mine)

### **The secret to thriving in survival mode is joy.**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. – Philippians 4:4

But to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

– 1 Peter 4:13

### 3 Suggestions for Finding Joy

#### 1. Stay connected

- a. You don't make joy; joy is made in you from God
- b. Biblical joy: *"...the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright, and the determined choice to praise God in every situation."* – Rick Warren

#### 2. Find a joy-giver; Be mentored by someone deep in the faith

- a. They don't give cheap answers
- b. They will encourage you
- c. Need many joy-givers? We call this a small group

#### 3. Grow in joy through God's Word

<sup>10</sup> "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

<sup>11</sup> so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

<sup>12</sup> "For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace, the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. – Isaiah 55:10-12

### Small Group Questions

- 1) Many people use the words "happiness" and "joy" interchangeably. What do you think? How are they the same – or different?
- 2) Think about a joyful person you know. How do they express joy?
- 3) What's your honest reaction to Philippians 4:4: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."
- 4) Read the Isaiah 55 passage above. How does God's word impact your joy?
- 5) Pray that each person in your group would grow in joy and their connection to God.

### OUR MISSION

To create an authentic Christian community that effectively reaches out to unchurched people in love, acceptance and forgiveness so that they may experience the joy of salvation and a purposeful life of discipleship.