

Joy!

Happiness and sorrow are part of life, and part of the narrative we read throughout the Bible. But the Bible does not separate the two. Rather, the Bible teaches that the joy we find in God is there whether we are in times of sorrow or times of gladness. Joy is more than being happy. It is the understanding that God is in control in all circumstances, and is with his people always.

This week we will study not only joy, but the things that can help or hinder our ability to know the joy of the Lord. In all things, at all times, with all we have and all we do, God calls us to experience a life of joy in him.

Monday – Spirited Joy

“Spirit filled souls are ablaze for God. They love with a love that glows. They serve with a faith that kindles. They serve with a devotion that consumes. They hate sin with fierceness that burns. They rejoice with a joy that radiates. Love is perfected in the fire of God.” Samuel Chadwick, 19th-20th c. English pastor

1. Please read Romans 14:17. How does Paul characterize the kingdom of God in this verse?
2. What other things in your life besides “eating and drinking” can interfere with a proper focus and devotion upon God?
3. How do joy, righteousness and peace each relate to and add to one another? What assurance do you get from the fact that these are “in the Holy Spirit”?

Making it Personal: Pray that God will help you follow the Spirit of peace and righteousness and joy.

Tuesday – Knowing God’s Joyous Will

“The Scotch catechism says that man’s chief end is ‘to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.’ But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.” C.S. Lewis, 20th c. Anglo-Irish writer

1. Consider the quote (above) by C.S. Lewis. How does enjoying God help you to understand what it means to be joyful in the Lord?
2. Please read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. In your own words, what is God’s will for you?
3. How do prayer, thankfulness and joy add to one another?
4. Consider the life of Jesus. How did he practice unceasing prayer, thankfulness, and joy?

Making it Personal: When you read the words “always”, “continually” and “all circumstances” what comes to mind? When is it most difficult for you to follow this passage? What about right now? Ask God to guide you.

Wednesday – Recipe for Joy (part 1)

“The joy of the Lord will arm us against the assaults of our spiritual enemies and put our mouths out of taste for those pleasures with which the tempter baits his hooks.” Matthew Henry, 17th-18th c. English theologian

1. Please read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28. What does Paul seem to be doing in this passage?
2. Which verses concern our relationship with each other, and which pertain to our relationship with God?
3. Pick one of these verses and describe how following it would help you to experience God’s joy in your life.

Making it Personal: What effect should verse 24 have on your life if you allowed it to inform the way you live today?

Thursday – Always is a Lot of Joy

“One joy scatters a hundred griefs.” Chinese proverb

1. Please read Philippians 4:4. What impression do you get from the repeated encouragement to rejoice?
2. Paul wrote this from his prison cell in Rome. What did he have to rejoice in? What do you have to rejoice about?

Prayer Focus: Pray that our church would grow in the joy of the Lord.

Friday – Recipe for Joy (part 2)

“My plenteous joys, wanton in fullness, seek to hide themselves in drops of sorrow.” William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (Act I, scene 4)

1. Please read Philippians 4:2-9. What interferences with joy did Paul address?
2. What things does Paul tell us to concentrate on? How would they increase your joy in the Lord?
3. What assurance do you find at the end of verse 9?

Making it Personal: Do you have God’s peace and joy in your life? Ask God to show you how to follow him into the life he wants you to have.

For the Weekend: Read Nehemiah 8:1-12. How did the leaders help the people experience God’s joy? Is the joy of the Lord *your* strength (verse 10)? Make sure you study God’s word regularly so you too can experience the joy he has for you.