

“Nearer to God”

(Phil 4:4-5)

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I. Introduction

A. Causes for Joy

1. The day the Tigers won the World Series
 - a. College freshman
 - b. After years of frustration
 - c. Scene in the T.V. room
2. The birth of your first baby
 - a. Carolyn and the anxiety in the labor room
 - b. Ecstasy in the delivery room
3. When did YOU experience a flood of joy?
 - a. Graduation?
 - b. Got your braces off?
4. Achieving a long sought after goal
 - a. The harder the struggle...the sweeter the joy

B. But what about when the joy dies...and anxiety builds

1. Your job is on the bubble
2. Sick for three months and fear the worst
3. Credit card maxed out and debts piling up

- a. Transmission making strange noises

C. Trent Santos' surgery on Monday

1. Their ministry in Brazil
2. Trent's impact
 - a. 18 year old freshman at Moody
 - b. Vibrant testimony in Brazil
 - c. Good looking
 - d. Tremendous athlete
3. And yet facing a 10 hour surgery last Monday to remove a brain tumor
 - a. Why Trent?
 - b. And how will he respond?

*later
4. How should we respond?
 - a. Two-part sermon based on Philippians 4:4-7

(4) Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (5) Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. (6) Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. (7) And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

II. Some Thoughts on Rejoicing

1. It shouldn't be dependent on your 401k

(4) Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (5) Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

a. Rejoicing is vastly superior to "happiness"

1. I'm not happy with what has happened to my 401k

- a. But I'm still rejoicing in the Lord
2. The definition of "rejoice"
 - a. From the Greek "chairo" (khah' ee ro)
 - b. A present imperative, calling believers to the continual, habitual practice of rejoicing. Neither Paul's imprisonment nor the Philippians' trials should eclipse their joy
 - c. Rejoicing is same as JOY
 1. One of the fruits of the Spirit
 2. A supernatural state
3. Happiness only happens when the stock market is going up
 1. Rejoicing happens in bear markets too
3. Happiness is a response to circumstances
 - a. Charlie Brown—"Happiness is a warm puppy"
4. Circumstances can cause not only happiness but also unhappiness
 - a. Losing as opposed to winning
 - b. Can be lost as rapidly as it is found
5. Rejoicing is different...it can be present in your darkest hours
 - a. ***"rejoice in the Lord always"***
- b. When God says "always"... He means "always"***
 1. What "always" *doesn't* mean—
 - a. Some of the time
 - b. Most of the time
 - c. Only when things are going well
 - d. Only when you get an "A"

2. *Always!*

3. Actually, the verse doesn't say "rejoice always"

a. It says "*rejoice in the Lord always*"

2. Be careful not to rejoice in the Detroit Lions

a. The sad state of affairs.....0 and 16?

1. Each summer hope springs eternal

2. Then they break our hearts

b. There's only one who will never let you down

1. The key—"In the Lord"

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c. Faith in who He is

d. Rejoice in the Lord's—

1. Power

2. Position

3. Control

4. Love

5. Security

6. Defeat of Satan

7. Victory over death

e. WOW!!

1. ...and He is YOUR Lord?

f. Even life's sorrows are used to benefit you

3. The more you know...the more you can rejoice

a. John MacArthur: “Knowledge of God is the key to rejoicing. Those who know the great truths about God find it easy to rejoice; those with little knowledge of Him find it difficult to rejoice. God gave the Psalms to Israel in poetic form so they could be easily memorized and set to music. The first three verses of the book of Psalms promise blessings to those who meditate on Scripture:”

“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.” (Psalm 1:1-3)

b. Things you need to know

1. That He chose you
2. That you have instant access to Him
3. That He works all things for your good (Ps. 139)
4. That He knows when you are hurting
5. That He has the power to change your circumstances

4. Rejoicing can produce a special gentleness

(4) Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (5) Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

1. Various definitions of the Greek word for “gentleness”
 - a. “epieikes” (ep-ee-i-kace’)
2. A graciousness and gentleness toward others—because of God’s grace toward you
3. How will you be remembered?
 - a. My dad’s “good name”
 - b. Ecclesiastes 7:1-2

*(1) A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth.
(2) It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.*

- c. Things that matter in life
- 4. What will people say about you at your funeral?
 - a. Never heard my dad complain
 - b. Firm yet gentle
 - c. Gracious and humble
- 5. Dr. Julius Franks
 - a. "Sitting at his table"

5. You never know who you might impact

"Let your gentleness be evident to all"

- 1. Meeting D's brother and nephew at the airport
 - a. How they've been praying for them
 - b. You never know
- 2. Let all people see your rejoicing and gentleness
 - a. Other Christians
 - b. And especially the unsaved
 - 1. You appreciate God's gift
 - 2. One they should have!
- 3. Engage people this Christmas
 - a. Ask them about their families
 - b. Scott B.
- 4. Notice the people at the cash register and in the store
 - a. Never know the impact
- 3. Hardness will damage your testimony

6. Don't let God get too far away from you

(4) Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (5) Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

1. *"The Lord is near"* (*engus*)
2. "Near" in two important ways
 - a. Time
 1. His soon return
 - b. Space
 1. How close?
 2. Will never leave nor forsake you
3. How near to God are you?
 - a. He doesn't drift away....but we do
 - b. When we ignore him
 - c. When we disobey him
4. Crisis can bring God very near
 - a. Back to Trent
 - b. How'd he do?

III. Summary

Email from Trent Santos (3 days before brain surgery)

Hello all. **This is Trent.** I'm so excited to be writing you from home! I'm finally getting to spend time with the fam and what's even cooler is that I'm done with my semester already! (besides the couple finals and few papers I have yet to finish...minor details) Well...surgery is three days away...wow...three days...it feels weird to say that...what does that even mean? Three days 'til what? Honestly I don't know...I can't know. But there is one thing that I do know and it has been the thing that people have reminded me of countless times. **GOD IS IN CONTROL!** This is an absolute and I believe that with all my heart. Is it always easy to live like I believe that? Definitely not, but I try my best.

About a week and a half ago, I had a major emotional breakdown. I had been fine all day; but when I got to my ministry thing and all kinds of people were asking me about it, I couldn't handle it. I wanted to stay so I could see my boys that I minister to, but when Don Stubbs saw me and asked me if I was ok, I said "Yes" as I began to weep. He prayed with me and sent me home. When I got up to my room I was broken. I think that I felt like Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane - obviously on a very minor scale. I was just weeping before God wondering a three letter question that we all ask everyday: "Why?" I knew that this was gonna be a pivotal point in this whole situation. That night I would either choose to fully trust God and allow Him to do His will in my life, or I would turn away completely and begin to try and solve things in my own power. Honestly, I wasn't quite sure what the outcome of that night would be, but I ended choosing God. I was in my room, on my knees, on my face, before the throne of God, weeping asking Him to forgive my naiveté; and since then, it has all been God. Have there been tears since then? Yes. Am I scared, worried, fearful? Of course. But am I confident in the God that created the world, knew all of my days before I was born, and loved me so much that he sent His Son to die for me? Yes, more than I ever thought possible. It hasn't been easy, but I have grown so much.

I once watched a sermon by Dr. Rudd that God allows His loved ones to suffer for two reasons. First, so that we can know God better, and second, so that we can help others. This has been so true in my life lately. I am going to have a relationship with God that no one else in the world can have because of the certain experiences I have been through whether good or bad. Also, I have been thinking about this so much...think about the people I'm going to be able to reach when this is all over. I will be able to look in the eyes of someone going through a similar experience and say "I know what you're going through." And to me, that's exciting. I love to encourage others, and I know this will be another way to do just that.

With all that said, I would like to thank you all. The way you all have surrounded me with love and prayer has affected me in ways unexplainable. Besides the fact that God has heard and answered your prayers, so many of you have contacted me simply to let me know that you are praying, and that means more to me than you know. I have seen the body of Christ actually functioning like the body of Christ described in the Bible, and that has been amazing. I seriously cannot begin to express my gratitude to all of you. You are all such a blessing to me and it is because of your prayers that I am feeling the way I am; feeling the peace that I feel. Please continue to pray, and in about a week from now I will write again letting you know that I am fine and I will thank you once again.

Trent
Proverb 3:5-6

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.