

PUBLICATION

On My Bookshelf – *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*

December 14, 2017

In Fall 2016, Archbishop Desmond Tutu and His Holiness the Dalai Lama published *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*, the written memorialization of a weeklong conversation between two spiritual leaders who are also known as "infectiously happy." Published before the 2016 election in the United States and the tumultuous events of the past year, the book offers wisdom for all of us looking to "find joy" during challenging times.

Both men are now in their eighties and have experienced more adversity than most of us hope to in a lifetime. The Dalai Lama has been a refugee in India since 1959, when he fled during the Tibetan uprising following China's attempt to assert control over Tibet. Archbishop Tutu experienced the injustices of a segregated South Africa under apartheid rule and is currently suffering with cancer. Yet, both men are recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize and deliver universal messages of happiness, compassion, and understanding.

The weeklong conversation was divided into three general categories: day one focused on "The Nature of True Joy," days two and three on "Obstacles to Joy," and days four and five on the "Eight Pillars of Joy." Each day was further segmented into discussions aimed at learning more about the ways these men have found inner peace and strength in the face of personal struggles, based on questions submitted in response to a world-wide questionnaire asking people what they wanted to know. For example, sub-chapters are named "Nothing Beautiful Comes Without Some Suffering," "You are a Masterpiece in the Making," "Gratitude: I am Fortunate to Be Alive," and "Generosity: We are Filled with Joy."

No matter your religion, background, or stage in life, this book is a "how-to" guide to finding your own joy. Within the appendix, there are specific exercises called "Joy Practices" that incorporate prayer, guided meditation, and self-examination geared toward the Eight Pillars of Joy: perspective, humility, humor, acceptance, forgiveness, gratitude, compassion, and generosity.

The depth of wisdom from these two pillars of peace is hard to capture in a brief review of the work. From Archbishop Tutu, we hear that "Our greatest joy is when we seek to do good for others," and "You are made for perfection, but you are not yet perfect. You are a masterpiece in the making." The Dalai Lama's instructions regarding self-compassion struck a chord. He notes:

"Modern culture makes it hard for us to have compassion for ourselves. We spend so much of our lives climbing a pyramid of achievement where we are constantly being evaluated and judged, and often found to be not making the grade. We internalize these other voices of parents, teachers, and society at large. As a result, sometimes people are not very compassionate with themselves."

Ultimately, a shift in perspective can help you to be more patient and kind with yourself and with others. Both men agreed that "We are most joyful when we focus on others, not on ourselves. In short, bringing joy to others is the fastest way to experience joy oneself." I found no better review of this book than the one from *Publishers Weekly*, which proclaimed "This sparkling, wise, and immediately useful gift to readers from two remarkable spiritual masters offers hope that joy is possible for everyone even in the most difficult circumstances, and describes a clear path for attaining it."

I wish each of you abundant, persistent joy in this holiday season and beyond, and hope that you are truly touched by the wisdom found in *The Book of Joy*.