

Q&A WITH NICOLE JACOBMEYER

Take Back Your Joy: Fighting for Purpose When Life Is More Than You Can Handle

Your new book encourages Christian women to take back their joy. How does social media become a joy-stealer? How can women take back the joy that comparison steals?

What we do want to gain from social media is the feeling that we're not alone. We all have an innate desire to be known, valued, and respected. We also want to feel seen and understood in our roles or our suffering. While these desires are not inherently sinful, we can quickly get off course when we seek external validation instead of going to God. Social media will never fill that void and our longing to be known.

Social media can cause us to forget what's right in front of us, our daily bread. We forget about God, but He was not meant to be placed on the back burner. The Lord has set us apart for a specific purpose. Yet, I've found that when I'm distracted looking at everyone else's posts, I end up getting jealous, not to mention wasting precious time. What is the result of this cycle? The comparison game, which robs us of our joy.

We can become so caught up in seeking this validation that we get things backwards. Instead, we must decrease for Him to increase in our lives (see John 3:30). And it's in that process of humility that we find our true worth, rather than in comparing our lives to others. As Paul writes in Philippians, "This same God ... will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus" (4:19 NLT).

I wish I could tell you there is a secret to avoiding comparison. The truth is I finally stopped the comparison and found contentment after I remembered all that I have been given. As with so many other struggles in my life with the Lord, healing and recovery started with a thankful heart. God has given me so much and was doing so much in my life, yet I was too busy looking around at everyone else to notice what was right in front of me.

Christian women often feel pressure to put on a happy face and "be nice" to everyone at all times. How does this impact our joy?

Too many times as Christians we think that we have to be chummy with everyone because we love Jesus. Yes, we're called to live at peace with everyone, but sometimes joy will be found when you finally say, "I forgive you, but no more."

You are not unholy or weak if you've been advised by counselors or the Holy Spirit to walk away from dysfunction, narcissism, toxic relationships, or abuse. Sacrificing your purpose, inner joy, and peace to play along with someone else's problems will keep you in a perpetual state of people-pleasing instead of living free. You answer to the Lord and, although He calls us to forgive, sometimes taking back your joy calls for setting healthy boundaries between you and those offenders.

Your cancer diagnosis shook your world and muted your joy. How did you take back your joy during that scary season?

God used my husband to break a belief I had held for years by asking, "If you don't question God's blessings, why do you question your suffering?" His words made me pause and think about my pain and God's sovereignty in a different way.

When God brings a timely blessing into my life, I don't respond by saying, "Why did you do this for me, God? Why on earth did you allow this?" But when suffering came my way, I questioned God's faithfulness and goodness instead of maintaining an attitude of praise, solidified in joy. I needed to remind myself that all the hard things I will ever go through will draw me to Himself if I allow God to work.

I slowly started to realize how important it was for me to sit with the pain instead of trying to push through it. I was beginning to learn that my tendency to “push through” sometimes kept me from experiencing joy. While I was used to powering through the pain, I learned that the only way to get through cancer with joy intact was to take the backseat and let God drive.

What are some practical things people can do instead of rushing on to the next thing, when they know that their heart, head, and spirit need to pause?

Here’s the truth, friends: we will continue to walk through hard things. But our joy and growth are determined by what we do with life’s challenges. We will have great days and hard days. We will have mountains and valleys. But learning when to rest empowers us to experience joy in all seasons.

A few practical suggestions:

- **Pause:** Be still. Don’t make a quick decision. Don’t rush or jump ahead. Commit to sitting with the pain, which can be extremely uncomfortable. Sometimes it’s in that uncomfortable spot that we grow the most.
- **Be Present:** The first thing I want to do when pain comes is skip ahead to the next season. But I’ve found that if I live in the moment, ordinary moments sustain me: a kid’s birthday, a hair appointment, doing laundry, making dinner. When you walk slowly and intentionally and concentrate on everyday gifts, you begin to feel God’s presence.
- **Write It Down:** I’m a big fan of journaling. Writing things down always helps me process what is happening and what I’m feeling.
- **Talk It Out:** Talking to a spouse, close friend, or counselor can be life-giving. But, most of all, talk with God. Share your feelings and questions and doubts.

Your write that the greatest threat to Christian joy isn’t our circumstances, it’s spiritual. Tell us more.

The devil is real and he wants to steal, kill, and destroy those who belong to Christ. Satan is not worried about those who don’t trust Jesus as their Lord and Savior since they aren’t a threat to him.

When we believe Jesus is the only way, there is a large target on our backs! Satan wants us to forget who we are in Christ. He wants us to turn our back on God and blame Him when bad things happen. He wants us to be entrapped by our sin and shame and misunderstand God’s Word and character. Satan wants us to pout, play the victim, doubt, go inward, twist Scripture, think the Bible isn’t enough, and lose all hope and joy so that we eventually cave and say no to Jesus. This should ignite a passion in us to live for Jesus and rest in the truth of His character.

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by Nicole Jacobsmeyer

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