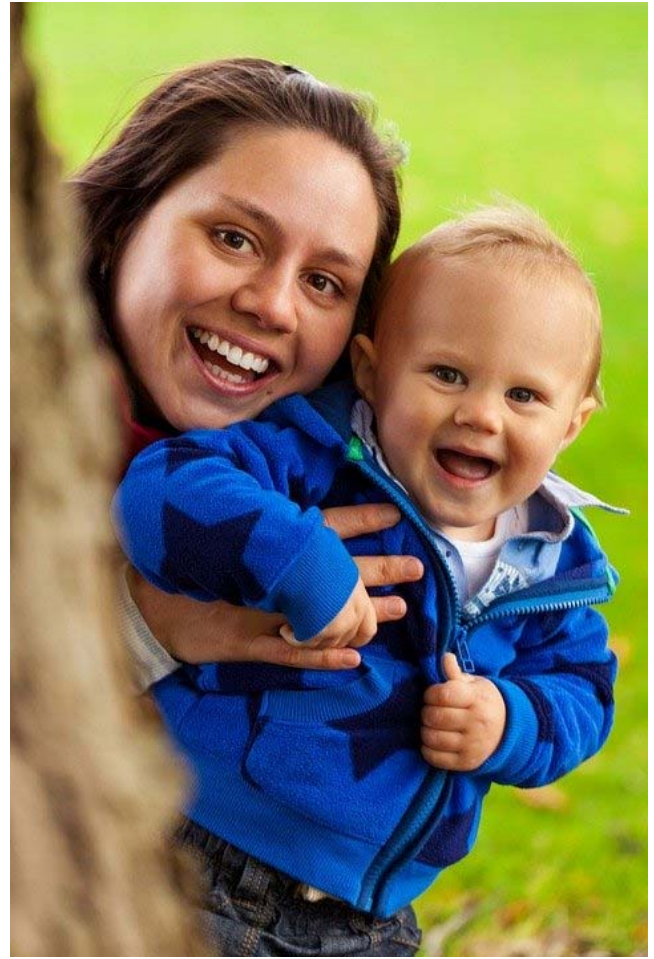


# Finding Joy

Did you ever have it. Did you lose it? Is something covering it up.

One Sunday I was praying with a five year old child whose parents had divorced some years earlier. He was frequently angry and often depressed, not a happy child. I was not sure how I could help or if prayer would help but trusting in the Holy Spirit I reached in my pocket, gave him a quarter and said “Hold it as tight as you can and if I can’t pry your fingers open you get to keep it.” I made a show of trying to pry his fingers open but then I reached in my other pocket and brought out a one dollar bill and said. “If you open your hand I will give you the dollar instead” and he opened his hand and let me have the quarter and I gave him the dollar. Then I explained that is what we need to do when we hold on to the way we want things, our heart clenches just like our fist and there is no room for anything new. God will bring you new joy but

you must open your hand and your heart for the NEW blessings, you can’t hold on to the past and hope for a better future. Since that day that quarter has helped hundreds of children. Try it with your children, try it with yourself , release what is past, release the old hurts and open your heart to God. He WILL bring you new joy. **Philippians 3:13, One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.**



Releasing our desire to make things like we want is not easy but it leads to the critical second step to discovering joy: TRUSTING God...refusing to worry. Philippians 4:6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God and ... he will guard your hearts. This scripture and many others make it clear that worry steals our joy...is in fact the opposite of joy. If you would find joy don't worry...TRUST GOD. Ask him to help you.

Next comes releasing unforgiveness and the hurt that lies underneath it. No one says it is easy but with God's help we can forgive anything and anyone. The best definition I have seen for forgiving is “Giving up the right to get even.” When we do this we are free and open the path to joy. A very good second step to ridding ourselves of unforgiveness is Phillipians 4:8 : 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. Filling our MINDS with good things will crowd out the bad things and in time overflow from our mind into our heart. In short we can't erase bad things we must replace them.

*Important as it is to open our hand and heart to receive new blessings the number one joy blocker is the absence of God, not having his Holy Spirit in and around us. Scripture is very clear: Galatians 5:22 “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,” Without the Holy Spirit there is no joy. The only way to get the Holy Spirit is to repent of our past sins and ask God to take over our lives. If anyone has not done this it is important. Talk to a Pastor or Army Officer about the joy of salvation. After a person is saved the greatest joy comes through fellowship with Christ and with his church. 2 Corinthians 13:14 : “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” Even after a person is saved and has Jesus in their heart we still sin and lose the joy Jesus longs for us to have. A great path to joy is to pray each morning [Psalm 139:23](#) “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

**But what about suffering.** How do we have joy when we are in spiritual, physical or emotional pain...when we are suffering?? Once again it is was in praying for a child that God helped me lay hold of the promises in his word. She was six and her brother was four. The boy was injured repeatedly by the father but the State refused three times to remove the boy from the home and one day his sister asked me “Why does God LET bad things happen? I gave her some sort of answer, the best I had but I knew it was of little help and for two years I prayed. Then one day when I least expected it I had a strong feeling that the Holy Spirit was saying to me: “Since the beginning of creation I have never LET a bad thing happen. When man or Satan do a bad thing I FIX it. I am a fixer and when bad things happen people should come closer to me and NOT back off”. The question of suffering then becomes “Who is God”...an ever present help in time of trouble or a distant idea with little power to help??

Surely bad things will happen. Surely most of us will **suffer** in one way or another. The one scripture that offers joy in the midst of suffering is God’s promise that he will not leave us alone. Isaiah 43:2 “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you...When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.”

**And Finally making joy COMPLETE.** 1 John 1:4 “We write this to make OUR joy complete.” It is hard to imagine any greater joy than being close to Jesus and yet the apostles proclaim that their greatest joy is in sharing him with others. They make this clear not only in this verse but in the way they lived their lives...not finding a quiet little place to let Jesus bless them but in lovingly and boldly reaching out to others with the message of his great love. Truly the disciples found great joy in gathering together, as should we, but the focus of their lives, their one great joy was taking Christ to others. This Sunday as you leave your church/citadel ask God to help you find the joy of sharing Him with others.

In short finding God’s joy is a matter of getting free of the things that block it (worry, unforgiveness, lack of trust etc.), getting as close to God as possible AND sharing him with others. May the following Bible verses help. Put them on your fridge or by your bed. Share them with your children.

**Psalm 16:11:** You make known to me the path of life; **in your presence there is fullness of joy;**

**Romans 15:13** May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.

**1 Thessalonians 1:6** you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

**1 John 1:4** We write this to make our joy complete.

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