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2  Joel 2:23–27

- Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains in righteousness. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before. The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil. “I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten . . . You will have plenty to eat, until you are full, and you will praise the name of the LORD your God, who has worked wonders for you; never again will my people be shamed. Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the LORD your God, and that there is no other; never again will my people be shamed.” (Joel 2:23–27 NIV)

3  Helplessness

- At the core of pessimism is helplessness.
- Helplessness is the state of affairs in which nothing you do effects what is happening to you.
- We are born in helplessness and when we get old, we die in helplessness.
- Do you know what helpless people do?
  - They cry and often suffer from depression.
- Do you know why they cry?
  - It hurts when we feel abandoned.

4  Helplessness

- Personal control—is the opposite of helplessness and is the ability to change things by one’s voluntary actions.
- Why are 2 and 3 year olds so hard to handle?
  - They are just starting to learn to control and influence their environment, yet do so very poorly.
- What is maturity?
  - Skill in influencing our situations and circumstances.

5  Beyond our Control

- Many things in life are beyond our control.
- Nevertheless, there are a lot of things that we can take control of, or concede control to others.
- These actions are affected by our attitudes and what we believe is true.
  - What we believe about ourselves.
  - What we believe about the goodness and ability of others to help us.
- So when we feel helpless, it is a byproduct of what we think about others and about ourselves as well.

## 6 Case Study

- A Graduate Student in literature at Oxford College changed her dissertation from a study in Charles Dickens to Jane Austen.
- Her mentor reluctantly approved her change and gave her advice on how to approach her new area of study.
- Right before her oral examination, her old mentor reappeared and accused her of plagiarism because she did not give him credit for his previous advice.
- Instead of facing her accuser, the student became pessimistic and collapsed inwardly, looking at every aspect of the situation in the worst possible light.

## 7 Case Study

- Research shows that people with pessimistic habits of thinking can transform mere setbacks into disasters.
- One way this happens is that when we convert our own innocence into guilt, we allow ourselves to discount our worth to succeed or receive help.
- One of the most significant findings in psychology in the last twenty years is that individuals can choose the way they think.

## 8 National Bestseller

- Martin E. P. Seligman, Ph.D, Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life.
- "Pessimism is escapable," by learning a new set of cognitive skills that will enable you to take charge, resist depression, and make yourself feel better and accomplish more.
- Dr. Seligman is considered the father of Positive Psychology, which is the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive.

## 9 Overview

## 10 Review

- Many of us spend far more time thinking on how to correct something that is wrong or going wrong than we spend on what is right or going right.
- This however, minimizes life's satisfaction and maximizes our anxiety, and depression.
- The secret to happiness is to count our blessings, when others are counting their troubles.
- However, for most of us, this will require new or better skills in which to analyze events so that we can better develop a "consciousness of blessing" that promotes optimism about the future.

## 11 Skills

## 12 ABCDEs

- Adverse situation—identify those you regularly encounter.

- Beliefs—note all the beliefs about those events that come to mind.
- Consequences—reflect on the consequences of living based on those positive and negative beliefs.
- Disputation—challenge the usefulness of unhealthy beliefs and focus on positive counter-evidence.
- Energization—be ruthlessly committed to living life based on positive beliefs and disputations of the alternative.

### 13 Joel Osteen

- In his book, *Your Best Life Now*, Joel Osteen gives 7 Steps to Living at our Full Potential.
- Enlarge your vision. (Find your calling)
- Develop a healthy self image.
- Discover the power of your thoughts and words.
- Let go of the past.
- Find strength through adversity.
- Live to give!
- Choose to be happy!

### 14 Personal

#### Testimony

- Remind myself that God called me and that my election had nothing to do my desire or effort. [See John 15:16, Rom. 9:11–12, 9:16]
- Focus on the fact that God is good and his love for me is real and not just a feeling.
- Don't overlook how God has helped in the past.
- Get rid of any real or imagined guilt.
- Realize that sufferings and trials are temporal and are not always bad.
  - For a child of God, they produce character and the refining of our character brings good fruit.
  - God freely gives us wisdom when we are in the midst of trials to help us make the right choices. [James 1:5]
- Prayer changes things and we don't need to be super spiritual giants or be perfect to be heard in heaven. We simply have to believe and be faithful to God's commands.

### 15 Words of Hope!

- Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains in righteousness. (Joel 2:23 NIV)
- I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten. (Joel 2:25 NIV)
- Never again will my people be shamed. (Joel 2:27 NIV)
- I will pour out my Spirit on all people. (Joel 2:28 NIV)
- And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved . . . (Joel 2:32 NIV)

## 16 Conclusion of the Matter

- In this life we will have setbacks, however realize what God says about them . . .
  - I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18 NIV)
  - [T]he Spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8:26 NIV)
  - And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28 NIV)
  - If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31 NIV)

## 17 Conclusion of the Matter

- The root of pessimism is helplessness.
- It is when we feel abandoned and are left to our own devices.
- It is made all the more a major problem, when we don't believe in ourselves, others around us, or God.
- Why did the Israelites have to wait 40 years in the desert? They gave into their unbelief.
- Yes, they had to fight giants, but who is bigger than those giants?

## 18 Real Hope

- The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. . . . Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (Psalms 23:1, 6 NIV)
- I lift up my eyes to the hills — where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip — he who watches over you will not slumber; (Psalms 121:1-3 NIV)
- God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. (Psalms 46:1 NIV)
- Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. . . . surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18, 20 NIV)

## 19 Good Shepherd