

LIVING

joy

by Shari Miller



If “joy” was defined as a “source or cause for delight,” what would you add to your list of things that bring you joy? Why?

I was hosting the entire family for Christmas, including in-laws, grown children, and parents. In addition, I was concerned about the space I needed to provide for sleeping, the food that everyone would eat, the presents under the tree, as well as the decorations in the house. On top of that, I had the music to decide upon as organist and choir director at church. I took to making lists and checked them off not just once but twice, to make sure that everything got done. December 24 and 25 came and went and the awful realization struck! Had I really worshipped and celebrated with joy the birth of the Newborn King? What had happened to my joy in having the family together? My worries and have-to's clouded the real joy of the Christmas season. Have you ever been robbed of your joy? Identify some of those “joy robbers.” Share with a partner or in the small group.

During this Bible study, we will explore the depths of the word “joy” in our Christian lives and in our Christian living. We praise and thank God for His gifts of grace and salvation, because of Jesus, that give us a living joy in our lives. We look forward to demonstrating that joy in Jesus, empowered by the work of the Holy Spirit, as we rejoice through our actions and words in our daily living. Finally, we set our eyes with hope to perfect joy and life eternal in heaven.

Opening Prayer

Dear Awesome God, with joy and exultation we come before You! We praise You for creating and sustaining our lives. We are sorry for the times we have sinned against You and have fallen into discouragement and even despair. Jesus Christ is our Savior from sin. The joy of our salvation is restored in and through Him. As the Holy Spirit works through Word and Sacraments, we are enabled to rejoice, give thanks, share Your message of salvation, and praise You. Bless our study of Your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Living Joy

What do the following passages reveal about the living joy that our loving God gives to us?

Nehemiah 8:10b _____

Psalms 5:11–12 _____

Psalms 16:1–11 _____

Psalms 35:27 _____

Psalms 51:10–12 _____

Isaiah 35:10 _____

Luke 2:10 _____

John 15:9–11 _____

1 Peter 1:3–9 _____

Read **Isaiah 55:11–13**. How does the Holy Spirit engender and nourish faith in verse 11? What other means does the Holy Spirit use to engender and nourish faith? (See also **1 Peter 3:21a** and **1 Corinthians 11:23–26**.) _____

Continue with **Isaiah 55:12–13**. What word picture is given in verses 12–13? (See also **Genesis 3:18** and **Isaiah 35:1**.) _____

Faith Talk

Psalms 30:5b reminds us that weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. In light of the Bible passages above, share with a partner or the small group how you would explain this phrase to a friend. (See the context of this passage in **Psalms 30:1–5, 11–12** for additional clues.)

Living Joy

We are blessed with a joy that is alive because it is connected to God and His good gifts of salvation, mercy, grace, faith, peace, hope, and joy! The Holy Spirit helps us to live out our joy each day. See **Galatians 5:22–23** for a list of the fruit of the Spirit. Joy is given to each believer in Christ, along with all of the other fruit (the whole "bunch") of the Spirit — it is ours!

Read **Hebrews 12:1–2**. How do we live our lives joyfully in the shadow of Christ's saving work of atonement for us? Be specific. _____

The verb for the word "joy" is "rejoice." In response to God's gifts of salvation, mercy, grace, faith, peace, hope, and joy, how are we privileged to rejoice daily in living that joy? Identify those specific ways in the following passages.

Psalms 31:7 _____

Zephaniah 3:14 _____

Romans 5:1–5 _____

Romans 12:11–13 _____

1 Corinthians 12:26 _____

2 Corinthians 13:11 _____

Philippians 2:1–4 _____

Philippians 4:4–9 _____

Colossians 1:10–12 _____

1 Thessalonians 5:15–17 _____

3 John 4 _____

If time permits

Read **Luke 15:1–7**, the Parable of the Lost Sheep. What lesson is Jesus teaching the Pharisees and scribes (and us!)? _____

Faith Talk

Share with a partner or the small group specific ways that you can share the joy of your salvation in your daily living.

How is everlasting joy pictured in **Isaiah 51:11** and

Revelation 19:6–10? _____

Faith Talk

Share with a partner or the small group about a time when the joy of the Lord was your strength.

Faith Walk

1. By the power of the Spirit, rejoice in your salvation in Christ and share the joy of your salvation with a special woman in your life.
2. Memorize a particularly meaningful "joy" passage used in this study, and start each day by repeating it.
3. Joyfully sing (at the top of your voice!) the hymns during worship this month. Meditate on the words and the message of each one.
4. Make a list of the joyful times in your life, and thank God for giving you the grace, mercy, hope, and joy to experience them.

Closing Litany (1 Chronicles 16:23–34):

Leader: Sing to the LORD, all the earth! Tell of His salvation from day to day,

Group: Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples!

Leader: For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and He is to be feared above all gods.

Group: For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

Leader: Splendor and majesty are before Him; strength and joy are in His place.

Group: Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!

Leader: Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; bring an offering and come before Him!

Group: Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth; yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved.

Leader: Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!"

Group: Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult, and everything in it!

Leader: Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for He comes to judge the earth.

All: Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever! Amen.

Closing Song

"Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" (LSB #803) or "Joy to the World" (LSB #387; LW #53; TLH #87).