

WALKING IT OUT – WEEK 7 – PLAY

Defining play

Play can be a wonderful way to experience God and grow in your relationship with Him. Understand that there is a difference between simple amusement and genuine “play”. The former leaves us more tired than we started. (Ever taken a trip to Cedar Point and come back more exhausted than you left?) Yet the latter refreshes us and grounds us. It helps us be the people God created us to be.

Play involves any activity that gives us the opportunity to forget about our cares for a while – we can express our creativity or simply “be”. For some, it might involve swinging on a swing, playing a board game, tossing a ball around the yard, or breaking out a deck of cards for a quick game of Uno. Whatever the method, play (as a spiritual discipline) should refresh us, renew us, and leave us in a place where we can focus on our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Rejoice in the Lord always... (devotional)

The word “play” comes from the old English word “plegian” which literally translates to “leap for joy”, dance, rejoice and be glad. Though we may not see times of play focused upon in scriptures, we certainly see commands, encouragements, and admonitions to rejoice, be glad, and even dance.

Paul wrote, in Philippians 4:4, “*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*” The encouragement was so important that he felt it necessary to repeat it immediately. This was part of a final exhortation to the believers in Philippi (and to us); and was grouped with other important spiritual qualities such as: gentleness, prayer, peace, and thanksgiving.

We need to play! We need to rejoice! We need to dance like no one is watching! It frees us from taking ourselves too seriously and allows us to embrace the child-like heart that will allow us to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Questions to talk about at home and with your small group

- 1) What is your favorite game? Why?
- 2) What are the differences between: Play - Amusement - Competition?
- 3) What are some ways that we, as adults, can play?
- 4) How does playing free us to be who God created us to be?

Prayer

Lord God, You are our Father and we know that You desire for joy to fill Your children's hearts. Free us to be the people you created us to be. Help us Lord, not to take ourselves so serious that we forget that joy is a part of our lives with you. Re-create in us a child-like heart so that we may see you as we were intended to... our loving Father! For Your Glory! Amen.

Additional verses for study

Psalm 23:2; Proverbs 15:13; Ecclesiastes 2:24; Zechariah 8:4-5; Matthew 11:28; Matthew 18:2-6; Mark 10:13-16; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17

Weekly challenge

PLAY! Make time during your week to play! Go to the park, play in your backyard, or stay in the house. Wherever you find yourself play a game! Play with your family, your friends, your kids, your spouse or your dog! Play a game where there's little completion (if any). Be silly!

If you're really enthusiastic, have a game night at your house. Invite friends, have a potluck and buy inexpensive trinkets to give out as prizes!

If you have children

Put aside time to purposely play with your children. Let them pick the game, and then you pick a game. Help them understand taking turns, rules, directions, fun, winning and losing.

Kids' activities: Coloring and activity sheets involving sports, games and children having fun!

