

Episode 67: Joy in Any Circumstance

Welcome to the 100% Awesome podcast with April Price. You might not know it but every result in your life is 100% because of the thoughts you think, and that my friends is 100% awesome.

Hello podcast universe! Welcome to episode 67 of the 100% Awesome Podcast. I'm April Price and I am so happy to be at my microphone today, and to have the chance to share something that I hope will make a difference in your life, and help you enjoy your Earth life experience just a little bit more. We could all use a little more enjoyment right now, right? Like for most of us, the disappointments are real and sort of omnipresent right now. Every time I tell my brain that its 50/50 my brain is like, not by my calculation, right? My brain is like, the way I see it, it's all bad. That is what brains do. So, mine is working.

And I love having the tools to manage my working brain when it offers its usual assessment, like brains just work on instinct, they are offering you nothing but negativity and problems. But you are a being with the ability to choose, with the ability to act, and not just be acted upon. You get to choose the way you experience your life, and that is just the best news ever. If you are tired of feeling like your life is just acting upon you, and you can't see things in any other way, coaching can show you the truth of what's really happening. It can show you where you are just listening to your brain and thinking the things it tells you are the truth and can show you where you have an entirely different option. It's kind of awesome, I have to say. And you can always sign up to try a session with me if you go to my website, aprilpricecoaching.com.

So, last Sunday, I was asked to speak to the youth in our area, there was a virtual fireside over zoom, and they asked me to talk about "Joy in Any Circumstance." How to find joy, and feel joy, no matter what is happening. And I thought that these thoughts might be useful for you too, because for the most part our brains are offering us a very disappointing story right now. And for many of us it feels very difficult, and so I hope these thoughts will help you find a little bit more joy in your circumstances.

So, today I'm actually going to give you the same talk as I wrote it for them. And so, that means there are obviously going to be some references to some of the circumstances that youth in particular face, but I hope that you will be able to see that the thoughts and principles I share to find joy in any circumstance are universal and they apply no matter what our personal circumstances are. So even though your examples of what's happening in your life might be different than the things that are happening for these youth, I hope that these thoughts about how to get to joy will still apply, and will help you in your life because no matter what our personal circumstances are joy is always available to each of us.

3:42

Okay so, here we go, I want to start tonight by telling you that, I love you. And more importantly I know that God loves you. I love what Elder Ballard said, "God knows you best, and loves you most." And I believe that with my whole heart, and I think it's kind of amazing that the God of

the whole universe, who knows me best, right? He knows all my flaws, and all my mistakes, and all my weaknesses, and all the ways I come up short. That God who knows me best, and all my stuff, loves me the most. That is the kind of God that you worship, the one that knows everything about you and loves you more than anyone else. And because he knows you best, and loves you the most, I asked him what he wanted me to say to you tonight.

You are here having an Earth-life experience, and as such, you have been separated from him for a time. You aren't with him right now, but he still has messages that he wants you to hear. He has things he wants you to know so that you can make the most of your time here on Earth. We are separated from him, yes, but he is still working in every way to help you learn, and grow while you're here, and have everything you need to be able to return to him.

Okay so, tonight I wanted to start with this story, and this happened when my children were very young, right? I think my daughter was about 8 at the time, and we were reading in the Book of Mormon. And we were getting to the end of the book where everybody was dying, right? Like the Nephites were dying by tens of thousands, like on every verse, like there is a verse, there's another 10,000, there's a verse, there's another 10,000, they're just like dropping like flies, right? And suddenly my daughter stopped reading, and she looked up at me and she said, "Wait a minute this book is not going to have a happy ending, is it?"

5:34

This was not the first time that we had read the Book of Mormon, but it was the first time that she really understood what was happening, right? That she really understood what was going on, and she just looked at me totally horrified, as I shook my head at her like, no no it is not going to have a happy ending. And then she said, "Why? Why would you have us read a book that doesn't have a happy ending?" And I think this is a really good question for all of us, right? We are here on Earth, and it's hard as you might have noticed, right? Just this afternoon my daughter is saying "Oh my gosh life is so hard, and President Nelson just said it's going to get harder."

You might have noticed that things don't go as planned, that there is disappointment, and heartache, and frustration, and loneliness, and embarrassment, and anxiety, and that's just like regular life, right? Then there are pandemics, and online school, and cyber bullying, and mass shaming on top of all of that, right? And it's just hard. And the question is, why? Why would God create an experience for us that wasn't just a happy little story, that wasn't just a story with one fun thing after another, right? Like a story that has a chapter with perfect childhoods, and then a chapter on being really popular, and then a chapter on being talented, and being really successful at everything you try, right? And the chapter on getting into the college you want to, and marrying the perfect person, right? And on, and on, and on, like if God is in charge then why not a happy story instead of a hard one, instead of a sad one?

And you might be looking around your life right now, looking at your current story and wondering like, really, really this is my senior year, I'm doing senior year from the kitchen table with my 12-year old brother who's like annoying me from two seats down, right? You might be saying, really this this is my family, my parents fight all the time, and my brothers hate me, and

everybody just ignores me. You might be saying, really this is my body, I have depression, and anxiety, and I'm clearly the ugliest one on Instagram, right? You might be saying, really this, this is who I am, I just keep making mistakes, and I'm never going to get it right.

Maybe someone you love is struggling, or sick, or maybe that somebody is you, and you think really, we have to be sick, and hurting, and in pain. Why Heavenly Father, why would you give me a story that doesn't have a happy ending? And then because we think that it was all supposed to be happy, that surely something has definitely gone wrong, and we think that, "Okay since it was supposed to be happy, and I'm not happy, that something's gone wrong." Then we think one of two things must be true. We think either one, there is no God or number two, he doesn't care about me. He's not intervening, he must hate me, he must be disappointed in me, he doesn't care about what's happening to me. We look around at the circumstances of our lives, and we notice that they aren't what we wanted, or they're hard, or they feel unfair, and we think that we've been abandoned by God. Either because he's not there at all, or he's just so disappointed in us that he doesn't care, and he won't help us. And I want you to know that neither of these scenarios is true.

He is there. He has always been there, and he loves you more than anything else in the universe. You are infinitely precious to him. So, my darling brothers and sisters, I think our premise is wrong. The premise that we are supposed to be happy. The premise that if the story is sad, or if the story is hard, then something has gone wrong, because I think it hasn't. And what I want to offer you is that it was supposed to be hard, and then not only was it supposed to be hard, it is hard, because God is there, and it's hard because God loves you. It's hard because he loves us. So I want to make a case for this tonight in the hopes that it will help you find joy in all of it. Joy in every circumstance. Joy when it's easy, and joy when it's hard, because the joy comes not from it being easy or comfortable, the joy comes from knowing that it's all happening for us out of love. Because he knows you best, and loves you most.

10:01

Okay so, I want to start at the very beginning. For me it always starts with Adam and Eve, right? And when Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, God told them that he was going to design their Earth-life experience with pain, and with sorrow, and with difficulty, for their sakes. He didn't do this because he was mad at them, he did it because he knew it was the only way for his children to learn and grow. The garden was a blissful happy place, it was a place where the story was only happy. But living that perfectly happy story wasn't why he designed an Earth and let us come. He didn't do all that work creating a world, and creating our bodies so that we could just have a happy story. He did it so that we could get an education. He did all of it so that we could learn, and grow in ways that we couldn't when we were living with him. And so, God told Adam and Eve in Genesis 3. God said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." Now listen to that phrase, "for thy sake." That phrase I think that means for our benefit, for thy good. And if it's for our benefit, then I think it actually means that it's better for us.

It's better cursed, than not. It's better if this story has some heart ache than if it doesn't. The Earth-life experience with pain, and sorrow, and noxious weeds with all of that was designed for you with pain on purpose. For your sake. It was never supposed to be happy all the time, it was

never supposed to be easy. And we kind of think it was, right? Like when you read the title of the fireside tonight, "Joy in Any Circumstance," maybe you thought like, I meant you got to be happy no matter what. Happy in every circumstance, right? And this isn't what I mean at all. You are never supposed to be happy all the time. You were never supposed to be happy no matter what, you were supposed to have an Earth-life experience which means it was supposed to be both happy, and sad. It was supposed to be both painful, and delightful. It was supposed to hurt, and you were supposed to swear, and cry, and bleed. And when we think it's only supposed to be bliss, and we're only supposed to laugh, or never worry, or be constantly content, we're just wrong about that.

In the scriptures Lehi says, "For it must needs be that there is an opposition in all things if not so my first born in the wilderness righteousness could not be brought to pass. Neither wickedness neither holiness nor misery neither good nor bad." And he went on to explain, if this wasn't the case, if we didn't live in a world with the opposition, with contrast, then he says, "All things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created and they must have remained forever."

No notice what he says, they're the same state, meaning they wouldn't change, they would stay in the same state. They couldn't grow. If they didn't live in a world of contrasts, where there was 50% positive and 50% negative, then they would have remained the same. There would have been no progress. No progress even possible. And this wasn't the plan, right? The plan was progress, Lehi says, "Adam fell that men might be, and men are that they might have joy." And I think that word joy means the opportunity to progress, the opportunity to become. We fell so that we could have the opportunity to grow, and to change our state. And that is what we have been given by coming to a world of opposition where it's not all a happy story. We've been given a chance for joy which means a chance not to stay the same, but to become a little more like God, and reach our eternal potential.

13:47

Now notice what else Lehi says here. He says that, if it was all happy, if it was all just ease, and comfort, and enjoyment which is like sometimes what we think we want, right? Then the whole thing would have been for nothing. He says, "It must needs have been created for a thing of not wherefore there would have been no purpose in the end of its creation." The purposes of God are fulfilled in the contrast between happiness and misery, you need both of them to have joy and be able to reach your eternal potential. And out of love, God created the opportunity for you to have that experience. That means that, yes, it's going to be disappointing, it's going to be hard, your heart is going to break because he loves you, and he wanted to give you a chance not to remain the same, but to become more like him. He wanted to give you the chance for joy. The fact that things are hard does not mean that God is not there. The fact that things are hard are evidence that he is there, and he is doing his work for your sake, that his hand is guiding all of it.

Now, I just want to speak to the idea for just a moment about this idea that when things are hard we sometimes think that it's because we've done something wrong. That maybe God is disappointed or angry. We're like just so frustrated with us, that he doesn't want to help us

anymore. We all have moments where we think that God just must not love us, he must not care about us. And we use the hard, negative circumstances of our lives as evidence of that. And so, I want you to notice for just a moment the lives of people that you know, God loves. I want you to think about Abraham, and how many disappointments he had. I want you to think about Jacob's son, Joseph. How many disappointments, and heartaches, and uncertainty, and fear, and grief he had. I want you to think about Nephi, and Mormon, and Moroni, and I want you to think about how lonely, and scared, and disappointed, and frustrated they must have felt. I want you to think about Paul, and how disappointed, and misunderstood, and scared, and abandoned he must have felt.

I want you think about Joseph Smith, and how many disappointments, and betrayals, and terrifying moments he had. And the list goes on, and on, right? Sometimes I think that's why we have the scriptures, because in the scriptures we have a record of those who we kind of think are the most chosen, and loved of God. No, of course no one is more chosen, or more loved of God, but we kind of think that, right? As humans we're kind of like, yeah, he's a little bit better, he's a little bit more loved, right? But in the scriptures, we have evidence that even they suffered, that they hurt, that they cried, and mourned, and questioned that their stories weren't happy, right? In the eyes of the world, and in our mortal perspective, most of them didn't even get a happy ending. Most of them died alone, and suffering. And so, if you are disappointed, you are in good company.

16:45

If you are disappointed in the way things are going in the circumstances of your life, nothing has gone wrong. This is the way of it. This is what it means to be a child of God. This is the Earth-life experience, and this is why you came. If you think about all of God's people they were disappointed. Abraham was disappointed, Joseph was disappointed, Paul is disappointed. None of it went according to plan, but it didn't mean that God hated them, and it doesn't mean God hates you. Rather if you are disappointed you can be sure it is because God loves you, and simply has a plan that is different than yours. Because God is in the education business. You are here to learn. Joy, or eternal progress is available to you, the more you learn, and he has a curriculum that was personally designed for you. He knows what you need to learn to not "stay in the same state" as Lehi said.

He knows that there are certain things that you can only learn through heartache, that you can learn in no other way. Just as he knew it for Abraham, and Joseph, and Nephi, and Paul. For each of us he creates the class schedule for our Earth-life experience, and the only problem is that it's probably not the class schedule you thought you were gonna get, or that you thought you should get. It's probably not the class schedule that you had in mind. And the difference between our expectation of what life should be like, what the schedule should be like, and what our life actually is, the classes were actually in right is what is causing us to think that God isn't there or that he doesn't love us. The difference between our expectation, and what is, is the only problem here. I also just want to offer you that each one of us has a different curriculum. Like right now my daughter is serving a mission in Iowa, and her mission curriculum in the midst of Covid, is

vastly different than my sons who served a mission to Italy three years ago, and my husband who served three decades ago, right?

He's always saying like, "Gosh my mission was so different than hers." Right, like "My MTC experience was so different from hers." Like that's a bad thing. The only thing that makes it bad is expecting our curriculums to be the same. Ammon's curriculum was different than Abinadi's. King Benjamin's curriculum was different than Brigham's. Yours will be different than your sisters, or the other priests in your quorum. And the more you can let go of what you thought the happy story, or the happy ending should have been, and accept God's curriculum for you, the more joy you can have in any, and every circumstance. To find joy in every circumstance, even the difficult ones, even the heartbreaking ones, I think we need to remember three things.

19:32

So first, I think you should always assume that everything is happening because God loves you, because he knows you best and loves you most. Second, I think you should have faith that everything is working for your good, and that doesn't mean that it's going to be easy, right? It means that it will be better. He always does for us what is better. And third, I want to offer you that the more we can access God's thoughts, and think in the way that he thinks, the more peace, and joy we can find in any circumstance here on Earth. We only have a human perspective, given to us by our human brains, but God sees so much more for us. And the more we can think about our lives like God does, the more joy is available to us along the way.

So, I want to show you just one example of this in the scriptures that I hope will help you. So, I want you to think about Joseph, Jacob's son, for a minute. Joseph grew up in this family where all his brothers hated him. His brothers were jealous of him. He lived in a family where most of the people at the dinner table wished he was dead. So much so that one day he goes out to get his brothers, where they're watching their father's sheep, and they see him coming a long way off, right? And they conspired to kill him. And they're just like, "Okay, let's just kill him and then tell Dad that some wild animal killed him." And luckily Reuben is there, right? And he tries to talk about this. And he's like, "Hey, let's not kill him, let's just put him in a pit that he can't get out of." And so, they do this, and then they're eating their lunch, right? And a group of Midianites rides by and they decide to sell him as a slave for 20 pieces of silver, right? They're like, "We might as well make a profit." And so, we don't actually know what Joseph is thinking at this time, right? But you can imagine. And there are some apocryphal writings that aren't found in our standard works, but that give us a little bit of insight into what Joseph might have been thinking. And in one of those books there is a record that says, that when Joseph's brothers sold him, Joseph cried, like his heart was breaking, right?

He just like sobbed his heart out. So much so that like he was on this camel, and he was crying so hard that the Midianites made him get off and walk, if he wouldn't stop crying. So he gets off this camel, and he's still crying, he's still sobbing, he didn't stop. And so, they just say to beat him up, right? And they just keep hitting him to make him stop crying because he was devastated and terrified. And so, as they're going to Egypt they passed by the place where his mother Rachel is buried. And the apocryphal writings say, that he knelt on her grave and said this.

22:17

"Oh, my mother, my mother Oh thou who did give me birth, awake now and arise and see thy son how he is sold for a slave, and no one to pity him weep with me on account of my troubles and see the heart of my brethren. Arouse my mother, arouse awake from nicely for me and direct their battles against my brethren. Oh, how they have stripped me of my coat and sold me already twice for a slave, and separated me from my father and there is no one to pity me. Arouse and lay thy cause against them before God and see whom God will justify in the judgment and who he will condemn." And the record says, "And Joseph cried aloud and wept bitterly upon his mother's grave."

Now in this moment Joseph can only see that everything has gone wrong. It has not gone according to plan. He is heartbroken, he is disappointed. The circumstances seem hopeless, but Joseph is not abandoned, and he is not forgotten. God just had something else in mind, a different curriculum than the one Joseph had imagined for himself. Now as you know that wasn't the end of Joseph's troubles, right? He's going to spend a few years as a slave, he's going to spend some time in jail, right? It's fun times in Egypt, right? But time passes, and eventually Joseph comes to power in Egypt, and he sees his brothers again, and he becomes the means of saving them. And I want to read you what he's says from Genesis 45. Okay, so first of all, can I also just insert here that I love that Joseph is a crier, right? Like when you read this record and the brothers first come in he has to run out of the room, and hide his face, because he just cannot control himself.

He's like sobbing, right? And so, then they come back again, and this time they bring Benjamin and he just cannot help himself, right? He just starts sobbing, and he has all the Egyptians leave the room. But the record says that like they're out there in the hall and can him hear him crying, right? He's crying so loud that all the Egyptians can hear him. And he says, "Come near to me. I pray you. And they came near and he said I am Joseph. Your brother whom you sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that you sold me hither for God did send me before you to preserve life. And God sent me before you to preserve you of posterity, and the Earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither but God. And he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and Lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."

Now I just want to interrupt this story here for a moment to emphasize and be sure to say that God didn't make Joseph's brothers sell him to the Midianites, right? If Joseph's brothers had chosen to love him God would have found another way to get Joseph to Egypt. God doesn't make people do wrong, or cause tragedies or cause disasters or worldwide pandemics. But he does use these things. He uses the natural consequences that happen from living in a natural world with other people, who make choices, to teach us, and to give us an opportunity to learn, and grow. The Fall, and the agency that we have each been given provides the mechanism of learning that we need, and God doesn't undo those effects when they can be used for our learning, and growth because that's what he cares most about, right? He's in the education

business. He cares about your education, your opportunity to receive joy as you become what he knows you can be.

25:45

Okay so, but that said, I want you to notice something in the two accounts that I read. I want you to notice how Joseph's thoughts changed. They change from, this isn't fair I've been mistreated I've been abused and abandoned. They change to, it was all for me, it was all for me, and it was all for you, and it was all designed by God. "It was not you that sent me hither, but God" he said, right? And he sent me because he loves us. He loves me, and he loves you. Joseph changed the way he saw the circumstances of his life. He saw it the way God saw it. And the more we can access God's perspective, God's thoughts, no matter what our circumstances are, the more peace and joy we can have, even when things are painful. When things don't go the way we want, or the way we think they should, our thoughts about those circumstances are what matter. Those thoughts can change how we feel, and if we can access God's thoughts more often, we can have more joy.

So, one of the best ways I think you can do that is through prayer, and through the scriptures. I think that you can go to your Father in Heaven in prayer, and scrub your heart out. Tell him how unfair it is, tell him how disappointed you are, tell him how heartbroken, and scared, and betrayed you feel. And then ask him to help you to see it the way he sees it. Ask him what he thinks, and he will give you his thoughts. They will come into your mind. Quiet thoughts that will help you see things differently, and think more like him. The same thing happens when I read my scriptures, I see how God doesn't see bad circumstances as bad for us. It reminds me that he's in charge of my education, and he never fails us.

So, my darling brothers and sisters, if it is hard, if the circumstances seem intolerable, that's okay. It doesn't mean that God isn't there, and it doesn't mean that he doesn't care about you. In fact, it means the opposite. He is there. His plan is working, and he loves you. Trust him, and his curriculum. The last thing I want to leave you with is to remember that no matter how unhappy, or disappointing, or painful the circumstances are, or how unhappy, or unfair the ending seems, because God is in the education business. He has made joy the ending for each of us, no matter what happens here. The real ending is always happy, because he sent his son.

28:09

So, I want to go back with you to where we started tonight. When my daughter asked me, "Why we would have her read a book that didn't have a happy ending?" I thought about her question for days, right? I've actually thought about it for years, but I thought about why it's so hard. I thought about why a loving Heavenly Father would send his children to suffer, to experience a story that was heartbreakingly sad sometimes, because remember, it isn't just a book, right? It's an account of real people, who had real suffering, and how could our Heavenly Father stand it. It goes way beyond reading a sad story, those were his children living a sad story. How could he bear it? How could he bear to watch the children that he loves best, suffer? And I thought about it for days, and then a few days later, at nearly the very last chapter of the Book of Mormon I found my answer. And in the last chapters Moroni shares a letter from his dad Mormon, and at

the end of that letter Mormon wrote, "My son may not the things which I have written grieve thee, to way thee down unto death." In other words, he's saying, don't let this sad story get you down. Whatever you are suffering here, whatever disappointments you face, don't let it grieve you, don't let it trouble you, or alarm you, or wear you down.

And here's why. He goes on to say, "But may Christ lift the up and may his sufferings and death and the showing his body and to our fathers and his mercy and long suffering and the hope of his glory and eternal life rest in your mind forever." Mormon says, all is not lost, no matter how difficult the circumstances, no matter how sad the story, no matter how different it is from the one you had written in your mind. All is not lost. Because you have a Savior. Because Christ came. Let that rest in your mind forever. Because Christ came, and because of his mercy, and long suffering, all the effects of the fall will be undone, and eternal life is available to you.

Adam and Eve fell that you could come, and have a contrasting learning experience with happiness, and misery, and pleasure, and pain. And Christ suffered, and rose again, so that you could get back, and that no loss, or heartache, or disappointment that you have while you were here learning would ever be permanent. And no matter how difficult, and tragic the circumstances you will face and learn from throughout your lifetime. Because of Christ it will all be made right in the end. I love how Stephen E. Robinson put it. He wrote, a "All the negative aspects of human existence brought about by the fall. Jesus Christ absorbed into himself all that the fall put wrong the Savior in his atonement puts right." My dear brothers and sisters, you are amazing spirits who live in an amazing time in the history of the world. Perhaps there has never been so much contrast, perhaps in many ways, life has never been so easy for Heavenly Father's children, and at the same time life has never been so hard.

31:12

Your life experience was never designed to be easy, it was designed for your growth. That is what your Father cares about, because he knows that staying in the same state isn't joy. Joy is found in eternal progression, even for Christ. There is a scripture in Hebrew 12, where Paul says, "Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which does so easily beset us and let us run with patients. The race that is set before us looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

Paul says your race your circumstances your life is not going to be easy but set aside every weight and look to Jesus. He sounds a lot like Mormon, right? Don't let it weigh you down even unto death. But let the thought of Christ mercy rest in your mind forever. Paul is saying the same thing, and then he says something so interesting to me. He says, "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising the shame and his set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

He says that Christ came for joy as well, that he also had eternal progress to make, and to receive his joy. To make the progress that was the next step of his progression he had to endure the cross, and the shame of the world. He had to do hard things. He had to do the hardest thing he had to handle, the most difficult of circumstances in the garden and on the cross, to receive the joy that he came for, right? "It says who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross and

the shame of the world in his set down at the right end of the throne of God as you encounter a life of difficult circumstances and have faith in God's plan for you."

Any way you are following the example of Christ, you are following the pattern that he set before us, that the way to joy is through the pain, and sorrows, and experiences that were personally designed for each one of us. Your story may not be the one you thought it would be, but allow Christ to be the author, and finisher of your faith. The author and finisher of your story, and if you do, you are guaranteed a happy ending. Christ endured Gethsemane, and Calvary for each one of us, and in doing so he received joy, and completed the mission the father gave him. And because he finished his work, you cannot fail in yours. And because he finished his work, all of our stories will have happy endings. All things are records of God's love. Amazingly even the difficult parts of your life testify of that love, and his unending dedication to you, and your education because through them he is providing a way for you to have true joy through eternal progression. And that my friends is 100% Awesome. I love you for listening and I'll see you next week!

Thanks so much for joining me on the podcast today. If you want to take the things that I've talked about and apply them to your life. Sign up for a free coaching session at aprilpricecoaching.com. This is where the real magic happens and your life starts to change forever believing your life is 100% awesome is totally available to every one of us. And as your coach. I'll show you exactly how to do that. So that you can truly love your Earth-life experience the way things are is not the way things have to stay.

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And that my friends is 100% awesome!