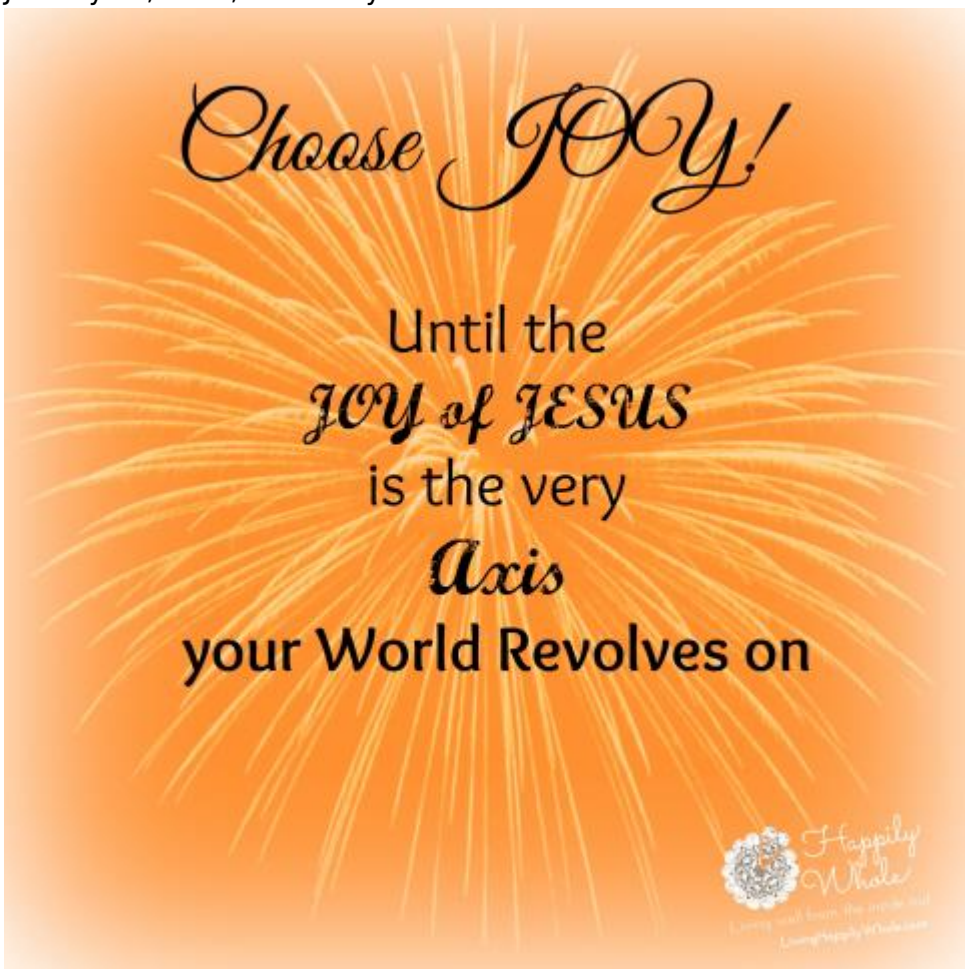
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JOY: Fake It 'Til You Make It

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Some days we wake up overwhelmed to a world already revolving with worry and our battle begins in us before we even get up out of bed. But this is exactly what we're trying to stop in our **quest for joy** [1]! It's why we're slowing down, squelching the worry and doing things radically different this year [1]!

What if we roll out of bed, instead of into a battlefield, into a journey towards joy? But I'm one of the guilty ones because too often my battlefield begins outside my bedroom door. When I open my eyes before I even rise, it sounds like I'll walk out into a minefield blasting with slamming doors, coveted hair straighteners and unauthorized borrowed articles of clothes. Just when I muster up the courage to enter the hallway waving my white flag, someone else launches a *word-grenade*!

Then there's *that one*…that *one* who, on that one day, decides she'll start out right. She hums a tune, tuning it all out. While I adore each of my sweet little soldiers, I'm drawn to her honest effort in the middle of the minefield. I'm drawn to her as she strives to do differently.

Because that's what we're all really doing here, isn't it? ***Vying for joy amidst the debris and dirt crashing into us and clouding our way through the course of a day…***

I notice her. I offer an encouraging smile to urge her on and I whisper a prayer of gratitude for this girl because I know what she's up to. ***She's, unwittingly, choosing joy amidst the junk.*** She's standing there smoothing her sweater, sweetly and slyly returning my smile. I see her wheels turning: she's ***choosing*** to deliberately walk away from the front lines.

It's simple, really. She's resolved to avoid the fuss and fake it. You see, normally she's suited up and ready to attack too. She's often right in the midst of the mess until this mom neutralizes the morning minefield. But on this particular day, she takes the initial, intentional step on a journey towards joy…she turns a cheek, *challenging herself to do differently.*

And, I'm drawn to her that day.

It's not favoritism for her or frustration in them. It's what I see just beyond her 'good-morning-go-d-deed'. As she peers into the mirror, I see the joy of Jesus twinkling in the reflection behind her eyes. ***And I'm always drawn into any ray of light Jesus shines.***

Just like she did that day, Jesus-joy is the kind we must choose. And sometimes that's a challenge! It's the always-available kind of joy we work for at first when we've lost touch. But even when it feels like we're faking it, we realize Jesus-joy exists in the deadliest minefields and darkest moments. After enough faking it, ***Christ's joy becomes an instinct, a constant option.***

If Jesus inhabits your heart, His joy already always resides right there! Maybe it's buried deep in rubble from your worries or its suppressed by your stress or schedule. Perhaps it's marred by your own messiness or it's gone dormant in the debris of mundane moments.

Maybe it's time to simply take that step and shine His light.

Yeah, maybe it's your morning to fake it 'til you make it. Because if what's in your heart eventually makes its way out into hands, can't we reverse that psychology and work joy backwards into our hearts? Let's see…let's just start!

Today choose JOY in just one tangible way. Quiet the noise. Hum above your hurts. Smile slyly at your stress. ***See Jesus in the mess.***

When bombs start bursting, shine His light! Because Jesus-joy illuminating unexpectedly from your heart is like that one girl choosing to dig deep and let joy burn bright in her battlefield.

Take a first step in a radically different direction [1]. Swim upstream with your words. Take the untrodden path with your ways. Choose an attitude of gratitude in the midst of minefields today. Choose kindness in the midst of chaos!

For me it means smiling at each instead of just that one rising above. It means gladly waiting a few extra minutes when he's running late for our date. It means suppressing my strained look when one forgets her permission slip and it's stopping before I scoff at that someone always seeming so critical. It means intentionally replacing harsh words with a compassionate heart. And it means letting my lists go when lingering an extra moment with the melting-down littlest one matters more.

Choosing joy sometimes means deliberately replacing wreckage with wisdom. And that's something we simply have to start practicing, even before the desire saturates our hearts. We pray all along the way that practicing joy penetrates our hearts until eventually JESUS-JOY becomes our new natural tendency.

Slowly but certainly, ***with each conjured up joyful step and with each sly smile, the joy of Jesus becomes the axis your world revolves on.*** You witness love and light at work in your life. It rubs off on others around you. Then, ultimately you experience this amazing eternal perspective because you've unlocked an understanding only accessible to those who already know the end…***and there's always joy in the journey when we know our eternal story ends in perfection!***

Where will you start today? How will you dare to do things intentionally different? Grab your journal and make a list. Put post-its in your purse. Stick reminders on your mirrors. What will you CHOOSE to do differently, to grab ahold of His hand and experience joy like you never have?

Ladies, let's step up! Let's obediently act the part all the while praying it penetrates our hearts. ***Let's spark this quest for joy with our eyes revealing our Savior's spark!***



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