**More – Week 2 – More Joy (Celebrate)**

Be careful of how you are using the word “more” – keep it related to the title (not just normal usage)

**Introduction: Counterfeit**

Have you ever had that experience where you’re shopping for something online and then all of the sudden you run across the deal of a lifetime? You know what I mean, right? You’re looking for that one item you just have to have and then suddenly you find it for half the price you were expecting to pay?

I had this experience recently with a pair of shoes. I was looking for a pair of comfortable dress shoes because my old shoes were killing my feet. After I did a ridiculous amount of research, I finally landed on the one particular pair of shoes I wanted to purchase. So I did what any reasonable person would do, I Googled the shoes to see how much they cost… and I almost passed out. They were SOOOO expensive.

Well I decided I wasn’t going to be dissuaded by this crazy price tag, so I went on an online treasure hunt to find the shoes I wanted at a price I could afford. Finally after a few hours, I ran across the shoes on Amazon for 55% less than they were asking at every other online store. So I immediately bought them.

It wasn’t until they showed up that I began to worry that maybe they were fake. I don’t know why, but somehow the idea that this deal was too good to be true began to take root in my mind. I became obsessed with the idea that they were knockoffs. So much so, that it took another 2 hours of research to prove to myself that they were, indeed, the real deal.

Has that ever happened to you? You worried that maybe you’d gotten a counterfeit item online and had to dig through mountains of research to find out the truth?

Has anyone ever actually gotten a counterfeit item in the mail? *(Show of hands)*

Well according to USA Toady, the global economy takes a $250 billion dollar hit, every year, because of counterfeit products. To make matters worse, the value and availability of these products is continually increasing at a staggering rate. So there’s a good chance that each and every one of us has been the not-so-proud owner of a counterfeit product at least once in our lifetimes.

**Series Recap**

Well today we’re continuing our series called **“More.”** Throughout this series we’ve been discovering that most of us have experienced a nagging feeling that, *“There’s got to be more.”* Last week we talked about the ongoing human pursuit of more life. And today we’re going to focus in on another thing we all desperately want more of… joy. We long for joy... true joy.

Yet far too often we choose to settle for counterfeit joy… counterfeit happiness in our lives. You see we want real joy, but at the end of the day we find ourselves chasing after ~~relationships~~, sex, possessions, and experiences that will only bring us the temporary feeling of pleasure, and not true… lasting joy.

What we’ve been chasing after isn’t working… because clearly what we’re chasing is killing us.

But have you ever stopped long enough to consider where that pursuit has left us? Think about it… we’re a society where depression, dissatisfaction, and anxiety are at epidemic levels.

In fact, according to the World Health Organization, depression is now the most common serious medical or mental health disorder in the United States. Anxiety and depression affects over 40 million American adults every year… leave this out, 40 million sounds bigger ~~nearly 20% of us.~~

Listen, I’m telling you this… not to shame anyone who may be suffering with these conditions… but instead to point out the fact that all the things we’re chasing after to bring joy to our lives isn’t working. Those relationships, those possessions… that next promotion isn’t going to bring you the deep and lasting joy we’re all searching for.

I also want to make it perfectly clear that I’m in no way suggesting that we simply have to decide to not be depressed and then everything will be ok. Many times in our lives we need the help of mental health professionals… doctors and counselors… to fight through these conditions. One of the great things about being part of the family of God is that we don’t ever have to go it alone!

If you’re struggling today with depression, anxiety, or anything else and you need help working through those things… I want you to know you’re not alone. Please reach out for help so that we can come alongside you as brothers and sisters in Christ and assist you in getting the help you need.

The reality is… we’re all in desperate need of joy. But did you know, the **“more”** we desperately long for can’t be found in all those things we chase after. Instead, it can be found in only one place... or, rather only one person: Jesus.

Jesus’ teachings in the New Testament reveal his wisdom for living a life of **“more joy.” Maybe Joy verse could go here? What is it that he “told” us?** So many times these teachings seem paradoxical or counter-intuitive because Jesus has an understanding of life that goes far beyond our own. To help us begin to uncover Jesus’ wisdom, we’re going to look at one of his teachings found in John 15.

**Word: John 15**

Now Jesus has been going around healing, teaching, and proclaiming a message of hope and love to a hurting world. And towards the end of ministry, his disciples are starting to catch on to the fact that he isn’t going to be around forever and they start to freak out a little.

So Jesus launches into this prolonged teaching where he’s trying to comfort them and help them realize that they’re going to be empowered to carry his mission forward.

In chapter 15 we find ourselves in the middle of this encouragement. Let’s start with verse 1. Jesus says,

**“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” (John 15:1-4)**

Now there’s some important imagery happening here that’s easy for us to miss. You see Jesus’ original audience would have immediately made a connection with the vine imagery and the Old Testament depiction of Israel as a vine of God. *(Onscreen Isaiah 5:1-7)*

Over and over again in the Old Testament Israel is talked about as a vineyard planted by God. However, God clearly expects good grapes to come from the nation of Israel. And unfortunately, they continually fail to live up to his expectations.

Then comes Jesus… and he starts replacing and expanding this Old Testament metaphor. He’s saying that he is the vine instead of Israel… that he’s the one whom good grapes will grow from and that the world will be impacted because the fruit he produces will be fruitful.

Now if you look closely, there’s one word here that we’ll see over and over again throughout this chapter. It’s really the key idea in this entire passage: **“remain.”** In fact, as we go through this passage we’ll see that the word **“remain”** appears 11 times! That means it’s a really big deal.

Here Jesus is instructing his followers to **“remain”** in him. What he means by this is that in order for the disciples to 'remain' in Jesus, they must be obedient to God’s word through their relationship with him... they have to stay closely connected to him following his direction.

All right, let’s keep moving… starting with verse 5 Jesus continues:

**“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” (John 15:5-8)**

Now this might sound a little harsh to us at first: branches being thrown away and tossed into a fire. But remember, Jesus’s audience clearly knows he’s making a correlation between the disobedience of Israel… the failed vine… and himself, the vine that will bear much fruit.

Notice, too, that the word **“remain”** shows up again… the key theme of this passage. Jesus is saying that when we **“remain”** in him much fruit will be produced in our lives... so many good things will come from our remaining in him that people will give God *“glory”* and we’ll prove to the world that we’re followers of Jesus. I don’t know about you, but I think that’s pretty amazing and shows how important this idea of **“remaining”** is to Jesus.

Now I also want to pause here for a moment and address something that I think can sometimes get misunderstood. Jesus says, “**Ask whatever you wish.”** If we’re not careful we can start to use this statement as permission to treat God like a genie in a bottle… like all we have to do is ask for a million dollars and poof… it’ll show up.

But that’s not at all what this verse is saying. Instead, this verse is challenging us to consistently and regularly come to God in prayer. You see prayer is a natural outflow of our relationship with Jesus… it’s all about our relationship with him. When we have a close relationship with God then we’ll ask him to do things… things that align with his will because we’re so closely connected to him… and he’ll do them.

Jesus wraps up this part of his talk with these words:

**9“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.**

Jesus finally reminds us that because of his extravagant love for **us** we can trust him and be confident that **remaining** close to him gives us the best opportunity to live this love-giving, fruit-bearing life.

Come back to “joy” verse here?

Here is what I believe Jesus is saying to us today, “You remain in me – which is to stay as close to me as you can and do what I tell you to do, and you will experience life as it was meant to be – a life joy!”

**Challenge**

So let’s get very practical now. And to do that, I want to go back to this one word that we find 11x in this section of Jesus’ teaching. It’s that word “remain.”

Here’s the deal: The way we remain in Jesus is to spend time with him. And I know, as soon as I mention the word “time”, you’re thinking “Jon, I am already more than tapped out when it comes to time. I’m not liking where this is going.” Well, stay with me for a few more minutes.

**Story**

Several years ago I read a story in the Chicago Tribune about Robert Hyland. Hyland received the title from the Wall Street Journal as “the nations most notorious workaholic.” Listen to his schedule:

* Six days a week he gets up and **starts** his day at 1 am.
* That way he’s at the office and starts his **workday** by 2 am.
* He then works until 6 pm each day.

We’re talking about working 96 hours a week! That’s pretty busy!

When I fist heard Hyland’s story, I thought this is a perfect example of how **NOT** to get **MORE** out of life. So we called his office to set up an appointment to interview him. And for 30 minutes Hyland talked about his schedule, his priorities and his pace of life. And there were three things he said that totally surprised us:

1. First of all, it turned out that **he would leave work every morning around 6 am and go to a nearby church to pray** for at least an hour. He prayed every day for an hour.
2. On top of that, he said **he had a leisurely dinner with his wife every night**. They’d sit and talk and spend the entire evening mealtime together. Who do you know who spends at least an hour in prayer a day and the evening meal with his family every night?
3. And thirdly Hyland said, “And **every 7th day I don’t work at all**. I take a full day off. But yeah, in between I work and I work real hard!”

I thought and thought about this. Here is my take away: My point is **NOT to work 96 hours a week**. As they say, “Don’t try this at home.” My point is that if a guy who is that busy can maintain his sanity and his relationships – maybe the **ONLY** reason he’s sane is because he has figured out what it truly means to get **MORE** from this life. And for him it was about taking time to remain in Jesus.

I believe if Jesus were here he would **dare** us to re-orient our lives in order remain in him. I think he might even double dog dare us! So here we go . . .

**Two dares. One is PERSONAL, and one is INTERPERSONAL**. Here’s the first dare - the personal one: If you want more joy from this life, take time to remain in Jesus through PERSONAL CELEBRATION.

**Personal Celebration**

At Community, we want everyone to become a 3C Christ-follower – someone who is Celebrating, Connecting, and Contributing.

* Celebrating is about strengthening our relationship with God in Jesus. This includes PERSONAL CELEBRATION – time alone, just you and God.
* Connecting is about deepening our relationship with other Christ-followers.
* And Contributing is about growing our relationship with the world as we use our time, talent, and resources to see our world become more like God intended it to be from the beginning

One of the tools we have developed to help you grow in your relationship with Jesus is a Big Idea Bible reading plan. Early in the morning, before you wake up, a section of scripture that is based on our weekend Big Idea arrives in your inbox. All you have to do is open your email.

So, here is my double dog dare challenge to you. Starting this week will you set aside time to read God’s Word. Reflect on it. Pray over it. Just 10-15 minutes every day! 3 or 4 minutes to read God’s word and the rest just sitting and reflecting on it - whatever that looks like for you. I dare you!

**Interpersonal Celebration**

The second dare is this: You ready? Make **interpersonal celebration** a weekly priority. Give someone near you a fist bump or a high five – cause you are all here and you got this one right this week! Congratulations!

Friends, we need to be here to celebrate the good things that God is doing in and through us. We need these times like this to remain in Jesus and recalibrate our hearts and minds to God. And I gotta be honest with you, sometimes I don't feel like showing up myself. Is it ok if I say that? Doesn’t sound very pastor-like, does it?

But I try to remind myself that even though **I** may not feel like it, there may be someone that needs **me** to be here. That’s why we chose to call it **inter**personal. This is not just about you and God. This time here is about **US** and God. Just your presence or a simple encouraging word may be the very thing someone needs to get through their week. Jesus made it a priority to show up in a place like this with other people to hear from God and focus on God.

So, here is the double dog dare – Will you make personal and interpersonal celebration a priority between now and Thanksgiving? Celebrate with God personally every day, and celebrate with us and God interpersonally every Sunday for the next 8 weeks?

Why 8 weeks? Maybe this will help . . .

Phillippa Lally, a health psychology researcher at University College London examined the habits of 96 people over a 12-week period. Each person chose one new habit for the 12 weeks and reported each day on whether or not they did the behavior and how automatic the behavior felt.

Some people chose simple habits like “drinking a bottle of water with lunch.” Others chose more difficult tasks like “running for 15 minutes before dinner.” At the end of the 12 weeks, the researchers analyzed the data to determine how long it took each person to go from starting a new behavior to automatically doing it.

The answer? **On average, it takes ? more than 2 months.**

**So we’re giving you 2 months. Aren’t we kind?**

Here is the question: Will you remain in Jesus and make it a priority set aside time every day for personal celebration? And will you remain in Jesus and make it a priority to be here every week for interpersonal celebration? Between now and Thanksgiving that’s 8 weeks.

**Conclusion**

I want to go back to where we started. We began by collectively admitting that there is something in all of us that yearns for more. It’s as if we’re often living life on less than a full tank. Something just isn’t complete. Ever feel that way? Well, Jesus wraps up this part of his teaching with these words. He said: ***11I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (John 15:11)***

word “complete” means whole…what people long for

He finally gives us the **WHY** for all this talk of remaining close to him. If you are feeling unfinished . . . incomplete – maybe like something is missing, the creator of the universe is saying to us that staying close to him is our best opportunity to live this love-giving, fruit-bearing life that results in a joy that is **COMPLETE** – not **partial**, not **close** to the real thing, but complete. It doesn’t mean that everything will suddenly be roses or every day you will wake up and hear birds singing, but it does mean you will have a joy that is anchored in something that even the worst of life’s circumstances can’t take away. It’s a joy anchored in Jesus. **WE EXPERIENCE COMPLETE JOY WHEN WE REMAIN IN JESUS.**

Here is what I believe Jesus is saying to us today, “You remain in me – which is to stay as close to me as you can, and you will experience more of life as it was meant to be – a life of complete joy!” -- Will you do that? I double dog dare you? ☺

**Communion**

The writer of Hebrews penned these words:

***“And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross . . .”*** *(Hebrews 12:1b-3)*

The “joy set before” Jesus was you. It was you who got him through the cross. It was you he had in mind when he endured the horrific beating at the hands of the Roman soldiers. It was you he was thinking about when he breathed his last breath. Yes, the one who loved us enough to die for us, says, “You can run this race with perseverance when you fix your eyes on me. You remain in me and I will give you a joy that is complete.”

We can bet our lives on all sorts of people, promises, and ideas. At communion, we are reminded that when we choose to follow Jesus, we are betting our lives on the one who gave his life so that we could experience a that is complete. Let us remember his death and resurrection. The bread represents his body and the juice represents his blood.