

Ice cream better than medication

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The signs of the season have begun. We have changed our clocks and it is getting dark early, colder weather has come, leaves are falling in our front yards, and rain showers keep us indoors. With our umbrellas now out of the back of the closet and heavier jackets hanging on the hook, we are finding ourselves doing things we haven't done in many months, such as turn on the heater and tune in the Weather Channel. My children woke up to a roaring fire in the fireplace yesterday. They loved it.

There is another sign of the season and it is resonant on people's faces; it is stress. It is during this season that the heavy load of fall seems to catch up with many people. New projects started, challenging schedules commenced, full course-loads embarked upon, and the energy of it all carries you headlong into a season of "on-the-go morning till night." But about now, the tranquility of hot summer beach days and relaxing vacations is now spent, and the thrill of back-to-school excitement has waned for most of us. This is where the grind sets in. People are already talking about their need for a getaway trip to anywhere. Add to that the clearer calendar view of the holidays almost upon us, which for many lost its awe somewhere during the teenage years, and you have a recipe for "glum."

What is glum you ask? Well, it is similar to ho-hum. It is where your eyes find it hard to show their brightness and your smile is less than radiant, your emotions seem to be dulled where you feel nothing as much as you used to. Pains don't consume you, but neither does happiness. You are glum. Life somehow narrows for those in this condition. It is as though the spectrum between good times and bad has become thin and everything you feel is somewhere not far from the centerline. Well if glum is the diagnosis for you, what is the prescription?

You know, some offer medications for this, but for most, I don't think that is the answer. Others offer pep talks, pithy articles, counseling, and group sessions to cheer you up. This does seem to work for awhile, but chocolate is cheaper. I personally prefer ice cream. Still others insist you must deny your state and speak positive words until you're healed. It can sound good from the sidelines like when you're calling out to a football player on the field to get up off the ground and stop loafing, but when it is you on the ground, the advice may seem trite. There is a phrase that I have borrowed: "Choose your attitude." This exhortation really does work sometimes, trust me, I have four children and this simple reminder can go along way.

But there are times when choices are bit more rudimentary than this. When choosing happiness is no more realistic than choosing to

have my car start without gas. Without gas my car will not go. Pretty simple, huh? No amount of choosing will change that unless I choose to earn money, choose to go to the gas station, and choose to fill the tank. In the same way, shallow words provide no power to set your life straight. Getting on track and staying there requires more than mere "humanity." Is that a word?

The Bible teaches of an inexpressible joy. A joy that can't be explained wherein there is tremendous strength. The Scriptures also reveal a peace that goes beyond anyone's ability to explain or understand. This peace transcends circumstance, problems and stress. Where many miss it is in the source of that joy and peace. People are seeking joy and peace and not finding it because they are often misdirected. They are looking for a force, an energy, a power, a verse, but are looking in the wrong place. Some even pray for this, but don't experience it because they are asking for the wrong thing.

The key is simple, and revealed in the Bible, that what you need, what we all need, is God himself shining through our lives. Not an energy of joy, not a power or force of peace, but God himself. So if you're glum you need God. If you're ho-hum you need God. God in prayer for what you really need, more of him in your life. Choose him! But get ready for an adventure that is anything but ho-hum and will find you everything but glum. God shining in our lives will cause experiences that you might not have expected: selflessness, compassion, humility, purpose, love, forgiveness of hurts, relationships restored, broken hearts mended. Jesus called it "life more abundant." Yes, it is an adventure, and it starts when we "choose life."

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Mid-Week Study:

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