

Read: **I Peter 1:3-8**

The passage we read told us in vivid language that our faith—our trust in Jesus and His finished work on the Cross—has at its core **joy!**

- Even—as the context denotes—in times of great trouble and pain
- That this relationship we have with Jesus—and its benefits—**transcends our troubles** and **translates into joy**
- We are told in verse 3 to: “**Be truly glad. There is wonderful joy ahead.**” (I Peter 1:3, NLT)
- And to people suffering greatly it says in verse 8 {of Jesus}: “**You love Him even though you have never seen Him. Though you do not see Him now, you trust Him; and you rejoice with a glorious inexpressible joy.**” (I Peter 1:8, NLT)
- It seems that Peter was convinced—and describes in bold terms—that there is something **radically enjoyable** about knowing Jesus. (even though we may be weeping—there is a deeper, abiding, transcending joy)
- Paul agreed, when He said in Philippians 3:8, “**Everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.**” (Philippians 3:8, NLT)
- The Psalmist would seem to concur when He exclaimed: “**Joyful indeed are those whose God is the Lord**” (Psalm 144:15, NLT)
- The angel was of the same mind as he announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds: “**I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all the peoples. The Savior—yes the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!**” (Luke 2:10-11, NLT)
- And Jesus would say—in clear terms—that those who are His would have joy: “**I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!**” (John 15:11, NLT)
- From the Apostles to the Psalmist to the Angel to Jesus Himself, we are told that **knowing Christ is something to be greatly enjoyed!**

So, we make it our mission here at Reality to: **Enjoy Jesus... together... and help others do the same**

- And that backdrop of Scriptures (+many more) fills our hearts and minds when we say: **Enjoy Jesus! (Theological)**

Let’s talk about this—and we’ll take 3 weeks to do so... (3 Parts)

Really what we are doing is explaining how we think about and approach **our goal of making disciples**

- That is the goal—the **explicit mission**—making disciples
- **Enjoy Jesus together and help others do the same** is just one of the ways we like to talk about it

There are a million ways we can talk about disciple making

- We might start by trying to **identify the end goal...**
- Since we are concerned with making disciples, we might ask **what is a disciple?** What, exactly, are we making?

At the very minimum:

- 1. A disciple follows and obeys Jesus (Cf. Enjoys Jesus)
- 2. A disciple does so with other disciples (Cf. Together—with others)
- 3. A disciple is engaged in the work of making other disciples (Cf. Helps others do the same)

Right?

- **1. A disciple of Jesus will seek to follow and obey Jesus**
 - When Jesus called His disciples, He said to them: “**Follow me...**”
 - And He said to His disciples: “**If you love Me, obey my commandments**” (John 15:14, NLT)
 - = A disciple follows and obeys (somewhat synonymous)
- **2. A disciple finds his or her self doing so with others with the same intent**
 - When Jesus called disciples, He called them in number and they followed Him **together**
- **3. A disciple ends up doing what the one they are following does**
 - Jesus is still calling disciples to Himself
 - The last thing Jesus said to His disciples was: “**Go and make disciples...**” (Mt. 28:19)
 - A disciple makes disciples

So, what we are doing here is trying to put a little bit of flesh on the simple phrase “**make disciples**”

Again, at the very least:

- Disciples **follow and obey** Jesus **together** and seek to **help others** do the same

How might we think of following and obeying? (Part I)

- We will start at the beginning
- Jesus: **The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And **you must love** the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.’** (Mark 12:29-30, NLT)
- With every **fiber of your being**—all that you are—love God!

How are we to think about this? What does it mean to love God?

- A lot! But, **minimally**... Jesus said it means to obey, but now we are into some circular reasoning... (love/obey...)
- **Additionally**, it certainly means to **enjoy** (as we have seen already in Scripture)
- You do not love something with “**all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength**” without **enjoying** it
 - You may say, “**Well, there are people I love in my family that I love but **do not enjoy**. And Scripture tells us to **love our enemies**, but I certainly **don’t enjoy** my enemies**”
 - Not the same thing!
 - Jesus said our love for even **our family** should look like hatred compared to our love for Him
 - “**If you want to be my **disciple**, you must **hate everyone else by comparison**—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.**” (Luke 14:26, NLT)
 - We are talking about an **all consuming love**—otherworldly
 - If we are even trying to touch the 1st commandment—to love God that way—we will be **enjoying** Him
 - And **obedience**, though challenging, will not happen begrudgingly, but **joyfully**

To think about it in terms of the Gospel

- We love God because He first loved us (I **John 4:19**)
- We rejoice in God—and He rejoices in us (See: **Zephaniah 3:14-17**, NASB)
- The more we **follow/abide** in/and **obey** Him, the more we discover of Him to **enjoy** (See: **John 15:8-11**, NASB)
 - The more we **obey**—the more we **enjoy**
 - “**O taste and see that the Lord is good**” (Psalm 34:8, NASB)
 - This tasting that proves to be enjoyable happens as we **seek** and **obey** Him...
- But the wonder of the **gospel** is:
 - **That when we fail to obey Jesus—we do not have to fail to enjoy Jesus**
 - Yes, Jesus taught that, **if we love Him we will obey him** (Cf. John 15:14)
 - But Jesus also taught that, **those who are forgiven much, love much** (Cf. Luke 7:47)
 - The **paradox** of the gospel: We are so wonderfully loved that we are compelled to obey—but when we fail to obey, we are still so wonderfully loved

And, there we begin to get at what it means to **enjoy Jesus**

- We have a **new, greater, truer** affection—Jesus Christ
 - Who we (because of love) joyfully obey
 - And the more we obey, the more we see of Him
 - And the more we see of Him the more we **enjoy** Him
- But, being honest, we fail far more than we want to
 - The more we fail, the more we realize of His grace, the more we find ourselves **enjoying Him and all His benefits**

The Psalmist said:

- “**Delight yourself in the Lord...**” (Psalm 37:4^a, NASB)
- “**Bless the Lord, O my soul, and **forget none of His benefits****” (Psalm 103:2, NASB)

And that is exactly what it means to enjoy Jesus:

To enjoy Jesus means both to **enjoy His person** and **His benefits**

- Definition of enjoy from the Oxford American Dictionary:
 - (1) *To delight or take pleasure in*
 - (2) *To possess and benefit from*

We delight and take pleasure in Jesus

By faith, we **posses** Jesus which is greater than possessing anything else

Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with **the infinite value of knowing Christ** Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ (Cf. Philippians 3:8, NLT)

And we **benefit** from His having saved us

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him **freely give us** all things? (Romans 8:32, NASB)

= Enjoyment by definition!

Throughout its history, the Church has seen fit to talk (in grand terms) about **enjoying God**

- Creeds and catechisms show us that these are not merely modern constructs or contemporary wisdom, but ancient truths handed down throughout church history. Anchors us in biblical orthodox tradition and interpretive understanding.

The Westminster Catechism (1647)

- **Question 1:** **What is the chief end of man?**
Answer: **Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.**

The goal of humanity (from a Christian perspective as shaped by Scripture) is to glorify and enjoy God forever.

- These (glorify and enjoy) are not in juxtaposition to one another
- We find these running in tandem throughout Scripture as commands to praise God
- They exist in **tandem** (if you are glorifying God you are enjoying Him—if you are enjoying God you are glorifying Him)

Some may object at this point:

- **Isn't God arrogant to seek praise? It would be weird if I wanted people to delight in, glorify and enjoy me! (YOU DO!)**
- C.S. Lewis, in his book on the Psalms, struggled with the same thing. Then he realized that when we have things or people of value in our lives, not only do we delight in them, but it is **our joy** to speak about them and share them with others.
- "I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation." (C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*)¹
- Cf. My wife
- Joy and enjoyment find their consummation in praise—God has called us to enjoy Him and so praise Him
- **I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done. I will be filled with joy because of you. I will sing praises to your name, O Most High.** (Psalm 9:1-2, NLT)

To enjoy Jesus is... to love and glorify Him (it encompasses those concepts)

Why don't we just say love, glorify and enjoy God?

- Or keep it at love or glorify? (GOOD QUESTION)
- Well, those are so loaded down with religious connotations
 - They become murky in church and popular culture (our mission field)
- The word "enjoy" is more **culturally provocative**
 - Our culture is obsessed with enjoying themselves
 - What we are trying to do is **rescue** the concept of joy and enjoyment
 - Point to the **true source** of joy and enjoyment
 - We want to **challenge** lesser/counterfeit/false joys (idols)
 - **Confront** the **cultural idol** of enjoying oneself
 - So we say "Enjoy Jesus"
 - **Not to the exclusion of glorifying God, but encapsulating it, while confronting idols**
 - It is just as orthodox and biblical, but actually more confrontational (**We are confrontational**)

¹ C.S. Lewis. *Reflections on the Psalms* (Harvest, 1958) 95.

- We want to confront the **religionist**—the stodgy do-gooder who wants it all to be about how much good she does and how well she obeys
 - 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.** (John 15:15, NLT)
 - EJ saves us from dead religion—we are created for loving, joyful relationship!
 - God loves a joyful giver—not merely a stodgy doer
- We want to confront the **antinomian**—the grace abuser who wants to do whatever they want
 - **If you love Me, you will obey My commandments.** (John 14:15)
 - A call to EJ is a call to be willing to **sacrifice** all and **serve** His people and the world
 - **(Follow Me = Pick up Cross) (Love Me = Feed My Sheep)**
- We want to confront the shallow **hedonist**—the seeker of lesser joys
 - **In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.** (Psalm 16:11, NASB)
 - All else is lesser—Jesus is better and the only One worthy of all our service, sacrifice and praise! He, Himself, is so wonderfully enjoyable that all else is rubbish.
 - **Jesus is most glorified when He is most enjoyed by us**

Side note:

- Why have we changed it from God (Cf. Westminster Catechism) to Jesus (Cf. Reality)?
 - Well, without dealing with the obvious Trinitarian issues... (Jesus is God)
 - God, in our culture, is about as **ambiguous/innocuous** term as there could be (The Grammys)
 - Pluralistic culture (Hindu, New Age, Islam, Mormonism, JW's)
 - We can say anything about “God” in any venue (E.g. Grammys) and no one is bothered... but you say “Jesus” and it stirs!!
 - **What the church needs to say often and everywhere is: “Jesus”**
 - Confronting false gods and saviors—Jesus of Nazareth is unique, radical, bold, and confrontational!
 - Jesus is much less ambiguous as to **who** we are **talking about**, who we are **following** as disciples, who we **worshipping** and who are **making disciples for**
 - We—Reality—are intensely Christ-centered (**We are Christological**)

So, how do we do this practically? Enjoy Jesus...

We are to make Jesus the true **source** and **center** of our joy. **How?**

It is **not a matter of feeling** anything—it is a matter of **acting according to truth** (obedience before desire)

- Christianity has always insisted that trust and obedience come first and that feeling follow
- We obey our way into feelings, not feel our way into obedience
- There will be no enjoying without truly seeking and following

And doing so in a way that **anything else that brings joy** merely causes us to **look beyond it** to Jesus

- Cf. Relationships, recreation, nature, having an abundance, possessions ★ **(My example of surfing—last year) ★**

It does not mean we **enjoy Jesus in lieu of** things necessarily, but rather, that we **enjoy Jesus in** all things

- And in doing that, we are able to **enjoy all things more**, because:
 - We are not looking for ultimate joy and fulfillment in those things
 - = We can need them less, and so actually enjoy them more (Because we insist they point to the Source)

But also, so that anything that challenges our sense of well-being **is transcended by** the joy of knowing Jesus

- Cf. Suffering, sickness, death, hardship, betrayal, going without
- **“The joy of the Lord is your strength!”** (Nehemiah 8:10, NLT)
- ★ **This has been my endeavor as of late with Daisy... explain (Hard work! But it works!) ★**
- **THE HOPE OF RESURRECTION—HEAVEN—THE RENEWAL OF ALL THINGS**
- To EJ is to persevere under trial—because we have a greater, truer, more sure hope and joy
- Cf. **I Thessalonians 4** (**We do not grieve as the world does**—but we do grieve—just not the same way)

It does not mean that we are always happy, clappy and glad—life is not that way (Cf. Stories in Scripture)

- Cf. **Read the Psalms** (Great sorrow—and yet the refrain is “**I will rejoice in the Lord**”)
- We have One who **transcends all that is good and bad** and whose benefits give us a **joy inexpressible**

★★★ Here is what that doesn't mean: **That we have to go back to faking it** ★★★

- The Gospel saves us from having to fake it
- Life is not all easy street just because you are following Jesus—Life sucks sometimes
- But I have a **source, center** and **Savior** who transcends all that sucks and gives me hope that yields **joy inexpressible**

To EJ is to have **strength** to **stand firm** against the **temptations** of the **world, flesh** and **enemy**

- Because we have a **truer love** and **source of joy**
- **So we are not tempted to demand those things from other/lesser places**
- **So that we live differently in a world that competes for attention/love/affection**

So, whether we are **thriving or suffering**, we are able to look beyond those things to a **greater/truer joy**

- Colossians 1:1-3, NASB
 - 1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is**, seated at the right hand of God.
 - 2 Set your mind on the things above**, not on the things that are on earth.
 - 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

To EJ is to appropriate all the benefits of knowing Him into our daily living

- To think deeply on them (His person and benefits) and what they mean when:

When having fun
When in nature
When in need
When I suffer
When I lose

When I win
When I've been rejected
When I am praised
When I have lots of money
When I have little money

When my job is boring
When my marriage is hard
When my health is failing
When my heart is breaking
When my daughter is dying

To realize and that looking beyond circumstances to the unchanging King of glory that invites us to enjoy Him and His truth is how we lay hold of what Scripture says about **joy in the Lord**

- Philippians 4:4-8, NASB
 - 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!**
 - 5 Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.**
 - 6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**
 - 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**
 - 8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.**

So that we can say, together, along with the Apostle Paul:

- Philippians 4:12-13, NASB
 - 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.**
 - 13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.**

In other words—Jesus is enough! I am only truly satisfied **in Him!**

- To EJ Jesus is to have **intended, obedient, truth oriented joy** in life when everything material and temporal is lacking, missing, broken or insufficient

That is the kind of world that Jesus came to save! (lacking—broken—insufficient—wicked—painful)

What we want to do **(the mission)** is make that same announcement to the world that the Angel made:

“Joy! To the world, the Savior's come”

- It's 2,000 years later so they can't go see a child in a manger
- But that can see something of that **joyful coming—the in-breaking of the reign of God—IN US**

Saying “Enjoy Jesus” is an intense, radical, counter-cultural, other-worldly, hopeful, deeply theological proclamation that Christ is the truer joy