

### Volume 09, Issue 27: The Science Behind Joy

I have always known that joy is essential from the Word of God that exhorts us to rejoice always. What I hadn't fully grasped is the difference joy makes in individual and relational well being until I read a YouVersion Bible plan provided by Marcus Warner and Chris Coursey from their book "4 Habits Of A Joy-Filled Marriage".

*"Rejoice, and again I say rejoice"*. Joy must be really important for Paul to have repeated it in one short sentence in the Bible. Additionally, for it to be something we are asked to do means that it's not automatic, but rather something we must be intentional about. We have to fight to prevent life's circumstances from stealing our joy. There are times I talk myself out of worrying, force a smile on my face and try to get my joy to manifest.

I was interested in the study on joy because of my interest in the subject of rest. You may have all the time in your hands to rest from work, but if you lack joy and fun, you might as well stay at work. My take is that rest needs to be accompanied by some form of gladness and enjoyment for it to count as true rest. Reading this study on joy last month gave me a new outlook on why I must fight to keep my joy. It is true that joy is a powerful motivator in life.

In their book, Marcus and Chris espoused on the science behind joy. Although their study is specific to marriage, the foundation is applicable in all phases of life. I am now going to share parts of their writings below to spur up your interest on the subject. Here is what they had to say on the matter;

One of the most startling revelations to come out of the latest breakthroughs in human science is the discovery that there's no more powerful motivator in life than joy. It is nearly universally recognized that your brain functions at its best when it's running on the fuel of joy. You may not have realized it, but joy is the key to long-lasting marital bliss.

Your emotional capacity directly relates to joy. Emotional capacity can be thought of as your ability to bounce back from difficult emotions or hard situations. When you fall in love, your emotional capacity soars. The rush of joy gives you an emotional high that makes you feel like

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nothing can get you down.

Joy is the key to emotional capacity. When you have lots of joy, life just works better. When joy is high, your marriage also works better. However, as you may have discovered, joy can be an elusive thing. Most of us have no idea what causes joy or how to revive it when it begins to fade.

Strictly speaking, love is not a choice. Love is attachment. It is a bond you share through good times and bad. You can choose to do loving things. You can choose to do kind things. You can choose to feel love. However, the more joy you build into your marriage, the more that feeling of being "in love" will stay strong and grow.

Falling in love is all about joy. When you fall in love with someone, you experience a "joy explosion" in your brain that floods your body with hormones (like dopamine and oxytocin) that make it hard not to smile. Couples who stay in love throughout their married lives are couples who excel at the art of keeping their joy levels high. The opposite is also true. Low joy couples are in trouble. Falling "out of love" is all about the absence of joy.

A joy gap is the length of time between moments of shared joy. But when too much time passes between moments of shared joy, a joy gap is created that makes you feel distant and alone in your marriage. The wider the joy gap becomes, the more likely it's for your problems to overwhelm you. Not only does the gap rob you of intimacy, but the gap begins filling with resentment, and bad habits can begin to form that keep you apart instead of bringing you together.

We won't get into the variety of brain science-based exercises provided by Marcus and Chris that help build a joy-filled marriage but we get the point. We all need joy to thrive. My main takeaway from this study is that our brains function at their best when they are running in the fuel of joy. Life works better when we are full of joy. So let's keep the pursuit of joy at the fore of our key pursuits.

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For His Glory,

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