Living Joy Reflection – Week 3

Rule #2: Practice Silence Reflection
(All quotes and page numbers are from the book unless otherwise noted.)

Quotes to Ponder:
Silence isn’t just an absence of noise. It’s how we open up to the presence of something more. (p. 44).

Music and silence – how I detest them both!…[Hell] has been occupied by Noise – Noise, the grand dynamism, the audible expression of all that is exultant, ruthless, and virile – Noise which alone defends us from silly qualms, despairing scruples and impossible desires. We will make the whole universe a noise in the end…. The melodies and silences of Heaven will be shouted down in the end. (C. S Lewis. The Screwtape Letters, 119-120)

The fruit of silence is prayer. (Saint Teresa of Calcutta)

Let’s Get Started:
On a trip to Hawaii, my husband and I stood on the top of Haleakala and for a few minutes, there was silence. No sounds of cars, people, birds, nothing – pure silence. I thought this is the sound of God. Silence. Sweet, sweet silence. Chris explains the importance of silence to finding our JOY: “Silence is the soil where joy grows, because it opens you to gratitude, creates the space for friendship to flourish, allows you to truly rest, and makes prayer possible. So, you need silence to live at least half the rules for a joyful life!” (p. 44).

In the Old Testament, Elijah recognized God in the “light silent sound” rather than the earthquake or the fire (1 Kings 19: 11-13). Throughout the Gospels, Jesus would go off to a quiet place and pray. Jesus also invited His disciples to “Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.” (Mark 6:31). Every holy man and woman who seeks God understands the necessity of silence in hearing the voice of God. Yet, we struggle to find silence in our world.

Noise is the way the devil distracts us from the silence. The quote above from The Screwtape Letters, a famous book by C. S. Lewis, is written from the perspective of one devil training a recruit on the ways of evil. The devil hates the music that we worship God with and silence. “Hell is occupied by noise.” We cannot hear God in the noise. We must create a space of quiet within ourselves and at times around us to be open to hearing God’s quiet whisper.

Chris expounds on the way technological advances have added to our noise. Technology has fed the illusion that we can be all-knowing. The amount of information that is just one click away is amazing. Technology has also fed into our illusion of being all-doers. Posts to social media feeds require quick responses. Emails need to be answered. Multi-tasking has become a buzzword that means do a lot of things at the same time without truly concentrating on one task and doing it well. Newsfeeds are instantaneous and can become addicting. Technology, while important, has a time and a place because, in the long run, we are distracted
from the things that really matter, such as relationships with our family. Chris states, “We are the most noise-bombarded generation in history, and it’s literally robbing us of sanity … let alone joy.” (p. 53)

Chris presents six gifts that come from silence (p. 53-58). Silence leads to substance / more meaningful work, wonder, gratitude, your dreams, rest, and friendship. Chris makes this connection between wonder and gratitude: “Silence leads to reverence. Reverence leads to wonder and awe. Wonder and awe lead to gratitude. Gratitude leads to joy.” (p. 55). He also shares that “Silence is the space where dreams grow.” (p. 56). And where we can be receptive to each other in bonds of love and friendship. (p. 58).

Recently, my husband and I met out-of-state friends at Shenandoah River State Park where there is no cell phone service. You must drive at least 4 miles out of the park in either direction to pick up service. While it was at times frustrating because we could not use the Internet to find answers to questions, it was also refreshing. We were much more attentive to each other and to the nature that surrounded us. For both benefits, I am extremely thankful, which always brings me JOY.

Questions to ponder:
1. What is the “noise” in your life or that you experience throughout your day?
2. How do you feel about “silence”? Are you comfortable with silence? Do you make time for it?
3. Chris states that silence is “where dreams grow.” Think about a dream that came true for you or maybe one you are hoping comes true. How did silence play into dreaming that dream?

How-To’s from Chris (pgs. 59-65):
1. Stop, think, breathe – be mindful of what is going on around you in this present moment. God is always all around us. What is He saying in this moment?
2. Put limits on technology, TV, screen time. He suggests giving it up for 1 day/week. I would suggest, at the very least, putting technology away when others are gathered with you for a meal or a visit.
4. Take walks in nature (without the ear buds in).
5. Just do it – fight for time of silence. Do not be afraid of the silence. Let silence envelop you.

Join me in praying this prayer for JOY:

Heavenly Father, I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will declare all your wondrous deeds.
I will delight and rejoice in you; I will sing hymns to your name, Most High.
You will show me the path to life, abounding joy in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever. I trust in your faithfulness.
Grant my heart joy in your help, that I may sing of the LORD,
"How good our God has been to me!"
Father, help me to remain in your love.
So that your joy may be in me and my joy may be complete.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.