

The Joy of The Lord

Is there anyone you can think of who does not want to live joyfully? With the world and our own country in such a poor moral condition, do you know anyone who consistently displays an outward appearance of joy? Most people nowadays walk around with such a soured attitude, they probably couldn't crack a smile if they saw a chimpanzee riding a unicycle down 5th Avenue! Forget about finding anyone in traffic experiencing joy, even in a Ferrari. However, these grumps must be an insignificant number in contrast to those who *sincerely* desire to possess joy in abundance.

Webster's New World Dictionary defines *joy* as synonymous with "happy," "glad," and "cheerful." *Webster's* specifically defines it as "a very glad feeling; happiness; great pleasure; delight." It also refers to the source or cause of delight. The joy we speak of isn't the kind of having Publisher's Clearing House show up at your front door. Even the joy the guy in the Ferrari has doesn't last, albeit maybe a little longer than being in a Prius.

These definitions only define the expression of the pleasing emotion. People fail to consider the reasons of joy, the conditions in which it is expressed or how long joy

really lasts, its longevity. Joy in the Bible grants much more compound qualities than these definitions specify.

As we begin this lesson, just think about the following things as we look into God's Word. You have the breath of life in you (**Gen. 2:7**). He gave us His Commandments and Holy Days (**Exodus 20, Lev. 23**). God gave us His only Son (**John 3:16**). God gave us His promise of eternal life through His Son Jesus Christ (**Romans 6:23**). God gave you His Holy Spirit at baptism (**Acts 2:38**). We have been adopted into the Family of God (**2 Cor. 6:18**). We shall reign as kings and priests in God's Kingdom (**Rev. 1:6, 5:10**). Aside from the other countless blessings we have been given, these listed should put joy in us that cannot be diminished. We should be doing backflips and cartwheels!

Joy isn't necessarily synonymous with laughter. **Proverbs 14:13**- "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that joy *is* heaviness." This notes that laughter and pleasure often hide grief and sorrow. There's even a TV commercial for a prescription drug that helps people with depression in which the patient carries around a "smiley face" on a handle to mask their true feelings. Additional verses in Proverbs often pictures fools laughing on the road to destruction (**Prov. 10:21; 26:19; 29:9**). But wisdom can also laugh (**Prov. 1:26**). This shows that the difference between the fool and the wise is the timing of laughter and the reasons for it. However, there is a time for laughter (**Ecclesiastes 3:4**).

We know that joy, like love are fruits of God's Holy Spirit (**Gal. 5:22-23**). Could joy be created in us in a different way? Like love, joy is not a creation of the natural mind but the product of the Holy Spirit of God. If true joy cannot be produced through our natural mind, then we cannot expect to find it without seeking it through God and His Holy Spirit. Sure, we may experience a limited version of what the world may think is joy but it is paled in comparison by what God desires implanted in us.

For us to experience biblical joy, the fruit of God's Holy Spirit, we need to grow in the godly inner qualities that we do not naturally possess (**Romans 8:3**). Anything we do of our own flesh, love for example, is a mere shadow of God's love. It is the same with joy. Until our faith matures and we become completely confident we are certain of God's presence and direction in our life, we will not experience the fullness of satisfaction God desires for us. We must choose to have a personal relationship with Him every single day. **Psalm 46:10**- "Be still, and know that I am God! I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth."

Biblical joy is inseparable from our relationship with God. Our knowledge and understanding of His purpose of life, His promises and the hope of living with Him and Jesus Christ our Savior for eternity will lead us to this eternal joy. If God is

truly present in our lives (He is), the joy He experiences can begin in us. **Psalm 16:11**- “You will make known to Me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy. At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Joy will be the sign that our life has found its reason for being. Our creation purpose! This is a revelation of God. We know that no one can come to Him and find the purpose of life unless He, by His Holy Spirit, calls us and reveals it (**John 6:44; I Corinthians 2:10**). In fact, it is our Christian duty to rejoice in the Lord. **Phil. 3:1**- “Finally, my brethren, rejoice in *the* Lord. Indeed, for me to write the same things to you *is* not troublesome, but for you *it is* safe.” **Phil. 4:4**- “Rejoice in *the* Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” **1 Thessalonians 5:16**- “Rejoice always!” **1 Peter 1:8**- “Whom, not having seen, you love; in Whom, *though* at the present time you do not see Him, you believe, and rejoice with unspeakable joy, and filled with glory;”

The type of joy that is a fruit of God’s Holy Spirit is in that realization that God is working His purpose in our lives to bring us and transform us into His image. We have the peace and joy of knowing He will see it through (**Phil. 1:6**). Biblical joy begins when God calls, and we hear the gospel, understand and believe it. Jesus quoted **Isaiah 61:1-3** as He began His ministry: “The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon Me because the LORD has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and

the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To preach the acceptable year of the LORD and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; To appoint to those who mourn in Zion, giving to them beauty for ashes, the oil of *joy* for mourning, the mantle of praise for the spirit of heaviness; so that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He might be glorified.”

For the world, the joy of the Lord may be incomprehensible and also elusive to the ones who do not possess it. But, for the true believer in Jesus Christ, the joy of the Lord comes as natural as grapes on a vine. As we abide in Jesus, the True Vine, we are the branches. We are full of His strength and vitality. The fruit we produce, including joy, is His doing. “I am the vine, and you are the branches. The one who is dwelling in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; because apart from Me you can do nothing.”- **John 15:5**. Jesus is the ultimate Source of our joy as we are united in Him.

When we do experience joy, how quickly does Satan swoop in and steal it from us? “Praise Pirates” one Pastor I know used to call them, the things that destroy our joy and make it short lived. Even if our source of joy seems secure, it can be short-lived sometime. Aging, health, death, taxes and so on, all the things that come at us as human beings will have an impact on our joy. As children of God, we can suffer

distress, oppression and grief from a multitude of sources in this life, but the joy of the Lord in us will always lift us above them because His joy is greater than any negative circumstance that might occur. **Neh. 8:10-** “Then he said to them, “Go, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions to those for *whom* nothing is prepared, for *this* day *is* holy to our Lord. And do not be sorry, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

Not all trials are detrimental. Instead of hindering our faith, adverse circumstances can actually enhance our joy. It depends on our reaction to them. **James 1:2-4-** “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But let endurance have *its* perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything.” I always picture Paul and Silas in prison, in chains hanging on the wall after they had been beaten. They were arrested without a cause and yet they sang praise unto the Lord. We know how that ended (**Acts 16:25-26**). Faith building is a source of joy.

God is aware of all things that happen to His children (**Matt. 10:29-31**). These same things do not have any effect on our Creator. While He doesn't find joy in tragedies (some are lessons He permits), He still finds causes to be joyful. We know that God's joy is different from mankind's. This is the joy we need to seek.

We can seek joy, but we cannot find true joy merely by seeking enjoyable exhilaration. True joy can be sought, but it must be sought God's way. It must arise as a product of yielding wholeheartedly to the creative purpose God is working out in our lives.

The best and longest sustained joys result from serving others as Christ did and not yourself, not yielding to seeking self-elevation. **Proverbs 3:5-6**- “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” God is not the author of confusion (**1 Cor. 14:33**). Remember, it’s okay to be last in line and a servant to all (**Luke 13:30, Matt. 23:11**). Also, edify one another and guard our words.

Proverbs 15:1- “A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.”

There are many ways in which we can experience the joy of the Lord. These are just a few:

1. Love God first
2. Keep God’s Commandments and Holy Days
3. Read and study the Word of God
4. Prayer
5. Meditate on the character of Jesus Christ

6. Believe in His Gospel

7. Love one another

Regular prayer and Bible study will build and strengthen our personal relationship with our Creator. This leads to repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation with God. **Isa. 55:12-13**- “For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break out before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap *their* hands. Instead of the thorn, the fir tree shall come up; and instead of the brier, the myrtle tree shall come up; and it shall be to the LORD for a memorial, for an everlasting sign *which* shall not be cut off.” **Isa. 65:17-19**- “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth. And the former things will not be remembered, nor come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever *in that* which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and I will joy in My people; and the voice of weeping will no more be heard in her, nor the voice of crying.” Meditating on the character of Jesus and His Gospel will focus us on the example He left for us to follow. Passover 2022 will be here before we know it and self-evaluation needs to begin now. These scriptures show that our conversion and yielding to God’s purpose is a key to finding Biblical joy.

Above all, we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, for His sacrifice and the salvation by His shed blood for the forgiveness of our sins. For the hope and promise in His resurrection and Kingdom to come. **1 Thess. 1:6**- “And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, having accepted the Word in much persecution with *the* joy of *the* Holy Spirit,” The joy of the Lord, our gladness of heart, is present even through the trials of this life. We know we are children of God, and no one can snatch us away from Him (**John 10:28–29**). We are heirs to an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.” **1 Peter 1:4**- “Unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for us,” and no one can steal it away from us. “But store up treasures for yourselves in heaven, where neither moth nor rust spoils, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”- **Matthew 6:20**.

Remember the list we mentioned at the beginning? How many other things can you add that is a reason for your joy?

The joy of the Lord is the gladness in our hearts that comes from; knowing God, abiding in Jesus Christ our Savior, walking in obedience to God’s way of life, our heartfelt prayers and being filled with His Holy Spirit. Our joys grow from seeking to fulfill God’s creation purpose in our lives and doing our part to see it come to

completion. Fulfilling our creation purpose according to God's will, will be the greatest joy imaginable on this Earth. This is why we were born. An even greater joy is to come, when we hear Our Savior say, "And his lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant! *Because* you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" - **Matt. 25:21**

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