

Topic 14: Joy & Peace *Life as God Meant for It to Be*

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13

The Disciple of Jesus needs to know certain things about the Bible, God (the Farther, Son and the Holy Ghost), and the Church

When we think of the qualities that mark a follower of Jesus, two virtues that come to mind are joy and peace.



Looking at the Text

Joy: What Is Joy?

The Old Testament Hebrew word *simha* and the New Testament Greek word *chara* convey a deep internal gladness that both comes from and culminates in external expression. In other words, joy is both a condition or quality and an action. We practice it (rejoicing) in order to possess it (joyfulness). True joy inevitably leads to heartfelt rejoicing, and vice versa.

Where Does Joy Come From?

1. Take a moment and read Nehemiah 8:10; John 15:11 and 1 Thessalonians 1:6. What grabs your attention when you think about these verses?

Consider Zephaniah 3:17, *“The lord your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.”*

Not many of us think about the truth that “God is joyful!”

The Lord is the source of all true love. And because he lives within us by his Spirit, infinite joy is readily available to us even in the midst of hard times. “You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”

Psalm 16:11

How Do We Cultivate Joy?

The fact that we are told, “Always be joyful” lets us know that joy is not exclusively a feeling (1 Thessalonians 5:16, nlt). Rather than being an emotion that comes and goes, joy is a quality that we can cultivate. It is something we can kindle, fan into flame – or, to switch metaphors, harvest: “But the fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy” (Galatians 5:22, nasb).

In the Bible, gladness is always tied to God (see Psalm 32:11; 64:10; 104:34; 126:3; Joel 2:23). At least forty verses connect the *act of rejoicing* with the *state of gladness*. In other words, joy comes from looking beyond temporary circumstances to the unchanging person and promises of God.

Happiness or Joy? What’s the Difference?

The Bible doesn’t draw a sharp distinction between happiness and joy. In fact, it seems at times to use the words synonymously. But what our culture calls happiness and what the Bible describes as happiness are indeed two different things.

Read Psalm 13

2. How does Psalm 13 illustrate the real possibility of joy despite tough circumstances?

3. What would you say about joy to a friend who battles with ongoing depression?

The psalms teach us that while we don’t rejoice *because of* tragedy, we can still be glad *in the midst of it*, by trusting that we are held by a God who is with us, who one day will dry every tear.

Rejoicing (the action) is an expression of this faith; it’s an exercise in hopeful surrender to God and a refusal to treat temporal circumstances as the final word.

Because of all this, we can experience a kind of quiet confidence – even when life is unpleasant. We don’t have to go through life despairing, full of gloom and doom. It seems impossible, but we can grieve current hurts even as we rejoice in future hopes.

