

The Joy of Believing

By

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The Scriptural Path to True Joy

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## INTRODUCTION

The greatest joy that man has ever experienced is ours today through faith in Jesus Christ. The apostle Peter said that it is so great that it is “inexpressible and full of glory.” In other words it is so great that it goes clear off the charts.

In my fifty plus years of walking with the Lord and thirty plus years of ministry, I have experienced such joy; not just in the good times but also in times when it seemed I wouldn't be able to survive the attacks of the enemy. The greatest experiences of this joy would come when I put my faith in Jesus. Believing in Jesus seemed to open the heavens and this great joy would flood my heart. In this book I write some of the great things that have happened and the joy that I have experienced, but it isn't just the big things. The small every day things that you believe in God for bring just as much joy. For me this joy has been my strength that kept me going when everything else in me was screaming to quit. I was blessed by this joy long before I saw the Scripture in Romans 15:13 which says: “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” I will take you through as much Scripture as I can to help you find this joy but knowledge alone won't produce the joy. Only as we believe God through His word, and walk in the obedience that pleases Him will we experience this great joy.

Joy is what we experience when we participate in the activity of God. God enjoys revealing Himself to us and working with us to

accomplish His will. God has an eternal plan and when we align with that plan it brings God great joy. When God shares that joy with us we can't help but rejoice. We respond to God's joy by rejoicing. I call it the reciprocal response. When this joy comes into our hearts it is like Jesus saying to us; "well done good and faithful servant."

This joy is something that should be constant in our lives, yet there are those Christians who lose their joy a few weeks after they are born again and never regain it. Others don't even know they are supposed to have it so they never miss it. Those who fall into sin lose their joy and can't regain it until they repent as King David did.

There are so many ways we can experience this joy. A good example of this is when we repent and ask Jesus to come into our hearts. There is joy in heaven over the sinner that repents. One of the ways I experience great joy is when I am praying for others. Another thing that brings joy is in being a blessing to others. When God uses us to bless others they get the blessing but we get the joy. It may be something as simple as making a phone call or baking something special and taking it to a neighbor. My wife Jessie finds great joy in sending cards to people as the Lord directs. Another source of joy for me has been the revelation of God's word. I will be reading along when all the sudden a verse will just come alive and minister to my need or the need of others. His word becomes a "joy and rejoicing" to me.

It has been a wonderful thing to hear all the ways people have experienced this joy. Even in the worst of hardships and persecutions people have been blessed with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Joy isn't affected by our circumstances but rather by our relationship and walk with the Lord. Those who have been imprisoned and tortured for the Gospel talk of such great joy that sustained and gave them strength. It almost makes me wish I had been there instead of them. The joy of the Lord was indeed their strength.

In order to properly understand how joy fits into our lives we need to look at two other things which we experience. These are happiness and pleasure. The simplest way to think of it is that joy is experienced in the spirit, happiness is experienced in the soul, and pleasure is experienced in the body. Another way to look at it is that joy is our interaction with God, happiness our interaction with people, pets, etc, and pleasure is our interaction with our environment. God has planned for us to experience all three, and they are promised to us in Scripture. If we chose to love and live for pleasure, we sacrifice the joy and happiness that would have been ours if we would have lived for His pleasure. I like to fish, so I take my boat out on the lake and find a beautiful place where there are many fish. While I am sitting there taking it all in, two beautiful eagles fly over my boat. That is a real pleasure! If I take someone with me and they see the beauty, watch the eagles and catch fish, that makes me happy. Many times when I take people

with me, the Lord will use me to minister to them: That brings me joy. When I go to a restaurant I enjoy watching people. When there is a large group, I try and pick out who will pay the bill. I can usually do it because they will be the happiest person at the table. The most miserable person at the table is the one who is afraid they are going to have to pay.

If we walk with the Lord, He will cause us to lie down in green pastures and He will lead us beside the still waters. When we allow Him to be Lord of our lives, we find real happiness. "Happy is the people whose God is the Lord."

When we experience the joy of the Lord, it causes us to rejoice which is our response to the joy we feel. To encourage people to rejoice before they experience God's joy never seems to work, but when they do experience it, you can't stop them from rejoicing.

Joy is also included in the way we identify the kingdom of God. "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 14:17).

If I am looking for a church where I can worship the Lord the most important things I will be looking for are righteousness, peace, and joy. Do people have a good relationship with each other? Is there peace or is the place filled with confrontation and conflict? Is there a real sense of joy and rejoicing among the people? Does God enjoy going to church there?

Another area we will be covering will be gladness. It is often included in the same text as joy or rejoicing. Joy is what we feel on the inside and rejoicing is the outburst we give in response. Gladness is what others can see as far as the lasting effect of the joy we have experienced. I like to refer to it as the residual part of the joy.

I pray that as a result of reading this book, you will spend the rest of your life experiencing the joy of the Lord, and that you will find the source of great strength.

## JOY OF BELIEVING

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15:13).

Joy is a gift that God has prepared for those who believe in Him. There is joy and peace for those who believe in Him and walk in the way that pleases Him. God gives each one of us a measure of faith when we are born. Every human being on earth has this faith, but not everyone uses it to believe. God has provided for every one of us His Word which is our source of faith, but not every one who reads the Word really believes it. When we choose to believe, that pleases God and brings great joy to Him.

When we promise something to our children and they believe us, that brings great joy to our hearts because they trust us and believe what we say. How much more the Father is pleased when we believe Him. God has planned great things for us but the only way we can receive them is to believe. We must believe God is who He says He is, and will do what He says He will do. The more God reveals Himself to us the more we believe. The more we believe the more He reveals Himself. God really enjoys working with us this way. The more we believe, the greater the joy of the the Lord. When we believe in Him to the extent that we put our whole trust in Him, He is able to lead us by His Word and His Spirit. This brings Him great joy.



Joy is as much God's nature as love and peace and He shares that joy with us by the Holy Spirit. As we believe, He is able to change us into His image and impart to us His character:

"But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." (Gal. 5:22-23).

Believing brings us into the realm of the Spirit where we can experience the activity of God and participate in His work. Faith isn't dreaming up things for God to do, but rather finding out what He is doing and believing that he will accomplish it. Start with simple faith and go on from there. I have witnessed great miracles and watched God do many wonderful things, but it all starts with simple faith. Believe what you can believe. Can you believe that God is love and that He loves you? That is a start. Can you believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God? Why would our believing bring God joy? God is invisible so we can't see Him, yet He wants us to believe that He is:

'Whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory." (1Pe. 1:8)

I like to tell people that being a Christian is real simple: All we have to do is follow an invisible God, down an impossible path, to an unseen destination.

We don't know anything about God except what He tells about Himself. God gives us a measure of faith and then wants us to act on that faith. Believing is the action that we take in response to what God is telling us He is going to do.

While pastoring a church in northern Missouri the Lord impressed on me two messages for the upcoming Sunday. During the Sunday morning service I was told my whole congregation would be going to another church for Vacation Bible commencement. The two rural churches had gone together to provide this for the children. My wife and our two boys were also going. Normally we would have all gone, but I felt led to stay because I felt the Lord wanted me to preach that evening sermon. My heart sank as my whole church got in their cars and drove off. The roads were dirt so I could see their dust for about two miles going south. As I stood there alone, I looked to the north and saw a trail of dust. There were several cars and they all stopped at the church. One man got out and asked if we were having services. I assured him that we were and invited them in. They were all total strangers to me. By the time they got in the church, all the seats were full. I picked up my guitar and began to lead the song service after which I started to preach the sermon that the Lord had laid on my heart. About half way through the sermon an elderly man in

the back began to breath heavy, grab his chest, and then slump over. I stopped and went back to see what I could do for him. One of the ladies that came with them checked him and couldn't detect any breath or pulse. I felt led to pray for him, which I did. In a few seconds he revived and asked what had happened. The joy of the Lord filled the place and we all started rejoicing. My heart was full of gladness because I had believed and obeyed. I could just imagine God smiling on the whole thing. I'm sure He had it planned that way all along.

I can always tell when I have truly believed for something because after it happens, I can hardly believe that it happened. The natural man can't believe it, even after it happens, so how do we expect to believe it before it happens? This is why we have the word "wonderful". I am always full of wonder as to how these things happen. When we believe, they happen, and when we don't believe they don't happen, but we can't tell how they happen.

Our first experience with believing, and the resulting joy, is usually when we are born again. We read in Acts 16:30-31 of the Philippian jailer: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

When the Philippian jailer believed on Jesus as His savior he experienced joy from heaven and began to rejoice:

"Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household." (Acts 16:34).

He was rejoicing because of the joy that had flooded his heart. He was in contact with the activity of God which is salvation:

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10).

"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:7).

"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luke 15:10).

There is so much joy in the heart of God when someone is born again that it fills heaven and all that dwell there. Notice that it doesn't say that the angels rejoice but that there is joy in the presence of the angels. God is the one filled with joy and it is flowing out to the angels.

I was nine years old when I believed and was born again. I can still remember the moment as if it was just yesterday. There was so much joy that it filled the whole church. The next day as I looked around things looked so different. I had never seen the sky so blue and the trees so green. The chickens were so white! But what I remember most was the joy I felt in my heart. Now fifty three years later the joy is still there.

We may not always be happy, and we don't always find pleasure, but the joy remains forever. This is because it is the eternal joy of the Lord. It doesn't depend on our outer circumstances like happiness and pleasure, but on the approval of God and of His work in our lives.

We can see in the life of King David that joy was evident in his salvation, because that is what he noticed was missing when he sinned and displeased the Lord.

"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit." (Psa. 51:12).

"Make me hear joy and gladness, That the bones You have broken may rejoice." (Psa. 51:8).

When David sinned by committing adultery and murder he lost the joy that had been such a part of his life. When the joy goes, the rejoicing stops, and when the joy returns, the rejoicing returns:

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." (Isa. 61:10).

"Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (Isa. 12:3).

"Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation." (Hab. 3:18).

When we participate with God to seek and to save the lost by preaching the Gospel, we too experience the joy, as well as those being saved.

"Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy." (Psa. 126:5).

Prayer is another way we can participate in the activity of God. Many times when I pray it is as though I am just saying my prayers, until the Holy Spirit takes over: Then it seems as though I know the will of God, and pray accordingly. I love to pray right from the Scriptures as the Spirit quickens them to me. What a joy it is to be with God in the place of prayer:

"Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations." (Isa. 56:7).

When I was twelve years old, I had an experience that really taught me to believe, and showed me the joy of believing. My favorite place to pray was in our chicken house. It was my chore to feed the chickens, so when I finished, I would climb up on the roost and through a hole into the attic. That was the Holy Place. One day as I was praying the Spirit spoke to my heart and said; Ask anything you want. Well, I had lost a baseball and a cast metal car and hadn't been able to find either one of them. First, I prayed that I would be able to find my baseball. After I prayed the Holy Spirit said, "If you really believe, begin to praise the Lord for the answer." I did that, and then climbed down the roost and went

outside. I felt led to go in a certain direction so I obeyed. I walked quite a distance and stopped. When I looked down there was my baseball in the weeds. I began to rejoice and headed back for the Holy Place in the chicken house. I prayed that I would be able to find my missing car. I praised and thanked the Lord. Then back down the roost I went I was led in a different direction this time, and then stopped. I looked down, and there was my car. What joy filled my heart as I could sense the Lord saying "Wayne believed Me, Wayne believed Me!" There is joy and peace in believing.

After Paul had led the people to Christ he felt the need to bring them into this joy in an even greater way.

"And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith." (Phi. 1:25).

When Adam was in the garden before he sinned he had close fellowship with God. After sin came in, that fellowship was broken and God could no longer walk with man as He had in the past. The good news is that God had a plan to restore that fellowship. We are God's special creation and He loves us very much. The problem is that His glory is so great that if He revealed Himself fully we would all die. He remains invisible and reveals Himself to us as He can, without destroying us. What He asks of us is to believe in what He reveals of Himself. The word revelation means to uncover. As God uncovers Himself we see and believe. As we believe, God is able once again to fellowship with us, and this brings Him great joy.

## FOR HIS PLEASURE

In order for us to experience the joy of the Lord, we must realize that it is just that: His Joy! God works according to His own pleasure. When we come into contact with the activity of God, we experience His joy. Isn't it a wonderful thing that He wants to share this joy with us?

"Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." (Eph. 1:3-5).

"Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself." (Eph. 1:9).

God simply said, "I checked with myself and decided, this is the way I will do it," and did it that way. He didn't check with me, or you, or any one else. I have heard people say: "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe something." The truth is, you have to believe what God believes if you want to walk in the fullness of joy.

We were created for His pleasure so we need to surrender to His will, and let Him do what He wants in our lives:



"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." (Rev. 4:11, KJV.).

God created us as the objects of His love. Love has to have an object. You can't just say "I love" because love is self sacrificial giving. God is love, therefore He must have someone to love. Even though He created us as the objects of His love, He also gave us the opportunity to not love Him in return. Our love for Him wouldn't have any meaning to Him unless we had the opportunity to not love. That's why there is so much joy in the heart of God when we choose to believe, love and obey Him. We are here for His pleasure.

God also wants to work in us to accomplish His will and purpose. When we allow God to use us for His good pleasure, this brings Him great joy:

"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure." (Phi. 2:13).

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen." (Heb. 13:20-21).

God has had a plan from before the foundation of the world: I call it plan A. I don't believe he has a plan B. I believe He

is still doing exactly what He planned to do from the beginning. It is with great joy that He carries out that plan. When we become a part of the plan we experience the joy. He really does want to include us.

"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building." (1Cor. 3:9).

"But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:31-32).

God planned on Jesus coming prior to the foundation of the world, before man ever existed or sinned. What a joy in the heart of God when the fullness of time came, and the plan was put in motion. Those who came in contact with this activity experienced great joy.

"But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.'" (Luke 1:13-15).

Sometimes people get to experience the joy of the Lord even though it isn't a deliberate choice of their part. The shepherds were just in the area tending their sheep when the angel appeared to them. Anytime we are in close proximity to the

activity of God we can experience the joy. I call it a close encounter of the best kind:

"Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.'" (Luke 2:10).

The wise men were drawn from the east to experience this joy, and to take part in the rejoicing.

"When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy." (Mat. 2:9-10).

One part of this story that I enjoy very much is when John the Baptist came in contact with Jesus while they were both still in the womb. Mary went up to visit with Elisabeth and when they met, John, who was in Elisabeth's womb, began to leap for joy:

"For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy." (Luke 1:44).

Another part of the plan of God is when He takes us home to be with Him. This, as with all the activity of God, will be a time of great joy and rejoicing.

"Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:2).

What was this great joy that was set before Him, that enabled Him to endure the torture of the cross and the shame that went with it? I believe the answer is found in the book of Jude:

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen." (Jude 1:24-25).

I can just see Jesus as He approaches the Father with all the great host of the people He has redeemed and says, "Father, may I present unto you these people I purchased with My blood. Redeemed ones, I present to you the Father?" Can you imagine the joy that will be in the Father's heart when Jesus presents us to Him? Can you imagine the joy Jesus will experience as He presents us to the Father? Dare I mention the joy we will feel on that day? Oh what a day! Oh what rejoicing!

I do believe that He will present us faultless before the presence of His Glory with exceeding joy. This is what Jesus was looking forward to when He was dying on the cross. This is what gave Him the power to endure. There is simply no comparison between the suffering and the glory. I will write more about this in a later chapter, but for now I wanted you to see how this part of the plan of God was the source of great joy.

Those who have labored with the Lord will also experience this great joy. As we see those we have led to the Lord standing with us in His presence, there will be great joy and rejoicing:

'For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Is it* not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.' (1 Thess. 2:19-20).

This joy is what gives us the ability to go on—no matter how hard the circumstances or what we have to endure and no matter how long it takes. We can make it because there is a joy that is set before us.

"For you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven." (Heb. 10:34).

When Jesus was crucified on the cross, there was great sorrow, but the plan of God wasn't finished. It was just beginning for all who would believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. After the two Marys' discovered the empty tomb, their sorrow turned to joy:

"So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word." (Mat. 28:8).

Jesus told the disciples it would happen this way:

"Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy." (John 16:20).

"Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you." (John 16:22).

Jesus appeared many times to His disciples after His resurrection. Each time it brought them joy and gladness:

"When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." (John 20:20).

The next part of God's plan was the Ascension of Jesus. There were those on hand to witness this event and once again there was great joy and rejoicing:

"Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." (Luke 24:51-52).

"You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming *back* to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I." (John 14:28).

Jesus lived His whole life here on earth to please the Father and to do His will:

"Then Jesus said to them, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and *that* I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.'" (John 8:28-29).

The Father confirmed this with an audible voice from heaven:

"And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" (Mat. 3:17).

If we are going to know the greatest joy possible we must learn to live for His pleasure and not our own. We must allow God to work in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure:

"For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy." (Col. 1:9-11)

"Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God." (1Thess. 4:1).

The word abound here refers to going onward and upward. You bound down the stairs, but you are to abound upward in Jesus. We abound by being overcomers. You can't overcome until you come to something you must come over. It is like climbing stairs. Every obstacle becomes an opportunity to go upward and forward. We overcome by faith in Jesus:

"For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" (1John 5:4-5)

Our believing and overcoming brings God both pleasure and joy. There is joy and peace in believing.

Now I would like to simplify this even more by tying several of these things together. The longer I walk with the Lord, and the more I know of Him, the simpler all things become.

First we see that it only by faith that we can please God:

"By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11:5-6)

The beginning of our faith is to believe that He is. As soon as we truly believe then the joy begins, because there is joy and peace in believing. We must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. I mentioned before that we don't know anything about God, except what He has told us about Himself. He introduced Himself to Moses as "I AM"!

I AM; YOU ARE; and HE IS; are all the same statement depending on who is saying it. When God is speaking He says; "I



AM"! When we speak to God we say; "YOU ARE"! And when we speak to each other we say; "HE IS"!

Jesus asked the disciples: "Who do you say that I am?" Peter's reply was "YOU ARE the Christ the Son of the living God." Then Jesus told him that flesh and blood hadn't revealed that to him but the Father.

So our believing is based on what God has said about Himself. When we believe what God has said about Himself, that brings Him great joy. He shares that joy with us and we are joyful; or full of joy. Our believing is what pleases God.

"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." (1John 3:22).

The disciples asked Jesus; "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?"

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.'" (John 6:29).

How do we please God? By believing.

How do we do the works of God? By believing.

How do we find joy? By believing

In the parable of the talents Jesus reveals even more: "His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" (Mat. 25:23).

In Neh. 8:10b: We read: "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

Now let's put it all together:

1. First God tells us about Himself.
2. Next we believe.
3. By believing we faithfully do the work.
4. By faithfulness we enter into the joy of the Lord.
5. The joy of the Lord becomes our strength.
6. Now we have the strength to do more work.
7. Yes! There is joy and peace in believing.

## JOY OF THE LORD

To know God is to know joy. To believe in God and His word is to experience fullness of joy. To walk with God is to have joy unspeakable and full of glory.

When we realize that it is God's joy we are experiencing and that He is the only source of true joy, then we begin in earnest to seek Him and His word. God so wants to share His joy with us.

"The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet *you* with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing." (Zeph. 3:17).

I can always tell when the Lord is in our midst because of the great joy that fills the people present. Because we have chosen to seek His face and to believe in His word, He rejoices over us with joy. It is almost more than I can comprehend, that God would joy over me with singing. There is nothing I enjoy more than the presence of the Lord.

"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore." (Psa. 16:11).

This joy isn't something God gives us separate from Himself, but rather from the sharing of Himself. In His presence is fullness of joy. Wherever God is revealing Himself, that is where I want to be. Whatever God is doing, that is what I want to be

doing. When we walk on the path of life that God has provided for us, we begin to experience His joy. It is the work that God is doing in our lives that He enjoys. All that God does is because of His love. When we love Him, or love one another, we bring God great joy.

"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full." (John 15:10-11).

The joy of the Lord Jesus was to love His Father, and to share His Father's love with others. If we do the same, our joy will be full. Jesus really wants us to have fullness of joy, and made every preparation for it through prayer before He returned to the Father:

"But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves." (John 17:13).

All the joy that Jesus experienced here on the earth He wants to share with us. As we allow Jesus to live in us we continue to have His joy fulfilled in us.

Joy is a part of the very nature and character of God and is revealed in His countenance. Where God is there will be joy:

"You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence." (Acts 2:28).

Some people see the "ways of life" and, "in your presence" as two different things that must be pursued separately, but God

intended for them to be one and the same. When we learn to walk in His ways we find that we are also walking in His presence. The joy of the Lord is to participate in every facet of our lives.

Jesus, in the parable of the talents, puts it all together and shows us that pleasing God results in joy—the Joy of the Lord.

"His lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'" (Mat. 25:23).

God rewards us for our faithful obedience with His joy.

Some of the best verses showing that the joy we experience comes from the Lord are found in the book of Nehemiah:

"Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for *this day is holy* to our LORD. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.'" (Neh. 8:10).

"Also that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off." (Neh. 12:43).

What a wonderful thing it is that God shares His joy with us and causes us to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

## FAITH OF CHRIST

It is through believing that we come into the fullness of joy. Our believing comes from our faith and our faith comes from God:

"So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom. 10:17).

"For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." (Rom. 12:3).

All God is asking of us is to believe what He is telling us about Himself. None of us have enough faith to believe in God. All He is and all He has promised to do is far beyond our reach, so He made it real simple. Instead of asking us to have faith in our faith, He asks us to have faith in His faith and His faithfulness. Paul explains how it works:

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20, KJV).

This makes it real simple: All we have to do is place our faith in what God has done through Jesus Christ and the faith of Jesus Christ will take it from there. This is what we call grace:

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God," (Eph. 2:8).

Notice that it doesn't say: For by grace are you saved, but; For by grace are you saved through faith. You have to invest the faith that God gave you and then grace takes over. If you have one percent faith and you invest that in Jesus Christ, then He will add the ninety nine percent which makes the one hundred percent you need to be saved. After you are born again you now have saving faith that you can invest in Jesus Christ. Jesus will take that and add all the faith that is needed to produce all the faith you need to do all that God has called you to do:

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." (Rom. 1:17).

Many times I have heard people say, "I just don't know if I have enough faith." Thanks to the grace of God we're not required to have one hundred percent faith on our part to receive from God. God is pleased with any faith and trust on your part, and because of the faith of Christ, He will make up all that is lacking.

God increases us and takes us from faith to faith. You always have the choice of taking that faith and using it for your own profit or you can invest it back into Jesus Christ. It is much like financial investments. If you put your money in them and leave

it there it will increase. You can take your money out and use it for your own pleasure, just as you can use faith for your own gain, but if you continue to reinvest your faith in Christ it will increase.

To understand it better think of it this way: Jesus has perfect faith in the Father and the Father is always faithful to the Son. Do you believe this? If you do, then you have all the faith you need to accomplish all the will of God.

The entire 17th chapter of John is the record of Jesus prayer for us. I believe that it was a prayer of faith and that my life in Christ is the direct result of that prayer: "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20b, KJV).

To understand the faith of Jesus Christ, we must establish the fact that God can have faith in God. Jesus is God and He has faith in His Father, who is also God. Everything Jesus did He did by faith. To understand the faith of God let's go back to the first record of faith in action.

"Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear." (Heb. 11:3, KJV).

We understand that it was through faith that God created the world by his word. Here's how it worked:

The Father-Spoke-and the Spirit moved. Gen. 1:1,2,6,9.

The Father-Son-and Holy Spirit.

The Father-Word-and Holy Spirit. Jesus is the Word:



"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." (John 1:1-3, KJV).

The Father is still Speaking and the Spirit is still moving today.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. (John 15:7).

"Believe Me that I *am* in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:11-13).

Some years ago when I was director of the Truth for Youth house, the young people would come each night for Bible study and ministry. One day I was impressed to minister on the faith of Abraham. That evening after I finished teaching, some of the young people led a blind man to the front who was Jewish. I didn't know he was coming when I prepared the Bible study, so I knew God was up to something. I prayed for him and then dismissed everyone to go into the the dining room for refreshments. After a few minutes I could hear the man shouting: I can see! I can see! It didn't happen because I placed my faith in healing, but because I placed my faith in the Healer. I placed my faith in the faith of Jesus

Christ, and just as He promised in John 14:12; it worked. What joy and rejoicing filled the house.

Invest your faith in Jesus Christ and let the faith of Christ work through you. Believe in Jesus and find the joy of believing.

We see a good example of this in Mark the ninth chapter. A father brought his son to Jesus to be delivered from epilepsy. He petitioned Jesus; "If you can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us" Jesus replied:

"If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:23-24).

How wonderful to know that all things are possible to him that believes. Basically what the man is saying is, I have faith in what you just said. Now make up what I lack, (Help my unbelief). The unbelief referred to here is simply a lack of faith. The man invested what faith he had gained from Jesus words; in the faith of Jesus, and received a miracle. He invested his one percent and Jesus added the ninety nine. There is joy in believing!

Peter and John had a similar experience as they went to the temple:

"Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth *hour*. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into

the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and lifted *him* up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them--walking, leaping, and praising God." (Acts 3:1-8).

When asked how this happened Peter answered this way:

"And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which *comes* through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." (Acts 3:16)

Faith in His name produced the faith that is by Him. Faith in Jesus activates the faith of Jesus. That's GRACE.

Everything that we have, in Christ, has been provided for us by the faith of Jesus Christ, and all we are asked to believe in Him:

"And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." (Phil. 3:9, KJV).

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all

have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 3:21-24, KJV).

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (Gal. 2:16, KJV).

Both our righteousness and our justification are by the faith of Jesus Christ, and all we are asked to do is invest our faith in Jesus. Faith in Jesus activates the faith of Jesus.

Even as I type on my computer I can really appreciate justification. I set my word processor program on justify, and no matter how long my sentences are, it makes them all come out even. The same is true with faith. No matter how much faith I have, Jesus makes it all come out even in the end.

Again we ask the question: How do we work the works of God? "Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent." (John 6:29).

The work of God is accomplished through our believing; that is investing our faith in the work the Father has already accomplished through His Son.

Here is the patience of the saints; here *are* those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: `Blessed *are* the dead

who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." (Rev. 14:12-13).

## JOY OF SEEKING

What a joy it is for God to reveal Himself to us so that we can know Him and believe. We don't know anything about God except what He tells us about Himself; then, we are only asked to believe what He reveals. Our faith is based on who He says He is, and what He has promised to do.

As we saw earlier, the statements: I Am, You Are and He is are all the same statements, only the people making the statements are different. God says to us; I Am! We say to Him; You Are, and we say to each other He Is!

Exodus 3:14 "And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, `I AM has sent me to you."

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Mat. 16:13-16).

"But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Heb. 11:6).

We must believe that He Is, if we are going to please Him.

In John 11 we read how Jesus brought Martha to an ever increasing knowledge of Himself. Martha's brother Lazarus had died and Jesus returned to Bethany to raise him from the dead. Martha comes out to meet Him.

"Then Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.'" (John 11:21).

Her original faith in Jesus was that of the past: "If you would have been here..." Many people today only know Jesus as someone who has done things in the past.

Her faith increases to a now faith:

"But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." (John 11:22).

Next her faith increases to a future faith:

Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." (John 11:23-24).

There are many believers who share this future kind of faith with Martha. These are all good kinds of faith but Jesus will show her and us that there is a better faith.

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?' She said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.'" (John 11:25-27).

Jesus asks her to move to an even higher realm of faith. "Do you believe I Am the Resurrection and the Life?" Her reply is the same as Peter's. "You are the Christ, the Son of God." This type of faith will bring great joy to the Father and great rejoicing on our part.

Jesus moves us from: I believe you do resurrections to: You are the Resurrection.

Our faith is based on who He says He Is, and our worship will be: You Are. This is the joy of believing!

The word confession means to say the same thing; in this case it is to say the same thing about God as He says about Himself:

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.'" (Gen. 17:1).

God spoke to His people:

"And said, 'If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I *am* the LORD who heals you.'" (Exo. 15:26).

Jesus's time on earth was a constant revelation of who He was:

"I am the bread of life." (John 6:48).



Our faith and therefore our believing is based on the fact that He is the Bread not just the bread provider.

"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8:12).

I'm glad I have the Light with me at all times. In our darkest hour we need to turn to the light. The Lord delights in us when we turn to Him. I love to hear all the testimonies of people who have experienced that Light in a very real way. Some have seen the Glory and the Light come into their hospital room, and when it left they realized they were healed. Others have had that Light guide them through dark places. For others it is a discovery of what is real as they are enlightened.

In 1972 I had bought a new Chevy Vega. Some time after I bought it I was going on a long ministry trip. I wasn't far from home when it developed a very bad sound in the engine area. I stopped several times trying to find what was causing the clatter. I couldn't find anything wrong so I kept driving but it sure was making me very miserable. After several hundred miles I couldn't take it any more and began to cry out to the Lord to help me. Suddenly a bright light began shining down on my car. Never before had I been able to see as clearly as I could then. As I began praising the Lord the noise stopped and I felt such joy and peace. Was I ever Enlightened. Praise God for the Light of the world!

Jesus continues to reveal Himself:

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture." (John 10:9).

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." (John 10:11).

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6).

Paul proclaims Jesus as the Way as he says:

"For in Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28a).

Jesus wants us to believe in Him as the way, not just someone who shows us the way. If you want to know the joy of the Lord start walking in the Way.

In 1973 I had moved my family to Pensacola, Florida but I didn't know what the Lord wanted me to do. I had plenty of places to minister but didn't have any direct revelation from the Lord; so when I was at home I would spend my time fasting and praying for the Lord to show me what He wanted me to do. One day while lying on a deserted part of the beach praying, the Lord spoke to my spirit and told me to move back to Kansas City, Mo. He said He wanted me to go once a month to the places He would show me; mostly to home meetings where all denominations of people could come and be ministered to. We loaded up the car and headed for Kansas City where we stayed with a friend until we could find a house. In a vision I saw a house with a fireplace and some unusual blue flowers in the front yard. I looked in the want

ads for a house in the area of town I believed it would be. I found one and called the realtor who took me to the house. As we pulled up I saw the flowers I had seen in the vision. We leased the house and moved in. No sooner had we put our phone in that it started ringing. In no time I had sixteen towns I was ministering in once a month. That was the beginning of Circuit Rider Ministry which is what I still do to this day. It is hard to explain the joy I felt as the Lord put it all together. All I had to do was to believe that He was the Way and He made a way where there was no way. He truly is, "Joy unspeakable and full of Glory."

Jesus continues:

"I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5).

Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." (John 8:58).

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (Rev. 1:8).

While God is busy revealing Himself to us He wants us to seek Him:

But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6).

The reward we receive is God revealing Himself to us. The more we seek, the more He reveals Himself. I mentioned before that we can't search for God because we don't have any instruments that can detect God, but we are encouraged to seek Him.

We can't search for God, because He doesn't fit within our frame of reference. We can only detect Him with our hearts and souls, but He is pleased when we seek Him and wait for Him to reveal Himself to us:

"Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him thus* no longer." (2 Cor. 5:16).

There was a time when the disciples knew Jesus after the flesh. After His death, burial, and resurrection, they could no longer relate to Him that way. Even Mary His mother, as well as His brothers once knew Him after the flesh, but now they had to find a new way to relate to Him.

"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. "God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:23-24).

The question is asked in Job:

"Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty?" (Job 11:7)

God reveals His plan this way:

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find *Me*, when you search for Me with all your heart.” (Jer. 29:11-13).

This verse does use the word search but it also indicates that it must be done with the heart. This next verse is the same except it uses the word seek in the place of search.

“But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.” (Deut. 4:29).

Isn't it a wonderful thing when we seek the Lord who is hidden; that when we go into hiding, He comes out of hiding.

“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” (Mat. 6:6).

“For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.” (Mark 4:22).

Yes, God is hidden, but that is only so He can bring us joy as He reveals Himself to us. Our part is to believe what He reveals.

Now let's see what we can do to seek the Lord.

"Oh, give thanks to the LORD! Call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples! Sing to Him, sing psalms to Him; Talk of all His wondrous works! Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD! Seek the LORD and His strength; Seek His face evermore! Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth." (1 Chron. 16:8-12).

First is to acknowledge Him, and to give Him thanks. God reveals Himself to us a little at a time. When we acknowledge that small part, and give Him thanks for that small thing He is doing in our life, then He reveals Himself even more.

Then He said to them, "Take heed what you hear. With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given. "For whoever has, to him more will be given; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him." (Mark 4:24-25).

God is pleased when we give Him thanks, because there are so many who are unthankful and unholy.

For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, (2 Tim. 3:2).

"As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the

thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever." (1 Chron. 28:9).

"Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice! Have mercy also upon me, and answer me. *When You said*, "Seek My face," My heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek." (Psa. 27:7-8).

"You have said, 'Seek My face [inquire for and require My presence as your vital need]. My heart says to You, Your face (Your presence) Lord, will I seek, inquire for, and require [of necessity and on the authority of Your Word]." (Psa. 27:8 Amplified Bible).

From this verse we see that seeking is more than walking around hoping we might see something. We must seek Him as a necessary part of our lives. To require by necessity means that we are going to turn down the alternatives in favor of Him. For everything that God wants to give us there is an alternative source. It is usually a more visible quick fix, so we choose that rather than to seek the Lord for the best.

"Glory in His holy name; let the heart of those rejoice who seek and require the Lord [as their indispensable necessity]. Seek, inquire of and for the Lord, and crave Him and His strength (His might and inflexibility to temptation); seek and require His face and His presence [continually] evermore." (Psa. 105:3-4 Amplified Bible).

"The young lions lack and suffer hunger; But those who seek the LORD shall not lack any good *thing*." (Psa. 34:10).

"O God, You *are* my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You In a dry and thirsty land Where there is no water. So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory." (Psa. 63:1-2).

"My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God." (Psa. 84:2).

"Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near." (Isa. 55:6).

"Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For *it is* time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you." (Hosea 10:12).

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Mat. 6:33).

"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." (Luke 11:9).

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8a).

Discover the joy of the Lord today by seeking Jesus and He will make sure you find Him.



## JOY AND REJOICING

What a wonderful experience it is to participate in the activity of God. I remember being in church services where the invitation after the sermon was a great time of rejoicing. Every time someone would stand up and walk forward the congregation would start rejoicing. It was so different from the somber invitations I had seen in the past. No one was bowing their head and no one was raising their hand to be prayed for. Those wanting to accept Jesus as their Saviour would simply stand up and walk forward, and the people would rejoice with great joy.

It is easy to rejoice when good things are happening but there are times in our lives when things are rather difficult and we have to learn to rejoice in those also.

Phi. 4:4 says; "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!"

In 1Thess. 5:16 we read; "Rejoice always."

We need to come to the place that we can rejoice no matter what the circumstance may be. In order to do this we must know that God is in it, and that He is pleased. The thing that has helped me the most in this is to acknowledge God whenever and wherever I see Him working:

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." (Prov. 3:5-6).

The more I acknowledge Him, the easier it is to recognize His activity in my life. I keep it real simple. When I see the Lord working something in my life, I say: "Isn't that just like the Lord".

The Scripture tells us of many things that should make us rejoice. The first thing that will make us rejoice is the fact that our names are written in heaven.

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." (Luke 10:17).

Jesus cautioned them not to rejoice because the demons were subject to them, but that they should rejoice because their names were written in heaven.

"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight." (Luke 10:20-21).

Oh what joy, oh what rejoicing, when we receive eternal life. We become a part of God's eternal plan and will take part in what he is doing forever. That means we will spend eternity rejoicing. Rejoice evermore!

After we have been born again and filled with the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of God becomes very real. The Holy Spirit leads us and reveals the will of the Father to us, on a moment by

moment basis. Not only does He lead us, but gives us the power and strength to do the work of God. As we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in the activities of God and His kingdom, we can't help but rejoice.

"For the kingdom of God is not food and drink; but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 14:17).

I love to go into a place where I see righteousness, peace and joy all present at the same time. This is the activity of the kingdom of God. I know this is where I will find the work of the Holy Spirit:

"And you became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit." (1Thess. 1:6).

I have so many wonderful memories of being guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit as I worked in the kingdom of the Lord.

One such time occurred as I was returning to Missouri from a ministry trip to Detroit Lakes, MN. It was mid-winter and some warmer air had come in. As I was leaving it started to rain. Some miles down the road it turned to freezing rain. Cars and trucks were sliding off the road and crashing everywhere. I prayed and asked the Lord if I should turn around and go back, or stop and get a motel room until the storm cleared. The Holy Spirit spoke very clearly to my spirit and said; "Speak to the ice." I hadn't done

anything like that before, so I wasn't exactly sure what to do. I took a deep breath and said; "Ice in the name of Jesus I command you to part and let me through." I couldn't believe it! Right before my eyes the ice parted in two paths. One for my right tires and the other for my left tires. I began to rejoice and praise the Lord. When I stopped rejoicing and praising the Lord the ice closed in again. I spoke to the ice again and the ice parted as before. This went on about eighteen times when I realized I still wasn't doing something right. I prayed again and asked the Lord what else I needed to do. Once again the Holy Spirit spoke to my spirit and said one word; "Love." I thought, what does love have to do with ice? Then I realized I was only thinking about myself. I then said; "Ice I command you to part, not only for me, but for all those in front of me as well as all those behind me." The entire lane opened up and I never hit ice again, even though everything else was still covered with ice. What a time of great joy. What a time of rejoicing. Praise the Lord!

On another occasion I was to minister in Hannibal, Missouri. I had never been to this person's house before, but I followed his instructions and managed to find his house. I got out of my car and rang the doorbell. Just as the man opened the door his phone rang. He went to answer the phone and returned in a few moments saying that the call was for me. That was really strange because no one knew I was there. The man calling wanted me to speak at a meeting in Quincy, IL. The two men

hadn't been in contact with each other in years, yet the one from Quincy felt led to call there hoping the other man might know how to get hold of me. As I hung up the phone a great joy came over me and I started rejoicing. How wonderful it is to know that the Holy Spirit can work such a work in our lives.

Another area of joy and rejoicing is in hope. The resurrection of Jesus and His promised return has established a wonderful hope. When we think about what is in our future and our eternal walk with God, how can we help but rejoice.

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit." (Rom. 15:13).

I believe, therefore I rejoice in hope. Hope like love and peace are eternal. There will always be faith, hope and love. This isn't just something we experience here in this life, but something that lasts forever.

There will always be love. Love is self sacrificial giving, and forever we will be receiving and giving love. Hope speaks of a glorious future full of good things. God will always be doing something new, and there will always be something beyond where we are. There will always be faith therefore we will always be believing.

"So then faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom 10:17). God will always be speaking and we will

be believing and obeying, forever and ever, and that will produce great joy. There will be great rejoicing in heaven.

I don't wait for something to happen and then rejoice. I rejoice as soon as God gives me the hope that it is going to happen.

"Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfast in prayer." (Rom. 12:12).

Prayer is another area of joy and rejoicing. Prayer is a very important way we participate in the kingdom of God:

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Luke 1:5-6).

Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous before God and kept all the ordinances and commandments. They were already participating in the kingdom of God and were people of prayer:

"But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 'And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 'For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.'" (Luke 1:13-15).

Praying for others is a real source of joy:

"Always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy." (Phil. 1:4).

Jesus invites us to pray to the Father in His name so we can know the fullness of joy:

"And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." (John 16:23-24).

What a wonderful promise; "Ask, and you will receive." God loves to meet our needs, but He wants us to ask. Every gift of God comes wrapped in joy. God enjoys His children coming to Him and asking for the things they need.

Prayer is also a time to learn God's will:

Many years ago when I worked as an expediter at a factory in Kansas City, I had a wonderful experience with the Lord while praying. I would go in on Saturday and file papers. They were filed in numerical order which didn't take any concentration, so I would spend the day in prayer. As I was praying the Lord spoke to my heart and asked me if I was willing to do whatever He asked me to do? I said I would do anything He asked of me. Time passed and He asked me again if I would do anything He asked me to do? The only difference was that this time he was closer, and my flesh was starting to be a bit uncomfortable. I was much more cautious this time but said I would do whatever He asked of Me. Again

some time passed and He came closer yet. By this time my flesh was very uncomfortable as He spoke to my heart: "Will you do whatever I ask you to do?" Now I was very very cautious and very nervous. His presence was so great I could hardly speak, but I answered Him: "Lord I will do the best I can to do whatever you ask." He was so close by this time that I couldn't stay in the room any longer and ran out into the shop. When I felt it was safe I returned to my office. As soon as I got to the office the phone rang. It was a Baptist church in southern Missouri wanting me to come and preach that Sunday. The strange part of it was that my phone was an extension phone and there was no one on the switchboard to plug me in. How they got through to me I will never know, but I knew better than to turn them down. We were with them Saturday night, Sunday morning and Sunday night. What a wonderful time we had in the Lord. What joy we experienced and what rejoicing went on! Even when we went out to eat they couldn't stop rejoicing. I would have been very hesitant to drive four hours down and the four hours back if the Lord hadn't spoke to me about it before the call came. As it was, the joy of the Lord became my strength, and even though it was very late when we got back Sunday night, I was refreshed and ready for work on Monday morning.

Joy is also activated when we speak the truth, and walk in the truth.



Jesus says; "I am the way, the truth, and the life". (John 16:23-24).

"He is the Rock, his work is perfect; For all his ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice; righteous and upright is He." (Deut. 32:4).

"God is a Spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24).

God's very nature is that of truth, so when we walk in truth, that pleases Him and brings us joy, causing us to rejoice.

(Love) "Does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth." (1Cor. 13:6).

For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth *that is* in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. (3John 1:3-4).

Righteousness is the meeting of the demands of a relationship. Because of sin, the relationship between God and man has been broken. Through Jesus that relationship has been restored and our faith is counted to us as righteousness. God is righteous and when we walk in righteousness there is joy in the heart of God, and great rejoicing among the people.

"Let them shout for joy and be glad, Who favor my righteous cause; And let them say continually, 'Let the LORD be magnified, Who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant.'" And

my tongue shall speak of Your righteousness *And* of Your praise all the day long." (Psa. 35:27-28).

"But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; Let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; Let those also who love Your name be joyful in You. For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous; With favor You will surround him as *with* a shield." (Psa. 5:11-12).

One of the greatest joys of my life is the word of God. When I was a young boy I would take my Bible to my tree house and read those wonderful words. Sometimes I felt like I might explode. I would get so full of joy that I could hardly keep reading. In the evenings my brother and I would take turns reading verses. I could hardly wait for it to be my turn. When I attended Sunday School the word would be so alive, I could feel it all through my whole body. I kept all my Sunday School books because I couldn't bear to throw God's word away.

Jeremiah must have felt much the same way about God's word:

"Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; For I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts." (Jer. 15:16).

Jesus words not only brought full joy to His disciples, but they bring that same joy to us today when we read His word, and believe.

"These things I have spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

(John 15:11).

Be filled with the joy of the Lord today and rejoice evermore.

## REJOICE IN TRIALS

As I wrote earlier there are some things we must endure. They can bring us as much joy as the good things if we continue to believe and walk in obedience.

It is hard for us to understand how the early believers could suffer as they did and still rejoice, or how Paul and Silas after being beaten, and thrown into prison, could rejoice and praise the Lord.

As we look at the following Scriptures we will see where their joy and strength came from. This same joy and strength is ours also, even in hard trials. James encourages us by saying:

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." (James 1:2-4).

James tells us to count it all joy when we fall into various trials.

Why would this be? Paul says we are:

"Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifested in our body." (2 Cor. 4:10).

Paul answers the question by telling us that the purpose of trials is so the life of Jesus might be manifest in our bodies. This

pleases the Father, and that is what produces the joy. He says we are:

"As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." (2Cor. 6:10).

Jesus in His dying made us rich, and when we are willing to die daily, we will make many rich in Jesus Christ.

"I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church." (Col.1:24).

"Yes, and if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all." (Phil. 2:17).

"Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all." (Phil. 2:17, KJV).

"Great *is* my boldness of speech toward you, great *is* my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation." (2 Cor. 7:4).

In order to really appreciate how this works we need to look at the example of Jesus and His death on the cross.

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him

endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:1-2).

As I explained earlier the joy that was set before Jesus was because He could see Himself presenting us to the Father; as written in Jude vs.24, which says, He will do so with exceeding joy!

It isn't the trial itself that pleases the Father, but the good work it accomplishes in us and others when we pass the test. God isn't pleased to see us suffer, but He is pleased to see the brokenness in us which makes us fruitful. When we are in a trial and feeling weak Jesus tells us:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul's response is: Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." (2 Cor. 12:9).

The Lord's strength is made perfect in our weakness, and the joy of the Lord is our strength, so we are able to bear up under any trial. We also have the promise that God will never allow us to be tested above what we are able, therefore we are able to rejoice even in the midst of great trials.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*." (1 Cor. 10:13).

The purpose of a test is to produce a test-i-mony. Without a test there can be no testimony and unless we see God's purpose in it, we won't rejoice and be glad. What is being tested? God puts His Word and His Spirit in us and then allows it to be tested. We aren't testable, as a matter of fact we are detestable until God comes inside us. God first tested everything we would need in Jesus to be sure it all worked:

"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15).

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." (Mat. 4:1).

Jesus was tested with all three tests that Adam failed, and came out victorious. What did He use to pass the test? "It is written"! God Himself doesn't test us but He helps us pass the everyday trials that are around us. I consider it a compliment to be tested because He promised He wouldn't allow me to be tested above what I am able. The very fact that He is allowing me to be tested means that He has checked me out, and knows that I have enough of His Word and His Spirit in me to pass the test.

The end result of the test is what makes it all worth while. The people who are saved, delivered and healed as the result of God's power and love reap the benefits. God is pleased, and we know this by the joy that floods our hearts.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." (Rom. 8:18).

Glory is defined as the recognizable reality of His presence. In His presence there is great joy. I have been put through terrible tests, some of which I wondered if I would even survive, but after it was all over I wouldn't take a million dollars for the experience. The closeness of the Lord, and the joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, can't be compared to the trial, because it is so much greater than the trial itself.

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1Pet. 4:12-13).

God has promised:

"To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified." (Isa. 61:3).

Jesus tells us to rejoice when we are persecuted for His name sake:

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so



they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Mat. 5:11-12).

The disciples of Jesus experienced this first hand after they were arrested for teaching in Jesus name:

"So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." (Act. 5:41).

Peter explains it this way:

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory."

(1Pet. 1:6-8).

Yet BELIEVING, you REJOICE with JOY unspeakable and full of glory.

## REJOICE AND BE GLAD

Having joy that makes us rejoice, and being glad, are very much the same, yet, there are some differences. The joy that we feel on the inside isn't always visible on the outside. Gladness on the other hand radiates from us and is usually expressed to those around us. We will notice that many of the verses we look at in this chapter contain both the words rejoice and glad, showing that there is a difference, otherwise only one would need to be mentioned. The main difference is in the way it is expressed and when it is expressed. For instance you may rejoice when someone comes to visit you that you haven't seen for a long time. They may stay several days and then leave. You may not still be rejoicing when they leave but you say; "I'm so glad you came." The gladness remains even after the rejoicing stops. Gladness then speaks something of a long term relationship or some kind of lasting experience. Another way to think of it is to think of gladness as being the residual or the lasting effect of the joy and rejoicing.

In our walk with God we may rejoice over something that has just happened in our lives, but we are glad that He is in our lives:

"This is the day the LORD has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it." (Psa. 118:24).

Recognizing and acknowledging the new day makes me rejoice, but knowing that it was the Lord that made it, makes me glad.

My long term relationship with the the Lord and who I am in Him is my basis for gladness, and what He does makes me rejoice:

"I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High." (Psa. 9:2).

I want to always be aware of the Lord, to acknowledge Him and what He is doing. What hope and what security that gives me:

"I have set the LORD always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope." (Psa. 16:8-9).

As in any long term relationship communication is very important.

"May my meditation be sweet to Him; I will be glad in the LORD." (Psa. 104:34).

The word meditation in this verse comes from a word which means to mutter or utter. In other words it means to talk to the Lord, about the Lord. When I mention all the things He means to me, it really makes me glad I belong to Him.

The more I learn about who He is and what all is in His name the more I rejoice in Him.

"Glory in His holy name; Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the LORD!" (Psa. 105:3).

As I mentioned before we don't know anything about God except what He has revealed to us about Himself. We can't search for God because we don't have any instruments that can detect God. If we seek Him He reveals Himself to us. That brings us back to the believing because, when He reveals Himself to us then we must believe what He has revealed. When we believe, great joy and rejoicing floods our hearts.

We will now look at several things that cause us to rejoice and be glad. The first of these will be righteousness:

"But let the righteous be glad; Let them rejoice before God; Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly."  
(Psa. 68:3).

Righteousness is provided for us by the grace of God and made active in our lives when we believe. Let the righteous be glad:

"Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all you upright in heart!" (Psa. 32:11).

"Oh, let the nations be glad and sing for joy! For You shall judge the people righteously, And govern the nations on earth." (Psa. 67:4).

Next we will see that our deliverance and salvation is a wonderful reason to rejoice and be glad:

"He brought out His people with joy, His chosen ones with gladness." (Psa. 105:43).

"And it will be said in that day: 'Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.'" (Isa. 25:9).

"And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, And come to Zion with singing, With everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, And sorrow and sighing shall flee away." (Isa. 35:10).

"Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; Let such as love Your salvation say continually, 'The LORD be magnified!'" (Psa. 40:16).

"Now therefore, Arise, O LORD God, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength. Let Your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, And let Your saints rejoice in goodness." (Psa. 40:16).

God has brought us out of every slavery and bondage. He has saved us from the world, and from ourselves. He has forgiven our sin and destroyed it's power over us. For that He causes me to rejoice. I am really glad to be free!

We couldn't possibly know that freedom if it hadn't been for His mercy toward us:

"Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, That we may rejoice and be glad all our days!" (Psa. 90:14).

The sooner we know His mercy the sooner we can rejoice and be glad.

"I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy, For You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities." (Psa. 31:7).

Another thing that causes us to rejoice and be glad is the work of His hands:

"For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands." (Psa. 92:4).

"On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the LORD had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people." (1Kings 8:66).

"I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works." (Psa. 9:1b).

To witness the work of His hands is a wonderful thing, but to participate in the work through believing really causes me to rejoice and be glad!

If we think all this is wonderful just wait until He comes for His Bride:

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." (Rev. 19:7).

"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation,

He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels." (Isa. 61:10).

Not only that but there will be a new heaven and a new earth:

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a joy. I will rejoice in Jerusalem, And joy in My people; The voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, Nor the voice of crying." (Isa. 65:17-19).

## CONCLUSION

If I am going to be able to do the work of the Lord, I will need the strength of the Lord. In order to have the strength, I must walk in the joy of the Lord. To accomplish that, I must do what pleases Him. To please Him, I must believe.

The people asked Jesus: "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God that you believe in him whom He sent." (John 6:28-29).

As we have seen there is "joy and peace in believing." (Rom 15:13).

This believing isn't a matter of believing something about Jesus other than the fact that He is the Christ, the Son of the living

God. It is a matter of believing in Him. It isn't based on what we have seen, for Jesus said to Thomas: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29b).

The believing brings the joy of the Lord, and the joy of the Lord brings the strength. This joy is part of the fruit of the spirit: Love, joy, peace, etc.

"And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy; for the LORD made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel." (Ezr. 6:22).

"Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for *this day is holy* to our LORD. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.'" (Neh. 8:10).

Paul puts it all together when he writes:

"That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." (Col. 1:10-12).

If the joy of the Lord is our strength, and we are strengthened with all might according to His glorious power, then we "can do all things through Christ who strengthens us." (Phi 4:13).



It makes me want to keep on believing and to keep on pleasing. I want to keep on being a faithful servant that I might hear Him say:

"Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord." (Mat. 25:23).

I want to live in this JOY forever.

There is joy in believing, it is the joy of believing!