

Glorious Joy

Though now you do not see Him, yet **believing**, you rejoice with **joy inexpressible** and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:8-9

What is joy?

While every single human being wants joy, few seem to have it.

So what are the right and wrong understandings of *joy*, and how can we get true joy? Furthermore, how can we know this joy while avoiding the counterfeits our flesh and the world's wisdom have to offer? (Mark 4:16-17)

While joy is a supremely desired feeling, most think of it as something that depends on having the right *circumstances*. There is *some* truth to that, but overall it is very misleading. To realize true joy, a key and helpful reality for us to know is this:

Joy is not just a superlative *feeling*. Instead, it is a barometer for what is going on **inside** of you, and depends less on what is going on **outside** of you.

In other words, your attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, focus, and the treasures of your heart have far more to do with joy than your circumstances. However, we often see it the other way around. Nevertheless, we can always have joy, even in the midst of pain and sorrow.

... as sorrowful, yet **always** rejoicing.

2 Corinthians 6:10

When we look inwardly—and follow God's ways over our ways—our level of joy will increase. On the other hand, to the degree we fix our eyes on what is temporary and outside of us (e.g., our circumstances) the more our experience will go up and down. And to the degree we live like that, we will likely lack joy, and perhaps experience anxiety and hopelessness as well.

(cp. Phil 4:11-13; 2 Cor 4:16-18; Col 3:1-4; 1 Pet 4:9)

UNDERSTANDING JOY

Therefore, having been **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access **by faith into this grace** in which we stand, and **rejoice in hope of the glory of God**.

Romans 5:1-2

JOY | a source or cause of delight

In Scripture, the Greek word “**charis**” (used 156 times) is mostly translated as **grace** (130 times in the KJV). One definition of this word is: **that which affords joy**, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: grace of speech

If someone declared, “X is *that which affords joy*,” perhaps everyone would eagerly respond, “Okay, what is ‘X’? I would love to know what X is so that I can know true and lasting joy!”

As we know, “X” is *grace*, and grace comes in abundance from God Himself. What is more, unending grace is available to us in His New Covenant (e.g., faith in God, His Word, and His gospel of salvation; Rom 5:1-2; 2 Cor 3:5ff).

And God is able to make **all** grace abound toward you, that you, **always** having **all** sufficiency in **all** things, may have an abundance for every good work.

2 Corinthians 9:8

When it comes *joy and grace*, here are some key Greek words to know. Notice the similarity of the first two with the Greek word for grace (“*charis*”):

CHARA | Joy, gladness; the joy received from you; the cause or occasion of joy
Used 59 times (KJV). Translated **joy** (51 times); **gladness** (3 times)

CHAIRŌ | To rejoice, be glad; to rejoice exceedingly; joy
Used 74 times (KJV). Translated **rejoice** (42); **be glad** (14); **joy** (5) (KJV)

AGALLIAŌ | To exult, rejoice exceedingly, be exceeding glad
Used 11 times (KJV). Translated **rejoice** (7); **be exceeding glad** (1);
be glad (1); **greatly rejoice** (1); **with exceeding joy** (1)

Other than the bond between God and joy—and love and joy—perhaps there is no stronger connection than the one between *joy and grace*.

We should also know that to the degree we struggle to live in *grace*—or to give grace to others—we are likely to struggle knowing true *joy*.

With that in mind, what does your level of joy potentially reveal about the level of grace in your life?

We must be careful, however, when it comes to the notion of living in grace. Why? Because there are many who emphasize *grace*, while neglecting *truth*. This error produces a *counterfeit love*, which leads to licentiousness, further deception, and great harm. Worst of all, it often produces false converts. (Matt 7:13-27; Jude 4ff; cp. Jn 1:14-17)

Others simply hold to and promote a distorted or counterfeit grace, as opposed to “true grace.” (1 Pet 5:12; cp. Col 1:6)

The solution, as always, involves being “*full of grace and truth*,” which come from the one and only true Jesus. Our goal should not be to have a “balance” of grace and truth, or to have *some* grace and *some* truth; rather, we should be seeking to be *full* of grace and truth. (Jn 1:14-17)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, **full of grace and truth**.

John 1:14

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JOY & HAPPINESS

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

Habakkuk 3:18

For what it's worth, the words *happy* or *happiness* appear in the Bible about 30 times. *Joy* and *rejoice* appear over 300 times.

Regardless of the numbers, it's important to realize that happiness is good, but joy is far greater. However, what we most often seek is happiness, while we should be pursuing joy.

For a better grasp on the difference between happiness and joy, let's understand being happy or unhappy this way: We are happy when certain *happenings* are deemed favorable to us, and we are unhappy when these *happenings* go against our desires.

Joy, however, can transcend our happenings. We can have joy no matter the circumstances in our life. We can even have sorrow and joy at the same time. (2 Cor 6:10; Phil 4:4-13; 1 Thess 5:16; Jas 1:2-4)

If you've ever been to the funeral of a dearly loved believer, then you have likely grieved, yet also rejoiced. In such instances, it's entirely possible to be sad and heartbroken, yet also experience great joy, knowing their joy to be in the presence of Christ. (cp. 2 Cor 5:8)

One key takeaway here is that, while our circumstances can have value, we should give less and less value to that which is temporary and more and more value to what is eternal, and that which is of God. (e.g., Matt 6:19-34; 2 Cor 1:8-9; 4:16-18; Col 3:1-4).

Generally speaking, if we experience a lot of ups and downs or fleeting happiness (at best), our hearts are likely set on that which is temporary. Conversely, if we experience lasting joy, the treasures of our hearts are almost certainly founded on God and that which is eternal.

(cp. Ps 73:23-26; Hab 3:17-19; Phil 3:7-11)

HOW DO WE GET JOY?

Now may the God of hope fill you with **all joy** and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

Where, exactly, does joy come from?

Where does *your* joy come from?

Joy doesn't just happen. Nor is joy dependent on what happenings around us. As with all valuable things, we not only look to the Lord and His Word for *answers*, but for *joy* as well.

The statutes of the Lord are right, **rejoicing the heart.**

Psalms 19:8

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace ...

Galatians 5:22

To experience true joy, we must also realize that there are several things that can either *thwart* joy or *produce* joy in our lives. The good news is that *we can choose joy*. In addition, we can make decisions and changes to get rid of those things that cripple joy.

Following are two lists: the first one instructs us on the many things that sabotage our joy. The second teaches us the many ways God has given us that produce joy. While there are many things in this world we do not control, there are also many things fully within our ability to help produce joy in our lives—but only through God and His design for life.

WHAT HINDERS JOY?

Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in **choke the word**, and **it becomes unfruitful**.

Mark 4:18-19

What prevents us from knowing joy? While there are many challenges, here are the 25 main obstacles or hindrances to true joy (there's a fair amount of overlap in these traits):

1. **Stubbornness** (Jer 7:24-28)
2. **Believing and living as if God** (and His Word, love, etc.) **is not sufficient**. This is often evidenced in *false needs*, like “I can’t have joy until my spouse meets my needs and fills my love tank.” | (cp. 2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:3-4; Ps 23; 2 Cor 9:6; Phil 4:19)
3. **Living a performance-based life**. Trying to earn love and acceptance—and seeking to find your worth, if not salvation—through your own efforts, performance, and goodness. (cp. Gal 3:1-11)
4. **Not receiving instruction or correction well**. | (Prov 15:31-32; Heb 12:5-11)
5. **Believing and living one or more lies or faulty mindsets** (e.g., perfectionism; needing people to like us; needing to earn love; see *list of lies*).
6. **Compromising with the world**—becoming like the world—and embracing the world’s wisdom and ways. | (cp. Rom 12:2; Jas 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15-17; 4:1-6)
7. **Setting our hearts on and living for what our sinful nature desires**, and not on what the Spirit desires. | (e.g., Rom 8:5-7; Col 3:1-4)

8. **Struggles to know and live in God's love**—living *for love*, not *living in love*, and *from love*. | (e.g., 1 Jn 4:16; Jn 15:1ff)
9. **Struggles with living in fear**, and being motivated by guilt, shame, and condemnation. (cp. 2 Tim 1:7; 1 Jn 4:18)
10. **Having an inaccurate and low view of Scripture.** | (Ps 1:1-3; 19:7-11; 138:2; 1 Thess 2:13)
11. **Focusing on the wrong things** (usually negative and unwanted) rather than on all the right things: that which is true, good, lovely, etc. | (Phil 4:6-8; Lam 3:19ff; Col 3:1-4; Rom 8:5ff)
12. **Putting too much hope in people** - the “fear of man.” | (Prov 29:25; cp. Jer 17:5-8)
13. **Putting too much hope in circumstances.** | (cp. Ps 73; Mk 4:19)
14. **“If only ... ” thinking.** “If only _____, *then* I would be happy.” | (Hab 3:17-19; Phil 4:11-13)
15. **Lack of living in grace.** | (cp. 2 Cor 3:6; Gal 5:1ff; Lk 7:36-50; Lk 10:38-42)
16. **Pride** | (Jas 4:6)
17. **Sin** | (Gal 6:7-8; Rom 6:23a)
18. **Holding on to sin.** Sinning, yet *not confessing* or *repenting* of it. | (Ps 32:1ff; Prov 28:13; 1 Jn 1:5-10; Jonah 2:8)
19. **Failure to forgive and give grace to others** | (Matt 18:22-35; cp. Eph 4:31-32)
20. **Lack of gratitude, thankfulness** | (Rom 1:21; 2 Tim 3:2; Lk 17:12-19; Ps 100:4; 105:1; Col 3:15)
21. **A pattern of pursuing immediate gratification.** A dependency on one or more aspects of the creation, which is often described as an addiction. | (cp. Rom 1:25; Jer 2:13)
22. **Living according to the Old Covenant** in a New Covenant reality | (Gal 3:1-5; 2 Cor 3:5ff)
23. **Struggles to understand and work with God** toward His goals for us in suffering (2 Cor 1:8-9; 4:16-18; 12:9-10; Heb 12:1-14; Jas 1:2-4; Rom 5:3-4; Jn 15:2)
24. **Selfishness**, especially when combined with a lack of concern for God and others (Jas 3:16; 2 Tim 3:1ff; cp. Phil 2:1-4)
25. **Complaining or grumbling** | (Phil 2:14; Ps 106:25)

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

What are *your* personal top 5 hindrances to joy?

Which verses stood out to you the most? Why those verses?

In reading this list, what 3 to 5 things did you learn about you and your heart?

WHAT PRODUCES JOY?

But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.

Mark 4:20

There are many sources of joy for the believer. Some of these are forgotten, while others are simply unknown. Many are neglected. Still others are not believed. Yet all of the following *will* produce joy in those who believe *and* apply them to their heart and life.

1. When we **live in the *New Covenant*** - grace, faith, and love
(2 Cor 3:5-6; Gal 3:ff)
2. When we **know, rest in, and live in God's love**
(Zeph 3:14-17; Ps 63:3-5; Jn 15:1ff; 1 Jn 4:9-17)
3. When we ***truly trust God***. It's important to note that trust and belief are not all-or-nothing. It is common to have some level of belief, yet also struggle with unbelief.
(Ps 5:11; Rom 15:13; Gal 5:22; 1 Pet 1:8-9; Prov 3:5-6; Jn 15:1-11; cp. Mk 9:24)
4. When we ***truly believe His Word***
(1 Thess 2:13; Lk 6:46-49; Ps 19:7-11; 119:1-2; Jn 15:7-8)
5. When we **live according to God's Word of truth**
(Ps 1:1-3; 18:30; 19:8; 119:1-2; Ecc 2:26; 1 Jn 3:24)

6. When we have **true fellowship with God**, in the light, in grace, and in the truth
(1 Jn 1:1-10; 3:18; Ecc 2:26; Ps 84:10; Cp. Jn 3:19-21)

7. When we have **godly fellowship and true unity** with true believers
(Phil 1:3-5, 27; 2:2-3; 1 Thess 2:19-20; Ps 133; cp. Phil 4:1-3)

8. When we are **truly grateful and thankful**
(Col 3:15; 1 Thess 5:16-18; Ps 105:1)

9. When **those we know and love are living according to the truth**
(Lk 15:10; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 4:1; Col 2:5; 1 Thess 2:19-20; 2 Tim 1:4; 2 Jn 1-4; 3 Jn 3-5)

10. When **we are loved** by others
(Phil 1:7, 20; 2 Tim 1:16)

11. When **we love God** with the right motives and according to His Word of truth
(Ps 5:11; Prov 15:23; 1 Jn 3:18; 1 Jn 4:16ff; Matt 6:1ff)

12. When **we love others** with the right heart, and in the right way (according to His Word).
[right motives + truth = right actions = true love] (e.g., 1 Jn 3:18; cp. 1 Thess 2:19-20)
[good intentions + bad ideology = counterfeit love = deception and destruction]

13. When we **focus on and truly appreciate** all that God has done, is doing, and will do
(Ps 103; 145; Lam 3:21ff; Rom 8:32; Col 3:1-4; 2 Cor 4:16-18)

14. When we are **saved from the ultimate penalty** of sin and the dominion of darkness
(Rom 6:23; Col 1:13-14; Jn 5:24; 1 Jn 3:14)

15. When we **fix our eyes and heart on what matters most**: Jesus, His Kingdom, His love, His salvation, and eternity with Him | (Mt 6:33; Rom 14:17; Phil 3:7-11; Col 3:1-4; 2 Cor 4:16-18; Heb 10:34; 12:1-4; Acts 20:24; Ga 6:7-8; Ps 73:23-26)

16. When we **rightly understand suffering**, and work with God toward His goals in suffering
(2 Cor 1:8-9; 4:16-18; 12:9-10; Rom 5:3-5; 8:28-29; 1 Pet 1:4-9; Heb 12:1-14; Jas 1:2-4)

17. When we are **forgiven of our sins**
(Ps 32; 51; Lk 7:36-50; 1 Jn 1:9; Prov 28:13)

18. When we **forgive** others
(Gen 50:20; Eph 4:31-32; cp. Matt 6:14-15; 18:22-35)

19. When we are **truly reconciled** with others
(Matt 5:23-24; 18:15-17; Col 3:12-14; Prov 28:13)

20. When we **have a high view of God's Word**. In other words, when we see Scripture as it truly is, just as God does, and, therefore, we truly "delight" in His Word.
(Ps 1:2; 18:30; 19:7-11; 56:4; 119:47-48; 138:2; Jer 15:16; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 3:15-17)

21. When **God's Word dwells richly in our hearts**
(Col 3:15-16; Jn 15:7-8; Ps 1:2-3; 19:7-11; 119:11; Prov 7:3; Josh 1:7-8; Deut 32:46-47; Jn 8:31-32; 15:7-8)

22. When we **have the right treasures** in our hearts
(Matt 6:19-21; Lk 6:45; Ps 1:1-3; Jer 2:13; 17:5-8; Heb 11)

23. When we **share the gospel and God's Word** of truth with others
(Prov 15:23; Phil 2:16; 1 Jn 1:1ff; Ps 40:8-10)

24. When we **truly humble ourselves before God**, and gladly yield to Him and His ways over our ways | (Is 29:19; Jas 4:6-10; Heb 12:9; Is 55:8-9)

25. When we **understand and appreciate the reality** of what is going on when we are attacked, persecuted, and hated because of our love for the true Jesus and for God's Word | (Matt 5:10-12; Lk 6:22-23; Jn 15:18-19; Acts 5:41; 2 Tim 3:12-13)

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

What are the top things, good or bad, you have learned about your heart after reading the above?

Which of the above produce the most joy in your life? Why?

Which has the most potential to change your life? Which of these are you eager to share with those you know and love? Why?

COMMON LIES THAT HINDER JOY

Remove falsehood and lies far from me.

Proverbs 30:8

Brethren, if anyone among you *wanders from the truth*, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from *the error of his way* will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

James 5:19-20

Living according to a lie could be the most destructive thing we do.

When we do this, we are not only living apart from the truth, we are often living in direct opposition to God, His ways, and His design for life, joy, and peace.

Is it any wonder that God repeatedly exhorts us to not be deceived, and to expose and warn others of deceivers and their false teachings?

On the other hand, perhaps the most loving and beneficial thing we can do is to help others come out of error and into the truth (e.g., Jas 5:19-20). Often the first step in doing this is to identify specific falsehoods.

To help facilitate this, we have compiled a list of more than thirty common lies that not only obstruct joy, but also reap *destruction* in our lives.

1. "I need to be good enough, and do enough, in order to be loved by God and others."
2. "I need the approval of people."
3. "My joy and security depends on what people think of me."
4. "Peace and joy come mainly through the right circumstances."
5. "If only _____, *then* I'd be happy and know true joy."
6. "Don't worry too much about truth or 'doctrine,' just focus on loving God and others."
7. "Yeah, the Bible is good, *but* you need more."
[worldly wisdom; a special experience or some kind of mysticism—e.g., contemplative prayer; "Lectio Divina"; breath prayers; "practicing the Presence"]
8. "Sin isn't that big of a deal."
9. "There's no need to be reconciled with God." (i.e., no separation between us and God)
10. "I need to be perfect."
11. "I can't have joy or peace of mind unless this is perfect."
12. "My worth is determined by how well I perform."
13. "If I fully admit to my failures, I cannot be secure, and no one will like, accept, respect, or love me."
14. "If I sin or fail, then I need to punish myself and live in condemnation."
15. "God will only love me and accept me if I am a good person."
16. "I need to do enough good works in order to be saved and sufficiently loved by God."
17. "I'm under grace, God has forgiven me; therefore, I can sin and it won't really harm me, or hurt others."
18. "Yeah, it might not be right, but what's it going to hurt?"

19. "Love is deserved."
20. "I deserve love."
21. "You can't love others until you love yourself."
22. "I don't need to forgive others."
23. "I *have to* forgive others." (Hint: We *get to* forgive others.)
24. "I need to forgive myself."
25. "I can't trust you; therefore, I will not forgive you."
26. "I will forgive you and completely trust you right away."
27. "Sometimes we need to forgive God."
28. "Repenting is not necessary, or all that important."
29. "I don't have to be overly concerned about being accurate as long as I care a lot."
30. "I need _____ (alcohol, drugs, etc.) to _____ (cope with life, escape, have joy, etc.)"
31. "I am enough."
32. "I need to be enough."
33. "God's Word is not enough ... for life, godliness, peace, joy, contentment, security ..."
34. "God is not enough ... in order to have sufficient love, strength, security, joy, peace ..."
35. "It's okay, if not a good thing, to have beliefs and values that are similar to those who reject and even hate God and His Word."
36. "I can become God."

In addition to these common lies, there is an overarching and prevailing faulty mindset we should be very aware of which says: “I do not have joy because of my painful *circumstances*,” or, similarly, “I *cannot* have joy because I have painful circumstances.”

Yes, there is some truth in this falsehood. Pain is pain. Pain is not, in and of itself, pleasant or joyful (cp. Heb 12:11a). Yet if we believe that joy mainly comes from having the right *circumstances*, then we will not be able to rejoice, or have joy, unless we have ideal circumstances. That is a very troubling, place to be in, which often produces hopelessness, rage, and bitterness, among other things.

The truth is, no matter what is going on outside of us, we can always *choose* to focus on that which does bring joy. (cp. Phil 4:4-19; 2 Cor 4:16-18; Col 3:1-4; Rom 8:5ff)

This is what changed everything for the prophet Jeremiah. (Lam 3:19-25)

We, too, can always change our focus, and trust God—and work *with* Him and His goals for us in suffering—all while knowing that the right responses will ultimately produce wonderful things in our hearts and lives. (Jas 1:2-4; Heb 12:11c; 2 Cor 1:8-9; 4:16-18; 12:9-10)

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

In what ways does this mindset apply to you?

Which of the lies above do you struggle with the most?

Do you see the connection between these falsehoods and the struggles in your life, particularly with joy and peace? If so, what might you do now as a result?

It can be very helpful to go back and write out the specific truths needed to displace the lies you have detected in your life, and then to dwell on these. (cp. 2 Cor 10:3-5)

5 SUPREME TRUTHS THAT BRING JOY

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “**If** you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know **the truth**, and the truth shall make you free.”

John 8:31-32

There are countless truths in Scripture, but we will limit our list to five pivotal truths. Meditating on and embracing these specific truths will go a long way in destroying any strongholds (i.e. harmful lies) in your heart and mind, as well as producing amazing fruit in your life, joy being near the top of the list! Please look up, learn, know, love, and meditate on the verses provided.

1. **God is sufficient**—true believers have all the love, value, worth, and security they need in God alone, through His grace and love. | [Ps 23; 2 Cor 9:8; Eph 3:16ff; Phil 4:19; 2 Pet 1:3-4]
2. **God's Word is sufficient**—and in His Word there are innumerable blessings.
[Deut 32:46-47; Josh 1:7-8; Ps 1:1-3; 18:30; 19:7-11; 2 Tim 3:15-17; 2 Pet 1:3-4]
3. **Joy and peace do not depend on having the right circumstances**, but on focusing on, appreciating, and rejoicing in the right Person, and the right realities.
[Lam 3:19-25; Hab 3:17-19; Matt 5:10-12; Lk 6:22-23; 2 Cor 4:16-18; Gal 5:22; Phil 4:4-13; Col 3:1-4; 1 Thess 5:16-18; Heb 10:32-38; 1 Jn 1:1-10; Ps 73:23-26; 119; 145; Jude 1:24]
4. **There can always be joy for the true believer**—even in the midst of pain and trials—but only when we have the right understanding of God, suffering, eternity, and His transcendent love for us. | [Jas 1:2-4; Rom 5:1-5; Heb 12:1-13; 1 Pet 1:4-9; 4:12-13; Is 55:8-9]
5. We are **forgiven** of all our sins, and **reconciled** to God by His **grace**, and by **belief** in Him and in the **truth** of Jesus' death on the cross for our sins. We are not saved and loved by God through our goodness or good works, but through **belief** in Him, His **gospel**, and His **New Covenant**. | [Rom 1:16-17; 5:1-5; 1 Pet 1:8-9; Acts 16:29-34; Ti 2:11-14; 1 Jn 3:14; Lk 1:47; cp. 2 Thess 2:10-14; 2 Cor 3:5ff; Gal 3-5]

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Which of these truths would you say you have the strongest belief in?

Which do you struggle the most with? Why?

What can you do to grow in this area?

ALWAYS REJOICE

Rejoice **in** the Lord **always**. Again I will say, rejoice!

Philippians 4:4

We must always remember that joy is not dependent upon our circumstances.

What goes on outside of us can give us joy, as well as pain, grief, etc. Yet true and lasting joy primarily comes from God (Gal 5:22; 1 Jn 4:16), as well as from what is inside of us (e.g., our beliefs, focus, attitudes, treasures of our heart), and, to a lesser extent, from what happens in our life.

We should not attempt to “always” rejoice *about* our circumstances, but we can and should always rejoice *in* the Lord. Circumstances come and go, but God always remains the same. So we can always rejoice in Him, despite our circumstances, and even in the midst of horrible circumstances.

Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;
Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;
Though the flock may be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls—
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.
The Lord God is my strength;
He will make my feet like deer's feet,
And He will make me walk on my high hills.

Habakkuk 3:17-19

To be clear, Philippians 4:4 is not just a commandment, but an encouragement and a blessed reminder that believers can always rejoice in the Lord, always. In other words, there are many things we have “*in the Lord*,” which are always true, for which we can always rejoice, and, therefore, always have joy. However, to the degree we do not see those things, or believe and appreciate them, we will struggle to rejoice in Him.

It’s important to acknowledge that there are times when our circumstances are awful, and that evil does run rampant in this world. Yet God is always good, and always loving. So rather than trying to “rejoice” *about* our circumstances, we can rejoice *in* the Lord, *always* - because of His love, His salvation, and the promise of eternity spent with Him. Of course, this requires the right heart, belief, and focus on our part.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are *true*, whatever things are *noble*, whatever things are *just*, whatever things are *pure*, whatever things are *lovely*, whatever things are of *good report*, if there is any *virtue* and if there is anything *praiseworthy*—***meditate on these things***.

Philippians 4:8

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

If you examine the fruit in your life, to what degree does your level of joy depend on what is *outside of you* (e.g., your circumstances; what people think of you)?

On the other hand, to what degree does your joy depend on what is inside of you (e.g., your focus; gratitude; trust in God)?

What does the ratio between these two things (outside and inside) tell you about your heart, and what you can do going forward?

Overall, what are the top 5 things (or more) that you know will produce lasting joy in your life?

In what ways are you going to make these things a daily part of your life?

What are the 3 most important things you realized about yourself in reading this article?