

The Pursuit of Joy

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to look at John chapter 15. And again, before I read the passage, just a little bit of an introduction to it and the reason I picked it.

Crossbridge, we say, from our name and our vision, we say what we want to be about is connecting Jesus to people, people to community, and community to joyful service.

Somebody says, you know somebody embarrassed Edna guy and you're pointing him towards a church. What's that church all about? And you can say, Jesus, community, and joy. Kind of put it together as a vision.

We didn't come up with it. It's from the Bible. That's what we're trying to get across within that. But one of the last things, you know, every church wants to be about Jesus. Every church wants to be about community.

And we're also saying that there's a response to it. You know, the community that Jesus forms, the community that we belong to is there for a purpose. It's supposed to do something.

[0 : 5 8] There's one theologian, Christopher Wright. He says it's not so much that God has a mission for the church as much as he has a church for his mission. God has a purpose, a plan.

And the people that he calls to himself, he actually invites in to his purpose. That's what we're here for. We're not just this aimless community. And so we want to say that, you know, to come and to know Jesus and to belong to his people then leads you outward, too, in order to serve.

And here's the thing. When you hear that word to serve, I think a lot of times it kind of sounds like, oh, right, give up the fun stuff I want in order to do something boring and dreary so someone else might have joy.

Right? You can kind of think that way about serving. Oh, this is about, you know, it doesn't matter what I think. If I like this, what's going on in my heart? This is for other people.

And again, we need to be outward facing. But what I want to say, the aim of all of that is not just to connect you to service. What the Bible talks about is that service being a service of joy.

[2 : 1 1] Okay? A service of joy. It's a joyful service. And I know maybe it sounds like, you know, the American accent with all the optimism bubbling in me, fueled by the preservatives and sugar that I ate growing up over in America.

You're like, calm down, Nate, with the joy stuff, like, day at a time. But I just want to say, I didn't come up with this. Jesus says this in the passage that we're about to read.

In this passage, it's a passage about connection. Jesus is talking to his disciples on the night that he's going to be betrayed. He's about to go to the cross. And he's using this imagery of connecting with him.

And the imagery is one of a branch and a vine. A branch and a vine. Jesus says, I am the true vine. And in saying that, when we read those words, he's evoking something that they would know, his disciples.

Because they would know they'd be steeped in the Old Testament scriptures. In the Old Testament scriptures, it talks about Israel, the people of God, as the vine. Right?

[3 : 10] So to be connected, to know God is to belong to his people. So if Jesus is saying that he's the true vine, he's saying, you want to know actually the way to connect with God? It's by attaching yourself to me.

Right? And you plant a fruit tree for a purpose. Right? You can plant many beautiful plants just to look at. But if you're planting one that bears fruit, you plant it, get this, to bear fruit.

Right? And so Jesus says, to come and to connect to him, to be attached to him, there's a purpose. There's a result in that. And that is that fruit might come from it.

And to do that, you abide in his love, he says. And that means serving and obeying. But this is the punchline. This is the punchline. The purpose of Jesus saying this, verse 11. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you and your joy may be full.

That's what gets produced. In serving and following Jesus and attaching yourself to him, what gets produced is joy. So again, we're actually going to read the passage, I promise.

[4 : 17] But I just want to ask this. How full is your joy tank this evening? How's it going? How full is it?

I don't know. Maybe some of you are like, how dare you? If you knew what I was going through, you wouldn't ask such a rude question. Maybe some of us, we just kind of brush it off and we say things like, I'm fine.

What I want to talk to you about is the serious pursuit of joy. All right. So we're going to read John 15, verses 1 to 2, and then verses 9 to 11. Listen up.

This is God's word. Skip down to verse 9.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

[5 : 25] These things I've spoken to you, that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be full. It's God's word. It's completely true. And he gives it to us because he loves us.

Would you pray with me for the preaching of the word? Father, we're here as your people and we'd ask that you would take your word and apply it to our heads so that we wouldn't grow shallow.

Would you take your word and apply it to our hearts so that we wouldn't grow cold in our love? Would you take your word and apply it to our hands and feet so that we wouldn't just be hearers of the word, but also doers of it?

We pray this with confidence in the name of Jesus. Amen. All right, let's talk about joy. Here's the outline for you, three-part outline. We want to talk about the pursuit of joy, the problem of joy, and the paradox of joy.

Okay? Pursuit, problem, paradox. First off, the pursuit of joy. All right. Verse 11 in our passage, Jesus says that my joy may be in you and your joy may be full.

[6 : 33] Okay? So it's saying Jesus' joy isn't just out there for no purpose. Jesus' joy is for you. Right? He wants that to be in you. He wants to give you his joy and not just any random joy.

Right? It's actually his joy. And not just a little bit of his joy, like drips and drabs. It's full joy. Now, I'll say this at the beginning.

I've said this. I've made this distinction. I hear this all the time in Christian circles. When we start talking about joy, somebody's like, oh, yeah, well, there's like a difference between happiness and joy. Right? And I think in the way that we use the word nowadays, absolutely, you know, happiness can, there's probably a little bit of more like shallowness to it, whereas joy is something that's deeper.

And so there can be. There's a good distinction in there. It's not just like plaster a smile on your face sort of a thing. But I just want to point out in the Bible, they're used interchangeably, happiness and joy.

Okay? And they can mean the same thing. And maybe some of us, when you've grown up in church circles, or maybe you're just naturally bent towards this, where we kind of act like dourness is a synonym for holiness.

[7 : 49] Right? If you're very serious as a Christian, well, then you plaster a stern look on your face. Right? Right? In our passage, though, Jesus connects obedience to joy.

He's actually encouraging us to pursue joy. It's not just a good thing, hey, if you get around to it, you should pursue joy. He actually says, this is what I want you to do.

And how? How are we supposed to go about pursuing joy? Well, he says in the image, by abiding in him, abiding in Christ. You know, joy is kind of this overall condition of the heart.

And we said, you know, we don't want to talk about joy like it's something that's shallow. There's a depth to it. An image that's been used before is imagine the difference between a babbling brook and a deep river.

You know, a babbling brook, it might make a lot of noise as it's bouncing over the rocks until you hear it and it's kind of loud. But if you stood in it, it's not going to knock you over. It's not going to move you at all.

[8 : 53] But a river, if the current's there and it's strong and it's below the surface, you might not hear it. It might be perfectly quiet. But if you got in it, it would grab you and move you.

That's what joy is like, right? It's deep. It's not just some surface level noise that's there, but it's this deep condition of the heart that moves and carries you.

And I don't know about you. Sometimes in my life I kind of feel like joy is the caboose following behind more important spiritual matters, right? There's other stuff we need to get to.

Joy, that almost sounds selfish. Like you're supposed to serve, but joy is just the cherry on top, right? Let's be honest. It's just the cherry on top to the Christian life.

If you get it, that's a bonus, but we're here just to kind of scrape by spiritually, right? That's what it means to be a Christian. I mean, I'll get my joy stuff in heaven. Right now, I got other stuff to do.

[9 : 53] No. I would like to propose to you that rejoicing in Christ as you follow and obey him and abide in his love is one of the chief callings in your life.

It's central to who we are as God's people. So the word joy, it's used 171 times in the Bible, and the word rejoice 154 times, so over 300 times.

Your Bible, depending on the size of the print, it's about 1,000 pages. It's about once every three pages we're talking about joy. Seems like it's pretty important, right? Let's come on me with a joy journey.

I'm just going to read God's word to you and show you why joy plays a part. So, let me ask some questions. Why were the Israelites supposed to observe feasts in the Old Testament?

Why? Oh, we're supposed to remember God's faithfulness. Absolutely. But listen, Leviticus 23. You shall take on the first day the fruit of the splendid trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.

[10 : 58] What were the sacrifices and the offerings all about? And you're like, well, there's sin, right? You have to make atonement. There's a sacrifice in your place. Absolutely. There's a goal to that, joining back in that sin being taken care of.

Deuteronomy 12. And then you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your free will offerings, the firstborn of your herd and your flock, and you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice.

You and your households, and all that you undertake in which the Lord God has blessed you. Why does God let Israel's enemies afflict them? Right?

Deuteronomy 28. Because you didn't serve the Lord your God. We kind of stop there sometimes, right? Oh, they would disobey. Because you didn't serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart.

What was the Ark of the Covenant all about, right? Is it just there for Indiana Jones to find it later and steal it from the Nazis? I mean, why does God go about, why does he want to dwell in his people's midst represented in this golden box?

[12 : 04] 2 Corinthians, 2 Chronicles, excuse me, chapter 6. And now arise, O Lord God, and go to your resting place, you and the Ark of your might. Let your priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let your saints rejoice in your goodness.

What's the result of God bringing the Israelites back from exile? Is it just like, well, God made promises, God keeps his promises? Yes, absolutely. There's more to it, though. Jeremiah 31.

Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy. I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow.

I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, declares the Lord. What happens when God rescues his people?

Isaiah 51. And the ransom of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing, everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain gladness, and joy and sorrow, and sighing shall flee away.

[13 : 05] I mean, Jesus is always telling these stories about, like, lost sheep and coins and things like that being found. And what's the result every single time? Joy. And joy. And joy. Joy. Why does God tell his people to fast?

To stop eating. And they're like, well, obviously, that can't have anything to do with joy, right? Just how serious they are about following God. Zechariah 8. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah, seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts.

What's the point of the incarnation? We celebrate at Christmas when Jesus came. The angels declare in Luke 2, I bring you good news of great joy.

What's the result of Jesus' miracles? The lame walk, the blind see. Yeah, but listen to Luke 19. The whole multitude of disciples began to rejoice and to praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen.

What does believing in Jesus do for us? Secure his eternity? Yes, absolutely. But right now, 1 Peter 1, though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

[14 : 23] What's the kingdom of God about? We could be here a long time. Romans 14, though, says, for the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating or drinking. It's talking about the Old Testament laws, but of righteousness and joy and peace.

What does the Holy Spirit do? He does a lot of things. He convicts us of sin. He reminds us of the truth. But also, 1 Thessalonians 1, and you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit.

That's what he does. The Holy Spirit gives joy. How does God the Father feel about you? What do you think? Disappointed? If you're attached to Jesus, this is what you get to know.

Zephaniah 3, 17. The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save. He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will quiet you by his love. He will exult over you with loud singing.

What happens when Jesus comes back? Well, yes, she's in the new heavens and the new earth. Yes, absolutely. What does Revelation 19 say? Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

[15 : 32] What does being connected to Jesus offer you? Sing this at this church to the tune Golden Hill. Psalm 16. You make known to me the path of life.

Obedience? In your presence there's fullness of joy. How's your joy tank tonight? See, we're here as God's people to pursue joy.

It's a serious business. C.S. Lewis talks about joy as the serious business of heaven. Martin Luther once wrote, the devil cannot stand joy. What's the first lie of the serpent in Genesis chapter 3?

God's holding out on you. He doesn't want you to have joy. He wants you to be less happy than if you actually go and partake of the fruit. Right? Bono said, joy is an act of defiance.

In the Bosnian War, there's a story I like called The Cellist of Sarajevo, this guy named Vedrin Smalevich. And there's this prolonged military blockade called the Siege of Sarajevo.

[16 : 43] Sarajevo. And in it, a mortar goes off in the town square and 22 people die from it while they're waiting in line for food.

And it's just rubble and things like that. And there's this cellist there, Vedrin Smalevich. And he goes, he brings his cello, and for 22 straight days, he just sits in the midst of this rubble playing beautiful music.

And it moved people because, I mean, first off, you know, again, when we're talking about joy, he wasn't like, you know, if you're happy and you know it, clap your hands. It'd be inappropriate. But it was this music that spoke to something deeper, moving, that was beautiful.

And it was a protest. It was a protest against this world where there is sin and destruction and sorrow, that joy still remains. You know, we can be plagued by so many things, by anxiety, by depression.

We go through different trials and suffering. But the promise of the gospel is that if that is you, you are not excluded from this offer of joy. We're not playing pretend when it comes to joy.

[17 : 52] The joy that we pursue is a protest in the face of all of those things that are not originally part of God's good creation, saying you do not belong and you do not get to take my joy because I'm attached to Jesus.

So, it's the first thing. Pursuit of joy. It matters. We should do it. Second is the problem, right? Now, I don't know. Again, like maybe you think about that and you're like, yeah, no, I mean, I like church.

I like my Christian friends and things like that. But if you thought about the things that bring you most joy, a lot of times we can disconnect it from our following of Jesus. I want to say that in our worship of God, in our communion with him, in our life together, in the way that we live and we serve one another, whether it's filling a rota or informally loving and serving the body of Christ and our neighbors, that is actually where true joy is found.

But there's a problem, right? Because if you live in this world like I do, we can find, first off, that joy can be fleeting. Right? Like you get it? You have a good day. You have a good week. You have a good moment.

Or maybe you go to like a free church youth camp or something. You're like, joy. All right. I get it, Nate. All right. And then you come back and life happens. You don't like different things about your life, whether it's the way you look or the family that God's given you or the job that he's given you or whatever it is.

[19 : 15] And it can feel so hard to actually talk about joy. And so we kind of dabble in it. Right? We give ourselves just for a moment and then we resign ourselves to be like, okay, I'm either going to be cheery or sullen.

And then we live a little bit longer and we realize all the people that we thought were cheery are actually like secretly depressed. Right? It's just a fake thing they do when they're around people. And all the sullen people are the ones who've given up trying to put on the pretense of cheerfulness.

And you just start to feel burned by life. And you just abandon the pursuit of joy. It's like a fairy tale for children. I read a study that was done and said the average four-year-old laughs 300 times a day.

You want to know how many times the average 40-year-old laughs a day? I think it's four times. Some of you just chuckled there and you've got three left.

300 times a day! What's happened to me? See, the opposite of joy isn't sadness. Jesus was sad and yet he was joyful. Remember what we're called to in Romans 12 is to weep with those who weep, to rejoice with those who rejoice.

[20 : 28] Paul writes about it in 2 Corinthians 6 that he's sorrowful yet always rejoicing. Those things can live together. Right? The opposite of joy isn't sadness.

It's hopelessness. It's despair. G.K. Chesterton once said, meaninglessness doesn't come from being weary of pain. Meaninglessness comes from being weary of pleasure.

You see, the despair that happens is when you actually achieve your goals. You actually get the thing that you've been longing for, that you thought was going to make you happy. You get it and you're like, oh, wait.

Didn't open up unending joy to me. I mean, we should know this. I mean, like there's literally like every single celebrity, every footballer and stuff like that will tell you the stories about how depressed they are and how they always want more and can never be satisfied.

Right? And we're going about it in the wrong way. There's this problem of joy. And even in church sometimes it can feel like joy is elusive.

[21 : 27] You know, you've showed up to all the stuff, but maybe in your life there's zero joy. What have you set your heart on as a source of joy?

We all do that, no matter who you are. You set your heart on something and say, that's the place where I'm actually going to find joy. In our passage, remember, there's this vine imagery. The invitation is to set your heart on to attach yourself, to join yourself to Jesus by abiding in his love.

And the problem is, if we're honest with ourselves, is we go and we attach ourselves to all different sorts of things. Again and again, hoping that we will actually find joy and it's leaving us miserable and unsatisfied.

Not only that can joy feel elusive, also the way that we go about it can have a problem to it. You know, we have these different strategies of trying to find joy. Not trying to paint everybody into the same box here, but I'll just say, you know, probably if you're younger, if you're, you know, in your 20s or something like that, you're just like, well, yeah, joy, like I'm happy enough, but also because I have these goals.

I have these goals in life. And so it's almost like you're constantly, you know, you're here in the present, but you're living in the future also. Right? And kind of tricky. If I'm not happy now, that's okay. I'm just young. I'm just still working towards my goals.

[22 : 44] Waiting to find the perfect spouse. I'm waiting to start the family, the perfect job, whatever it is. Find myself here at university. Feel who I am. Right? And so it's always out there.

We trick ourselves. Joy is going to be there in the future once I get that thing and the goalposts just keep moving. Or sometimes we try to go about getting joy by just doing it frantically. Like I was trying to get joy.

You know what was wrong? I wasn't trying hard enough. I'm going to turn it up five notches. I'm going to do more of the stuff that I think is going to bring me joy. So we work harder. We go after love more. You work out more.

And eventually you just crash. Or sometimes, you know, again, you just keep attaching yourself to something new. You go from thing to thing to thing. Have you ever? Have you ever tried to fix something and then you made it worse?

Anybody done that before? The British Empire has done that before. I'll give you one example of how. So the British Empire are colonizing India and there's this problem of snakes.

[23 : 42] Not just any sort of snakes. Cobras. There's too many cobras and they're poisonous. And they need to get rid of them. In fact, the British Empire said, well, you know what we're going to do to make this place better is to eradicate cobras from India.

Here's our plan. What we'll do is we'll pay any person who brings, you know, a full-grown cobra dead to us. We'll give them two pence. Want to know what happened? The Indian people said, hey, yeah, I got an economic plan here in order to be doing a little bit better in my life.

And so they would take a room in their house and they'd turn it into a little bit of a cobra farm. You know, and they'd raise these wee cobras and let them grow and grow and grow until they're a certain size. They'd kill it. They'd bring it to the British and they'd get their two pence.

The British find out about this and they're like, no, no, no, no. We're shutting down a program cobra. No more two pence at all. It's done. What's the problem? Well, now you've got a cobra farm in your guest room and it's making you no money.

So what do you do? Open the doors. And all the cobras go out. So instead of fixing it, they just increased the number of cobras out there. Have you ever had this experience with joy?

[24 : 53] Have you had this grand plan? You're going to go about it? I'm going to be joyful. This is going to be it. Oops. Oops. I looked up what the NHS recommends to be happier.

I'm going to go with that. I've got three different things it said on their website. First off, manage your stress. You're going to be a little bit happier in your life, manage stress. And actually, it's not a bad idea, right?

Like it talks about you need to get good sleep. You need to take control of your time. There's some good techniques like breathing exercises and things like that to manage stress. God created you with a body.

You need physical rest. All right. Okay. I'm going with that. Another thing that it recommends is if you're struggling to be happy and to find joy is to try to enjoy yourself, which I find very interesting comment.

Are you struggling with joy? Have you tried enjoying yourself? Like, oh, okay. That was the problem, right? All right. Okay. The next thing it says is if you're struggling to be happy, boost your self-esteem.

[25 : 54] Tell yourself positive things. Now, again, some of us do struggle with these. We say really ugly, mean things to ourselves, and that's not a godly, helpful thing.

You need help in those things. But here's the thing. What if you're not listening to yourself? Or what if the positive things you're looking for is from somebody else and they're not giving it to you?

Right? What then? You see, in all of those things, maybe they can help in little ways with it. But in each single one of those pursuits of joy, the problem is it's all about you.

It's all fixated on your joy. Every tip and strategy is about you. Last point. It's the paradox of joy. The pursuit of it. There's a problem, right?

Oh, we're not joyful. We don't know how to get it. But there's a paradox, and that, I think, is what helps us. And this is the paradox of joy. We are to pursue joy, but joy is never our main aim.

[26 : 59] We're after joy, but it's not a selfish joy. So there's joy out there. Mirth. There's a good old English word that we should use more, right? Mirth. It starts to come when we actually stop worrying about joy so much.

Joy is the byproduct of seeking something else more. In other words, I'm going to put it this way. Joy, the way you get it, you're supposed to pursue it, but it's gotten indirectly.

Joy comes indirectly. And we might not verbally admit it, but often we see joy and service as contradictory. But again, remember, I said our church, any church, we should want to connect community to service, but that service is joyful service.

But we see, you know, serving, maybe that's getting in the way of me actually being joyful. We don't have time to be with one another, desire to be with God, freedom to give our money away, security to step outside our comfort zone.

Why? Because we think we need all that stuff in order to be joyful. But this is the paradox of joy. It's what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6, 33. Seek first the kingdom of God, and the rest will be added.

[28 : 13] And that applies to our joy. You know, the person who is joyful, the most joyful people I have met are people who are not so terribly concerned about how full their tank is of joy.

Maybe that feels a little bit confusing. Like it's received indirectly. Don't focus so much. You're supposed to pursue joy, but don't focus it. And it's like, you know, if somebody's like, you ever had your spouse or somebody say to you, whatever you do, don't turn around.

You're like, well, you know what I'm doing. I'm going to look, right? It's like, don't think about a pink elephant. You're like, well, now I'm picturing in my mind a pink elephant, right? I'm supposed to pursue joy, but not pursue.

This feels like an impossible task here, right? We say don't be so obsessed with joy that you just, you're not thinking about it, right?

But what's going on? Well, here's the thing. The joy that we're offered in seeking first the kingdom of God, or as our passage in John 15 says, to keep Jesus's commandments, right?

[29 : 15] That's where it comes from. And here's a C.S. Lewis quote that I think helps unpack this. He says this. Joy bursts in our lives when we go about doing the good at hand and not trying to manipulate things and times to achieve joy.

If you want to get warm, you must stand near the fire. If you want to be wet, you must get into the water. If you want joy, power, peace, eternal life, you must get close to or even into the thing that has them.

They're not a sort of prize which God could, if you choose, just hand out to anyone. All right, so here's the paradox. The paradox of joy is that we're filled with it when we're not grasping and so desperate for it.

And the way that comes is actually by getting close to the source, right? Because we disconnect joy from its source. Joy comes from getting close to Jesus. That's what our passage says, to abide in him as we obey, as we follow him.

You know, abide, that gives us this image of rest. But that rest isn't passive. It's active. There's something that we're called to do. And where does this lead us? Well, you know where it leads Jesus?

[30 : 21] For the joy that was set before him, what did he do? He endured the cross. He endured the cross because there was a greater joy on the other side.

He gets joy by giving up his preferences and saying, not my will but yours be done, Father. Joy comes by losing our lives. There it is. That's the secret.

That's where it gets so hard, right? Because what we, it means faith. It means trust, right? To say that this is actually the way to true blessedness.

This isn't a call to be super dramatic about everything, but to realize that Jesus gave his life. And that joy rides the coattails of serving and obeying and following him.

And this starts to grow a joy in us that allows us to sing and to celebrate others and to enjoy a good meal and to give thanks. It turns duty into delight. You know how you stop thinking about thinking about something?

[31 : 25] So if somebody says, hey, whatever you do, don't turn around, you know, that's hard because you're like, I want to know. You know what would help you? If there was something ravishing and beautiful in front of you. Of course, I don't care about turning around because I want to look this way.

Because my imagination has been captured and my heart has been captured. I don't need to worry about that other stuff. You see, when we're calling to pursue joy, we come to a Savior who offers it to us by giving away his life.

And the reason that he is doing this is so that your joy may be full and may be secured. That's how much he loves you.

And if that's not the most beautiful thing in the world, I do not know what is. That he would empty himself and that he would give himself a way to pull you back in.

And so when we say, we have to have this thing. Oh, obedience, that sounds too costly. That's going to keep me from my joy. What argues with us is the cross of Jesus Christ.

[32 : 33] So, so what? So, if you're a young person, if you're a teenager, if you're a uni student, there's lots of joy in being a young person and connecting with other people in university.

You're like, oh, this is a time where I get to make friends and figure out what I'm going to be in life. Absolutely, absolutely wonderful. That's a great thing to pursue. Also do it in the midst of Christian community.

And serving in the church. In loving one another in costly ways. If maybe you're older and you said, you know, my time to serve has kind of come and gone.

I just kind of show up. Don't stop showing up. This is a wonderful thing. But find ways to serve. And again, this isn't just about filling a rota. We need people to fill rotas and things like that in churches, right? But it's also about how you relate to one another.

What you say to one another and what you don't say. Right? As you put one another first and serve one another and actually believe that as I do that, that's going to be the most joyful relationships that I have.

[33 : 37] As you get a bigger building and different things to do. Again, it's not about, oh, well, here you are. Duty just says you need to do something about this. You know, we've sacrificed.

So now you need to sacrifice. Right? Yes, absolutely. People need to serve. But listen. As you come in and you fill. As you invite people. As you do different ministries. And things go on here.

The glory of it all is that you get joy. There's going to be times where you're absolutely knackered. Maybe times where you don't want to show up. But if you follow Jesus and you've tasted of his goodness.

I hope you can say, all those things that I gave up. It was absolutely worth it. He's never turned his back on me. He's never withheld joy.

Instead, he gives it to me. Let's pray. The Lord would help us in this serious task. Amen.