

Joy in His Presence

BY JAN BRUNETTE



Joy in the small things

Joy comes in viewing His grace as we savor an appreciation for the small things of life. It comes in the beauty of flowers that adorn kitchen tables and the fragrance of roses that appear in spring. Hugs of joy from Him are captured in the face of a newborn and the touch of tiny fingers wrapped around ours. Joy exudes from within as we listen to waves lap onto the shore or experience awe at jagged mountain peaks covered with pure white snow. Joy can even be discovered in the midst of storms, for we know that after the rain, lush green leaves will appear and clouds will change from dark gray to sparkling crimson at sunset.

Opening Prayer: Dear Jesus, I cannot thank You enough for the joy You bring into my life. Open my eyes to the visible and invisible miracles You share with me daily as I grow in my love for You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Joy discovered in His word

Learning of His love in and through the study of His Word is the most beautiful gift that enriches our lives. Psalm 119:103 best describes a positive reaction to His Word as we read of Him, listen to Him, and honor Him with our praise: *How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

With this picture of God's Word available to us, we discover that spending time in the Bible is very important in understanding joy from His perspective. As honey brings sweetness to our palates, so reading of His love through His love letter brings sweetness to our souls. His joy in us becomes refreshing, resulting in a new understanding of Who He is and of His desires for us as His children.

Look up the following verses and receive a taste of that joy in His presence. Take note of such words as *eternal*, *pleasures*, *filled*, and *overflow*. Describe how they reveal an amazing God.

1 Chronicles 16:27 _____

Psalms 4:7-8 _____

Psalms 16:11 _____

Psalms 21:6 _____

Romans 14:17 _____

Romans 15:13 _____

1 Peter 1:8-9 reveals the message of grace and salvation and how it impacts our joy. As believers we not only acknowledge that our faith is a gift from the Holy Spirit, but also that we are filled and enabled to receive amazing blessings from Him. List them below.

Verse 8 ... we are filled with _____

Verse 9 ... we are receiving _____

Joy is received in the spirit, in our inner person. It is the location where Jesus resides and where His Holy Spirit nourishes us. It is abundant even when our lives are falling apart and is separate from anything external that is happening.

Joy in the midst of sadness

Read together the words of verse 1 of “In Thee is Gladness” (LSB #818).

In Thee is gladness amid all sadness,
Jesus, sunshine of my heart.
By Thee is given the gifts of heaven,
Thou the true Redeemer art.
Our souls Thou wakest, our bonds Thou breakest;
Who trust Thee surely has built securely;
He stands forever: Alleluia!
Our hearts are pining to see Thy shining, dying or living
To Thee are cleaving; Naught can us sever: Alleluia!

This hymn verse announces with courage that joy is not only available but possible — even to the point of shouting “Alleluia!” Discuss how that is possible and WHO is the source of true joy.

In the Bible, there are examples of individuals and/or groups who shared their joy in the midst of earthly struggles. As you read their experiences, record the thoughts about joy and the reasons behind it.

Nehemiah 8:8-10 _____

Psalms 51:7-12 _____

Psalms 126:3-6 _____

Isaiah 55:6-12 _____

2 Corinthians 8:2-5 _____

1 Thessalonians 1:4-6 _____

The ultimate joy

Jesus is the giver of joy and He often provides it without our expectation. It is His gentle surprise. Record the proofs found in Jesus’ own words:

John 15:11 _____

John 16:24 _____

John 17:13 _____

Jesus experienced joy as He gazed upon us even when hanging on the cross. The intense physical suffering tearing at His flesh and the agony of spirit as a result of the Father’s separation was motivated by an anticipated joy — a joy He now shares with us. These words from Hebrews 12:2 help us grasp a better understanding of how that was possible: *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

That author and perfecter did all this for us so that we could become the recipient of His joy — the same joy that kept Him moving forward in spite of the pain. It was all planned. It was all meant to be.

Our response

The Psalms contain incredible examples of how we can respond to His joy. What examples of response are found in these verses?

Psalms 28:7 _____

Psalms 30:11-12 _____

Psalms 71:23-24a _____

Psalms 92:1-4 _____

Incredible as it may sound, the more we give up for Him, the more we receive. The less we hold on to the things of this life, the more His joy is experienced. Abiding in Him, and He in us, joy belongs to Him and is heaped on us in abundance. It isn’t about the hopeful happiness we can conjure up with stuff, or over-activity, or over-confidence in our own good deeds. It is about Jesus.

Praising God reveals our trust; joy is His blessed result. Rejoicing comes in knowing Him — really knowing Him. Seeking Him in His Word, we discover His joy has been there all along. Kneeling at the communion table, we joyfully receive His body and blood, given and shed for us. Remembering our baptism daily, He floods us with joy as we receive the assurance that all is forgiven in Him. Now we can joyfully acknowledge that in Him is gladness — in Him is true joy!

Closing: Read together the words of verse 2 of “In Thee is Gladness” (LSB #818).

Since He is ours — we fear no powers,
not of earth nor sin nor death.
He sees and blesses in worst distresses;
He can change them with a breath.
Wherefore the story tell of His glory with hearts and voices;
All heaven rejoices in Him forever: Alleluia!
We shout for gladness, triumph over sadness,
love Him and praise Him
And still shall raise Him glad hymns forever: Alleluia!

Closing prayer: Alleluia! Jesus, You are deserving of all honor and praise. Open my eyes to the truths found only in You and continue to fill me to overflowing with Your eternal pleasures. Thank You for the gift of joy given to me, and enable me to share that joy with others. In Your name I ask it. Amen.

Closing hymn: Sing or say together one or more verses of “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” (LSB #803) or “From All That Dwell Below the Skies” (LSB #816; LW #440; TLH #15).

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