

Happiness and Joy—April 2014

UUFVB Covenant Groups

Chalice Lighting

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings,
but connected, in mystery and miracle,
to the universe, to this community and to each other.

Check-in: How is your spirit right now?

Opening Reading

Joy and happiness are often intermixed in English but, in fact, they're quite different. Happiness is what comes from the things that life brings, the emotion that is aroused within us when we buy a new outfit or are lauded for a job well done. It's dependent on our circumstances. It's outward and momentary, like rising bubbles—delightful but temporary. Other cultures may come closer to understanding the difference between the words. The French word for happiness is *bonheur*, or a happy moment, and the French phrase for joy is *joie de vivre*, or joy of life.

Joy comes from within. It's always there—the very fiber of our soul, the very essence of ourselves—something we choose to have and bring into our lives, how we choose to feel. Joy is counting one's blessings, looking at what we can be grateful for this day.

Topic Exploration

What is your response to the following comparisons of happiness and joy? Which speaks to you on a personal level?

- Happiness is a wish; joy is a practice.
- Happiness can be surface. Joy runs deep.
- Happiness is winning an award or getting a raise. Joy is waking up every morning and doing what you love.
- Happiness is a cupcake for one. Joy is a feast for an entire dinner party.
- Happiness is temporary and fades. Joy remains; it's an attitude of the heart which brings us peace in the middle of a storm.
- Happiness is pleasantness—nice to have around, and we're always sad to see it go; Joy is powerful, mountain-like in its permanence.
- Happiness—love it when it sits on your doorstep. Joy—love that lasts no matter what.
- Happiness is a gift from a friend or a kiss from a child. Joy is feeling love for someone and noticing when someone loves us.

Questions / Sharing

1. What do you have in your life that brings you joy?
2. Describe any rituals or celebrations that bring joy to you.
3. How does our culture of consumerism affect our happiness or joy?
4. In what ways can we affect the happiness or joy of another person?
5. Can we intentionally seek happiness or joy?
6. There are people who struggle with intermittent depression, yet value Joy. How might joy accommodate periods of depression, the sorrow of bereavement, or the sadness of disappointment? How are joy and suffering two sides of one coin?

7. How does your spirituality affect you happiness or joy?

Check-out and reflection on today's session

Closing Reading

Happiness is elusive; it comes and goes because it's pursued outwardly. Joy remains, however, because it comes from within and doesn't need anything external to exist. However, to achieve a joyous life we must choose it each and every day. We need to connect with what is truly important to us and to have an acceptance of life. This joy will carry us through the good times and really touch ones that we all face at one time or another. It grows out of a faith in what's good, gratitude for what we have in our lives, hope, and of course love. It is the pure and simple delight of being alive. Joy is our reaction to feelings of happiness, pleasure and awareness of abundance (Dr. Don Huntington, author and motivational speaker)

Extinguish the Chalice

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,
the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.
These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

Housekeeping