

Living JOY

Leader Guide and Bible Passages

(Please do NOT use the "if time permits" sections when your study session time is limited. These sections could possibly be done by the participant in private.)

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? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.**

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.

Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.

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? **Have each participant read one of the passages indicated throughout the study as they are comfortable. Tell them ahead of time what order you will progress around the circle so they have their passage prepared. Suggested responses in red are included below. Answers may vary.**

Nehemiah 8:10b Strength of the Lord (through the working of the Holy Spirit) to live in joy even in the midst of grief and pain

^{10b} **And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.**

Psalm 5:11–12 Refuge, protection

¹¹ **But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.** ¹² **For you bless the righteous, O Lord; you cover him with favor as with a shield.**

Psalm 16:1–11 Preservation, faith in the one true God, beautiful inheritance (eternal life), counsel (in His Word), helps me remain firm in faith, even my flesh dwells secure, pleasures forevermore in heaven

¹ **Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.** ² **I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you."** ³ **As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.**

⁴ The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips. The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.

⁶ The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. ⁷ I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. ⁸ I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. ¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. ¹¹ 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 35:27 Righteousness through the merits of Christ

²⁷ Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore, "Great is the Lord, who delights in the welfare of his servant!"

Psalm 51:10–12 Forgiveness of sins, Holy Spirit, salvation, His presence

¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Isaiah 35:10 Captives are released and given everlasting joy

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.

Luke 2:10 Jesus, the Savior, is born, good news for all people

¹⁰ And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

John 15:9–11 Love of God, joy that is full

[Jesus said:] ⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

1 Peter 1:3–9 Hope of eternal life, joy inexpressible

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Read **Isaiah 55:11–13**. How does the Holy Spirit engender and nourish faith in **verse 11**? **Through the Word of God, which accomplishes what God wants to be done** 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.) **Baptism, The Lord's Supper**

Isaiah 55:11: ¹¹ so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

(1 Peter 3:21a: ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you ...

1 Corinthians 11:23–26: ²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.)

Continue with **Isaiah 55:12–13**. What word picture is given in **verses 12–13** (see also **Genesis 3:18** and **Isaiah 35:1**)? **A beautiful picture of paradise restored; sin marred that paradise in Genesis, but through Jesus atoning work, creation and everlasting paradise are again restored**

Isaiah 55:12–13: ¹² "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. ¹³ Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

(Genesis 3:18: ... thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.

Isaiah 35:1: The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus ...)

Faith Talk: Psalm 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 **Psalm 30:1–5, 11–12** for additional clues.)

Answers will vary, but encourage all to participate. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.

¹I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me. ²O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. ³O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit. ⁴Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. ⁵For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. ¹¹You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, ¹²that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

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!

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

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. **Cast our burdens on the Lord; keep our eyes on Jesus; with the help of the Spirit, tap into His joy – the joy of the cross**

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking 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.

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 daily rejoice in living that joy? Identify those specific ways in the following passages. **Answers may vary.**

Psalm 31:7 Rejoice and be glad in our Savior’s love; Jesus knows our needs

⁷I will rejoice and be glad in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have known the distress of my soul.

Zephaniah 3:14 Sing, shout, exult

¹⁴Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!

Romans 5:1–5 Rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; rejoice in our sufferings that lead to hope through the power of the Spirit in our lives

¹Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ²Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 12:11–13 Be zealous and fervent; serve the Lord; rejoice in hope; patient in trials; constant in prayer; share with those less fortunate; show hospitality

¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

1 Corinthians 12:26 Work together and rejoice with the sisters and brothers in Christ

²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

2 Corinthians 13:11 Have an attitude of rejoicing; restore relationships; comfort and agree with each other; live peacefully

¹¹ Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

Philippians 2:1–4 Be in full accord with sisters and brothers in Christ; be humble; look to the interests of others

¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 4:4–9 Rejoice always in the Lord; be a mediator; don't be anxious; pray; think about worthy things

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Colossians 1:10–12 Bear the fruit of good works; endure and be patient with joy; give thanks to God

¹⁰ ... so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. ¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

1 Thessalonians 5:15–17 Seek to do good to everyone; pray; rejoice always

¹⁵ See that no one repays anyone evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to everyone. ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing,

3 John 4 Stay in the truth of God

⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

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!)? **Answers will vary. Could include a lesson about forgiveness; God forgives us all and as brothers and sisters in Christ who have been forgiven, we can rejoice with the "lost sheep"**

¹ Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them." ³ So he told them this parable: ⁴ "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' ⁷ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

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. **Answers will vary, but encourage all to participate. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.**

How is everlasting joy pictured in **Isaiah 51:11** and **Revelation 19:6–10**? **Answers will vary.**

Isaiah 51:11: ¹¹ 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.

Revelation 19:6–10: ⁶ Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; ⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. ⁹ And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

Faith Talk: Share with a partner or the small group about a time when the joy of the Lord was your strength. **Answers will vary, but encourage all to participate. The leader should give an example of her own to begin discussion.**

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 (sing together): “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” (*LSB* #803) or “Joy to the World” (*LSB* #387; *LW* #53; *TLH* #87).

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