

Matthew 11:28-30 ²⁸Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light."

THIS WEEK: JOY

The definition of Joy in the Bible: (ἡδονή, *simchah*; χαρά, *chara*)¹ Positive human condition that can be either feeling or action. The Bible uses joy in both senses.

Joy as Feeling: Joy is a feeling called forth by well-being, success, or good fortune. A person automatically experiences it because of certain favorable circumstances. It cannot be commanded.

- The shepherd experienced joy when he found his lost sheep (**Matthew 18:13**). The multitude felt it when Jesus healed a Jewish woman whom Satan had bound for 18 years (**Luke 13:17**).

Joy as Action. There is a joy that Scripture commands. That joy is action that can be engaged in regardless of how the person feels.

- Proverbs 5:18 tells the reader to rejoice in the wife of his youth, without reference to what she may be like.
- Christ instructed His disciples to rejoice when they were persecuted, reviled, and slandered (**Matthew 5:11-12**).
- The apostle Paul commanded continuous rejoicing (**Philippians 4:4**; **1 Thessalonians 5:16**).
- James said Christians are to reckon it all joy when they fall into various testings because such testings produce endurance (**James 1:2**).²

- If we can't have joy unless my life looks good with material possessions, good circumstances, and good health, then what is the difference between the world and us?

JOY IN THE MIDST OF SORROW...

Psalms 77:1-15

- Have you ever felt what the author is feeling?

WHERE ARE YOUR EYES SET?

Philippians 4:4,8 ⁴Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! ... ⁸And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

- Our ability to be joyful in every situation comes from not only where we decide to set our sights but also our decision to put on our new nature.

OUR HOPE LEADS TO JOY!

Proverbs 10:28 The hope of the godly results in happiness, but the expectations of the wicked come to nothing.

- What is your hope in, and where is your joy found?
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A FIGHT FOR JOY: We have an enemy.

John 10:10 The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 ³We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. ⁴We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. ⁵We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.

- A part of our fight for joy starts with capturing our thoughts and standing on both God's word and who God declares Himself to be in His word.
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CLOSING

1. What are you hearing? What is standing out to you? Is there a step you need to take or a thought process you need to re-think?
2. What are your eyes set on, currently?
3. Do you need to come to God in the midst of your challenging circumstances—and vent and pour your heart out to Him and other godly people?
4. What's your hope been in? Where has your joy been found?

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you in the message, and why?
2. Have you ever been in a defeated and discouraged place? What happened? What did you do? Did you bring it to God or did you keep your struggle to yourself?
3. Read Philippians 4:4-8. Ask: What have your eyes been set on, currently? Negativity? worldly things? Spiritual things?
4. Read Proverbs 10:28. Ask: What stands out to you in this verse? Why do you think our hope in Jesus can lead to joy?
5. Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Ask: Why do you think a part of the journey to cultivate the fruit of the spirit joy in our lives has some to do with how we fight with our thoughts and beliefs?
6. What is the main thing God has been showing you so far in this series and why?
7. Don't forget to take prayer requests in your group!

Bonus! Try Memorizing Galatians 5:22-25

Passages to prepare for next week, Cultivate! Week 4: Peace

This week, read Galatians 5:16-26; Philippians 4:6-8; Romans 5:1-5

As you read, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the passage saying about God, mankind, and how the world works?
- What do I learn about myself from this passage?
- What response does this require of me in my thinking, believing, and doing?

¹Find the Greek and Hebrew translations of words in the Bible using a Concordance at BibleHub.com!

²These definitions of Joy taken from the *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, by Walter A. Elwell, 1988.

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