

☛ Recovering Your Joy

You know it's going to be a bad day when:

- *you turn on the morning news and they're displaying emergency routes out of the city*
- *you have an appointment in 10 minutes and you just woke up*
- *you wake up in the morning and your dentures are locked together*
- *your twin sister forgets your birthday*
- *you see a "60 Minutes news team" waiting in your outer office*
- *your horn gets stuck following a group of hell's angels*

☛ Followers of Christ understand that **joy and happiness are not the same**. Happiness is the feeling you get when things are going well; it's based on your circumstances. Joy, on the other hand, is a deep sense of gladness and well-being that is independent of circumstance. In all of life's circumstances it's valuable for us to ask ourselves, "Am I relying on my happiness, or does my strength come from the joy of the Lord?" God wants you to be joyful! If you feel as if you have lost your joy, how do you get your joy back?

Ten Ways to Be Unhappy

by Neil Eskelin

- 1. Make little things bother you. Don't just let them, make them.*
- 2. Lose your perspective on things and keep it lost: don't put first things first.*
- 3. Find yourself a good worry, one about which you cannot do anything.*
- 4. Be a perfectionist, which means not that you work hard to do your best, but that you condemn yourself and others for not achieving perfection.*
- 5. Be right. Be always right. Be the only one who is always right, and be rigid in your rightness.*
- 6. Don't trust or believe people, or accept them at anything but their worst and weakest.*
- 7. Be suspicious. Insist that others always have hidden motives.*
- 8. Always compare yourself unfavorably to others. This guarantees instant misery.*
- 9. Take personally everything that happens to you.*
- 10. Don't give yourself whole-heartedly to anyone or anything.*

This issue of joy is a big deal. It is listed second in the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control.

We often talk about the other aspects of the fruit. Even I, as your pastor tend to focus on those, but joy is near the top of the list. You've probably heard this acrostic...

☞ Jesus; Others; Yourself

☞ Reverse this and you'll end up with **Years Of Junk**

☞ **Philippians 4:4-7**

The word rejoice appears several times in Philippians. Apparently the Philippian Christians needed this word. Most of God's people need this challenge often. It is easy for believers to let circumstances discourage them. **The cure for discouragement is to rivet your attention on the Lord and rejoice in Him.** It is significant also that Paul, a Roman prisoner, would plead with people who were free, to be joyful in their Savior. It seems that it should be the other way around. Paul learned that there can be rejoicing in the Lord even when outward circumstances are difficult.

If there was anyone who had reason to give in to despair and claim that he was a victim of his circumstances it was the apostle Paul. But from his prison cell in Rome, Paul writes one of the most joy-filled letters anyone could ever read.

Chuck Swindoll says that joy is a positive attitude we choose to express. It stems from your confidence in God... The belief that He is at work; that He is in full control; that He is in the midst of whatever has happened, is happening or will happen.

To have joy we need... The Proper Perspective; The Proper Posture; The Proper Prayer

1. ☞ **The Proper Perspective (Jesus first)**

The Lord is near. This doesn't refer to his imminent return, but that he is near to help us right now. Paul gives several admonitions in Philippians: stand fast *in the Lord*; be of one mind *in the Lord*; rejoice *in the Lord*; *the Lord is near* at hand! It's all focused on the Lord. This is "practicing the presence of Christ," seeing Him in every situation of life, and letting Him work out His perfect will.

☞ **Joy is found in God's presence**

Psalm 16:11 says, *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* (ESV)

If you lack joy, make a determined effort to spend time in God's presence. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, consider His incredible kindness, celebrate how great and powerful God is and you will experience His joy.

☞ **Joy is found in God's Word**

Psalms 119:111 says, *Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.* (NIV)

Some people wish they had a rich old aunt or uncle who would leave them a huge inheritance. But the Bible is an inheritance from the Lord; it is better than gold and it has been passed down to you. When we see the Bible as treasure that we have inherited, invariably, that mindset will lead to joy.

☞ Joy is found in remembering our salvation

Psalms 51:9-12 says, *Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*

Remember when you really understood what Christ had done for you? He rescued you from the flames of hell and he welcomes you into glory. Those thoughts will produce joy!

☞ Joy is produced by righteous hope

Proverbs 10:28 says, *The hope of the righteous brings joy...* (ESV)

What is hope? For the Christian, hope is the anticipation that God will do something good! God has done good to us through His Son Jesus and He will continue to do good in more ways than we can count.

Romans 8:28

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Develop the habit of anticipating God's goodness in your life, and you will have joy!

2. ☞ The Proper Posture (Others second)

Gentleness = "sweet reasonableness." If you feel yourself getting angry with someone let your sweet reasonableness shine through.

--Warren Wiersbe... *It is wonderful when Christians can have convictions and yet be easy to get along with! If we keep in mind that the Lord is with us in every circumstance, then it is easy to obey Him and get along with other people.*

☞ Joy is found in promoting peace with others

Proverbs 12:20 says, *There is deceit in the hearts of those who plot evil, but joy for those who promote peace.*

How do you promote peace with others? Put them first.

1 Corinthians 10:24

Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

☞ **Philippians 2:1-4**

If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care — **2** then do me a favor: **Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends.** **3** Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and **help others get ahead.** **4** Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to **lend a helping hand.** (MESSAGE)

Ephesians 4:2-3

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

☞ **Joy is found in remembering how God works through the people in our lives**

Philippians 1:3-5 says, *I thank my God for you every time I think of you; and every time I pray for you all, I pray with joy because of the way in which you have helped me in the work of the gospel from the very first day until now.* (GNT)

When I think about the people God has put in my life, who they are and what they've done, it brings me joy. Refuse to focus on the unkind words and hurts that have come to you from other people. Instead, spend your time thanking God for the people who have developed you, encouraged you, served with you, and you will have joy.

3. ☞ The Proper Prayer (Yourself)

Talk to God! Tell Him what is on your mind.

☞ **Joy is found in answered prayer**

John 16:24 says, *Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.* (ESV)

☞ Answered prayer brings joy, but **you can't have answered prayer if you don't pray.** And you won't pray as much if you don't have a prayer time! Making time to pray is key to making room for joy!

--Warren Wiersbe... *Not just praying, but right praying. The Bible nowhere says that any kind of praying will bring peace to our hearts. What is right praying? It begins with adoration, for this is what the word "prayer" means in v. 6. This is love, enjoying the presence of God, honoring Him in worship. Rushing into His presence and begging for peace of mind will never get results. We must bow before Him in worship and let Him search our hearts and minds. Next comes petition, which means the earnest, sincere desire of the heart. True prayer comes from the heart, not the lips. What a joy it is to present our requests to Him!*

☞ Joy is found in always being thankful

Psalm 95: 1-3 says, *"Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods."*

There are a lot of Christians who treat God like a great Automatic Teller Machine in the sky. "Gimme, gimme, gimme. Oh, God, why do you hate me? I don't have a new car like so and so; my house isn't as big as so and so's. What have I ever done to you? I go to church most Sundays, I drop a 10 into the offering plate, I don't cuss in front of ladies and small children like the Good Book says. Why don't you just, gimme, gimme, gimme." Please understand that God wants us to be grateful for what He has done for us. If we are not grateful, we do not appreciate it. He wants our thanks and praise more than He wants any other kind of sacrifice. And it's good for us to be thankful. An ungrateful heart will invariably be a joyless heart.

☞ Picture – Life-changing joy begins with life-changing gratitude.

The Glad Game

☞ **Video song** - Nehemiah 8:10 says, ***the joy of the Lord is your strength.***