

Testimonies from Montreat

Camp Attendees

July 9, 2023

IN JOY

This was the theme of the 2023 Montreat Youth Conference attended by Maggie and Nick DeWitt, Ella Blair and Owen Stanley along with 900+ other high school age believers. Judy and I participated in connecting groups, small groups and all key note and worship activities with the other attendees. Having been planned a year in advance the theme "IN JOY" was right on target! High school age kids are concerned about gun violence, melting ice caps, social media, loneliness and the broken world in general.

Monday's theme was claiming JOY. The theological concept was that God is the source of our JOY as we are the source of His Joy. Luke 15:3-10 and Exodus 15:20-27, were the scriptures referenced. Joy is from GOD and not to be mistaken for happiness which is determined by our circumstances.

Tuesday's theme was how can JOY survive. The theological concept was that Joy is not in denial of the brokenness of the world, but in defiance of it. How then can JOY survive? It is a conscious decision and we must choose to live in joy! The scripture's referenced were Philippians 4:4-20, rejoice in the Lord alwaysand Luke 1:46-55, Magnificat, Mary's song.

Wednesday's theme was, how do I find JOY? The theological concept was that JOY is not a destination. It is a practice! The scriptures referenced were Luke 17:11-19, the leper who says thank you and Exodus 20:1-17 the Ten Commandments and the fifth commandment in particular to observe the Sabbath. Joy can be found through worship, bible study, prayer, making a gratitude list and sharing your faith with others. Developing regular times each day to stop and give thanks for the blessings God has given us. Joy is a gift from God

Thursday's theme was where do we find communal JOY? The theological concept is that JOY is not a solo act. The scriptures referenced were 2 Tim 4:9-18, come before winter; carefully choosing community. Genesis 33:1-20, Jacob and Esau's reunion and Psalm 133. We are not human or Christian by oneself. We need community and community needs us. Fellowship and worship together strengthen our collective relationships as well as our Godly faith relationship. Focus on good every day! Remember JOY is a gift and thank God constantly for it. The Lord is our strength. Think of JOY as a fruit of the spirit. JOY isn't static. It transforms and regenerates! Remember that JOY multiplies! Look for God in ordinary and simple things. One key to finding JOY is recognizing GOD'S hand in your life even during challenging times.

Friday's theme was why does my/our JOY matter? The concept is JOY is an act of defiance and the world needs your JOY! The scripture referenced was John 20:19-29, the locked room and Acts 8:26-40, the Ethiopian Eunuch. Our Joy matters because it is the difference between fear and brokenness. When troubles of any kind come your way, count it all, consider it all an opportunity for great joy. Gal 5:22, But the fruit of the spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness. Against such things there is no law. 1 John 4:12, No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another God lives in us and is made complete! John 20:21, Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me. I am sending you!

Judy and I thank you all for the support you have shown to enable these young people to experience Montreat and to grow in our faith and understanding of the HOLY ONE.