

Rejoice Always

1) Joy is an Essential Christian Experience

Essential – meaning something that is designed to be there.

Experience – joy is an experience, not a possession.

Essential Christian Experience – what I don't mean is that if you are not experiencing true Joy, then you aren't a Christian (though that could be true). What I mean is that you are having a less-than-designed Christian experience.

- Neh 8:10 – Then he said to them, “Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”
- Psalm 5:11 – But let all who take refuge in You be glad, Let them ever sing for joy.
- Psalm 32:11 – Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones; And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.
- Psalm 33:1 – Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones;
- Psalm 37:4 – Delight yourself in the Lord
- Psalm 40:16 – Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; Let those who love Your salvation say continually, “The Lord be magnified!”

- Psalm 68:3 - But let the righteous be glad; let them exult before God; Yes, let them rejoice with gladness.
- Psalm 96:11 – Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice
- Psalm 97:1 – The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice; Let the many islands be glad.
- Psalm 149:2 – Let Israel be glad in his Maker; Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King.
- Isaiah 25:9 – And it will be said in that day, “Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.”
- Isaiah 61:10 – I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Joy has an Object

Joy is not a mysterious delirium that comes over you unexpectedly – joy has an object – in this case it is to be “in the Lord.”

Philippians 4:4 – *Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice!*

2) We Have a Joy Problem

a) Joy is an Emotion

In the NT it is used

- of new mothers at the first site of their baby (Jn 16:21),
- of a close friend of the groom on the wedding day (Jn 3:29),
- of someone happening upon a great fortune (Mt 13:44),
- of the response of amazement when the disciples saw the risen Lord (Lk 24:41),
- of the wise men when their journey reached its fulfillment (Mt 2:10).

b) Joy is Required

Objection: Emotion + Required = Inappropriate

REACTION: Redefine Joy as something more appropriate to command...

“Joy is not a feeling, but is the deep-down confidence that God is in control of everything for His glory and our good, and thus all is well no

matter what the circumstances.” John MacArthur, MNTC @ Philippians 4:4

John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*, “If it is appropriate to have feelings at all, it is appropriate for Jesus to command and legislate them.”

NOTE: Joy = Inner Delight + Outer Expression

Objection: Joy + Always = Impossible!

So – what does “always” mean

- 100% of the time
 - John 8:29 - Jesus always does the will of the Father
 - 2 Cor 2:14 – God always leads us in triumph
 - Heb 7:25 – Jesus always lives to intercede for us
- In a State / Condition
 - Luke 15:31 – the prodigal’s older brother, who has always been with the father
 - John 7:6 – Jesus’ brothers, whose time is always opportune to respond to Jesus
 - 1 Thess 4:17 – after the rapture, we will always be with the Lord

- General Pattern
 - John 6:14 – always give us this bread
 - John 18:20 – I always taught openly in your synagogues and in the Temple
 - Romans 1:10 – always praying for you
 - 2 Cor 5:6 – always being of good courage... we walk by faith, not by sight

Considering these 3 options, “always” here seems to fit our general pattern of life and heart...

3) Cultivating Joy

So, our question is how we cooperate with the Spirit in cultivating a Joy in the Lord...?

a) Joy-Fillers

1. Knowledge

- Character
- Works
- Promises

How? from the Word (John 15:11) – fed by Readings, Songs, Conversations, Meditations

2. Experience = “Faith Exercised”

- Venture on Him, believing His promises
- Pray to Him, releasing our anxieties (Ps 94:19)
- Obey Him, regardless of the costs
- Emulate Him, wherever possible

- Join Him, engaging with His people & mission

b) Joy-Killers

1. Wrong Expectations (due to poor theology, a sense of “deserving”, etc)
2. Complacency / Comfortableness – we must Fight for Joy! Paul said he was a “*worker with you for your joy.*”
3. Replacing Giver-Joy with Gift-Joy
4. Hopeless grief / anxiety – must anticipate “joy in the morning” (Ps 30:5)

Praxis

1. What is a reason you have had for joy in this past week?
2. What are the Joy-Fillers that facilitate our “joy in the Lord?” Which do need to pick back up?
3. What are the Joy-Killers that rob our “joy in the Lord?” Which ones will you leave off this week?
4. How can Christian fellowship affect our “joy in the Lord?”
5. What is the difference between “gift-joy” and “giver-joy”? Why is this important?
6. Thought question: How does the “always” part work when you are beset with a real trouble?