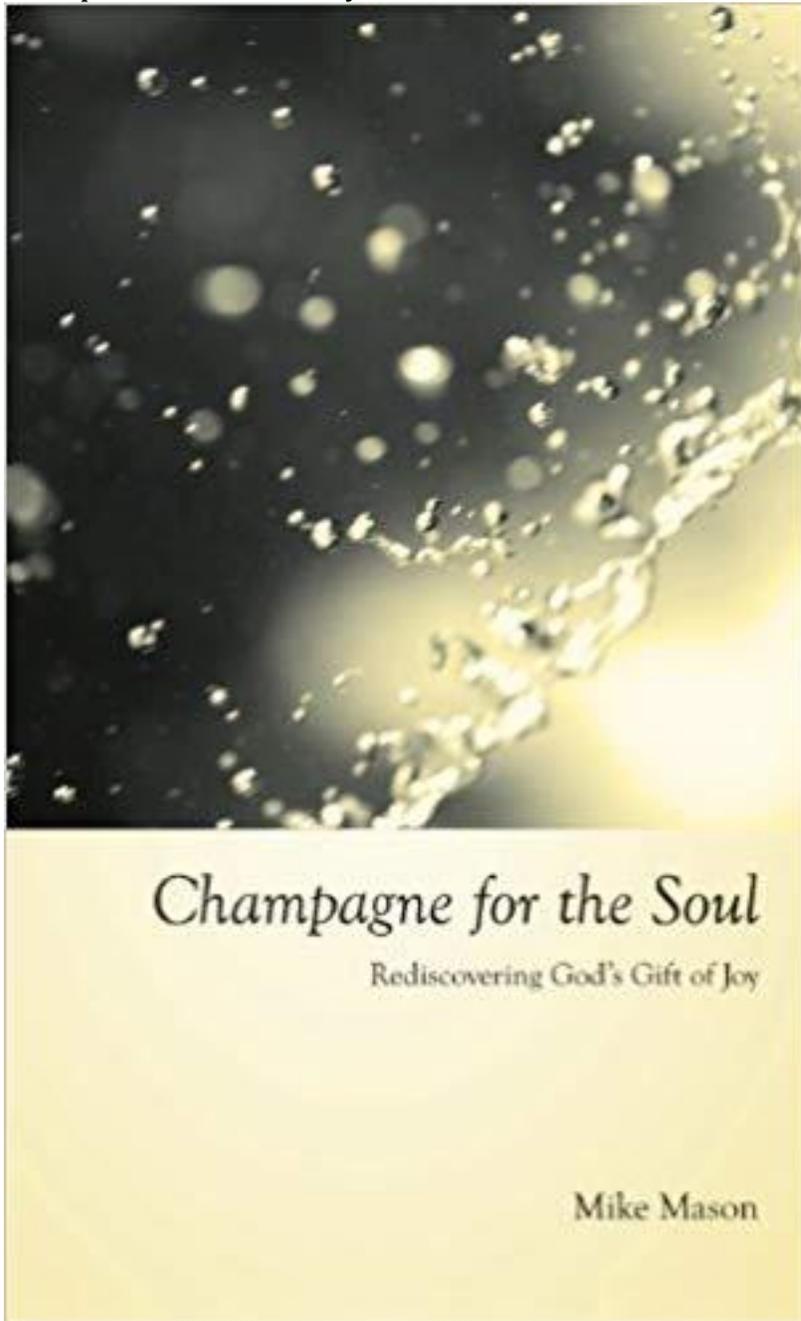


Champagne for the Soul

Excerpts from the book by Mike Mason



You can get this book at this link:

https://www.amazon.com/Champagne-Soul-Celebrating-Gods-Gift/dp/1573834815/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=champagne+for+the+soul&qid=1556209057&s=gateway&sr=8-1

An Experiment in Joy

Joy is like a muscle, and the more you exercise it, the stronger it grows

The way to break an addiction is to replace it with something stronger. To break my addiction to alcoholic spirits, I had to develop a taste for true spirituality. To break my addiction to the cheap wine of melancholy, I had to seek champagne for the soul.

During this time I learned that the search for joy is inseparable from spiritual warfare. Anyone who wants to be happy will have to fight for it.

Day 1 Brokenness

Joy loves our brokenness best.

Christian joy is rooted in darkness, chaos, meaninglessness, sorrow.

The happiest thought in the world is the shed blood of Christ.

Day 4 Riding on the Heights

Rest is an opportunity to become aware of joy. We need sleep because we need dreams, and we need rest because we need daydreams. Many people's lives are so unhappy that their only glimmers of joy come in daydreams.

Day 5 Going for the Gold

By contrast I know I've lost sight of the gospel when I find myself restless, unhappy, fearful, plagued by subtle guilt. Unhappiness keeps me stuck. Only joy moves me over the line into experiencing the kingdom of heaven.

Day 7 Fire from Heaven

Joy is a response to the Lord's presence... Has the fire of God come down and consumed your sacrifices? All your piety, your churchgoing, your repentance, your efforts to be good—do these produce shouts of joy?

If we're not joyful, we haven't finished repenting. The sign that we've repented well is happiness, as God consumes our sacrifice of sorrow and exchanges it for joy

Day 8 Mirth

“Joy is a deep-seated sense of well-being, often arising in mirth.”

Day 10 Ten Joyful Commandments

Joy is a biblical commandment. Is it fair for God to command you to be happy? Aren't the odds overwhelmingly stacked against you? No, this is a lie. The truth is that Jesus has done everything to secure your happiness, in order that His “joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11).

Nobody questions Jesus' important command, “Love one another” (John 13:34). Why then do we argue with the command to rejoice?

Day 11 Redefining Happiness

Sometimes joy is what seeps through the cracks when our hearts are breaking.

It takes williness to be happy. When cornered, we have to look at all the options and find the way out. We have to know how to outwit the heebie-jeebies, **how to think faster than our blackest thought**. We must be able to slip the nooses of condemnation, lethargy, self-pit, confusion.

Joy may seem an upbeat sort of feeling, but the direction of joy isn't always up. Often to be joyful we must go down—down through the noise of racing thoughts, down through the swirling chaos of circumstances, down through the deceptive appearances of life, down into the still waters and green pastures at the heart's core.

Can these two states coexist—joy and profound disturbance? Strange to say, they can.

Day 12 Be Here Now

Be happy now! If you can't find happiness in the present moment, you never will. Joy isn't around some corner—it's here.

Day 13 The Secret of Happiness

According to Ecclesiastes, the key factor in happiness is not the possession of good things but rather the ability to enjoy what one has by accepting one's lot.

The story is told of a man who received a nicely wrapped gift, which he found to be empty inside. With a cry of joy he exclaimed, "Nothing! Just what I've wanted!" The man knew that happiness doesn't inhere in having or achieving anything in particular, but in an attitude of heart.

If the secret of happiness is a gift, does this mean that not everyone has it? No, it's a free gift available to all. Ecclesiastes even gives the gift a name, calling it our "lot" or portion. Do you have a portion in life? I certainly do. Everyone does. Accept it as a gift. If you can't be happy, be content.

Day 14 Joy and Gladness

Happiness without joy is shallow and transient because it's based on outward circumstances rather than an attitude of the heart. As for joy without happiness, it's a spiritualized lie.

The Bible does not separate joy and happiness and neither should we. Repeatedly Scripture mentions the two together: "There was joy and gladness among the Jews (Esther 8:17); Let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9); "May those who delight in my vindication shout for joy and gladness (Psalm 35:27).

If a proper distinction can be made between joy and happiness, perhaps it's like that between faith and works. These two are not distinct in the sense that sometimes we have one and sometimes the other; rather, they're two aspects of the same reality. Joy tends to be felt on the inside, deep down, while happiness is a matter of mining joy to form it into useful articles.

Happiness keeps joy honest. If the heart is joyful, let it tell your face. Before Jesus healed a paralytic He asked, "Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?'" (Matthew 9:5). Similarly we can ask about joy: Which is easier: to believe in it or to live it? The proof of the pudding is in the eating. In a whole person the inner and outer spheres of life blend. Healthy spirituality seamlessly connect the two, continually opening channels between heaven and earth. Happiness is the way heavenly joy handles daily life in this world.

Day 15 Soul and Strength

Yes, the spiritual is greater than the physical, but precisely because it includes the physical. The joy of the Lord is like a muscle, and like a muscle it can be moved, flexed, used to wield tools and weapons, to accomplish work.

Joy is like breathing: It's not enough to breathe in; one must also breathe out. In a word: Rejoice! Let your joy reverberate. Hug someone. Dance. Speak some

inspiring words. Write a letter or a book. Don't just think about happiness—be happy. **Joy yearns to be physically expressed.**

Day 16 Authenticity

Could I “rejoice in the Lord always” and still acknowledge all the unhappy feelings that any normal person may legitimately experience? Is happiness compatible with sadness, longing, loneliness, frustration? Oddly, I discovered that the answer is yes. Indeed there can be no real happiness without a full range of all the other human emotions accompanying it.

Happiness comes not to those who deny their weakness but to those who authentically inhabit the inherent paradox of the human condition.

Day 18 Blessings and Curses

The Lord cares more about adverbs than verbs. He doesn't want us just to serve Him; He wants us to serve Him joyfully. Without joy, all our work and sacrifices, even our flawless theology, cannot please Him. God doesn't love a giver, He “loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Day 19 A Winning Attitude

As Paul says, “Our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Corinthians 4:17).

It makes all the difference whether I see my problem as light and momentary or as heavy and insoluble.

Day 21 Love the Struggle

The secret of winning at spiritual warfare is to love it.

Christ knows that rising up against the enemy of our souls is the only way we can be free. He'll supply the weapons, the courage, the power, and everything else—but only we can supply the will to fight. Only we can decide to love this work as much as God does, and so get on with it.

Do you love God's will? Then love to wage war. Jesus does. He gave His life in battle. He loves war because He loves us. If I had to choose one key to joy as being most important, it would be this: Love the struggle.

Day 23 Standing Ovation

Joy glorifies God. When we feel good, God looks good. Don't be half-hearted for God; give Him a standing ovation every day. It's what He's waiting for. It's what you're waiting for too. **Your whole being waits to erupt into thunderous and unending praise.** You won't be happy until you do. You won't be happy until your first waking thought is of the glory of being alive.

Day 26 Commitment

In conversations I've given up on trying to argue people out of their unhappiness. The more one reasons with them, the more their eyes glaze over.

Neither seeing nor believing in the joy set before them, they're resigned to unhappiness, and so that's what they get.

Resignation is a form of commitment

Day 28 Who Am I?

God doesn't love who I'm not; He loves me. The evil one whispers, "Just being you is not enough; it's more complex than that." But God created me to be myself—the true self, formed in His image—nothing more nor less.

In the words of Brent Curtis, "Let people feel the weight of who you are, and let them deal with it."

Day 32 Oil of Gladness

The LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me... to bestow on them
a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

This is the joy of someone raised from the dead and sitting at the right hand of God in heaven, for whom the battles of earth are all over. In this joy, by the miracle of faith, I share. In touch with this reality, whenever I encountered struggles and failures in my experiment, far from discouraging me that only awakened a hunger for a still deeper and more pervasive joy, running and **spilling like warm oil into all the empty crevices of my being, into the very places of my failure.**

Day 37 Routing the Enemy

A commitment to joy is a commitment to destroy every enemy of joy. It's not enough to wipe out all our enemies but one. One enemy left standing, unchallenged, casts a shadow over all our joy.

Day 38: Description: Joy

God's will is done happily or not at all.

Day 39 The Champion Spirit

Champions are not afraid of death. At least, they're less afraid of death than they are of not living fully.

Day 44 No Condemnation

The good news of redemption, not the stale news of sin, is the Christian's obsession.

Many of us could benefit from taking ten minutes a day not just to count our blessings, but to count the ways we bless others.

Rather than running ourselves down, we need to agree with God who has "raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 2:6). To believe in God is to believe also in ourselves.

Day 46 Song and Dance

Song and dance must be done with all the heart—or why bother?—and this in itself effects a change. The very act of throwing oneself utterly into an activity releases joy. So often we hang back from life, but spend a night dancing your heart out and see how it feels. Then approach work, marriage, church, everything this way. A life of joy requires giving oneself a hundred percent.

I try to see people as they would be if their customary reserve were suddenly uncorked and the champagne of their souls came bubbling out.

Day 49 The Ultimate Sacrifice

At his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the LORD
Psalm 27:6

If I want to be happy in Jesus, I must begin by setting aside all other goals. I make it my one ambition to bless the Lord in all circumstances, to love Him no matter what, to worship Him always, to remain, to be constantly and eternally grateful.

The least I can do in return is to be nice to Him by being happy about what He's done.

For years I went around expecting God to be nice to me and wondering why He wasn't. I had to learn this rule: Be nice to Jesus and He'll be nice to you. He's nice to you anyway, but without joy you won't notice it. Why not thank and praise the Lord, giving Him the sacrifice of joy by being a happy Christian?

Day 53 Let God be Right

Joy instinctively sides with God in everything, against human circumstances, against transient feelings, against common sense. Common sense does not yield joy; joy is supernatural sense. To attain the supernatural I must adopt God's point of view. Therefore I resolve to let God be right about everything.

Day 54 Shortcut to Happiness

Happy people can have just as many problems as unhappy ones. The difference is that unhappy people hate having problems, whereas happy people are content to work through their problems, finding joy in spite of and even because of them. Joy doesn't result from avoiding suffering but from moving through it.

Day 55

"Are you at the end of your light? Right around the next corner a bright red leaf shines for you in a still pool. Even now your world holds an infinite number of such glimpses of mysterious beauty—hidden in a nearby forest, in your home, even in the concrete jungle, or perhaps in a talk with a friend. One of these shining mysteries today, is just for you. Open your shutter quickly and take it in."

Day 62 Tending the Fire

Human hearts are meant for burning, but we have two choices how to burn—consumed with selfishness or warmed with the joy of the Lord.

Day 66 Next!

To seize joy in the present, it's necessary to forget what's behind.

Forgiveness means letting go of the hope of a better past.

Just as regret over yesterday has the power today, so joy today has the power to obliterate a lifetime of pain.

Day 68 Air Sandwiches

As I examined the reasons for my joy in the midst of ordinary days, I realized that joy loves ordinary life best of all.

Day 74 Joyful Noise

Joy is happy only when the whole world lies open before it, untrammelled and uncensored.

Day 77 A Firm Foundation

Moodiness is the deadening of healthy emotions, whereas joy is emotionally alive. Anyone who doesn't allow room for sadness, anger, and suffering cannot remain happy. The joy of the Lord is all-inclusive, deriving its strength from the very fact that it has carefully considered every aspect of reality under the sun, yet still remains happy.

Day 80 Jesus' Secret

If at times all you can do is suffer, do it well. You can still pray to be set free, but prayer means asking and trusting, not pouting and demanding. More joy comes from trust than from sense of self-mastery.

How is the cross coming to you right now? Disease? Divorce? The death of a loved one? There's only one thing to do with this cross: Pick it up and rejoice. We'll recognize the cross of Christ because, as we pick it up, it feels light. The cross is heavy only when we shoulder it unwillingly. Our own bitterness weighs it down.

Day 83 Making it Last

While there's nothing wrong with making practical use of joy's energy, getting things done isn't the primary purpose of joy. Joy's purpose is to rejoice in God, the Joy Giver, and in all His good works.

Day 87 Resurrection

Joy comprehends secrets that cannot be known in any other way.

Joy is a message from the heart of God that all is well.

Day 88 Confidence

Knowing we're loved by God is the basis of joy.

A life of joy depends upon approaching each day not in fear or worry but in the confidence of faith.

Joy springs from a deep seated confidence that God's life in us is incorruptible and inalienable.

Day 90 Ecstasy

Yet ultimately I discovered that the deepest joy comes out of the blue, for no rhyme or reason, not because one is praying or meditating or feeling filled with faith, nor because one is being very good or has done anything right, but only because God Himself is all goodness and all rightness and because the depths of His joy surpass all understanding.