



Joy





Core Truth: God gives JOY!

Scripture: “Oh, the joys of those who trust the Lord, who have no confidence in the proud or in those who worship idols.” Psalm 40:4



Let’s talk about what joy means. Joy is a feeling of extreme happiness. Joy comes from inside of us. Joy lets us have hope even in really hard situations. Joy allows us to feel happy even when things are hard.

This verse tells us that we get to have joy when we trust in the Lord, instead of trusting in idols. Trusting the Lord is reason to feel joyful! True joy should not come from things. True joy comes from Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. God is the source of our joy! Because of this, we know:

God gives JOY!

Let's Talk About It!

How can we experience the joy of Jesus?

- Worshipping Him (singing, dancing, praying).
- Reading the Bible.
- Trusting in the Lord.

Apply It!

How can we show joy to other people?

- Being happy despite the situation, even when it is hard!
- Having a positive attitude!
- Invite them to worship with you!

Prayer

Dear God,

We thank You for the joy we get to experience because of You. Thank You for being the source of joy in our lives. Thank You for reminding us to be joyful even when it is hard. We love You.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

~ Rebecca Robertson Holloway



A joyful heart makes a face cheerful...

Proverbs 15:13

Philippians—a Book Filled with Joy

You'll notice two main reasons for joy in Paul's letter to the Philippians.

1. The joy found in knowing Christ Jesus.
2. The joy of Christian fellowship, ministry together and providing for each other's needs. Both brought about by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 1:

3-5 I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, always praying with **joy** for all of you in my every prayer, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

18 Christ is proclaimed. And in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will **rejoice**.

25 I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your advancement and **joy** in the faith...

*Rejoice in the Lord
always.*

*I will say it again:
Rejoice!*

Philippians 2:

1-2 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my **joy** by thinking the same way, having the same love, sharing the same feelings, focusing on one goal.

16-18 Hold firmly the message of life. Then I can boast in the day of Christ that I didn't run in vain or labor for nothing. But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and **rejoice** with all of you. In the same way you also should **rejoice** and

share your **joy** with me.

28-29 For this reason, I am very eager to send him [Epaphroditus] so that you may **rejoice** when you see him again and I may be less anxious.

Therefore, welcome him in the Lord with all **joy** and hold men like him in honor, *(Read the verses before 28-29 to see who Epaphroditus was.)*

Philippians 3:

1 Finally, my brothers, **rejoice** in the Lord. *(The verses that follow—through verse 11—tell how knowing Christ is the reason to rejoice. It could be summed up with verse 8: the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.)*

Philippians 4:

1 So then, in this way, my dearly loved brothers, my **joy** and crown, stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

10 I **rejoiced** in the Lord greatly that now at last you have renewed your care for me.

Rejoice!

~ The Apostle Paul



*...Don't be dejected and sad, for the joy
of the LORD is your strength!*

Nehemiah 8:10 NLT

Joy and the SECRET to being Content

When thinking about the fruit of the Spirit it strikes me that all of the fruit mentioned are things that are contrary to the world. The world does not and cannot understand the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control that are talked about in Galatians 5:22. It reminds me of the verse that says the message we preach is “foolishness” to the Gentiles (or unbelievers) (1 Corinthians 1:22).



Let's take a look at joy. If you were to ask a random person on the street “what is joy?” they would most likely answer “a feeling of happiness” or something similar. If you were to ask them what kinds of things bring them

joy they may list their pets, their children, their significant other, their job, etc. But the Bible has something else to say about joy. The Bible says we should have joy no matter what. In fact, in James 1 we are told “consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.” Do you think rejoicing through trials would seem a bit foolish to your non-Christian neighbor? It probably would. It may even seem a bit odd to you. Why would God want me to rejoice in my trials? Well, if you finish out the verse in James he continues to say “knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” That verse goes on to explain that having the trials will bring about endurance and in us lacking nothing. We are joyful when we lack nothing, when we are trusting God to provide for us.

So how can we have joy through trials and in every part of our lives?

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." We are to always have joy, no matter what, and be thankful despite our circumstances. It seems difficult to do because life can get pretty hard. Well, I want to share with you the secret to rejoicing always and finding contentment and joy no matter what comes our way.

In Philippians chapter 4, Paul tells the people to "rejoice in the Lord always" (vs.4), to "let your gentle spirit be known to all men" (vs.5), and tells them to "be anxious for nothing" (vs.6). Sometimes those things may seem impossible but Paul gives us some insight on how this can be accomplished. Verse 6 goes on to say "in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." In verse 7 he says that God will guard our hearts and our minds and give us peace. If you continue reading on in chapter 4, Paul moves into contentment (which in my opinion is tied to rejoicing and not being anxious). Then Paul tells us the SECRET. It is the SECRET that we can all cling to. Many people take this SECRET out of context but if we put it in the context of the whole chapter the SECRET is pointing back to all of the things Paul has addressed in the previous verses. So here it is, here is how we can go through life and rejoice in all things, no matter what our emotions are or how we feel at the time, we can do it all without worry and without discontent if we keep this SECRET in mind:

I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME!!!! (vs.14) Yay! What a wonderful secret, a secret that shouldn't be kept! We can do it. We can have Joy in any and all circumstances. We can do it because God gives us the strength.

~ Christy Davis

*When I am filled with cares,
Your comfort brings me joy.*

Psalm 94:19





The Nashville Zoo

Joy Through Trials and Troubles

It's easy to be joyful when you're opening your birthday presents! Or skipping to the zoo with grandbabies! But how can we be joyful in the year 2020?

2020—the year of trials and troubles: floods, tornadoes, a pandemic full of sickness and death, skyrocketing unemployment, murder hornets, riots and looting, a tsunami of dust from the Sahara desert (you can't make this stuff up!). We are in a collective trial full of troubles. Many of us face personal trials and troubles too: financial uncertainty, addictions triggered by isolation, cancer and other medical troubles, family issues... the list is as varied and endless as we are. How do we rejoice in the Lord always? And again, Paul says, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4)

First—Remember—God is at work!

The first thing to do is remember that God uses trials and tribulation to help make us “mature and complete.” I'm not saying that God causes destruction in your life just so He can make you mature and complete. In a broken world bad things will happen to good people at times. God works in and through the difficulties of life: to help mold us into the image of His Son, to give us wisdom (just ask), and to make us mature and complete. Knowing that should make your heart shout for joy!

James 1:2-5 “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”

Romans 8:28 “We know that all things work together for the good of

those who love God: those who are called according to His purpose.”

Second—Keep your eyes on Jesus!

Jesus found joy as He faced the cross because He saw what was coming.

Hebrews 12:2 “keeping our eyes on Jesus, the source and perfecter of our faith, who for the *joy that lay before Him* endured a cross and despised the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of God's throne.” (*emphasis mine*)

As we keep our eyes on Jesus—we may not see what's coming the way He did, but we know that He will give us strength and peace and joy through all of life as we follow Him! Joy doesn't depend on what circumstances life brings our way, but on the ONE who sustains our life—even during the difficult times. Am I happy that murder hornets may show up at my house and kill all of my bees? (or me?) No! But “I will rejoice and be glad in Your faithful love because You have seen my affliction. You have known the troubles of my life.” Psalm 31:7 (By the way, you should read all of Psalm 31....)

~ R. Lyndel Littleton





The amount of “joy” you derive from this picture may depend on the number of people in your house that you do laundry for! Thank you, Heather Sugg, for reminding us of one of the simple joys in life—

Sunshine in My Soul

This morning was dark, the skies gray, my windows dripping with rain. I felt a little dreary, maybe even a little sad. As I looked up into the darkness of the stormy skies a flash of light pierced through a slit in the



Dunbar Cave

clouds. It reminded me that the sun was still shining above the clouds, that the storm with all its power and blackness could not extinguish the light above and that the dreariness would soon vanish and the sun would take its rightful place. I wonder if I would really appreciate the light of day if there were no dark storms. Yet, the storm serves many good purposes in the overall scheme of nature.

I thought... is my life like the weather, some days bright and sunny and other days dark and dreary? Do I appreciate life's pleasures more after a bout of pain or depression? Are there times that I make my own storms, that I hang on to those wet, gray thoughts? Or do I have the power within

me to banish the inner storms and bring out the sunshine in my soul?

Oh, sure, circumstances often affect my attitude. But they change. I need to strip them of their power to rob me of a happy day. Will the dreary circumstance go away if I worry about it? I don't think so. Will I feel better if I worry about it? I don't think so. How about if I yell at someone close to me...that ought to help? I don't think so.

So, what can I do? That's a tough question, but I think the answer lies in my own belief that the Power within me is greater than all of those circumstances, those clouds of doubt and fear. Each day I need to choose the sunshine instead of the rain, and if the rain comes down for a while...well, I can probably use the water for some part of my life. When I'm drenched with problems, I need to grow, to overcome situations and circumstances, to prepare for the day when the sun will shine and blooms will shoot up from the dark soil. Visit a nursing home, call an old friend, send someone a card of encouragement, visit the hospital, say thanks to your mail carrier, tell a sales clerk what a good job they are doing...spread a little joy. When that sunshine in my soul comes out, all is right in the world. Problems become opportunities and impossible feats are challenges. Life is good!

~ Don McElroy

All of Creation Sings His Praise

*Let the trees of the forest sing, let them sing for joy before the LORD,
for he comes to judge the earth.*

1 Chronicles 16:33 NIV



Kristi Huang Photography

Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them;



Bernard, Maine



let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.

Psalm 96:12 NIV

Oahu, Hawaii

*The meadows are covered with flocks
and the valleys are mantled with grain;
they shout for joy and sing. Psalm 65:13 NIV*



Kristi Huang Photography

*Sing for joy, you heavens, for the LORD has done this:
shout aloud, you earth beneath.*

*Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees,
for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel.*

Isaiah 44:23 NIV



Vineyards of São João de Pesqueira, Portugal



Calli Smith
PHOTOGRAPHY

