

Joy

NT John 15:11 ¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

We've talked about many topics over the past years that can have both a worldly meaning and a biblical meaning. Joy is the same. We tend to think of joy as happiness, but joy really isn't about being happy. We also tend to think of joy as coming when you are thinking really positively, but No power of positive thinking can bring lasting joy. Let's look at some of the definitions of joy. The dictionary defines joy as "*feeling* great delight with present or expected good." The dictionary tends to associate joy with delight or something good happening. Like I said most people associate joy with the thought of being happy so many people think we can't have joy if we're *not feeling* happy.

Instead, Biblical joy is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in us, and characterizes the people of God which is much different than worldly joy. Biblical Joy is the contentment we feel from being connected to God. It is entirely unrelated to enjoyable circumstances. Only Biblical joy, can give us "calm in the midst of the storm and a sense of happiness or cheerfulness when life isn't cheerful." Biblical **joy** — a fruit of the Holy Spirit — is a supernatural relationship we experience with God. It's the deep assurance that helps us to face many negative things that happen in our lives because we know that God is carrying us through it. One of the definitions I liked most about joy was from an article I read by John Piper and I will share with you some of his thoughts. His definition is as follows:

Definition- Christian joy is a good feeling in the soul, produced by the Holy Spirit, as he causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the word and in the world. I like this definition because I agree with it, based on my own feelings of joy I believe it's accurate, and he breaks it down into different characteristics of joy. A good feeling, in the soul, by the Holy Spirit, as He helps us see Christ in the word, and Christ in the world. As a former trainer these also give me some bullet points to work with.

A good feeling- We all know when we have a good feeling. We all know when we've had a good day that is full of good feelings because of what happened that day. I was telling the prayer group one morning that I was going to praise God for the good day I had the previous day. The good feelings I had were produced by what I thought would be difficult or time consuming things I had to do that day that each turned out to be much easier than I had thought. My son needed to go to the doctor. Oh boy, let's go to the nearest walk in clinic. And in my head I am thinking the wait will probably be an hour, there will be people in there coughing and sneezing, but when I got there, no one was in the waiting room. The doctor saw and diagnosed my son before I even finished filling out the paperwork and paying.

They called his prescription into my normal pharmacy but since he has different insurance than me I didn't realize that my pharmacy isn't covered under his insurance. Luckily I rarely have to take him to the doctor so I forgot his insurance was different than mine. So when I stopped by my pharmacy and they told me that they didn't cover his prescription they said I could call his pharmacy and they would transfer the prescription to his pharmacy. That would require me to go home and look on the website for pharmacies in his network and then call Walgreens so they could transfer the prescription and then drive back out to the pharmacy. It would cost me \$50 if I just paid for it out of pocket at Walgreens so I just decided to do that but

was very annoyed as I was driving home that I had to spend \$50 because I wasn't prepared and didn't want to take the time to get his meds for free. But then when I got home and checked my mail I got a refund check from the IRS for \$49.01 for an overpayment of my taxes.

Then I had a large metal bed frame left over from the FF and the garbage collectors at the church wouldn't take it. So I took it home hoping that my garbage collectors would take it. Oh bother, if they didn't I'd probably have to drive to the city dump. What a hassle. But the bed frame was gone in the morning. Everything I had to do that day that I thought would be time consuming, complicated, or even had me initially annoyed, worked out really well for me, without much effort. I sure had a good feeling when I think about that day. But you know what, I could have easily had a day that was full of frustration, a day where nothing was going my way. And that good feeling would be gone. So the good feeling we're talking about is more long term, not one that comes and goes depending on how your day went.

One of the things we have to realize is that that good feeling is an emotion, it is not an idea. It is not a conviction. One difference between an idea and an emotion or feeling is that you don't have immediate control over your feelings or your emotions. You can't snap your fingers and decide to feel something. Emotions don't work like that. But the Bible is filled with commands that we do things with our emotions that may not always come natural to us depending on the situation — commands to rejoice, to fear, to be grateful, to love your neighbor. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 ***Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*** So that good feeling is something we can't rely on from the type of day we've had, how many likes our recent social media post got, or how many compliments we got at work about the project we worked very hard on. We must rely on that good feeling from God, because I am sure we've all had days where we are not having a worldly

good feeling about anything, but if we are commanded to rejoice always, even though that feeling may be the opposite of how we really feel, we must turn to God to help us rejoice.

This good feeling is in the Soul- By that, I am just saying that it's deeper than the skin or body. The soul, the intangible and unseeable part of you and me experiences joy. The body may feel the effects of that joy or any other emotions I feel. When I feel joy I may raise my hands to heaven or have a huge smile on my face. We see people while singing raise their hands which is caused by the joy of singing praises to God. My soul feels and communicates that feeling through my physical being. When I am feeling an emotion of anger or negativity you might see it on my body in my facial gestures or in the use of my arms or hands when I am talking. And the Bible tells us to feel joy in God just as it tells us not to be anxious in any situation. These emotions that we feel in our soul then drive the bodily movements that follow.

And next these feelings are produced by the Holy Spirit. You know there are just some days that we don't have what it takes to muster up the slightest bit of joy, but the Holy Spirit can do that for us. They are called the fruit of the Spirit and we are told in Galatians 5:22-23 ***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.***

The last piece is that this feeling of joy happens as the Holy Spirit helps us to see Jesus in his word and in the world. The clearest place where we see the beauty of Christ is in his word, the Bible. It is not *just* in the word that we see Christ. We see him in his gifts and in people. We see him in his gifts of nature. We see him in his gifts of food and in all of the good things that our Father in heaven gives to us. Take Note of what's going on in your life and you will be amazed at what the Holy Spirit is showing you about Jesus' work in the world and in your world.

Now you may say well the Holy Spirit gives us joy but do we need to do anything to increase or activate that joy? I believe we do. Its kind of like getting a plant as a gift, you can't just sit it there and walk away and never take care of it. You have to follow the instructions for watering it and possibly feeding it and making sure it gets enough sun or shade or it will eventually wither away. I believe the same may be true for joy, I believe we must

Abide in God through prayer and worship. I know there are some people who say well I am a Christian but I don't need to attend a church to be a christian. I lived that way for many years after I went away to college. I accepted Christ when I was 16 and left PA to come to Tampa for college at 17. Other than attending church when I was home at Christmas I kind of left my church life behind. I didn't spend hardly any time in worship or praise of God. When I look back I consider them the lost years. I lost out on a beautiful and growing relationship with God and accepted a withering relationship. Once I graduated college and settled down in Tampa I would join a church just in time to be able to bring the relationship back from a state of withering, but then I would move within the Tampa Bay area or out of state just to stop the worshipping again.

We need to Spend Time in Scripture. Some Christians read their Bibles often, marking the text with pens and highlighters. They regularly get into God's Word to *know* what it says, so they can *live* it out. Other Christians never crack open a Bible, not realizing what they're giving up. **If you don't read the Bible, why not? Perhaps because you tried reading a passage or two and decided it was boring? Certainly, some parts of the Old Testament are a bit dry, but they're included because they're historically important. But there's no way you can call the New Testament boring. It teaches us about our Savior! To fall in love with Jesus, we have to [get to know Him](#). To get to know Him, let's start with the truest, most historically vetted source: [God's Word](#).**

The Bible is not a dusty work of fiction, but timeless wisdom still very applicable to modern life. I've told you that when I share stories in the bible I like to us to see the connections to present day life. They struggled in the bible with the same things that people struggle with today. Poverty, death, divorce, unfaithfulness, unable to have children, being estranged from children, not being able to find work, and so on and on. And not to just focus on the negative but they rejoiced in the same things we rejoice in today, a wedding, the birth of a baby, good fortune, good weather, and so on.

We need to Live for God, not for the world. By connecting with God, and knowing what He says to us in [His Word](#), we begin to desire to please Him with our thoughts, words, and actions. It is in Him that we find our roadmap for joyful living. So why do we tend to be drawn to following how the world tells us to live? Well we do live in the world but we are told not to be of the world. But we're not immune from the messages we hear and see every day. You need to drive this car, live in this neighborhood, attend this college, associate with these people. The world tells us that it gets to define who are "winners" and who are "losers." God reminds us that only His high opinion of us matters. The world tells us that self-focus guarantees our "best" life. God reminds that in having a servant's heart we truly live. The world tells us that nothing is free, and to not expect second chances. God reminds us that His love has no strings, and that He's the architect of unlimited comebacks. The world tells us to be perfect to be accepted. God reminds us that our growth is what matters to Him. Clearly, the world cares very little for us. But God loves us so much that He sent his son to die for us. John 3:16 is the basis for the Love Story between us and God.

Joy doesn't mean forcing happiness during sad circumstances. We can usually tell when someone tries to fake it until they make it. But joy comes during every season. It is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Joy comes from our choices to choose joy.

Invite God into everything you say and do. Let Him come into your heart and your home and take over! Set your focus on glorifying God with your words, thoughts, and actions. We were designed to live in a loving relationship with our God, and it is only when we stop trying to carve our own path without God that we experience the most joy.

Benediction

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