

HOW TO FIND JOY

This life is full of trouble and challenges (Psalm 90:10). This can often cause great despair in life. Consequently, people are always searching for a way of escape. Sadly, most people look in the wrong places to find the answer – chasing it through success, relationships, possessions, entertainment, experiences, wealth, and other earthly things that do not last and cannot satisfy. Yet, God offers a lasting joy that is greater than any emotion and survives every season of life. Therefore, we should seek God's answers to unlock this great blessing He has provided.

JOHN 15:9-14

This passage comes in the context of a heavy conversation Jesus had with His apostles, hours before He would be arrested and sentenced to crucifixion. He was preparing His apostles for what would happen. Still, Jesus spoke about His joy, with the promise that His joy would be given to them. But what was Jesus's joy? Certainly, His joy did not come in the form of constant happiness in His earthly life, as He was often rejected and hated, and was now on His way to the cross. Yet, Jesus even endured the cross for the joy that lay before Him (Hebrews 12:2)! His joy came from remaining in His Father's love, doing the will of God, and knowing the glory that was ultimately awaiting Him (John 4:34; 17:1-5; Philippians 2:5-11). Therefore, the joy Jesus would offer to His apostles (and all His disciples today) also centers around remaining in His love, keeping His commandments, and knowing the glory that will ultimately come to them (John 14:1-7; 15:1-8)! This joy is superior to the fleeting emotions that can be experienced!

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-20; 4:4

The apostle Paul experienced many challenges and struggles in his life (2 Corinthians 11:22-33). Even when he wrote Philippians, he was a prisoner because of his faith in Christ (1:12-13). Yet, this letter is full of references to the opportunity to rejoice in the Lord

(Philippians 1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 17-18, 28-29; 3:1; 4:1, 4, 10)! Notice, however, that the opportunity to experience true joy only exists in the Lord. Not in the experiences, wealth, possessions, relationships, etc. of the world. True joy as expressed in this letter cannot be defined by an emotion (e.g., happiness). Instead, it can be experienced even in suffering if one is rooted in a right relationship with the Lord. For, no matter what is experienced in life, this joy knows that God is pleased with you and you live with an eager expectation of living eternally with Him!

1 PETER 1:3-9

The concept of joy through the pain of life can be seen regularly in the New Testament. These Christians were not only experiencing sufferings in life, but also suffering that was directly connected to their faith. Likewise, you will never be able to escape all the pains and challenges of life. However, the joy God provides through Christ is greater than every circumstance. It is the same kind of joy the apostles could have after they were flogged (severely beaten) because of their faith (Acts 5:40-42)! This is a joy that is beyond the power of words to express, a radiant glory that only comes through fellowship with God! It is coupled with an unshakable faith in Jesus Christ regardless of the circumstances you experience (Hebrews 11:1). It is strengthened by the hope for the future glory of what God has prepared when Jesus returns in Heaven (Romans 8:18-25). And it is rooted in the love for the One (Jesus Christ) you have not seen but are eagerly waiting for, which involves keeping His commandments (John 15:9-14).

GALATIANS 5:22-23

After recognizing Jesus as the source of joy and defining joy as something that is greater than any emotion, this passage helps to understand how you can actually experience the true and lasting joy God offers. However, notice that it is not something that can be purchased or found through anything limited to this life (Galatians 5:19-21; Ecclesiastes 1:12-18; 2:9-11, 18-23). Nor can this joy be self-generated through self-improvement, positive thinking, relaxation, meditation, or any other thing. Instead, true joy is presented in Scripture as a fruit God produces in the lives of those who focus on spiritual things and follow what the Holy Spirit has revealed in

the pages of Scripture (Romans 15:13; Ephesians 3:3-7). Therefore, true joy is produced in your life whenever you hear, believe, and obey what God has taught in the pages of Scripture and allow God to transform your life (James 1:21-25)!

PSALM 1:1-6

The concepts of joy and blessedness are deeply connected. Blessedness (translated “happy,” CSB) is the concept of one’s condition being as it ought to be before God that results in being deeply joyful/fortunate. Notice that this is not rooted in an emotional experience. Instead, it is rooted in relationship with God. The one who can experience true joy is the one who chooses the Lord’s ways in life. Rather than being a tree that withers, this one can be a flourishing tree planted beside flowing streams! For, the one who delights in the instruction of the Lord and meditates on it will find favor from God and accesses all the hope and blessings He provides!

MATTHEW 5:3-12

Jesus describes what the blessed life that experiences true joy looks like. Notice how opposite Jesus’s list of characteristics and circumstances are from the typical human ideas about what will produce joy. He speaks about spiritual poverty (humility), mourning (over sin), meekness, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, showing mercy, purity in heart, peacemaking, and enduring unfair persecution. Yet, these characteristics will produce joy through the promises God gives! Notice how each one of the characteristics are balanced with the promises from God for something that is greater than either the pleasures or sufferings of this world! When you submit to God, God will develop these characteristics in your life and produce the joyful and blessed condition that He promises!

CONCLUSION

Although life is full of challenges and struggles, God has provided an avenue to experience true joy. However, the joy that He offers is not based on fleeting emotions or changing circumstances. Instead, it only flows from a relationship with Him. If you place your trust and hope in God to live in His love by keeping His commandments, His joy will flow through your life as you experience His blessings and wait for the glory He will give to you!

DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

What was Jesus’s joy?

How can Jesus’s disciples experience His joy?

What is the joy God provides?

How is it possible to experience joy despite the challenges of life?

Why is it impossible to find true joy through an emotion?

Why is it impossible to find true joy through the things of this life?

How do you access the true joy God provides?

How are the characteristics and circumstances that bring about true joy different from human ideas?

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