

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

September 2018

Dear Friends,

Stasi Eldredge here. I'm writing you this month not because John is on mission in the UK (he is), but because I've been working on a new book and I wanted to share some nuggets with you. It's a book about joy. *Defiant Joy*.

In this world we find ourselves living in, having joy often feels both crazy and out of reach. That's why I included the word "defiant." Defiant means to stand against the tide. It means to go against the flow, even when the flow is comprised of a strong current of despair and difficulty. To have joy in the midst of sorrow—or the never-ending news feed—can seem impossible. But joy is meant to be ours, a joy that is defiant in the face of this broken world. Our hearts are to echo the heartbeat of our joyous God.

Happiness is circumstantial.

I'm happy when I wake up and realize it's not Monday, but Saturday—I have a day off! I'm happy when someone brings me a cup of coffee. I'm happy when I get a birthday card. I'm sad when a vacation is over. I'm sad when I mishandle the heart of a friend. I'm sad when no one remembers my birthday. I love being happy. But happiness is unpredictable; it feels vulnerable because it is tied to my circumstances. And don't we all know it? One day you're up; next day you're down.

Joy is something else altogether.

It feels firmer, richer, less vulnerable somehow. I'm happy when my family goes out for ice cream, but it would seem a little overblown to say I was filled with joy because of it. I was joyful at all three of my sons' weddings. I was filled with joy over the birth of our granddaughters. Joy flooded my heart when a dear friend was cleared of cancer. I don't think it was merely happiness; the joy felt rooted in the presence of God. His hand was so evident.

Joy is not happiness on steroids. It is something entirely different, made up of its own unique substance. Joy is connected to God and reserved for those who are tapping into his reservoir, who are connected to his life.

Joy is rooted in God and his kingdom, in the surety of his goodness, his love for us. It is immovable. Unshakeable. It is available at all times, day and night, because God and his kingdom are always available to us. I'm ready to get off the roller coaster of happiness; I want my heart grounded in the higher place of joy. I bet you do, too.

Who among us does not want more joy in our lives? In our work? In our marriages? In our relationships? With our children? In our quiet moments alone? If joy is a fruit of the Spirit, (and it is), then we are meant to experience it and enjoy it, regardless of our circumstances.

Whatever may be swirling around us, the eye of the storm is joy. But how do we get there? The simple answer is, we need to come to know God more deeply. When we do, we can believe and rest in his faithful, immovable, immeasurable love for us in every moment we are in.

Joy is the heartbeat of heaven, the very light that emanates from Jesus' heart, so as we grow closer in relationship with God, we'll also grow in joy. We'll see that he is not spending his moments wringing his hands, as we are sometimes prone to do. He is not braced against the future or overcome by serious hardship. His joy is never up for grabs. Rather, his joy is immovable, just as he is. It is an essential part of his very person. Meister Eckhart wrote:

“Do you want to know what goes on in the heart of the Trinity?

I will tell you.

In the heart of the Trinity the Father laughs and gives birth to the Son.

The Son laughs back at the Father and gives birth to the Spirit.

The whole Trinity laughs and gives birth to us.”

We are born from the laughter of the Trinity. What an amazing thought. As image bearers of the Living God, surely joy is written deep in our very hearts. So it should come naturally, right?

But I am not a naturally joyful person. My battle has not been one of needing to be pulled back into reality because of my Pollyanna worldview. My battle has been with depression. I know what it feels like to spend your days walking through sludge up to your knees with a heavy cloak upon your back. But I also know the incredible feeling of having it replaced with a sense of hope and promise leading to a deep, untouchable joy. I'm learning. I do want to get off the emotional rollercoaster of circumstantial happiness. I do want to be rooted and grounded in joy.

That's what I'm after. That's what I believe God is calling us to. That is what I am calling us to as well. I hope you read this new book, because I really do believe it's going to open up wonderful new experiences of joy for you!

Offered in love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stasi', written in a cursive style.

Stasi

PS – *Defiant Joy* is available on October 16th, but you can discover more about this message now, and even pre-order the book, at DefiantJoy.com.