

A Journey of Joy

Bible Study • Leader's Guide

Please provide a copy of this study and a Bible for each participant.

Opening Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, we gather here today to discover what it means to have joy in our journey. Every journey is different, sometimes good and sometimes not so good. Sometimes it's filled with joy or happiness; other times it's filled with grief or sorrow. Open our hearts and our minds to hear the message You desire for us to receive from Your Word. Then we can see that no matter what journey we are in, there can always be joy. Amen.

Theme Verse: *And I commend joy, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun (Ecclesiastes 8:15).*

First, let's contemplate the word "journey." In the Old Testament, a journey was usually taken following a message from the Lord when He would send someone to do what He had requested. Moses traveled to Egypt, Noah built an ark, and Jonah went to Nineveh, eventually. In the New Testament, a journey took on a different look. It was usually talking about Jesus' ministry or the Apostles' trip to spread the Gospel. Today, we take vacation journeys. However, isn't daily life a journey?

The title of this Bible study, *A Journey of Joy*, seems like a simple concept, doesn't it? There are Scripture verses which confirm that joy in our journey can be simple. Read the verses below:

Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10).

You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound (Psalm 4:7).

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11).

“For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:12).

What is the common theme in the above Scripture verses?

Joy is from God. God reveals and gives His joy to us on our journey. A journey of joy can only be found when we are walking daily in communion and relationship with the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, using His Word as a roadmap for our daily living.

But what about when the sun is not shining, the birds are not singing, and your heart is not full of gladness? There are Scripture verses which reveal that sorrow is a reality in our journey also. Read the verses below:

How long must I take counsel in my soul and have sorrow in my heart all the day? (Psalm 13:2a).

that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart (Romans 9:2).

Jesus too, felt sorrow as He walked as man on this earth: *“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death;”* (Matthew 26:38b).

My soul melts away for sorrow; strengthen me according to your word! (Psalm 119:28).

What is the solution mentioned in Psalm 119:28? From where will our strength come?

God and His Word.

Sometimes our sadness comes from our sinfulness — daily petty sins, unintentional sins, or sins we haven’t confessed. That is when we cry out to God as King David did in prayer.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit (Psalm 51:10–12).

The Holy Spirit does not allow sin to have dominion over us, but helps us to be free and restored to joy.

Where does our help or joy come from no matter which journey we find ourselves in today?

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:7–10).

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isaiah 35:10).

Our help and our joy is found in our Father, who claimed us as His own at our Baptism. Our help and our joy is found in Jesus Christ, who sacrificed His own blood on the cross to save us from our sins. Our help and our joy is found in the Holy Spirit, who lives in us each day, guiding and directing our path, and bringing all our hopes and fears before the heavenly throne.

To conclude this *A Journey of Joy* study, we will look at one final Scripture verse:

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1b–2).

Reread our theme verse:

And I commend joy, for man has no good thing under the sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun (Ecclesiastes 8:15).

The Lutheran Study Bible note for Ecclesiastes 8:15 says: “Abiding joy finds cause to give thanks to God in any situation.” (*The Lutheran Study Bible* © 2009 by Concordia Publishing House, page 1060.) Let’s strive to walk in abiding joy with a grateful heart each and every day, because it is another day given to us by our loving God.

We experience joy because Jesus has endured the cross, He has gone through all the unpleasant times and overcome them so that we may face them with confidence. Because of Jesus, each day can be *A Journey of Joy!*

Closing Prayer: Dear God, every day is a journey — sometimes through the valley, and sometimes on the mountain top. We thank You for the joys and the journeys in our life. We are grateful You loved us enough to send Your one and only Son to journey on this earth, providing an example, showing us the best path, and providing for us forgiveness of our sins and eternal salvation. This is true joy! Amen.

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