

Spiritual Practices during a Pandemic

A 5 week study offered for adults at Unity Presbyterian Church

Week 4: Joy

[Romans 15:13](#)

Joy is one of the Fruits of the Spirit listed in [Galatians 5:22-23](#). Throughout scripture, the words joy and rejoice are used to describe a whole host of human experiences. The Psalms are full of references to feeling joyful after personal encounters with God. In the New Testament, joy is expressed after an encounter with Jesus Christ, beginning at his birth, and is included in many of the parables. But Paul and several other epistle writers talk about finding joy in suffering and in the midst of affliction. In last week's podcast, Brother David said, "Joy is the happiness that doesn't depend on what happens...a deep inner peace and joy in the midst of sadness..." In comparing happiness and joy, he also said, "Happiness is not steady, but joy can be steady." Joy, therefore, just like lament, peace, and gratitude, must be sought out and practiced. We are able to practice joy in the midst of difficult times through the power, love, and grace of Jesus Christ. Seek joy with me this week.

Experience:

Listen to the first 37.10 minutes of this interview, about *Tending Joy and Practicing Delight*, with Ross Gay, a professor of English at Indiana University, and author of a poetry collection entitled, *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude*, and a book of essays, *The Book of Delights*:

<https://onbeing.org/programs/ross-gay-tending-joy-and-practicing-delight/>

Read this description of all the ways joy is found in the Bible:

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/joy/>

Watch this short video where Brene' Brown talks about the connection between the practice of gratitude and joy: <https://globalleadership.org/articles/leading-yourself/brene-brown-on-joy-and-gratitude/>

Reflect & Discuss:

1. In describing her interview with Ross Gay, Krista Tippett says, "To be with Gay is to train your gaze to see the wonderful alongside the terrible; to attend to and meditate on what you love, even in the midst of difficult realities and as part of working for justice." Can you think of people in your life who naturally train their gaze to see the wonderful even when things are difficult? If so, think about those people and how they do that.
2. In the "In Being" podcast, Ross Gay says his parents modeled delight and joy in their lives for his brother and for him. Is it natural for you to attune yourself to delights and unabashed gritudes? If so, where does it come from for you?

3. In the “On Being” podcast, Ross Gay says, “Joy has nothing to do with ease.” Do you agree or disagree? What is your definition of joy?
4. In response to the question, “How is it possible to be joyful in a time like this?”, Ross Gay says, “How can we not be joyful, especially in a moment like this?” Is joy possible for you in moments of difficulty? Why or why not?
5. Ross Gay spent a year writing an essay each day about something that delighted him, or brought him joy. He said it got easier as he practiced it. What would help you look for the little things that bring you joy each day?
6. Ross Gay talks in the “On Being” podcast about gardening and the public orchard he helped start and what parts of those experiences bring him joy. What do you love and how do those things bring you joy?
7. What brings you delight or joy today? How can you share that with others?
8. Brene’ Brown’s research showed that a daily practice of gratitude makes people more joyful. What connection do you see between gratitude and joy in your life?