

LIVING  
IT OUT



**DAILY  
BIBLE  
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

# Is This Much Fun Allowed? - Preach Off

February 8, 2021

I hope you enjoyed the Preach Off! As an employee at CedarCreek, it's cool to observe the "behind-the-scenes" of big weekends like the Preach Off—all the creativity, thought, planning, and anticipation that goes into preparing for it, and the joy our staff feels when we finally experience the end product!

As I was helping prepare for the Preach Off last week and watching everything come together, with a spring in my step (admittedly, I was on my third cup of coffee), I had to stop and appreciate just how much joy my job brings me. Don't get me wrong—some days work is challenging, some days it's frustrating, and some days I come home exhausted. The things in life that make a difference often require a lot of hard work. But the joy I feel knowing God is using my time and skills to help people grow in their relationship with him strengthens me.

Unfortunately, a lot of people don't associate church with joy. Some people think it's boring, and for others, it can even be painful.

At the end of the Preach Off, Lead Pastor Ben Snyder shared some scripture from *Nehemiah*. To provide context, this passage takes place a long time after Jerusalem had been conquered and destroyed. God's people were struggling. Ezra, a priest, brought everyone together in the town square, amongst the broken-down remains of what used to be a great capital, and began reading God's law to them.

The people responded by weeping ([Nehemiah 8:9](#)).

Maybe you've felt that way at church—when you've been struggling, when the message has called you out, when you've looked back on past mistakes, or for a number of other reasons. I know I've felt that way. Maybe some of you even feel like that's how you *should* feel at church—somber and repentant. But Nehemiah told the people not to mourn or weep!

## **Nehemiah 8:10**

*And Nehemiah continued, "Go and celebrate with a feast of rich foods and sweet drinks, and share gifts of food with people who have nothing prepared. This is a sacred day before our Lord. Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy of the Lord is your strength!"*

I repeat: ***The joy of the Lord is your strength!*** Yes, sometimes God wants us to be serious and repentant when appropriate, but he also wants us to be joyful, because we get to hear from him, to understand what he's teaching us, and to experience the adventure he has for us. There is so much joy to be found in that!

Over the next few days, we will talk about what that joy looks like and how we can experience it. I hope you experienced the joy of the Lord during the Preach Off, and that you find ways to be strengthened by that joy in your day today.

### **Questions:**

What feelings do you associate with church? Is joy one of them? How can you experience the joy of the Lord in your daily life?

### **Next Steps:**

Find ways to be strengthened by and rejoice in the Lord today. That could mean watching one of the Preach Off sessions that you missed online—each service time was a different experience! Or it could look like creating a devotional routine that brings you joy. I love to read my Bible in the morning with a cup of coffee, a cozy blanket, a cat on my lap, and my shades up so I can watch the sunrise from my desk. Remember, God wants us to enjoy our relationship with him!

### **Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, thank you for being a God who strengthens us through joy! Thank you for all the ways you invite us to experience joy each day—through laughter, good food, good conversations, sunrises, and beautiful snowy days, and most of all through the blessing of knowing you. Help us to have open eyes and ears to see the ways you want to bring us joy. May we rejoice in our relationship with you and be strengthened by it for the adventure you have ahead of us! In Jesus' name I pray, amen.*

*This post was written by Payton Lechner, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.*

# What Drives Your Joy!

February 9, 2021

I became a Christian while I was a shift supervisor for a police department. I spent eight hours a day, more or less, driving around in a squad car, waiting for the next thing to happen. This afforded me a good deal of time to listen to Christian radio. It was through a radio ministry that I was saved, and for several years afterward, that radio station was the tool God used to spur my spiritual growth! I loved listening to Chuck Swindoll, Charles and Andy Stanley, Max Lucado, David Jeremiah, and *Adventures in Odyssey*! Their teachings filled my mind with biblical truth. And to this day, I am so grateful for the gift of the time I had to listen consistently to their wisdom and practical applications.

Over the years, God has used those teachings to help me understand and illustrate how God's word applies to my life's circumstances. I am grateful to the teachers who use their gifts to make scripture approachable and applicable to whatever is going on today! This has helped me really appreciate the following verse.

## **Psalm 28:7**

*The Lord is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy. I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.*

On hard days, I can lean into God's word because of the foundation I've built on the truths learned from those anointed pastors and teachers. I know that the Lord *is* my strength and my shield—that I can trust him with all of my heart. And knowing that fills my heart with joy! And I do burst out in songs of thanksgiving and worship for all he has done for me. (Don't listen!)

Since my spiritual birthday (Feb. 16, 1994), and with the help of radio teachings, podcasts, books, and studies, I have invited God to show me his heart—and to change mine! Thanks to the internet, so many more options are available for us to listen to and learn from. I'm a work-in-progress, but knowing God's not done with me yet fills me with hope and joy!

## **Questions:**

Have you found a way to get God's word into your heart every day? Does it bring you joy? Do you listen to worship music to fill your heart with God's word? Do

you have a favorite Bible teacher (besides Ben, of course!)? Whom do you learn from?

**Next Steps:**

Take advantage of the resources available to help grow your faith:

- Find a Bible Teaching mentor and listen to his/her teaching on a regular basis.
- Read and meditate on the LivingItOut Bible Study every day for a month.
- Download the YouVersion Bible app, look for a study that interests you, and commit to finishing it.
- Listen to nothing but Christian music on your car radio for the next 30 days.

**Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, I am so grateful for the ways you have spoken into my life through your faithful servants! What gifts you have given to these teachers! I am in awe of how you use them, and how willing they are to be used by you! Thank you for your grace and mercy to me! I pray you continue to use these spiritual mentors in my life and the lives of my brothers and sisters in the church! Yours is the kingdom, glory, honor, and praise forever! Amen.*

*This post was written by Lauri White, a regular contributor of the LivingItOut.*

# Share the Struggle - The Preach Off

February 10, 2021

## Proverbs 3:5

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding.*

Over the years, the Lord has been so gentle with me while constantly bringing this verse back into my mind. “TRUST me, April ... just trust me.” But on more than a hundred occasions along the journey of being a parent, I did not listen to his great and mighty wisdom. Instead, I thought it would be a much better idea to pick up all the cares and worries of my children and carry them around for a few days, weeks, months, or even years—as if they were in much better care with me. Well, one thing God has shown me over and over is that I was not created to carry all those burdens. However, this daily struggle of mine—remembering to lay everything down at the cross and TRUST God—has provided so many opportunities for me to share Jesus with others.

Sharing what God is teaching me with others has grown my relationships with them and aided in helping them feel understood as they suffer through similar situations. So many moms have crossed my path over the years, and this verse is exactly what they needed to hear. I have reassured them that they are not alone in their struggles. I know from personal experience, when we trust God, a peace that transcends all understanding fills us—and life gets a little lighter.

I think we sometimes underestimate how important our struggles are. They are not something that we should look at with self-condemnation. Rather, we should be thankful that when God gives us victories, we can share them with someone else who is suffering. Nothing in our lives is wasted when we walk with Jesus ... he uses the good and the bad.

## Questions:

Is there something God is teaching you right now that you think could help others?

Have you ever had someone speak a truth to you right when you needed to hear it? How did that person’s courage change your life?

**Next Steps:**

Step out and share your story with someone who might need to hear it. Choose a Bible verse that has helped you and be ready to share it.

**Prayer:**

*Jesus, we are so thankful that you are with us and that we are never alone. You are faithful to continue the good work you started in all of us. You are a good father and love us so well. Give us the wisdom and words to love others well. Amen.*

*This post was written by April Willer, a regular contributor and editor of the LivingItOut.*

# Why So Serious? - The Preach Off

February 11, 2021

My grandfather raced the grandkids in the streets when he was pushing 70 years old. We watched him eat the (cooked) brains of animals and pretend that doing so added to the knowledge box on the back of his head. He loved to play pranks and would place hot sauce in our mouths if we fell asleep in the living room. Mr. Cephas wasn't a "get off my lawn" kind of person; instead, he encouraged us to roll around in the grass and laughed as it made us itchy. He had a genuine love for his grandchildren, and his interactions with us were classic.

Our natural desire to be near him spoke to my grandfather's character. No child wants to be in the presence of an always serious, bitter, mean-spirited person. We saw what my grandfather represented. His love had a joy that could fill the room with laughter. His words came with lessons that we couldn't ignore. His approach was what we needed, and his stature commanded respect.

Think about how children were naturally drawn to Jesus.

## **Mark 10:13-16**

*<sup>13</sup> One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But the disciples scolded the parents for bothering him.*

*<sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw what was happening, he was angry with his disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. <sup>15</sup> I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn't receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." <sup>16</sup> Then he took the children in his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them.*

Jesus accepted them. He understood what children needed—he loved them, and they knew his love was enough. We may think that a childlike faith toward God implies having a simply innocent or naive relationship, but I believe our thoughts betray us. Consider this: My kids, like others, occasionally do the wrong thing, and at times, they aren't humble. But there is never a time when those traits or poor decisions prevent children from receiving or accepting our hugs and gifts. Their hearts are always open to receiving love, and that quality is what makes them smart enough to know that our love isn't something that has to be earned. Just as we do not and cannot earn our Father's love—it has already been unconditionally given.

I think about my grandfather, who even after World War II, segregation, and the death of a child, never lost his childlike faith. He grew up without growing too serious.

**Questions:**

Do you think your relationship with God lacks joy? Does believing that a Christian life lacks fun prevent you from starting a relationship with God? Do you feel as if you haven't earned God's love?

**Next Steps:**

Make it a daily habit to share your love and joy for God with the people in your life. Don't be afraid to let others know about the struggles you've overcome, and pray about the things you still struggle with. Join a small group to further grow your faith and build relationships throughout the week.

**Prayer:**

*God, thank you for loving me with no strings attached. May I always come to you with the trusting faith of a child. Remind me of your promises when my grown-up pride tries to prevent me from receiving the love you already have for me. I pray that I continue to be open to my children and light-hearted enough to keep them moving toward your love. Amen.*

# Good Grace - The Preach Off

February 12, 2021

This weekend's service ended with a song called, "[Good Grace](#)." Before I was played, Ben Snyder encouraged us to live by grace and not by perfection. I don't know about you, but I find it easy to bounce between the two.

While I know that my relationship with God is made possible through Jesus, I still find myself trying to prove that I am worthy of it. That isn't what grace is, though. Grace is unmerited. It is mercy (favor) that God gave us by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross. This is what restores our standing with him and secures our eternal salvation from sin.

As I listened to the song from this weekend's service, there was one part that jumped out to me: "Fix your eyes on this one truth—God is madly in love with you."

As I thought about God being madly in love with me, I was reminded how critical that truth is to live in grace. God loves us, not because of the good we do, but because we are his. He created us to share in his goodness and experience his love, and he still desires us to experience it today.

## **John 3:16**

*For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.*

## **1 John 4:9-10**

*<sup>9</sup> God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. <sup>10</sup> This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

## **Isaiah 54:10**

*"For the mountains may move and the hills disappear, but even then my faithful love for you will remain. My covenant of blessing will never be broken," says the Lord, who has mercy on you.*

## **Romans 5:8**

*But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

## **1 John 4:8**

*But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

### **Questions:**

Do you find yourself trying to be perfect or earn God's acceptance?

How do you define grace?

Have you accepted God's grace in your life?

### **NextSteps:**

As you enter this weekend, take some time and reflect on the above verses and the song "[Good Grace](#)." Write down the words and key phrases that jumped out to you. Reflect on what it is about them that stands out to you.

If you have questions about how you can have a relationship with Jesus and accept his Grace, talk to someone. Your campus staff, a DreamTeam Leader, or a Group Leader would love to tell you how. Or fill out this online connect card and indicate that you have a question.

### **Prayer:**

*Dear God, When I think about you being madly in love with me, I am overwhelmed. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for sending your son, Jesus, to die for me so I can know you and be in a relationship with you. As I take steps to know you more and experience your love more, help me share that love with those around me. In Jesus' name. Amen.*