

The Importance of Joy

Scripture references joy over 150 times. If we include its adjective forms “joyous” and “joyful”, that number rises to over 200. Then add to that another 200 for the use of its verb form “rejoice”. Clearly, there’s something here that the Lord wants us to grasp.

It’s been said that a person pursues happiness but chooses joy. What’s the difference between the two?



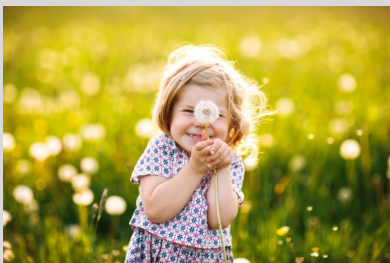
Happiness is like a thermometer. Thermometers measure the temperature outside the house, and temperatures may fluctuate often and drastically. In fact, those of us who live in Texas can attest to wearing our winter coats in the morning and our flip-flops by the afternoon. Likewise, happiness is usually based upon external circumstances. These can vary greatly within the course of a day based on who said what to whom, how much money we have or don’t have in the bank account, and the emotional rise and fall that these shifting circumstances produce.

Joy is like a thermostat. Thermostats set and regulate the temperature inside the house, and this temperature stays the same no matter what is going on outside. The worst blizzard on record could be roaring on the other side of our door, and inside we are sipping coffee in a toasty 72-degree living room. In the same way, no drastic change in circumstance is going to affect people with joy inside them. Their internal well-being is based on something—or rather, *Someone*—solid and reliable and unchanging.



Why is it so important to establish joy? So that we can return to it! Hardship and trial are going to come, but knowing our joy, remembering our joy, and recognizing that our joy comes from Him enables us to do more than just endure the trial—we can *connect* to it, know what He’s teaching us through it, and grow in our understanding of who we are and Who He is... because His unshakable joy is also our joy.

In Session 2, you have come face-to-face with years of lies and misconceptions, and by the power of the blood of Jesus, these are broken off of your mindset. Now with this Joy Journal homework, we will help you fill this void with the joy He planned for you since the beginning of the world.



If you want to learn more about the science behind joy, search out these titles by Dr. E. James Wilder:

- *Joy Starts Here: The Transformation Zone*
- *Joyful Journey: Listening to Immanuel*
- *Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You*

HOMEWORK: The Joy Journal

Now that all those lies have been renounced, it's time to fill that void with His love and truth. How does His love and truth manifest in our lives? JOY!

Of course, having joy includes feeling vibrantly happy. However, in its fuller meaning of expressing God's goodness, joy involves so much more. It is a perpetual, deep-rooted, divinely-inspired confidence that comes from knowing, experiencing, and trusting Jesus. It's no wonder that Scripture states, "*The joy of the Lord is your strength.*" (Neh. 8:10)

So let's find our joy.

First, take several minutes and remember what you were like when you were a child. Think about these questions and jot down 20 memories in the spaces below:

- *What things made me smile? Where were my favorite places to be?*
- *What activities could I engage in for hours and feel like no time had past?*
- *What things was I really good at? What things did I really enjoy doing?*
- *What talents or abilities just came naturally to me?*

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Examples:

*I loved watching thunderstorms through the living room window.
I enjoyed dancing in my bedroom when no one was watching.
I would curl up in my fuzzy blankets and read a book every night.
I played in the rain and splashed in the puddles with my bare feet.*

*I could shoot baskets for hours alone in my backyard.
I loved going to the beach and splashing in the waves.
I loved it when my grandma would take me to the park to swing.
My family had a movie night with popcorn every Friday.*

Second, find an empty journal. Choose one of the joys from the list. Then talk with God about your joy using these three questions. Write down what you perceive He is saying as well as your own thoughts and feelings about what He said. Make sure to record any new understandings of your relationship with Him.

1. *Lord, why do I like this?*
2. *How is this like You?*
In what ways does this reflect Who You are?
3. *Why did You share this part of Yourself with me?*

In your journal, it might look something like this:

	<i>JOY: I love trees, especially pine trees.</i>
	<i>1. Pine trees are evergreens, so they always reflect life— even in the winter times.</i>
	<i>2. Lord, You bring life to the places in me that feel dead sometimes.</i>
	<i>3. Trees produce oxygen for us to breathe, just as Your breath connects us all together. Lord, You wanted me to see how Your breath sustains me always—just like an evergreen.</i>



Third, give yourself permission to enjoy this joy often. Remember... It was tailor-made for you and placed within you by the Lord Himself. Thank God for all you have learned about yourself and Him through this joy.

Finally, repeat this process for the rest of the joys on your list. Also, stay open to recognizing new joys as they occur and then add them to the list.



Why is focusing on joy so amazing? Thinking about joy, thanking Him for joy, and learning the connection between Him and joy help us develop a new mindset—a totally new way of handling life.

When a problem threatens to throw us emotionally off-balance, we can read and remember all that the Lord shared with us and quickly return to our joy center with Him. We can say out loud:

“I can go through this because You are my joy, Lord—and I will experience that joy again and again. Because of this, I trust You with this situation. I trust You with my whole heart, and I do not have to lean on my own understanding. I acknowledge You, and You make the right decisions clear to me. Thank You, Lord, for always meeting all my needs.”