

JOY

“Joy is more conspicuous in Christianity than in any other religion, and more conspicuous in the Bible than in any other literature.” G.G. Findlay

J...O...Y Three little letters...a small word that holds so much meaning for us all. We as Americans are raised with an expectation ingrained in our collective thinking:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the ***pursuit of happiness.***”

Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson

Oh, to be joyful!!! Happyat peace...isn't that so often our soul's great desire?

But the reality of life seems to be fighting against us. In spite of our many blessings, we often find ourselves weighed down with stress, anxiety, sorrow and grief.

***Yet the Scriptures talk so much of joy and rejoicing.
How can we attain to it?***

It's one thing to exercise our will to Love another, or to show patience....but Joy seems more like a condition of the emotional life. Often it seems nearly impossible to dictate *feelings of joy* to that soulful part of ourselves.

The first step in this month's homework is to define JOY in your own words.

Like we did last month, take some time to spontaneously list synonyms and antonyms of JOY.

Antonyms of Joy are:

Synonyms to Joy are:

JOY vs HAPPINESS

One of the key goals in this month's homework is to distinguish Biblical JOY from Earthly Happiness.

Here are some statements pulled from definitions obtained from Webster's Dictionary:

JOY: the passion or emotion excited by the acquisition or expectation of good; the excitement of pleasurable feelings which is caused by success, good fortune, gratification of desire or some good possessed, or by a rational prospect of possessing what we love or desire. Joy is the delight of the mind, from the consideration of the present or assured approaching possession of a good.

HAPPINESS: Being in the enjoyment of agreeable sensations from the possession of good; enjoying pleasure from the gratification of sensual appetites....to be in any degree happy , we must be free from pain both of body and of mind, to be very happy , we must be in the enjoyment of lively sensations of pleasure, either of body and mind.

Take a blue pen/pencil and underline any portion of the above definitions that speaks to present circumstances that bring joy and/or happiness.

Take a red pen/pencil and underline any portion of the above definitions that speaks to the hope of a future circumstance.

Did you notice that Joy unlike Happiness can be based not only on present good circumstances but in the HOPE or EXPECTATION of future good?

In Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, it further defines Joy in the following way:

“The Joy that the people of God should have is holy and pure. This joy rises above circumstances and focuses on the very character of God.”

Don't you love that Joy has its focus on *the very character of God*!!

Look up the following Scriptures and place one of the words from the box below to indicate the Source of Joy mentioned in each reference: (some words are used twice)

THE PRESENCE OF GOD	THE HOLY SPIRIT
GOD'S WORD	GODLINESS
JESUS' WORDS	THE COMFORT AND REDEMPTION OF GOD
GOD HIMSELF	ANSWER TO PRAYER
OUR SALVATION	HUMILITY

Galatians 5:22-23_____ Psalm 43:4_____

Ecclesiastes 2:26_____ Isaiah 29:19_____

Isaiah 52:9_____ Jeremiah 15:16_____

Habakkuk 3: 18_____ John 15:11_____

John 16:24_____ Psalm 16:11_____

Romans 14:17_____ Act 2:28_____

One of the distinctions of JOY is that it is possible to experience it during times of pain and suffering. Please look up the following Scriptures and note what they say about JOY.

Matthew 5:3-12

James 1:2-4

2 Corinthians 7:4-7

Acts 5:41

John 6: 33

Happiness may be the result of NATURAL events,
but JOY is SUPERNATURAL!!

Our Joy is very closely tied to our understanding of the great
salvation we have received from Our Lord Jesus.

Now we have another opportunity to pull out some colored pencils. Yay!!!

On the next page you will find verses on joy and rejoicing. Circle all those JOY words in your favorite color!! Make it a joyful color 😊

Now go and pick another color pen or pencil and underline all passages that reference our salvation and redemption!!!

Romans 5:2-11

- (2) through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
- (3) And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance;
- (4) and perseverance, character; and character, hope.
- (5) Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.
- (6) For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.
- (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.
- (8) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- (9) Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.
- (10) For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.
- (11) And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

1 Peter 1:3-12

- (3) Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
- (4) to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,
- (5) who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
- (6) In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials,
- (7) that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,
- (8) whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,
- (9) receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls.
- (10) Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully,

who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you,

(11) searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

(12) To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into.

1 Peter 4:12-13

(12) Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

(13) but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

Luke 2:10-14

(10) Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.

(11) For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

(12) And this *will be* the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."

(13) And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying:

(14) "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"

Jude 1:24-25

(24) Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present *you* faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,

(25) To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.

Someone once said that the key to JOY is:

J---Jesus first
O---Others Next
Y—Yourself Last.

There is wisdom to this little acrostic. If we would live a life that is characterized with joy, we can use this little tool to guide our days.

First, am I seeking to honor and obey the Lord each day? Do I look to His word to instruct me and then by the power of the Holy Spirit to endeavor to obey Him in all things?

It was said “Joy is the sign that the soul has found its object.” Is Jesus the object of your affections, the King of your heart, the love of your life?

Secondly, am I living a life of love towards others? How are the interactions with my family, my neighbors, my coworkers and even the strangers I share the roads, stores and schools with? Am I other centered?

(FOR EXTRA STUDY: search all the “others” verses in the Bible) Paul the Apostle took great joy in the people he had led to Jesus and then subsequently ministered to for the remainder of his life. Paul said he rejoiced at the thought that he was poured out as drink offering for others...do we feel the same? (see Acts 20:24 1 Thessalonians 2:19)

Thirdlyalthough everything in our culture seems to say that we need to spend lots of time in self-care, cultivating self- worth and the like; the real deal is *we often spend way too much time thinking of ourselves*. We spend hours focusing on our feelings, our agendas, our time, our needs, our rights. This kind of thinking often leads to the opposite of JOY.

Corrie Ten Boom rightly instructed us:

*“If you look at the world, you'll be distressed.
If you look within, you'll be depressed.
If you look at God you'll be at rest.”*

REFLECTION

On a scale of 1 to 10 ...How is your JOY quotient today? _____

With the Holy Spirit's guidance...evaluate your priorities of late. Is Jesus first?

Take some time to pray; asking God's help to live a life of JOY in Him.

Be encouraged the Holy Spirit longs to fill you with His Joy.

*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!
Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.
Philippians 4: 4-5*

JOY IS NOT
NECESSARILY
THE ABSENCE OF
SUFFERING. IT IS THE
PRESENCE OF GOD.

