

The Secret to a Joyful Life Part 2

“She may have been blind, but once she was saved, she became one of the greatest hymn writers of all time. And it all started as a child when at the age of six weeks, she came down with a cold, which caused her eyes to become inflamed.

But her family’s regular doctor was not available so another was called in who decided to treat her eyes with a hot poultice. But it was this procedure that totally destroyed her vision. In fact, that doctor, immediately and hurriedly left town.

But as she grew into girlhood, she harbored no trace of resentment against him. She accepted her lot cheerfully, as a part of the will of God. In fact, she’d been a “religious person” from childhood on, but it wasn’t until she was thirty-one years old that she trusted in God’s pardon for her sins through Jesus Christ.

It began one night with a dream. A friend of hers, who seemed to be dying, asked her, ‘Will you meet me in heaven?’ And it was this question in that dream that got her to start thinking about life. And so she took God up on His offer of salvation and instantly she was filled completely a flood of light and total joy.

And it wasn’t long before hymns of praise began to flow from her grateful heart. Such hymns as “Blessed Assurance” “Draw Me Nearer” “Praise Him Praise Him” “To God Be the Glory” and “Tell Me the Story of Jesus” just to name a few. In fact, when all was said and done, this one Christian woman wrote over 8,000 hymns and over 50 million copies have been shared across the world.

In fact one biographer wrote of her, ‘In her day, she was considered by most people to be the greatest in America. As Johann Strauss reigned in Vienna as the ‘Waltz King’, and John Phillip Sousa in Washington as the ‘March King’, so this woman reigned in New York as the ‘Hymn Queen’.’

And to show you where her true joy lied, one time a preacher said to her, ‘I think it is a great pity that the Master did not give you sight when He showered so many other gifts upon you.’

Whereupon this woman replied, ‘Do you know that if at birth I had been able to make one petition, it would have been that I should be born blind? Why? Because when I get to heaven, the first face that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Savior.’”

And so at the ripe old age of 95, she got to do just that. She got to see Jesus, face to face. Her name of course was, Fanny Crosby.”

Now folks, I don’t know about you, but I’d say ol’ **Fanny Crosby** had a pretty cool life as a Christian, you know what I’m saying? In fact, so much so that I’d say **now that** is A Life Worth Living For, amen? But that’s right folks, as we’ve been seeing, **we’ve got a problem**. You see, even though God’s the same God and we’re just as much His children as Fanny Crosby is, most Christians read the Bible in one hand and take a look at their life in the other and say, “Man, something’s missing here. Something doesn’t match, something’s not right. What’s going on? Why do these people like Fanny Crosby get to have an amazing walk with Jesus Christ and here I am keep fumbling around in the dark? I don’t have a life worth living for. I’ve got a life worth giving up!”

Oh, but people, once again, I’m here to tell you this is the great news. It doesn’t have to be that way! That kind of life, a life worth living for, like Fanny Crosby had, **is available to every to every single Christian!** And

that's exactly why we're going to continue in our series entitled, "**A Life Worth Living For.**" And what we're doing is taking a look at **4 different keys** that I believe are absolutely pivotal if we're ever going to have that amazing walk with Christ like Fanny Crosby had.

And we've already seen that **first key** to having **A Life Worth Living For** is when you and I finally learn **The Secret to a Worshipful Life** not a cry baby whiny complaining life. And then last time we saw the **second key** was when you and I finally learn **The Secret to a Joyful Life** not a some sour ungrateful grumpy life. And so far we've seen the **first way** we get tricked and seduced into missing out on **A Joyful Life** is by **Seeking Happiness in Things Instead of Joy from the King**. And there we saw instead of receiving a permanent joy in Christ, this world tempts us to find happiness in **Perfect Comforts, Perfect Futures, Perfect Trips**, and even **Perfect Bank Accounts**. And what we saw was that not only can those things **not provide you with joy** but hello, they will actually make things worse! Next thing you know, you're not just bankrupt materially, you're bankrupt spiritually!

But that's still not all. The **second way** we get tricked into missing out on **A Joyful Life in Christ** is by **Seeking Happiness in Behavior instead of Joy from the Savior**. And the **first behavior** we're tempted to find

happiness in is a **Perfect Body**. Oh people, tell me that's not the mantra of society today! If only I had a "perfect body" that's when I'll be happy! And I'm not talking just about people in the world, **but even in the Church!** Correct me if I'm wrong, but it's gotten so bad that people, yes even in the Church, will buy any book and pop any vitamin just to have that perfect body. But people, hello, I don't care how many pills you pop and how many vitamins you ingest, you're not going to stop the inevitable! Sooner or later, you're going to start apart.

For instance, one morning you'll wake up and go to the breakfast table where you'll hear snap, crackle, pop and you're not eating cereal. And then one night you go to bed only to realize that you and your teeth don't sleep together anymore. Or you wake up on morning and you actually look like your driver's license picture. Or you sit in a rocking chair and you can't get it going. Or you look for your glasses for half an hour before you realize they were on your head the whole time. Or at the next potluck you sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there. Or the ultimate sign is when you bend over to straighten out the wrinkles in your socks and discover you aren't wearing any. Face it folks, one day that's going to be you! But here's my point. Deep down inside, we all know, hello even as Christians, that we

aren't guaranteed a perfect body, right? Time is going to catch up with us, right? But here's the point. That doesn't keep us from trying does it? No!

And so here's what we do! Instead of receiving a permanent joy in Christ, this world tempts you and I to look for a temporary happiness in a **fabulous physique**. For instance, we often say, "I'll be happy **when** I go on that **perfect diet**." But pretty soon that perfect diet gives way to the next perfect diet, and the next one, and the next one. It never ends, does it? And so guess what? Your search for happiness never ends too.

So then we say, "I'll be happy **when** I get that **perfect health**." But folks, in case you haven't noticed, once you finally get rid of one health problem, sooner or later you come down with another one, right? Why? Because our bodies are not destined to last forever and neither is our health. And unless we realize this, our lives are going to be filled with a lot of unnecessary pain, like it was with this lady.

"There was a lady who was having some health problems and she was hurting all over so she went to the doctor.

And when she got there the doctor asked, 'Well, what seems to be the problem. Where are you hurting?'

And the lady said, 'I'm hurting everywhere doctor. See?'

So she proceeded to touch her arm and cried, 'OUCH!'

Then she touched her leg and said, 'OUCH!'

Then she touched her nose and screamed, ‘OUCH!’

‘See doctor?’ she cried, ‘I’m hurting all over!’

And the doctor shook his head and replied, ‘Lady, you’ve got a broken finger!’”

Now that lady caused a lot of unnecessary pain didn’t she? That’s right. All her poking around was creating a whole bunch of problems, wasn’t it? And folks it’s the same thing when you and I poke around here and there looking for some sort of fountain of youth only to discover **it’s really a waterfall of wrinkles**. And so guess what? Your happiness wrinkles up too.

People of God, wake up! There’s nothing wrong with being happy about eating right or having good health. Go ahead and enjoy them while you can. But just don’t make the mistake of placing your joy **in them**. Why? Because **Perfect Body’s** don’t last forever.

1 Peter 1:24 “As the prophet says, People are like grass that dies away; their beauty fades as quickly as the beauty of wildflowers.”

You see folks, in case you haven’t noticed, flabbiness comes and muscle tone goes, and so does trying to find happiness in them. But if you **seek joy in God**, you’ll be able to rejoice, even if all our youthfulness has faded away? And so I ask you, “Which would you rather have?”

Oh, but that’s not all. The **second behavior** we’re tempted to find happiness in is in a **Perfect Performance**. You see, instead of receiving a

permanent joy in Christ, this world tempts you and I to look for a temporary happiness in a **favorable history**. For instance, we often say, “I’ll be happy **when** I get that **perfect reputation**.” But folks, all it takes is one mistake to destroy your reputation. And so guess what? Your happiness gets destroyed too.

So then we say, “I’ll be happy **when** I get that **perfect reconciliation**.” But folks, try as we might, have you noticed that with some people, we may never ever be able to arrive at reconciliation this side of heaven. And guess what? Your happiness never arrives either.

People of God, wake up! There’s nothing wrong with being happy about a good reputation or even a good reconciliation. Go ahead and enjoy them while they last. But just don’t make the mistake of placing your joy **in them**. Why? Because **Perfect Performances** don’t last forever.

Philippians 3:13-14 “No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us up to heaven.”

You see folks, don’t misunderstand me, I would hope that each one of us is striving for a good reputation and good reconciliation with others. But we’ve got to understand that as long as we have a sin nature, even as Christians, that sometimes we’re going to **blow it and blow it big time**,

leaving behind a destructive past. Therefore if we keep **projecting** our happiness in a perfect performance, we'll never be happy. Why? Because **nobody** has one!

Besides, you and I need to be **more concerned** about a **good reputation with Jesus Christ** and an **eternal reconciliation with God**. Why? Because He's the Only One Who can forgive us of our past and He's the Only One Who has the authority to remember our sins no more. Therefore by His grace, we can truly **forget the past**, and keep moving on. That's why bad days come and bad days go, and so does trying to find happiness in them. But if you **seek joy in God**, you'll be able to rejoice, even if your history never changes. And so I ask you, "Which would you rather have?"

But that's still not all! The **third Behavior** we're tempted to find happiness in is a **Perfect Relationship**. You see, instead of receiving a permanent joy in Christ, this world tempts you and I to look for a temporary happiness in a **fantastic companion**. For instance, we often say, "I'll be happy **when** I get that **perfect friend**." But folks, in case you haven't noticed, there is no perfect friendship. Why? Because have you noticed how every friendship we have happens to involve you and I? And so we have a

tendency to mess them up, don't we? And so guess what? Your happiness gets messed up too.

So then we say, "I'll be happy **when** I get that **perfect marriage**." But folks, I really hope that none of us here are kidding ourselves thinking that there's such a thing as a perfect marriage. In fact, Brandie and I learned this the hard way in our first year of marriage. You see, we had these **great expectations** of being two people in a romantic carriage riding off into the sunset, only to discover we were actually **two bulls in a china shop riding around in an 80 El Camino**. And people, it didn't take me long to find out that the reason why I was having so much trouble was because I married a sinner. And Brandie figured out even faster than I did that the reason why she was having so much trouble was because she married an even bigger sinner than herself. And folks, just because you have expectations, doesn't mean they're going to last forever, like this guy learned.

"One day a man was sharing with his buddy at work how when he got married, the first thing he did was to let it be known that he expected his wife to cook him a full breakfast each and every morning.

Well, the co-worker couldn't believe it. His wife never cooked him a breakfast in all the years they'd been married.

Then the first man continued, "In fact, over the years I started feeling sorry for her as she slaved over that hot stove, so I decided to help her out."

"Well, what did you do?" asked the co-worker.

And the first man replied, ‘Well, I began to watch my wife’s routine at breakfast over the next few years.

And one day, while I was sipping my coffee, I noticed she was wasting a lot of time by making a lot of unnecessary trips between the refrigerator, stove, table and cabinets, by carrying one item at a time.

So one day I told her, ‘Honey, why don’t you try carrying several things at once?’

And the co-worker asked, ‘Well, did it save her time?’

And the man replied, ‘Actually, yes. It used to take her 20 minutes to make breakfast. Now I do it in seven.’”

Now that guy should’ve kept his mouth shut and appreciated the way things were, right? And because of this his expectation came to an end didn’t it? And folks as long as we place **unrealistic expectations** on our spouses and **refuse to appreciate them** for who they are, then our happiness will also come to an end.

People of God, wake up! There’s nothing wrong with being happy about a friendship or even a marriage. Go ahead and enjoy them while you got them. But just don’t make the mistake of placing your ultimate joy **in them**. Why? Because **Perfect Relationships** are don’t last forever.

2 Corinthians 6:8,10 “We serve God whether people honor us or despise us, whether they slander us or praise us. Our hearts ache, but we always have joy.”

You see folks, if you think that people will ever live up to your expectations or ever treat you the way you’d like to be treated, then you

might very well end up with a heartache. That's why people come and people go, and so does trying to find happiness in them. But if you **seek joy in God**, you'll be able to rejoice, even if your relationships never changes. And so I ask you, "Which would you rather have?"

The **fourth behavior** we're tempted to find happiness in is in a **Perfect Life**. You see, instead of receiving a permanent joy in Christ, this world tempts you and I to seek temporary happiness in a **pain-free existence**. For instance, we often say, "I'll be happy **when** I get rid of all my **problems**." But folks, as long as we live in a sinful world, sooner or later, problems are going to leak into your life. And so guess what? Your happiness begins to leak too.

So then we say, "I'll be happy **when** I get rid of all my **pain**." But folks, if there's one thing the Bible **never promises**, it's a pain-free life. And as long as we live under this illusion, our happiness will also be an illusion.

People of God, wake up! There's nothing wrong with being happy about being able to solve some problems. There's nothing wrong with being happy about being able to soothe some pain. Go ahead and enjoy it while it lasts. But just don't make the mistake of placing your joy **in them**. Why? Because **Perfect Lives** are never guaranteed.

And the point isn't in trying to create some sort of pain-free life. That's impossible. The point is **to know what to do** when they do come. And what we need to do is ask ourselves a few questions in the midst of the pain. The **first question** we need to ask is "**Lord, what are You trying to teach me?**" And it's this question that reminds you and I of God's sovereignty and that He is in full control of everything, even of our problems.

Romans 8:28 "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose."

People of God, the Bible is clear. Even though I may not see it or understand it at that time, our problems **must** serve a good and loving purpose. Why? Because a good and loving God is in full control.

The **second question** we need to ask is, "**Lord, how can I please You in this?**" This is a question reminds you and I of our personal responsibility that we have towards God in any situation. I'm not responsible for other people's behavior, but I am accountable to God for my reactions to their behavior. And I can remind myself all day long that God is good and loving and sovereign **but** if I don't acknowledge my personal responsibility, I can still miss the lesson and end up taking another lap. And I don't know about you, but I hate taking laps! So get it right the first time!

The **third question** we need to ask is, “**How would my attitude change if I knew I was going to meet the Lord five minutes?**” This question has a way of putting our problems into the proper perspective. You see, many times when we encounter difficulties we get tunnel vision and allow our problems to become all that we can see. And once this happens, we lose a proper perspective and they seem bigger than life. But if we would only realize that we really could be meeting Jesus in five minutes, because nobody knows except God when our time is up, then we instantly realize, “Hey, it’s really not that big of a deal, is it? I mean, in the grand scheme of things, it’s not really worth getting worked up over. And it’s something as simple as this, putting your problem into an eternal perspective is what instantly releases the pressure.

But that’s not all. The final and **most important** response is this, “**Lord, choose to embrace this.**” And people, I’m telling you, it’s this final statement of embracing our problems, not denying them, not trying to avoid them, that enables you and I to discover **a joy** in the midst of them. And this is exactly what James was trying to tell us.

James 1:2-4 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”

People of God, when we can finally see that **all of our problems** exist to make us stronger not weaker, then we really can consider them pure joy. Why? Because we can finally see there's a higher purpose involved in them. And it's only when we choose to embrace all of our pain that we are finally in a position **to transcend our pain**, like this man did.

“Dr. Victor Frankl was imprisoned by the Nazis in World War II because he was a Jew. His wife, children, and his parents were all killed in the holocaust.

The Gestapo made him strip. He stood there totally naked. As they cut away his wedding band, Victor said to himself,

‘You can take away my wife, you can take away my children, you can strip me of my clothes and my freedom, but there is one thing no person can ever take away from me – and that is my freedom to choose how I will react to what happens to me!’”

You see, even under the worst circumstances, **joy is still a choice that will transform our tragedies into triumphs**. That's why bad times come and bad times go. And so will your happiness if you try to avoid them. But the Bible declares to you and I that even if we find ourselves in extreme pain, **it can still be an opportunity for joy**. How? If you **seek it in God**. And so I ask you, “Which would you rather have?”

You see, it's only by seeking joy in a **Perfect God**, not our bodies, not our performance, not our relationships, and not even our lives, that enables us to experience **A Joyful Life in Christ**. It's really our choice. You see,

“The secret of joy is not to wait until you feel happy, but to rise by an act of faith, out of depression which is dragging you down, and begin to praise God as an act of choice.” And folks, if we find this impossible to do, then could it be that we’re looking for a temporary happiness from behavior instead of a **permanent joy from the Almighty Savior?**

Phillips Brooks, “The religion that makes a man look sick certainly won’t cure the world.” How about us? Does our countenance reflect a healthy relationship with Jesus, or does it reflect a depressing religion that leaves one sick? Remember Jesus said, if we abide in His love, our joy **will be made full**. But as long as we keep looking for a temporary happiness from certain behavior, we’ll never experience **A Joyful Life in Christ**. Why? Because it can only be found in God!

Psalm 40:16 “But may all who search for you be filled with joy and gladness.”

People, the Bible is clear. You can **call off the search party**. True joy can only be found in God! That’s the secret! **The Secret to a Joyful Life!**

Oh people, don’t you see what’s going on here? Not all of our battles are against flesh and blood. This isn’t just about joy. It’s about being a witness! You see, the devil does not want you to be joyful in God. Are you kidding me? He wants you to be mad at God! He wants you to join him by shaking a fist at God by accusing Him saying, “God You’re no good. You

don't know what You're doing. And I'm going to scream and shout until I get it my way and the things that make me happy!"

And folks, lest you think there's no way to go through life with a constant joy from the Lord, let's look at the life of a Christian man named **Nick Vujicic** who absolutely radiates the joy of the Lord. Did he have a perfect life? Did things always go his way? Are you kidding me? Take a look for yourself!

"You may have thank God for your many blessings, but what if God seems to be unfair to you in some ways? What if He dealt you an overwhelming impediment for life? It wasn't until I saw Nick Vujicic's story that such thoughts ever entered my mind. He is an amazing inspiration.

Nick is a young man of 22 years of age. He is a resident of suburban Brisbane, Queensland. He has a positive approach to life and is outgoing and friendly, with a happy and cheerful personality. He has a smile that makes anyone feel comforted and at ease. But life hasn't been easy for him.

His parents, both lifelong Christians, had eagerly anticipated the birth of Nick Vujicic, their first child. Nick Vujicic was on the morning of the 4th of December 1982 in Melbourne, Australia. However, the last two words on the minds of his parents was 'Praise God!' That is because their firstborn son had been born without limbs! All his mother could say was, 'Please, take him away!'

The whole church mourned over his birth and Nick Vujicic parents were absolutely devastated. Everyone asked, 'If God is a God of Love, then why would God let something this bad happen to not just anyone, but dedicated Christians?' Nick's father thought the baby wouldn't survive for very long, but tests proved that Nick Vujicic was a healthy baby boy just with a few limbs missing i.e. no legs, no arms.

Understandably, Nick's parents had strong concern and evident fears of what kind of life he would be able to lead. The first biggest hurdle was for his

parents to be at peace and trusting that God was in control. It took them a number of months of tears, questions and grief before that complete trust overtook their hearts. God provided them strength, wisdom and courage through those early years and soon after that Nick was old enough to go to school.

Nick Vujicic was one of the first disabled students to be integrated into a main-stream school. Nick liked going to school, and just try to live life like everyone else. But it was in his early years of school where he encountered uncomfortable times of feeling rejected, weird and bullied because of his physical difference. It was very hard for him to get used to, but with the support of his parents, he started to develop attitudes and values, which helped him overcome these challenging times.

He knew that he was different but on the inside he was just like everyone else. There were many times when Nick felt so low that he wouldn't go to school just so he didn't have to face all the negative attention. Nick was encouraged by his parents to ignore them and to try start making friends by just talking with some kids. Soon the students realized that Nick Vujicic was just like them, and starting there God kept on blessing him with new friends.

There were times when Nick felt depressed and angry because he couldn't change the way he was, or blame anyone for that matter. Nick went to Sunday School and learned that God loves us all and that He cares for you. Due to his emotional struggles, he had experienced bullying, self esteem problems and loneliness, God has implanted a passion of sharing his story and experiences to help others cope with whatever challenge they have in their life and let God turn it into a blessing.

One of the first lessons that he learnt was not to take things for granted. Nick Vujicic had that wake up call around the age of twelve and realized just how much he was blessed with. He took his foot for granted, his family, and the fact that he wasn't born in a third world country, with all the blessings that God had freely given. Nick had complete peace knowing that God won't let anything happen to us in our life unless He has a good purpose for it all.

Nick Vujicic completely gave my life to Christ at the age of fifteen after reading John 9. Jesus said that the reason the man was born blind was 'so that the works of God may be revealed through Him.' Nick truly believed that God would heal him so that Nick could be a great testimony of His

Awesome Power. Later on Nick was given the wisdom to understand that if we pray for something, if it's God's will, it'll happen in His time. If it's not God's will for it to happen, then He has something better.

Nick Vujicic has many dreams and goals that he has set to achieve in his life. He wants to be a witness for God and be used as a vessel in both Christian and non-Christian venues. Writing several best-selling books has been one of his dreams and he hopes to finish writing his first by the end of the year. It will be called 'No Arms, No Legs, No Worries!'"

Oh people of God, here's the point. If anyone had a "right" to be sour and mad towards God it was Nick Vujicic, right? But people, what did he do? Somewhere along the line **he had a choice to make**. And apparently he chose right! He chose once and for all not to scream and shout against God but to rejoice in God! **People, that's the secret! The Secret to a Joyful Life** and the key to unlocking **A Life Worth Living For**.

Therefore, if you're here today and you're sick and tired of reading the Bible in one hand and looking at your life and saying, "Man, something's missing here. Something does not compute. What is going on? Then maybe you too need to discover **The Secret to a Joyful Life**. Maybe you too need to stop living life as some ungrateful sad excuse for a Christian life and start living a life that rejoices in God **with your face!** And people, I'm here to tell you, once you do, you're going to discover just like that, that you just got empowered to finally have that **Life Worth Living For!**

To find the way to God, to understand the *truth* of God's Word, and to received the gift of eternal *life*, begin by repentance and faith through a prayer like this:

“Dear God, I understand that I have broken Your Law and sinned against You. Please forgive my sins. Thank You that Jesus suffered on the cross in my place. I now place my trust in Him as My Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”
