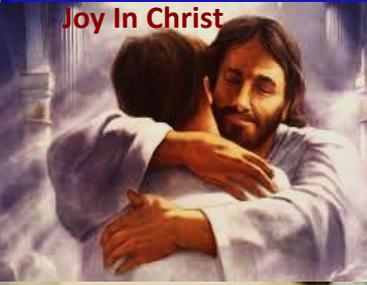


"We Glean Joy From Community"



Joy In Christ

In addition to prayer and proper perspective, we glean joy from community. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!" We were created for community, as can be seen by God's creation of Eve to be a helper for Adam and in Paul's description of the church as a body of believers. (Roman 12:4-8) "For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and



Joy In One Another

individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness." Christians are instructed to encourage one another (Hebrews 3:13) "But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." (1 Thessalonians 5:11) "Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing." We can share both our hurtful and happy moments with friends, (Romans 12:15) "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep."

"Joy, Is Like A Bottomless Well Of Water"

Worldly joy or happiness comes and goes as often as waves hitting the shore. It isn't something you can cling to when you've lost a loved one or are facing a great trial. The Spirit's joy can stay with you for the long haul. For the believer, the fruit of the Spirit, including joy, is like a bottomless well of water—there's always an abundant supply. Even in the darkest days, when sadness, grief, and loss may threaten to overwhelm you, God's joy is there. We need to understand that God's joy cannot be taken away. Oh, you might think that it's gone—that the hands of misfortune have snatched it from you—but it's not. As believers, we are promised the constant presence of the Holy Spirit. We are promised His joy. Just as our salvation is assured through Jesus' one-time sacrifice for all. Jesus' words in John 15:11, "I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

"Good Tidings Of Great Joy"



My Spirit Rejoices In God My Savior



The joy of the Lord is the gladness of heart that comes from knowing God, abiding in Christ, and being filled with the Holy Spirit. When Jesus was born, the angels announced "Good Tidings Of Great Joy" (Luke 2:10) "But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people" All who find Jesus know, with the shepherds of the nativity, the joy He brings. Even before His birth, Jesus had brought joy, as attested to in Mary's song; "And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:47) and by John's response to hearing Mary's voice as he "Leaped For Joy" in his mother's womb; "For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy." (Luke 1:44)

"Jesus Exemplified Joy In His Ministry"



Jesus exemplified joy in His ministry. He was not gloom and doom; rather, His enemies accused Him of being too joyful on occasion. "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' (Luke 7:34.) Jesus took great joy eating with the tax collectors and

sinners for this was the core of His ministry. "For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10) Jesus described Himself as a bridegroom enjoying a wedding feast; "Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting; and people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus said to them, "The wedding guests cannot fast while the bridegroom is with them, can they? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day." (Mark 2:18-20)

"Joy Is Reflected In Many Of Jesus' Parables"



Joy is reflected in many of Jesus' parables, including the three stories in Luke 15, which mention "Rejoicing In The Presence of the Angels" (Luke 15:10) and end with a Joyful Shepherd "The Parable of the Lost Sheep", A Joyful Woman, "The Parable of the Lost Coin" and a Joyful Father "The Parable of the Prodigal Son." In these particular Parables something of great value is lost and the joy comes from the seeking and the finding. We are of great value to our Lord. He has sought us, He has found us and He continues saves us. "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

He "Rejoiced In The Holy Spirit"



He "Rejoiced In The Holy Spirit" "At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was Your gracious will." (Luke 10:21)

He spoke of "My Joy" "I have said these things to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete." (John 15:11) And He promised to give His disciples a lifetime supply of it; "Until now you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete." (John 16:24). Nehemiah told the repentant Israelites that "The joy of the Lord would be their strength." (Nehemiah 8:10). The early church was characterized by gladness and the joy of the Lord (Acts 2:46; 13:52), and "Joy In The Holy Spirit" is a distinguishing mark of the kingdom of God (Romans 14:17). Those who are part of the kingdom share in the kingdom's delight. Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). In fact, it is our Christian duty to rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 3:1; 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16). In Christ, the believer is "Filled With An Inexpressible And Glorious Joy" (1 Peter 1:8).

"Joy" Is Related To The Greek Word For "Grace"

Joy is not based on our circumstances. In fact, joy may not even prevent us from experiencing negative emotions. Rather, joy is a deep-seated sense of happiness in what God has done and what He is doing. The Greek word for "Joy" is related to the Greek word for "Grace." Truly, joy is a grace bestowed on us by God. So how can we accept and experience the gift of joy? In many ways, perspective is key. When we look at what God has done for us, we naturally respond with thanksgiving and joy. When we look at difficult circumstances or the frustrations of life, we naturally respond with discontent. This is not to say that we do not acknowledge the difficulties of this life or the lack in our world. Rather, we do so while still recognizing that God is in control and that He loves us.

"We Can Experience Joy When We Give Our Burdens To Jesus"

When we voice our concerns and allow ourselves to be reminded of the goodness of God, we release our burdens. Jesus said, "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I Am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). We can experience joy when we give our burdens to Jesus. He helps carry the heavy load. He also reminds us of Who He is. Knowing of His care for us and our ultimate victory in Him, we can experience joy even in our hardships.

"How Do We Rejoice In The Lord Always?"

Paul was no stranger to hardships (2 Corinthians 11:23-27). And yet he was also prolific on the topic of joy, particularly in his Epistle to the Philippians. Paul writes, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7). We give our burdens to God through prayer and do so with thanksgiving. But we don't stop there. Paul goes on to say, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (Philippians 4:8). After we have given our requests to God, we keep a proper perspective. We think on things that are pure, full of splendor, excellent, right, and praiseworthy. We do not dwell on our heartache but on the goodness of God and the beauty He infuses into our lives.