



Daily God Walk

Virtues Series

Joy

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A Little Joy
in Your Life

Paul T Smith

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All Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version (NIV). All other translations used will be credited using these abbreviations:

(KJV) – King James Version

(NKJV) – New King James Version

(TLB) – The Living Bible

(TM) – The Message

New Hope Ministries
2232 Terrace Ln
McKinleyville, CA 95519
Phone: 707-349-9890
www.dailygodwalk.org
paul@nhmresources.org

Daily God Walk Virtues Series

A Little Joy In Your Life is the second in a series of 12 books with the theme of building virtues in your life. Each features a virtue of the Christian life taken from Galatians 5:22-23 and 2 Peter 1:5-7 and Colossians 3:12-14. Between these three passages there are more than 12 virtues that every believer should develop.

A Little Joy In Your Life

Joy – we sing about it, we experience it, but all too often it is that indefinable quality that we enjoy but don't know how we get it or what to do to maintain it. These devotions and meditations will explore many aspects of joy and we will look at a number of principles found in the Bible that help us to grow this fruit of the Spirit as we walk in faith.

We start this book of devotions and meditations by exploring the Joy of Walking in the Spirit and with that we go on to explore the Joy of Serving followed by the Joy of Righteous Living. The first half of the book is about our walk and the joy that comes through being in obedient service to the Lord in his kingdom.

In the second half of the book we are focusing more on the Joy of His Presence, the Joy of His Promises and Joy in the Hope of Deliverance.

Day One

Joy Is A Fruit Of The Spirit

The fruit of the Spirit is joy... Against such there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. - Galatians 5:22-23

Where do you go to get an apple? You go to an apple tree. Where do you go to get an orange? That's right, you go to an orange tree. Where do you go to get joy? You go to the joy tree of course. That's not as ridiculous as it sounds. If the fruit of the Spirit is joy then the tree upon which joy grows is the Spirit. When we are in Christ, Christ is in us and the fruit, or evidence of that is joy.

We sometimes watch people trying to put the fruit of joy on the tree of their life. They try really hard. They paste on a smile and use kind words, but something is missing. Somehow plastic smiles and kind words through gritted teeth just don't seem to be natural fruit. It's like putting ornaments on Christmas trees. No one believes the ornaments are natural to the tree; we all know that they are just put there for show. Is our joy just for show, or is it really fruit of the Spirit?

The way we produce the fruit of the Spirit is for our life to be an extension of the Spirit, just as a branch is the extension of the trunk of a tree.

So how do we do that ? In verse 25 of this chapter Paul encourages us to "keep in step with the Spirit." I think what he means by that is to be sure that we are walking side by side with him and that we are submitted to his leadership.

We must stay connected to the tree (Holy Spirit). To do that we must maintain regular contact so Holy Spirit life can flow through us.

Prayer: Lord, I've tried putting on the fruit to show my spirituality, and it didn't produce joy. Grant me the grace to stay connected to the trunk. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: The fruit of our life comes from our core values. To change the fruit we must change our values.

Affirmation: I am focused on changing my values so my life will produce desirable fruit.

Reflection: How do I make my life an extension of the Spirit, just as a branch is the extension of the trunk of a tree?

Day Two

Joy In The Bridegroom's Voice

The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. - John 3:29

I usually awaken early in the morning, much before my bride of many years. I will go to the kitchen, put on the coffee and go to my desk for devotions and preparation for the day. After a while I will hear a stirring in the bedroom and in just a moment I will hear my name being softly called. She is not calling out in need; it's just that little notice of, "I'm awake now." I can't tell you what hearing that voice does inside of me every morning.

Whether we are talking about brides or bridegrooms the principle is the same - Hearing that one voice affects us like no other. Our relationship with the Lord can carry the same kind of joy when we look to him with the same hope that a bride has when she thinks of her bridegroom.

I remember a time when I was particularly discouraged over a failure in my life and I knew that there was no way that God could love me,

or even forgive me again for this oft repeated sin.

I was in prayer one morning, wondering why I was even praying because I knew He couldn't answer. I had failed too many times. Then in my heart I heard him say, "My son, don't you know I love you." I had a conversation with him that day that forever changed my life. From that day I have never doubted his love.

Prayer: Lord, I am grateful that when I fall you are there to pick me up and speak words of comfort to me. Amen.

Message: Hearing the voice of that special person in our life gives us joy and in the same way hearing the voice of God speak to our heart gives us joy.

Affirmation: I listen intently to hear the voice of the Lord as he speaks words of endearment to me.

Reflection: What voice is it that brings joy to my heart? Is it the voice of the world around me? Is it the voice of worldly ambition and opportunity? Or is it the voice of the Lord our savior?

Day Three

Sometimes Hard Words Produce Joy

I wrote as I did so that when I came I should not be distressed by those who ought to make me rejoice. I had confidence in all of you that you would all share my joy. For I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you. - 2 Corinthians 2:3-4

All of us with children have experienced times when we had to speak hard words to them that clearly outlined the consequence of a certain line of behavior. We have seen them get upset, and sometimes even spew out angry words that hurt - but we spoke hard words because we knew that there were certain things that we could not allow. This is what Paul was feeling when he wrote these words to the church at Corinth.

This church had some behaviors that were not acceptable in the community of believers and Paul had to address them. It grieved him to have to do this, but his goal was that they "would all share my joy." Paul knew that when believers continue in behaviors that affect their walk with God the walk becomes tedious and there is no joy in it. His goal was to restore their joy.

We've all been in a service when the minister was preaching a message that was convicting. We felt that he was preaching directly at us, but in fact he was addressing the whole congregation.

In those times we may feel that the preacher has it in for us, but he is only giving us the truth. We must be willing to listen to this voice of the Lord as he is trying to cleanse us of everything that inhibits our joy.

Prayer: Lord, help me to hear your voice, even when it is hard words, so that your joy might be in me. Amen.

Principle: Hard words is love trying to guide us away from behaviors which can harm us.

Affirmation: I will listen to words of instruction, even when they seem hard to bare.

Reflection: Can you remember times when you were given hard words of instruction? How did that make you feel? How did you deal with it? Did those times make you stronger?

Day Four

Service Produces Joy

His lord said unto him, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy lord."

- Mathew 25:21

Jesus was telling a parable of a lord who had trusted certain of his wealth to three of his servants. Each of the servants had been proven to be trustworthy and faithful, but each had different abilities. He gave one a small amount, another more and to the other much more.

The servant who had received a small amount had little faith in his ability to do well with his master's money. Afraid that he would lose it in the marketplace he decided to just hold on to it until his master returned.

The other two servants, feeling empowered by the trust their lord had shown them, went to the marketplace to buy and sell. they were prudent in their service and when the master returned they had doubled the money.

When the master returned to check on his investment he was met with mixed results. The one servant who had received little had done nothing with what he had been given. The lord

was very upset with him and he fired the servant on the spot, sending him away with nothing.

The other two was a different story. They had both been faithful to use what their master had given them and their service paid off. Because they had proved themselves to be prudent and wise servants, the lord gave them much greater responsibility and much greater reward. He gave them his joy.

Prayer: Lord, help me to have the confidence in myself that you have in me. Grant me the grace to use the gifts and abilities you have given me for the work of your kingdom that I might have the joy of the Lord. Amen.

Message: God's confidence in us is shown by his investment in us. Our confidence in him is reflected by what we do with what he invests in us.

Affirmation: I will trust God's wisdom and his investment in me. I will use his gifts wisely to benefit the kingdom.

Reflection: How do you feel about the gifts God has given you? Are you wise in how you use those gifts? Are you afraid of losing what he has given you? Remember, service produces joy and fear leads to disappointment.

Day Five

Joyful Sounds Of Victory

When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes. - 1 Samuel 18:6

The men of Israel had been at war with the Philistines and were returning home the victors. David had slain Goliath and the army of Israel had pursued the fleeing Philistines destroying them along the way.

The army of Israel was coming home victorious. As they entered the city the people were jubilant. Dancing and singing broke out in the streets. There was joy over the victory.

It is amazing how that just a short time earlier the army cowered behind trees and rocks as the giant, Goliath, challenged them to battle, yet now these same men were proudly marching home in victory. What had happened to change them? One young man dared to do battle in the name of the Lord. David didn't see a giant, he only saw an unbelieving Philistine that was threatening the army of the living God - he was challenging God himself.

The only way we are going to be victorious over the giants that challenge our faith is to stand up against them in the name of the Lord and prove the validity of what we believe. Declare to the enemies of your soul, “I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty,” (1 Samuel 17:45). Then, when God gives the victory, there is great joy. You have joy in victory and those around you have great joy because of the victory that was released by your act of faith. It is time for joyous singing and dancing.

Prayer: Lord, help me to see that challenges to my faith are actually challenges to you and you will not fail. Thank you for the joy of victory. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: Victory in any arena produces joy. It is good to make joyful sounds of rejoicing over victories in our walk.

Affirmation: I rejoice in the victory afforded me by the aiding presence of Holy Spirit.

Reflection: Have there been times when you have stood up against an adversary and been victorious? How did that make you feel? Was rejoicing in order?

Day Six

Joy At Seeing The Works Of God

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went...When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attentions to what he said... Many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in that city. - Acts 8:8

The scene depicted in this chapter of Acts does not resemble the typical church setting today. First of all this ministry was taking place out in the open where the needy and hurting are. Then there was the preaching of the true gospel; the good news of Christ, the resurrection and the promise that holds for all who believe on the name of Jesus.

As Philip preached an amazing thing happened. God began to confirm the truth of what was being said by healing people of disease and delivering them from evil influences.

Perhaps there would be more of the same kind of confirmation of the gospel today if it were proclaimed with the same faith and expectation. Too often we more concerned with convincing people that our group has the best programs and best facilities, and there is very little demonstration of the power of God that brings true joy to the people.

I am as disturbed as everyone else about the condition of society around us. Crime is rampant and

gangs of youth raised without purpose and direction roam the street looking for something of meaning to attach their life to. Government leaders have shown their limitations and church leaders have not explored their potential.

The world is waiting for a Philip to declare the true gospel and show the world a Christ who heals and delivers. Bring joy to your community - show them who Jesus is!

Prayer: I have been stirred Lord to bring the message of hope and deliverance offered by Christ to my community. Grant me the grace and understanding of how to do that and the will to get the job done. In Jesus name. Amen.

Message: There is joy in the community when God confirms his word with signs and wonders for those who speak it with expectant faith.

Affirmation: I will believe and speak God's word with expectant faith and I will rejoice in the signs which follow.

Reflection: Why do you think it is that there are so few signs and wonders following the preaching of the Word of God? Are you expecting God to manifest himself in signs and wonders? Why, or why not?

Day Seven

Sowers And Reapers Rejoicing Together

Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying, “one sows and another reaps” is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor. - John 4:36-38

There are few things in life that bring more satisfaction than a job well done. You can probably remember the time that you put a lot of effort into a project and wondered all along the way if it was going to work, would it be appreciated, would it be a big flop, and all the other questions that come up as you struggle to complete the work. Then it is finished. You look at the completed work and have that sense of completeness that comes from knowing you have done a good job.

Jesus is talking about that kind of joy in this passage. The word that is translated “rejoicing” is *chairo*. It means to be full of cheer, that is, calmly happy or well off. He seems to be telling us that when we have done a job well there is a certain sense of calmness, a sense of well being, that comes from the accomplishment.

In this passage Jesus mentions the many hands that go into a worthy project, “One sows another

reaps.” Much of what we accomplish in life, in fact, nearly all worthwhile projects, require the cooperation of many.

Another point that he makes is the satisfaction of a job well done often depends on how willing we are to share the work and the credit with others. Sharing the credit with others produces rejoicing among many.

Prayer: Lord, I have the tendency to look at my work and want all the credit myself. Grant me the grace to recognize the part others play in my victories and include them in my times of rejoicing, In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When we have done a job well there is a certain sense of calmness, a sense of well being, that comes from the accomplishment.

Affirmation: I rejoice in knowing that I have sown well and a bountiful harvest rewards my efforts.

Reflection: Remember a time when you received great satisfaction from a job well done. Were you able to share that joy? Did others share in that victory with you? What part did others play in your victory?

Day Eight

Justice In Judgment Produces Joy

When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous, but terror to evildoers. - Proverbs 21:15

Justice - how sweet it is, except, of course, when we are called into account for our own behaviors. Then we abandon justice and plead for mercy. This proverb is contrasting the righteous and the wicked. The law brings joy to the righteous, but the same law brings fear to the unrighteous.

Paul tells us that God has placed authorities over us so that we might glorify the name of the Lord by doing what is right (Romans 13:1-5). He writes, "Rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong" (v3).

We have a young lady in our ministry who has lived a rough life. She had been addicted to drugs, in and out of jail, and many broken relationships. Then she found Jesus and everything changed. She started living righteously and God began to bless.

At 40 she got her first drivers license. One day she got pulled over by a policeman. She sat there smiling as he walked up to the car and asked to see her license. She was so proud because for the first time in her life she was legal. Instead of

being nervous and afraid of the lawman she was giddy with excitement and filled with joy.

Living right produces great joy. In our old life when we thought about God we would be afraid because we knew that our lives were in disarray that he couldn't possibly love us. All of that changed when we found Christ and he began to live his righteousness through us. Now, we can rejoice without any fear whatsoever.

Prayer: Lord, I can see the unhappiness and apprehension in those who are not submitted to Christ. I don't want that. I want the joy that comes through living righteously, but I need your help to do that; help me in Jesus name.

Message: Neither the law of man or the law of God holds a threat to those who are righteous.

Affirmation: Because, by the grace of God, I live in an upright and righteous life, I have no fear of the law.

Reflection: Can you remember a time when a siren, or flashing lights caused fear and apprehension in you? How do you feel now? Is there a difference? What is the difference?

Day Nine

Drawing Joy From The Wells Of Salvation

Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

- Isaiah 12:2-3

In the wilderness and desert regions that birthed the nation of Israel there were very few rivers, and only a small number of wells. In this twelfth chapter of Isaiah the prophecy is being put forth that there would be a well established that would be called salvation and those who draw water from that well will have great joy.

People have been coming to this well of salvation for over 2000 years and everyone who comes goes away satisfied and filled up with joy. I have seen many people come to God broken, lost and outcast from the community, and I have witnessed the change that comes over them when they partake of the water at the well of salvation.

A picture I get when I think of this refreshing well filled with an abundance of joy is that of person lost in the desert and seeking water. They may have entered the desert with high hopes and provisions for the journey, but along the way they became lost, their provisions were used up and

they were, alone, thirsty and slowly dying. Then, they see it in the distance; a well in the middle of the desert. They drag themselves to the water and receive new life from the well. That is exactly what happens to all of us who find Jesus.

When we were lost and desperate, someone offered us a drink from this well called salvation and our life was forever changed. Isaiah ends this chapter with; "Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you." You are at the well; drink and rejoice.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for the wellspring of life, which is Jesus The Christ. Grant me the ability be content with the refreshing that comes from him. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: The Lord, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation

Affirmation: I am trusting the Lord to be my strength. I am singing of his salvation.

Reflection: How does our salvation compare to a well in the desert? How has God become your strength? What is the song of the Lord you sing?

Day Ten

Rejoicing In The Hope

Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

- Romans 12:11-13

I have seen a phenomenal occurrence here in America in the last decade. It is that people are losing hope. Confidence in government is as low, or lower, than it has ever been. People have lost confidence in the economy. Even in religion there have been major failures that have left people wondering about their faith.

What is the cause of this disillusionment? People are seeing the inconsistencies of human institutions and the inconsistencies of their leaders. Those whose hope is in an institution run by mankind are going to find their hope is ill placed.

There is a striking contrast between the hope offered by the world and the hope that is in Christ. Man changes laws and rules at will, but Jesus said, "My words will last forever." Man will give up on difficult people but Jesus said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." Man promises prosperity but only gives debt and bondage, but God's word says, "My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

When our hope is placed in Christ then whatever comes we know he will see us through. It is that hope which gives us a calm assurance that we are going to make it. The word used for “joyful” in the Greek is “*chairō*.” It means to be full of cheer, calmly happy or well off. This joyful, calm assurance, gives us the strength we need to make it through any circumstance. Rejoice in this hope.

Prayer: Lord, I am grateful for this joyful, calm assurance you have given me. Help me to keep my heart clean and my spirit fervent for you. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: When our hope is placed in Christ then whatever comes we know he will see us through.

Affirmation: I am joyful in hope and I zealously pursue Christ with spiritual fervor. I am never be lacking in zeal, but keep serving the Lord. I am joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.

Reflection: What are the evidences that your hope is placed in Christ? How would others see your fervent zeal in serving the Lord?

Day Eleven

Joy In The Work Of Another

I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the saints. - Philemon 1:6-7

My six year old granddaughter gave me a birthday card this year. She had made it herself. It read, “Hape burf day pape.” Did you notice any misspelled words? I didn’t! all I saw was a child trying to express her love, and she succeeded. When I saw the work of her own hands great joy welled up inside of me. I was proud of that birthday card. She had given me a card, but the gift I received was great joy. I think that is what Paul was trying to convey in this passage.

I have many sons and daughters in the gospel and when I see them my heart is made glad because of how they are serving God. Paul says of his friend Philemon, “Your love has given me great joy and encouragement.” It is truly a joy to watch someone with whom you have had influence come to the Lord and begin to grow and develop.

Here is an interesting insight. The word used for joy in this passage is *charis*.. *Charis* is sometimes translated grace, a gift, or favor and, as in this passage, joy. The nuanced inflection is that this joy is a gift.

Paul seems to be saying that he had invested in Philemon, and the response of Philemon was to encourage other believers. Paul received the gift of joy in this transaction..

God has called every one of us to invest our lives in the lives of others. Every kind deed, every encouragement, and yes, even every dollar invested in another person is returned many times over in the joy of watching them grow and mature.

Prayer: Lord, there is joy in accomplishing good works myself, but grant me the grace to be joyful over the accomplishments of others. Grant me the grace to invest my life in others, and the wisdom to know who to invest in. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.

Affirmation: Sharing my faith with others influences them to serve God and opens my heart to a more full understanding of God's grace.

Reflection: How are you investing your life in others? Do you get joy from the success of others?

Day Twelve

Joy At Rescuing The Lost

Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, “Rejoice with me: I have found my lost sheep. I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. - Luke 15:6-7

Jesus tells the parable of the shepherd who was putting his sheep in the pen for the night and discovered one was missing. He secures the 99 and goes out to find the one. If you’ve heard many sermons you will hear someone talk about the lost sheep that was found. This story tells of a shepherd’s love for his flock and the joy he experiences when a lost sheep is found.

The subject in this story is not lost sheep but it is about sinners being found by the Good Shepherd. When he gets to the part where the shepherd is returning with the sheep that was lost but now is found he says, “Rejoice with me.” There is a principle here and it is this: When our heart is pure there is great joy when others receive a blessing.

In this chapter 15 of Luke Jesus tells three stories of things that were lost and then found. There is the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. In all three there is the message of joy at finding the thing that

was lost. In each one Jesus compares that joy to the joy that is in heaven when one sinner comes to Christ.

I also see another principle in this story. It is the principle of hope in the face of adversity. There was the crisis; the sheep was lost. There was the hope of finding the sheep that drove the shepherd out into the night to search for the sheep. When we see those who have lost their way we should look at them with hope and offer hope to them. Then we must be ready to rejoice with them when they find the Good Shepherd.

Prayer: Lord, it is in my nature to be smug when someone encounters hardship and feel jealous when others are blessed. Grant me the grace love others as you love them. That I will hurt when they hurt and rejoice when they rejoice. In Jesus name.

Message: Hope in the face of adversity. There was the crisis; the sheep was lost. There was the hope of finding the sheep that drove the shepherd out into the night to search for the sheep.

Affirmation: Faith has inspired me to have hope, even in the midst of crisis, and that gives me joy.

Reflection: Is this story about things lost or things found? What was the reaction of the shepherd when he found his lost sheep? How does this story apply to those of us who are kingdom servants?

Day Thirteen

Joy In The Kingdom

The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. -Romans 14:17

Paul is not saying here that there is no eating and drinking in the kingdom of God. He is simply stating that what you eat and drink does not affect your status in the kingdom of God because the kingdom is not about physical or material things.

The kingdom of God is about spiritual transformation. Living in this kingdom is about being conscious of others and how we can serve them. That is a new concept for some people, but for those who understand, kingdom service produces great joy, peace and righteousness.

Far too many people perceive being in the kingdom as getting saved and going to church on Sunday, and when they have done that they feel they have fulfilled the requirements of the kingdom.

The problem with some people is in that word "requirements." They look at kingdom service as something they have to do and they want to know the minimum requirements. That attitude does not produce much joy. In fact it doesn't reflect a heart that has been transformed.

Here is an interesting contrast: Most people I know who are constantly thinking about what they can get

out of a relationship are the most unhappy and unsatisfied people, and those who willingly give themselves to serving others are the happiest people.

It is amazing that those who are striving to get the things that will make them happy are no more satisfied when they get those things than they were before, but those who sacrifice the most seem to have more joy than anyone.

If you want to be happy focus on making others happy and it will come back to you. Jesus said it this way; "Give and it will be given back to you."

Prayer: Lord, help me to stay away from the kind of thinking that only asks for the requirements. Grant me a heart to serve others in the kingdom. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Living in God's kingdom is about being conscious of others and how we can serve them.

Affirmation: I practice thinking of how I can bless others instead of thinking of how I can be blessed.

Reflection: How do you feel about being "required" to serve in the kingdom? How do you feel about the statement, " Most people I know who are constantly thinking about what they can get out of a relationship are the most unhappy and unsatisfied people?"

Day Fourteen

Promoting Peace Produces Joy

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

We've all known people who are very good at instigating trouble. They will pretend to be helping someone but they are really trying to set that person up for failure so they can gain an advantage. We call that being deceitful. Have you had someone who you thought was your friend but actually they were using you to gain an advantage for themselves.?

On the other hand there is the person who is concerned about making peace and who gains great joy out of going into a chaotic situation and producing a peaceful outcome. This person knows the value of friendship and loyalty.

Of the two people we have just mentioned, the instigator of chaos and the peacemaker, who do you think is the happiest? There is the deceitful person who is always working to come out on top, but always feels that he needs more to be satisfied. Then there is the person who is content with being who he is but he's always trying to make a situation better by helping others to reconcile and come into unity. This person is filled with joy when he sees peace come into a situation.

To be a promoter of peace a person must be able to realize the purpose of the relationship. In business it is

to produce a product or service that is marketable; in relationships it is finding common ground upon which to build. In every occasion the peacemaker is working for the common good of all and he's trying to achieve the greatest level of success for the whole with little concern for his own agenda.

Take a look at your motivations today. Are you a peacemaker or are you an instigator? Do you gain satisfaction out of getting ahead or out of advancing the group as a whole? Think about it.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to look past my own agenda and get a focus on the purpose of the body as a whole and work toward unity in achieving that goal. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: There is deceit in the hearts of those who plot evil, but joy for those who promote peace

Affirmation: I have purposed that I will promote peace wherever I go, even if it means setting aside my own agenda.

Reflection: The devotion mentions the instigator and the peacemaker. How are they described, and what is the motivation for each of them?

Day Fifteen

Obeying His Commands Produces Joy

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

- John 15:10-11

Remember times when you were a child and your mother said, "When I come back in this room you had better have it cleaned up," and while she was gone you cleaned your room thoroughly; making the bed, even cleaning out from under the bed, sweeping and straightening everything. Do you remember how you felt when she came back into your room and gave that smile of approval? That is what Jesus is talking about in this passage, except it is more than that.

There is a certain joy that is natural to us when we have done well, or someone has recognized our efforts. Our example above demonstrates that joy. The Greek word translated joy here is *chara*. It is very similar to the word used for a gift and it means calm delight. When we are doing our best and can see good results we have that certain sense of accomplishment that gives us satisfaction for having done well.

Then Jesus speaks of adding to our joy. He says, "I have told you this that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." It seems that he is telling

us that there is a certain level of joy that comes naturally when we have done well, but he is adding his joy to that so that our joy is complete, or is full.

He appears to be telling us that when we live in the Spirit and fulfill his commands our joy will be raised to a higher level and we will be full of joy. This joy, this calm satisfaction, is what is so attractive in believers. People have observed the way Christians respond to stressful situations and said, "I don't know what you have, but I want it." That is the joy of the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, I tend to follow my own way instead of yours. Grant me the ability to walk in obedience so that your joy will be in me and my joy will be full. Amen.

Message: When we are in His love we keep his commands and His joy is complete in us.

Affirmation: I regularly submit to Christ so that His love will be predominate in my life and I will keep His commands. In doing that my joy is complete.

Reflection: How do you feel when you have done a job well? The Greek word for Joy in our passage today is *chara*. What is the primary meaning of that word and how is it applied in this devotion?

Day Sixteen

Restoring The Joy Of Salvation

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. - Psalm 51:10-12

David had sinned. His sin was worse than the sins that most of us have committed. It started with adultery and ended with murder. In the verse for today, David was feeling the weight of guilt and he was feeling separated from God.

His cry is so typical of what we go through when we have sin in our life. You may not have been there, but most of the rest of us have. We have sinned and we don't want anyone else to know about it so we go on as if it never really happened.

We continue to do all the religious things we have been doing; we pray piously, we read the Bible and go to church. We might even witness a little, but in the depth of our heart we know we have sinned and we haven't really connected with God for quite some time.

Along the way something happens to make us feel our need of reconnecting with the Lord and we cry out, "Create in me a pure heart, O God." It's time for renewal. God is calling us to return to right relationship with him. So we cry out, "Renew a

steadfast spirit within me.” We feel deserted and alone as we pray, “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.” We are desperate, yet a little fearful as we petition him for renewal.

We long for the joy of his salvation, and again we petition him. “Grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.” Then it happens. The heaviness is removed and a smile grows across our face as the joy of the Lord returns to our heart. In another psalm David wrote, “You have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence” (Psalm 21:6).

Prayer: Lord, grant me a spirit of repentance every day so that I can be cleansed of anything that would hinder my relationship with you and steal my joy. Restore to me the joy of your salvation.

Message: Unrepented sin causes a separation between us and God.

Affirmation: I daily keep my heart purged of all sin so that I might maintain a right relationship with God.

Reflection: Can you remember a time when a sin in your life kept you from having confidence with God? How did you handle that? Did you have a time of calling out to God, like David, for restoration? Did God restore your joy? Think about it and write your thoughts.

Day Seventeen

There Is Joy In His Presence

The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear?...One thing I ask of the Lord... That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life...Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord.

- Psalm 27:1-6

No one in the entire Bible expresses the joy of being in the presence of the Lord any better than David. The imagery that he uses in expressing his desire for the presence of God is compelling. Dwelling in the house of the Lord conjures up pictures of just basking in his presence day after day.

In another place he writes, “As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God” (Psalm 42:1). You can see the deer running from his pursuers, and growing thirsty as he gains ground and the pursuing danger is far behind.

The cry of David’s heart for the presence of God stirs a hunger within us to also be in his presence. For many years now I have devoted the early morning hours to being with the Lord and I can tell you there is great reward in pursuing him when the day is fresh and our minds are not cluttered with the world.

Every day we are faced with all manner of distractions. There is the attitude of others; there is

the natural desire of the flesh for the world; there is the need to provide.... And the list grows. If we don't set a time to be in his presence, and the earlier the better, then we will never be able to get around to it.

Today is the day! Today make it a purpose that you will dwell in his presence. Start out with prayers of petition and thanksgiving and meditate upon his word. When you make the effort to start the day with him you will have his joy.

Prayer: Lord, I tend to begin the day with good intentions, but early in the day I allow the cares of this life to keep me from being with you. Grant me the grace and the persistence to be in your word and in your presence daily. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Spending time with the Lord early in the day releases his joy to us.

Affirmation: I purpose to daily give God the first fruits of my time that I might dwell in his presence.

Reflection: David used the imagery of a deer panting for the water brook to demonstrate his hunger for the presence of God. How would you describe your own pursuit of God?

Day Eighteen

There Is Joy At The Altar Of The Lord

Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight.

- Psalm 43:3-4

In the time of David the altar had many meanings. It meant that there was a place of sanctuary where one could go when distressed. It meant a place of redemption when one has fallen and needs restoration. It meant a place of rejoicing and giving thanks for what God has done. The altar was all of this and more to David, but the altar means the same to us today.

There were many times when I was but a youth that I have gone to altar with a heavy heart. I may have sinned and lost my peace with God; I may be feeling a great heaviness of concern for a friend who is staying; or I might just be hungry for the presence of God. I was raised in a tradition that emphasized taking care of business with God at the altar and I gained great respect for what God does when we bare our soul to him in contrition at the altar.

I was once pastor at a church where the leaders wanted to take the altar out and put in prayer rooms to take people to when they came forward. I would not allow it because I knew what the altar

means to a needy soul. The altar is not just a place for people to come to confess Christ, it is also a place to seek God for deliverance and restoration. We need the altar in the church for people to pour out their hearts to God, and we need the altar so people who need to give themselves to the Lord can see what happens when people surrender to God.

If you haven't experienced the altar in a long time I can tell you for certain - it's been too long. Joy waits at the altar and bids you come and see how good it is.

Prayer: Lord, I thank you for the altar. Give me a heart that will take me to the altar not only when I am in need, but also when I just want a refreshing of your joy. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: The altar of prayer is a place where restoration takes places and joy is released into our hearts.

Affirmation: I will go to the altar and there find restoration and joy.

Reflection: What has the altar meant to you? Have you found a place where you can bare your soul to God and have him wash you of all the effects of the world? We all need an altar - Do you have one?

Day Nineteen

There Is Joy In The City Of Our God

Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, his holy mountain. It is beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth... God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress.

- Psalm 48:1-3

In the days just after the first Pentecost of the Christian era many thousands of people came to Christ. In fact, there were so many people in Jerusalem becoming believers in Jesus that the Jewish leaders were afraid Judaism would become extinct.

From the day of Pentecost forward many thousands became believers. Some scholars have estimated that in the early days of the church there were as many as 80,000 believers in Jerusalem. That must have been something to see. If all of the believers acted like those did in the upper room in Acts 2 we could certainly see why they created such a stir.

In this Psalm David envisions a time when the city of God would be established as the place from which God ruled the earth. The only thing we have today that comes close to what David was writing about is the congregational community that gathers to worship God in a place we call “the church.”

The corporate congregation of the body of Christ, or the church as we know it, is people coming together for worship, for fellowship and for just sharing their

burdens with others. Typically we gather in a building, but church is not about the building, it's about what happens when people gather in the name of the Lord.

Healing happens; Conversions happen; Restoration happens - and much more. The joy that is in those of us who are believers in Christ is the joy of the house of the Lord - that's because we are the house of the Lord; we are his body, his church. Rejoice - God is in the house.

Prayer: Lord, I am thankful for the community of believers who gather to worship you and to give witness to your marvelous love. I am thankful to be your house. Thank you Jesus, amen.

Message: Church is about what happens when people gather in the name of the Lord.

Affirmation: I will regularly gather with the congregation of believers that we might together worship him who alone is worthy to be worshipped.

Reflection: The place of worship is shown in the psalm of this devotion to be a citadel, a fortress. What does the house of the Lord mean to you?

Day Twenty

Joyful Is The Nation Whose God Is The Lord

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance. From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind... The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. - Psalm 33:12-19

The nation that trusts in the Lord is a blessed nation. The Hebrew word for blessed is *esher*. It means happy, or joyful. The nation that trusts in the Lord will have lasting peace and contentment. They will be happy or joyful.

The United States has been blessed for these few centuries because it was founded on a faith in the Lord God and principles of life found in his word. When the original 13 colonies of America made their declaration of independence from British rule they agreed upon a document that was signed by all of the representatives. We call that document the Declaration of Independence.

The Declaration of Independence begins, “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.”

Just as with Israel, God heard the cry of the people who were laboring under a government that did not

treat them fairly, and he gave that people freedom from their oppressor.

Unfortunately, America has followed Israel in that as a nation we have not remained faithful to the God who gave us the liberty we cherish. And, just like Israel, if the leaders, and the people of America, will repent of their sins, turning back to the God our fathers, God will Bless us and he will restore what the enemy of our souls has stolen from us.

If we, as a nation, repent, he will restore us.

Prayer: Lord, I have recognized that our nation is moving off of the foundation it was built upon. Move our leaders to trust you once again. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: The nation that trusts in the Lord will have lasting peace and contentment.

Affirmation: I will continue to pray that our nation will again trust in the lord so that we will have lasting peace.

Reflection: The founding fathers of our nation believed that our nation was ordained by God. What is your response to, “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.”

Day Twenty One

Our Joy Is Complete Because He Answers When We Ask

I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. - John 16:23-24

In this passage Jesus is speaking to several different situations. The first concerns him and his relationship with the disciples. Up until now Jesus has been pointing to the Father. The disciples had not been praying to Jesus at all, but only to the Lord God of their fathers. He tells them that he is going back to the Father and that they are now to come before God in his name.

Another aspect to the relationship the disciples have with Jesus is that they now are not going to look to him to be one to do the works of the kingdom, but it now becomes their responsibility. In another place Jesus told the disciples that they would not only do the things he did but they would do even greater things (John 14:12).

A third aspect to their relationship is that they had been experiencing measured amounts of joy in their relationship with Christ, but now their joy was going to be complete. That is they were happy when things were going good, but they felt threatened when things were not so good. Now they are going directly to God

in the name of Jesus and Jesus promised that they would get what they were asking for.

What will make the difference now that Jesus is going back to the Father? Instead of being the middle of the lake in a terrible storm and having to go to Jesus for relief they are now able to go directly to the Father and they have the same authority as Jesus had to command the waves to be still. That produces great joy.

Prayer: Lord, help me to really believe in the authority that Jesus has transferred to me as a believer. Grant me the faith to believe, the courage to ask and the joy of seeing you do what you have promised to do. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We can now go directly to the Father in the name of Jesus (with the authority of Jesus) and that produces great joy.

Affirmation: I have confidence that the Father hears and answers the prayers I ask in the authority of Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God.

Reflection: This devotion points out three aspects to the relationship of the disciples to Jesus and the Father. What are those and what are your thoughts on them?

Day Twenty Two

Sacrifice For The Joy Of Another

I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

- Philippians 1:19-26

Paul is speaking here of a dilemma that many of us have faced. He felt a longing to be free of this body and to be in the presence of the Lord. He was tired of the chains and imprisonment. He longed to be housed in his eternal body, but, he would forgo that for awhile for the sake of others.

I have struggled with what some would call a life threatening disease, and there have been times that I have prayed, "Lord, I'm ready to go if you are ready to take me." Then I see the need of my wife and family as well as the people that I minister to and I have to say as Paul, "I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith."

Paul had learned the principle of investing in the lives of others. We must come to the place that we are willing to surrender the things that make us comfortable so that the ones God has given us to nurture and mature in the faith can have the same joy that God has given us. God is calling us to sacrifice our own comfort for the joy of others.

When we willingly make that sacrifice then it becomes no sacrifice at all. In verse 18 of this passage Paul writes, "The important thing is that in every way, ...Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice." A strange thing happens in Paul as he commits himself to continuing in this life, even in chains, for the sake of others: Paul has occasion to rejoice that Christ is preached. Joy comes when we are more concerned about others than we are about ourselves.

Prayer: Lord, give me a willing heart to serve, even to the point of sacrifice. Help me to see the needs of others above my own desires and to rejoice when others have abundant joy in Christ. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Joy comes from investing in the lives of others.

Affirmation: I am willing to surrender the things which make me comfortable so that the ones God has given me to nurture and mature in the faith can have the same joy that God has given me.

Reflection: What is the spiritual truth behind the statement, "Joy comes when we are more concerned about others than we are about ourselves?"

Day Twenty Three

The Humble And Needy Increase Their Joy

In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Once more the humble will rejoice in the Lord; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.

- Isaiah 29:18-19

There are two kinds of needy people. There is the “I need, I want” folks who are constantly wanting someone else to take responsibility for their lives; these people are never satisfied because they will always have a hand out and a mind-set that says, “I need, I want.” The other kind of needy person is the humble needy; these people are trying their best but the circumstances they have to live with keep them from progressing. It is to these folks that this passage is promising joy.

We have done some missionary work in Haiti and there are millions of humble needy people in that country. In a pastors seminar there a few years ago Brother Martinez gave this testimony; “In my area there is much sickness, but God heals; In my area there is little food, but God provides.” You should have seen the joy of the Lord that was on this pastor who had walked 9 hours, barefoot, to the pastors meeting. He had shoes, but he didn’t want to put them on until he got there because he just had one pair and he wanted them to last. This man has joy.

A couple of years ago we helped a homeless couple by letting them come live with us for a time. They were the best house guests we've ever had. If I left the house for a while the whole house would be clean when I got home. He would mow the grass and pull the weeds. In just a couple of months they got their own place. They have a number of difficulties and never have much money, but they live with the attitude that God has been good to them and they are going to make it.

Prayer: Lord, grant me the grace to trust you, even in difficult circumstances. I don't want to be a "I want, I need" person. I want to be one who endures hardship rejoices in all things at all times. Amen.

Message: There is joy in living with the attitude that God has been good to us and we are going to make it.

Affirmation: I accept the grace of God to live in whatever circumstance I find myself and I have joy in knowing that in every circumstance God is in control.

Reflection: How is the Haitian pastor in this devotion an example of those being addressed in the Scripture passage? Would you consider yourself "needy?" If so, in which of the two categories do you feel you fit into?

Day Twenty Four

Joy In The Harvest

Restore our fortunes, O Lord, like streams in the Negev. Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him. - Psalm 126:4-6

Winters can be hard on us. It's not as hard for most of us as it was in the day when most people lived on the farm and raised their own food. In that day the farmer would harvest his crop and hope that it was enough to feed his family through the winter and spring and leave enough to sell or trade for the necessary things of life. And his hope was always that when winter is over he still has enough seed to plant a new crop.

In this passage Israel has gone through about 70 years of being kept from their homes and land. It was like a long winter. Now they are back home with just a small amount of seed and hoping for a bountiful harvest. As they sow there are many tears of sorrow for what had been lost over the last 70 years. But there are also tears of hope; their hope is in their God and this psalm speaks of this hope: "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy."

We all have to face winters in our life. For many of us the challenges of life's winter produces a sorrow that carries over into the spring when it is time to sow

for a new harvest. Don't allow the sorrow of hard times to prevent you from sowing for a new harvest. Sow new seed, even if it is in the pain of loss. For every Winter there is a Spring just waiting to bring forth a new harvest, but we must sow, even in tears, in order to reap a bountiful harvest.

Have you been in the Winter of life? It's Spring. Go out and sow, even if it hurts. You will have a time of harvest if you will sow the seed. Remember; He who goes out weeping carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves."

Prayer: Lord, don't let me get stuck in winter. Grant me the grace to sow for a new harvest even when it hurts. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Don't allow the sorrow of hard times prevent you from sowing for a new harvest. Sow new seed, even if it is in the pain of loss.

Affirmation: Even in pain I sow seeds of righteousness so that I will have great joy in times of harvest.

Reflection: How does sowing in tears and reaping in joy relate to the circumstances of life? Can you remember a time of pain you endured and from that experience reaped a harvest of Joy?

Day Twenty Five

Joy And Generosity In Extreme Poverty

And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

- 2 Corinthians 8:1-2

Not only were the Macedonian churches experiencing extreme trial and persecution, they were also experiencing extreme poverty. Yet, in the midst of this great hardship they were giving offerings to others who were in need. What a tremendous spirit these people had.

Read how Paul elaborates on their generosity: “I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints” (v3-4). Even in their poverty they begged for the privilege to give more.

How could they be such givers when their own need was so great? Paul explains that in the next verse: “They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will” (v5). You can always tell the folks who haven’t fully given themselves to the Lord. They give little and have no joy in what they do give.

You can also tell those who do give themselves fully to the Lord. They give much, and often, like the widow who gave only a penny, they give their all.

Instead of being sad and downcast over what they don't have they rejoice over what they had to give.

There is a lesson here for all of us. Let us first give ourselves to the Lord, then to those who serve him well, and finally to those who are in great need. Don't look for financial reward from giving your best, but you can expect that your joy will be overflowing. You may even receive a financial blessing from giving, but whether that comes or not our joy should come from seeing others blessed, not in anticipating a reward.

Prayer: Lord, grant me a heart to give. Not to just give from my abundance but to give even when I am in need. Give me the joy of giving myself fully to you so that your kingdom will be blessed. In Jesus Name.

Message: You can always tell the folks who haven't fully given themselves to the Lord. They give little and have no joy in what they do give.

Affirmation: I often check myself to see if I am fully given to the Lord, and I usually start by checking my attitude about giving out of my own need.

Reflection: Why do you think the church in Macedonia was so eager to give when their own need was so great? Reflect on the difference between those who don't give because they feel their own neediness and those who do give even in their need.

Day Twenty Six

Ransomed Of The Lord Return With Joy

The ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. - Isaiah 51:11

Isaiah prophesied many things to come for Judah and Jerusalem. He wrote his prophecies more than 100 years before they began to come to pass. This passage concerns a time far into the future when the “Arm of the Lord” (v9) would bring restoration to Jerusalem and the people.

He jumps over the time of sorrow that was ahead and goes to the time of being redeemed. Our verse for today speaks of those who would be ransomed and return to the city of God, Zion. When that time comes they will be crowned with everlasting joy.

Some see this passage applying to Judah of that time. Others see it applying to the return of Christ and the eternal kingdom. Still others see it as applying to the church. There are applications for all three of these views, but as applies to us today, we can see the Lord reaching into the world and redeeming men and women by the blood of the lamb.

All of us were in bondage to sin and separated from the joy of the Lord. We were in need of someone who would ransom us from the terrible place that sin had taken us to. Then he, by the gracious act of sending

Christ to the earth and ultimately to his death, made opportunity for us to be redeemed - ransomed by the blood of Christ. Yes, it is with Joy that we draw water from the wells of salvation.

We are overtaken with gladness and joy - sorrow and sighing have left us as we rejoice in the great gift of salvation. Hallelujah!

Prayer: I thank you Lord for the price you paid to ransom me from the bondage of sin. Grant me the ability to honor your gift and live faithful to your calling. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Christ ransoms us from the bondage of sin which separates us from the joy of the Lord.

Affirmation: My joy has returned because I have accepted the redemption offered by Christ and I have been freed from the bondage of sin.

Reflection: Was there a time when you were in bondage to a behavior (read "sin") that was controlling your life? Has Christ ransomed you from the bondage of sin? How does that feel?

Day Twenty Seven

Joy In Enduring Hardship With Hope

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. - Hebrews 12:2

This passage gives us a look at another side of joy. The writer tells us that Jesus knew the shame of hanging on a tree, and he knew the pain the entire event would cause him. He also knew that it would culminate in his death.

What is remarkable is that Jesus could look past the excruciating pain of the cross and the terrible emptiness of being rejected by those he had come to save. Looking past the suffering and death he saw the empty tomb and changed lives that would result from his sacrifice and that gave him joy.

The writer tells us to “fix our eyes on Jesus.” He is saying that he is our example. We are to endure whatever hardship or persecution that comes our way; and because we know the victories which lie ahead we can endure these hardships with joy.

An example of this is in Acts chapter 16. Paul and Silas were stripped, beaten and thrown into a cell. But, “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God” (verse 25). Can you see the picture? They were beaten severely and probably had

open cuts on their backs, yet, they were singing praises and worshipping their Lord.

The book of James gives an interesting perspective on having joy in persecution. "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds" (1:2). When our eyes are fixed on Jesus, even persecutions do not keep us from the joy we know lies before us.

Prayer: Help me to look beyond any hardships I encounter and see the victories that lay ahead. Give me the grace of joy to endure whatever comes my way knowing that in the end we win. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: We can endure suffering when we can see the fruit of our sacrifice.

Affirmation: I am not anxious to suffer, but I am willing to endure whatever is necessary that I might see others come to Christ.

Reflection: We cannot compare our light afflictions and persecution with the suffering endured by Christ - but, the question is, "How am I affected by my suffering?" And, "Can I look past the cost to see the prize?"

Day Twenty Eight

Great Joy In Salvation

I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. - Isaiah 61:10

Many outside the Christian faith think of it as just being another belief system. They put it in the category or “religion” and equate it to Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, or any of the other religions of the world; but those of us whose faith has led us to experience Christ in a very real manner know the joy of his presence and the delight of dwelling in his house.

Peter, in his letter to the church wrote, “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy” (1 Peter 2:8). Just like the old hymn says, “It is joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

I had talked with mark at work about the Lord and he was interested. After work we met in a nearby restaurant and I shared the plan of salvation with him. In just a few minutes he was ready to pray. We went out to my car and sitting in the front seat we prayed the sinner’s prayer together. When we had finished praying he opened his eyes and said, “Wow, I feel

different.” He was forever changed by the grace of God.

It’s just as simple as that. When we call on the name of the Lord he hears us, forgives our sins, restores hope and places his joy in our heart. Peter calls our relationship with Christ, “inexpressible and glorious joy.” Shout to heaven – you’re redeemed and filled with his joy!

Prayer: I thank you Lord for allowing me to know the Christ and the power of his salvation. I thank you for the inexpressible, glorious joy that comes from knowing him. In Jesus name, amen.

Message: Rejoicing comes from our heart when he clothes us with garments of salvation and arrays us in a robe of righteousness.

Affirmation: I rejoice in the salvation of my Lord and in the righteousness he has given me in Christ Jesus.

Reflection: How does Christianity compare to other religions like Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam? What does faith in Christ mean to you personally?

Tips for Leading a Small Group

The most critical elements of a small group are:

- ✓ **Good fellowship:** *Koinonia* (Greek word used for fellowship in Acts 2) is more than people coming together for a good time. It is sharing lives; sharing faith; sharing hope. The fellowship time in a small group must have those things without taking over the entire session with fellowship.
- ✓ **Good study and discussion material:** We encourage folks to use the Daily God Walk as material for their small group discussions. Every month it gives many scriptural based principles to live by.
- ✓ **Praying for one another:** Few things bind a group together better than praying for one another. We will often set out a chair ask those with needs to sit in the chair as we gather around them and pray for them.

To get more insights on leading small groups go to: www.dailygodwalk.org/small-groups

If you have any questions, ideas, or comments, feel free to contact us at any time.

email: paul@nhmresources.org

phone: 707-349-9890