

different

Week 5: Don't Resign, Rejoice

Pray: In your own words, ask God to fill you with His gift of joy.

Control. We really have very little. Yet we invest a lot of energy trying to get the characters and circumstances in our lives to follow our directions. And when things don't happen the way we wish, we are unhappy. When things are out of control, we want to resign. God, the One who does have control, tells us we can react in completely different way.

Read: Acts 16:16-34

Watch: "Jailhouse Rock"

Reflect

1. What are some ways you react when you receive bad news, face a stressful situation, or endure physical pain?
2. Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned without a trial. Yet they respond to their dark, unjust imprisonment with prayer and praise. What does it take for someone to choose joy in unhappy circumstances?
3. This passage shows two reactions to tragedy: Paul and Silas rejoice while the jailer resigns to kill himself. Paul's unconditional love for his jailer converts an enemy into a brother. What are some ways you can offer the hope of Jesus to those who live lives of resignation?
4. Years later, Paul reminds the Philippian church to "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4). In what current circumstance do you need God's joy? What can you do to make more room for joy?
5. Paul writes, "Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn." (Romans 12:12, 15). What are some practical ways for you to be joyful, patient and faithful? With whom can you rejoice? Who had a loss (loved one, job, dream) that could use your comfort?

Steps:

Contentment is holding onto God's joy instead of the circumstances. What circumstance can you let go in order to have more joy?

Share with your group one step of faith that will help you be different this week. Ask one person to hold you accountable to this step. Examples:

- A. Commit to a regular time of faithful prayer each day with God.
- B. Whenever a conversation goes negative, see what happens when you respond with hope and joy.
- C. Be a friend to someone who is mourning a loss. Don't give answers. Just listen and be with them.
- D. Create an action item of your own.

Pray: As you pray, ask Jesus to help you make more room for hope, joy, patience and peace in your life.