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WE'RE OFF TO SEE...

What are the feelings you crave? What price will you pay to feel them again?

What daily habits can you build that will stimulate those feelings regularly?

How would your life be different if you are full of hope that godly living produces those feelings?

Romans 15:13 – May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I) **Beyond the Horizon...**

Do you know someone excellent at creating fun surprises? They know the people they plan for so well that the experience is always delightful. They choose the right events, companions, timing. If you do, you are likely to trust that person and go along with them on any excursion. You look forward to going beyond the horizon to discover what lies ahead. Jesus wants to be that person in our lives. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He has scouted out what is before us. He is prepared to lead us into pleasant surprises through the adventures of life. If we surrender control to Him, we can relax and enjoy what comes. Joy's purpose is fulfilled as we build momentum toward our destiny.

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♦**Who do you say I am?** Spiritual truth is based on our idea of identity. Human arrogance first wants to know our own. Who are we, what will we do, where do we fit? Without a clear idea of God's identity, this exposes us to the devil's deceptions. Jesus defends us by getting our attention, asking who do you say I am. God declared Himself I Am. Simple words that express continual existence. Never past or future, here or there, always and everywhere present. His infinitude means He is "the God of hope (Romans 15:13)," the One who did what He promised before we heard the Word.

♦**Get your fill:** There is only so much we can fit in. Into our homes, schedules, stomachs. Most parents have admonished their kids at some point to stop filling up on junk or they won't have room for dinner. Our hearts and minds, our souls, can only hold so much, too. Jesus has told you to stop filling up on spiritual junk so that He can "fill you (v13)," with His goodness. He measured—it will fit perfectly if nothing is in the way.

II) Are Treasures...

Perfect items, exhilarating experiences, lovely places. The right thing for the moment. As we venture to follow Jesus beyond each horizon, we receive such surprises. We shouldn't be surprised because He delivers what He said He would. We enter uncertain moments fearfully and find the wisdom and strength of character to get safely through. We find it because He put it on the path before we arrived. He has promised treasures laid up for us around each bend. Are we brave enough to stay the course?

♦**Power of imagination:** Great surprise artists provoke the power of imagination. We don't worry about what nasty thing lurks on the other side. We dream of our various desires that might be fulfilled by this wonderful person. Our memory of the ways in which we have been satisfied before opens wide the spectrum of hopeful things. Jesus wants us to be filled by Him "with all joy and peace (v13)." Joy in pleasing Him. Peace in submission. These are spiritual means, not ends. They serve His purpose by propelling us onward after Him.

♦**Yellow brick road:** Belief in the miraculous compels us to do that which is unimaginable. We willingly endure terrors for the promise of our greatest wishes. Cowards confront giants, simpletons demonstrate wisdom, and the heartless act selflessly while on the yellow brick road. Why? Because they are certain that what they crave more than anything lies at the end. Many are transformed this way by the testimony of a stranger. All the more should the treasures of "joy and peace in believing (v13)," be enough to keep us going.

III) Worth Discovery...

Jesus tells us of treasures worth discovery just over each horizon. Rare treasures unavailable here at any price. We must go to them. That's why He tells such magnificent stories about them. He wants to stir our imagination until we can't resist the adventure. How badly do you want to be wise, a source of joy, the rock on which others can depend? A partial filling isn't enough. Jesus prays that we our spiritual tank is full of fuel for the long road ahead.

♦**Eager expectation:** Joy and peace are the means to keep us going past each horizon. They are refilled with the many pleasant surprises we accumulate along the way. Crucially, these are linked to our belief. Belief that He is faithful and will not fail any promise. This belief, this faith in Him, manifests an eager expectation in our heart. This is their purpose, "that you may abound in hope (v13)." Belief that the yellow brick road leads to One who *might* produce a miracle isn't enough. We must be convinced the One *will* produce the miracle.

♦**Gathering steam:** We will not make it alone. Jesus leads us, but He often is far ahead of us preparing the way. Our companions are an encouragement, but struggle with their own frailties. We need a mighty guide to keep brave. Thankfully, we are continually filled with hope "by the power of the Holy Spirit (v13)." Our party is gathering steam with every victory over a terror that used to cause us to flee. God's Spirit is the source of a quiet confidence that we can do what we know we could not. Jesus surprises us by causing us to learn that we needed the God we always had, not a fraud behind a curtain.

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