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JOY ROBBER NUMBER 1: **EXPECTING A PROBLEM-FREE LIFE**

“I have accepted Jesus as my Savior, I attend church regularly, I serve, I tithe, I work hard, I try to help people that I meet...Therefore, I should have a problem-free life.

This is a common misconception, perhaps based on TV ads.

The ads are built on a simple idea: If you buy “X” product, you get “Y” result.

For example:

If you buy State Farm insurance you get treated like a good neighbor.

If you buy Allstate insurance you’re in good hands.

If you buy a BMW you get sheer driving pleasure.

So, it stands to reason - if you become a Christian, you get a problem-free life. Right?

Wrong. A problem-free life is not biblically accurate and expecting one can rob you of joy.

HOW TO OVERCOME THIS JOY ROBBER

Expect problems.

Shortly before His death, Jesus spoke to His disciples about what would happen after His ascension: *I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.* (John 16:33)

Notice that Jesus did not say “Could” or “Might”- He said you “Will” have problems.

To illustrate the point, Christians have many of the same problems that Biblical people had.

For example, if you have:

- Problems with kids - Adam and Eve only had two kids. One killed the other. (Genesis 4:8)
- Money problems - Paul said I know what it is to have need. (Philippians 4:12)
- Family problems - Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery. (Genesis 37:18-36)
- Work problems - Nehemiah faced threats, intimidation, discouragement, exhaustion, and negative attitudes as he led efforts to rebuild Jerusalem’s wall. (Nehemiah 6:15)
- Health problems - Job was afflicted with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. (Job 2:7)
- Death of a loved one - David’s son died. (2 Samuel 12:15-18)

Since God tells you that you will have problems, don’t be surprised when they come. If you expect a problem-free life, you are setting yourself up for joylessness.

So, in order to overcome this joy robber - expect problems.

JOY ROBBER NUMBER 2: FAILING TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND JOY

The terms “joy” and “happiness” are often used interchangeably. Many believe they are the same. However, there is a difference in the Bible between happiness and joy. Happiness depends on your outward circumstances; if everything is going well, then you are probably happy. However, if things are not going well, then you are probably unhappy. But even when things are not going well, you can still be joyful.

HOW TO OVERCOME THIS JOY ROBBER

Distinguish between happiness and joy.

Always be joyful. (1 Thessalonians 5:16)

Notice that Paul did not say “Always be happy”.

Here are nine ways to distinguish between happiness and joy:

Happiness	Joy
Is “because” of life’s circumstances (My team won, my political candidate won, I got a promotion at work, I got a clean bill of health).	Is “in spite of” life’s circumstances (My team lost, my political candidate lost, I lost my job, I have been diagnosed with a serious health issue).
Comes from worldly sources (achieving a goal, receiving praise, enjoying pleasurable experiences).	Comes from God (exists despite failing to achieve a goal, there is no praise or pleasurable experiences).

Happiness	Joy
Is a reaction to life.	Is an approach to life.
The world can rob you of happiness.	The world cannot rob you of joy. (No one can rob you of joy. (John 16:22))
Is a state of mind.	Is a state of the soul.
Cannot exist with sorrow.	Can exist with sorrow. Paul says he is sorrowful, but always rejoicing. (2 Corinthians 6:10)
Is based on my ability to control the details of my life.	Is based on God's assurance that he is in control of all the details of my life and that He is working every detail for my good.
Is temporary, fleeting.	Everlasting, permanent.
Comes and goes with the ebb and flow of life's circumstances.	Remains the same because it flows from my unshake connection with God.

So, in order to overcome this joy robber - Distinguish between happiness and joy.

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I was inspired by the practical, Bible-based tips for being joyful despite difficult times. I wholeheartedly recommend this e-book. -Carolyn W.

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