



**JOY: IT'S YOUR
BIRTHRIGHT**

*Once awakened by the
silver trump of knowledge,
my spirit was roused to eternal
wakefulness. Liberty!
The inestimable birthright of every man...*

Frederick Douglass

Joy! Have you ever stopped to consider that it belongs to you? It is your gift, every day that you awake. Joy is your guarantee, your birthright. You have the liberty to claim your birthright. Unspeakable joy, full of God's glory is your heritage, as the Lord's anointed.

And, yes, it is possible that you can be joyful every second! Every day you receive the generous, heavenly gift of 86,400 seconds. The Power of Joy lies in the knowledge of how to take that gift of one single day and allow it to recreate, illuminate and unshackle your life.

Joy is necessary for every second in which you dream the impossible—well, not-so-impossible, merely-improbably, “Hey-I-Can-Do-This” dream.

Starting today, promise yourself to infuse, to steep, and to transform every second with a gleam of joyfulness. To possess a joy that breaks the rules about WHY you should be happy.

The diagnosis of cancer can evoke heart-wrenching chaos. Cancer, in many minds, is the dire equivalent of a death sentence. Hearing that word can wreck havoc on one's faith and optimism. To even the grounded believer, there is that sudden, chilling fear which speaks: *Now, you've done it. You've finally gotten yourself into something that's even too hard for God.*

I saw that thinking in people's eyes. People looked at me as if there was suddenly an invisible countdown clock suspended above my head.

There were countless reasons why I should not have been joyful. The diagnosis in 2001 was Stage 4 Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma. There are no stages beyond that. Lymphoma is a blood-borne cancer of the lymph nodes. It is a malignancy that could not be surgically extracted—like many other cancers—because it was everywhere.

Surrounded by those who believed in the power of prayer, I claimed my healing. Of one thing I was entirely certain: Chosen of God and precious, the elect of the Lord, sanctified in His Spirit. Even through this, I determined to be kept by the power of God and by His joy. By His stripes, I was healed—even if the doctors did not immediately agree.

Following the diagnosis, there was the chemotherapy. No hair. Even an innovative new medicine which my husband teasingly informed me had been delivered to the clinic in an armored vehicle. The anti-nausea medicine worked so well I fooled myself into thinking I could leave the clinic and stop by Cracker Barrel for a meatloaf dinner. (Certainly not my wisest moment.)

Fast forward to today, 2011. My oncologist still schedules periodic CT scans—the results, I'm healthy. Living proof that God still does the hard stuff. I take pride in being His walking, talking, living, breathing advertisement for miracles.

Whatever your challenge at this moment, only His love can bring you into the certainty of indescribable joy.

Today, make joy your determination...even if you have to put Jesus on speed dial. Make this today's affirmation: "I will rejoice with inexpressible joy, no matter what the realities of my life may be."

(Author's note: the poem quoted above is from *My Bondage and My Freedom*, by Frederick Douglass, Penguin Classics, New Edition, New York, NY, 2003)

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