



# Foundation of Faith

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## *Joy* In the Lord

*Singing Through the Storm*  
*Materialism and Discontentment*  
*Happiness In Every Circumstance*  
*Old and Joyful—Really?*

# Contents

## JOY IN THE LORD

- 4 **The Joy Journal**
- 5 **Singing Despite Hardship and Pain**
- 6 **Singing Through the Storm**
- 7 **How Can We Rejoice Always?**  
Joy in the midst of tribulation—how is that possible?
- 8 **The Dangers of Self-Centered Joy**
- 10 **The Joys of Salvation**  
What no worldly substitute can give
- 12 **Joy: A Fruit of the Spirit**
- 13 **Happiness In Every Circumstance**
- 14 **Happiness Lies at Your Door—  
Have You Discovered It?**
- 16 **Reflections on Holiness**
- 17 **Announcements**

- 3 **Editorial**

- CHILDREN'S CORNER

- 18 **Trust**
- 19 **True Friendship**

- YOUTH PAGES

- 20 **Materialism and Discontentment**  
Why materialism leaves the soul thirsty

- SENIORS' PAGES

- 22 **Old and Joyful—Really?**

- THE SECRET OF THE SINGING HEART

- 24 **Part 7 - The Road to Happiness**

- THE CALLING OF A PASTOR

- 26 **Part 7 - Where Are the Workers?**  
Pray to the Lord of the harvest—  
A forgotten commission?

- POEM

- 28 **Abundant Joy in the Lord**

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## *Editorial*

Dear Readers,

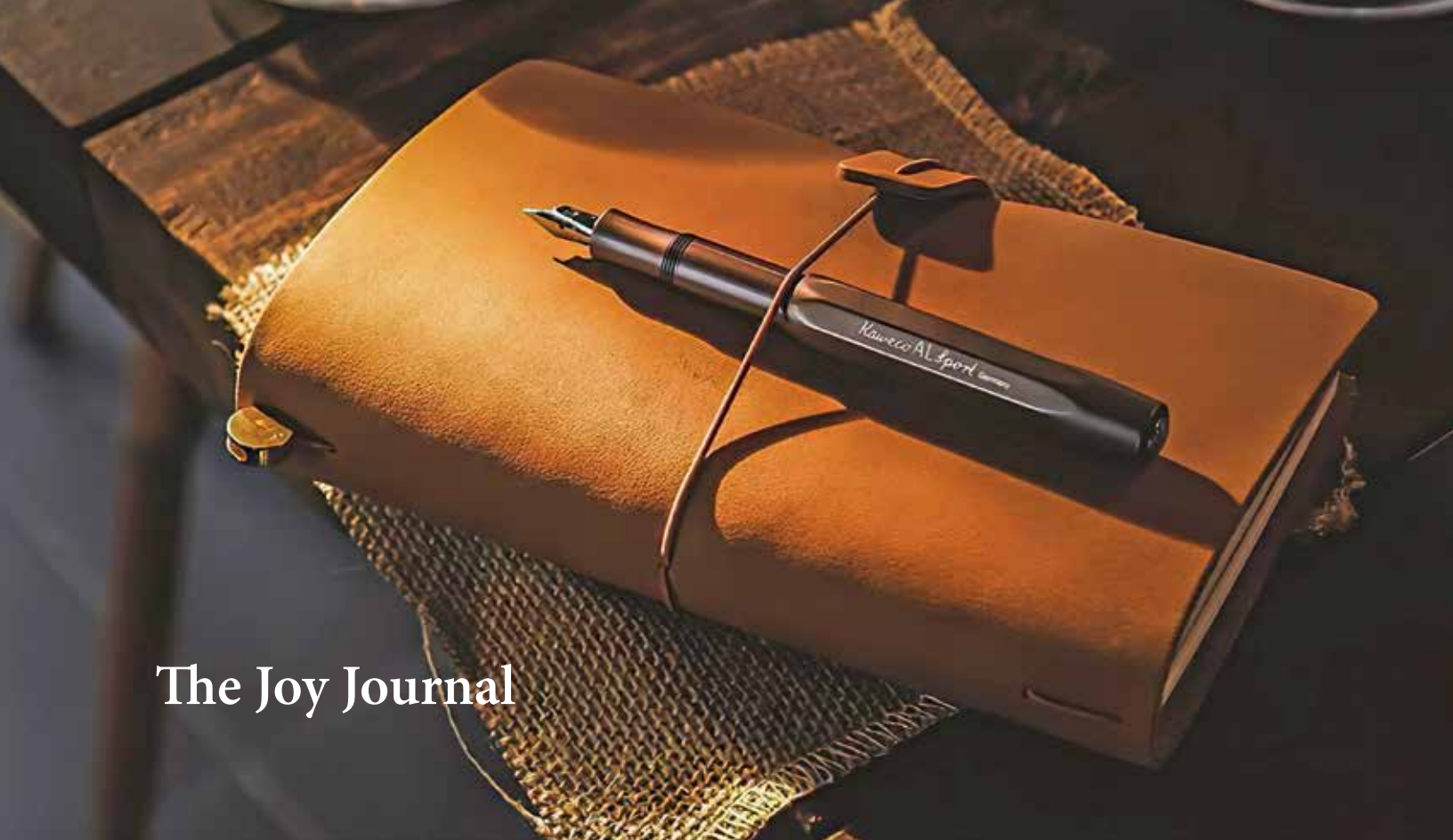
Everyone seeks joy in life; God made us that way. And yet so many, many people are unhappy. Why is that? Much could be written on the subject, but ultimately it is because people look for joy in the wrong places. True joy is found in the Lord and through the Lord!

Only when our lives are hidden in God can we find true joy. And only when we seek our joy in God—when we seek Him, love Him, obey Him, and serve Him—will we have lasting joy. All other joys are fleeting.

When the people of Israel returned from captivity to Zion and Ezra read the Word of God to them, they wept. Nehemiah, the governor, encouraged them, saying, “Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared; for *this day is holy to our Lord*. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8: 10). Do you realize where true joy comes from? Is it not the “rich and sweet” blessings of God, sharing with others, and having God as the object of our joy? The joy of the Lord makes you strong!

Our goal is to help every reader rediscover true joy through the articles in this issue. May the Lord fill you with His joy as well!

R. Taron



## The Joy Journal

In my neighborhood lived a woman whose face always radiated peace, although she had not been spared suffering. On the contrary, she had endured more than her share of life's hardships and often struggled through seasons of deep trial. And yet, despite it all, she seemed to rise above the everyday frustrations and worries that so often burden people and leave visible traces of anxiety on their faces.

One day, a weary woman approached her and asked, "How is it that you remain so happy?" Immediately the beautiful old face of the woman being questioned shone with joy and gladness, and she answered: "My dear friend, I keep a journal in which I write down all the joys I experience. It's my joy journal!"

When she was asked further about it, the kind woman continued:

"Long ago I learned that no day is so dark and gloomy that it does not contain at least one ray of sunshine. Therefore, I made it part of my life's task to write down little things that often mean so much to a woman. Since my youth I have kept a book in which the joys I experience are recorded.

They are only little things: a new dress, an act of love from my husband, a kind word from a neighboring woman, a flower, a letter, a book, or a drive in the

countryside. Everything goes into my diary. And when I begin to feel down, I open my joy journal and read a few lines in it, reminding myself what a happy and blessed woman I am. You are welcome to look at this treasure; these joys of mine."

Slowly the unhappy woman leafed through the book and now and then read a passage aloud. She almost became ashamed of her constant discontentment when she read the entries of one particular day:

"Today I received a letter from my mother.—My husband invited me to a restaurant for lunch."

There were also Bible verses and hymn stanzas written in the joy journal: "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).

"Have you really found something to rejoice about every single day?" the discouraged woman asked. "Every single day," she answered. "I made that my goal, and I have kept it ever since."

But when the visitor read on one of the last pages: "My dear husband died with his hand in mine, having spoken my name," she closed the book with tearful eyes and made a firm decision for the rest of her life's journey.

Dear reader, what if you too would make such a decision? You truly have reason to do so, for in heaven there is a God who loves you! For your sake, Jesus Christ, His Son, sacrificed His life on the cross; for your sake He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. For your sake He will return in power and glory!

Have the courage to accept forgiveness of your sins in faith and walk the path of life with Him! This will bring peace and joy into your heart. It will open your eyes to the acts of lovingkindness God places into your everyday life.

Yes, begin your own joy journal and open it in gratitude with the joyful words of Psalm 103:1–4: “Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, *bless* His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies.”

I can think of no better way to begin your joy journal than with this song of praise celebrating

God’s forgiving love. And as you delve into the New Testament and meditate on the life, suffering, and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, your journal will surely be filled again and again with fresh insights from God’s Word.

Then you too may become a joyful person with the motto: “The joy of the Lord is my strength.”

*My heart with joy is springing  
and can no more be sad;  
my soul is filled with singing,  
see only sunshine glad.  
The sun that cheers my spirit  
is Jesus Christ, my King;  
the heav’n I shall inherit  
makes me rejoice and sing.*

*Paul Gerhardt  
Eng. trans.: Richard Massie*

M. R.

## Singing Despite Hardship and Pain

**I**t was a visit to Taiwan that I will never forget. It began for me with a heavy heart. Standing in a hospital ward, I faced a group of men who were both blind and suffering from leprosy. What an unimaginably difficult condition! What could someone in good health possibly say to encourage them?

But I didn’t need to say a word! The men opened their mouths. They sang a song intended as a welcome for me: “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.”

These men, in all their misery, knew comfort and joy! They were disciples of Jesus Christ. Through His forgiveness, Jesus had cleansed their consciences of the filth and the leprosy of their sin. He had opened their hearts, and they had come to know Jesus as the Savior of the world and their good Friend and Shepherd. Now they could rejoice, give thanks, and sing His praises.

Amazed and humbled, I listened to them. Did I not possess, in addition to the joy these men knew, the added blessing of a healthy body? Yet was I filled with gratitude and praise to my God and Savior as they were? Did thanksgiving and worship overflow from my heart as they did from theirs?

After singing the hymn, the second part of the greeting began. The men recited the second verse of Psalm 103: “Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” Once again, I was amazed and ashamed.

I heard from the nurses that these men were not simply reciting pious words from memory. They were giving voice to the praise that truly lived within them. In spite of their suffering and pain, they were not defeated or discouraged. Rather, they sang hymns and lifted their hearts in thanksgiving to God. ■

# Singing Through the Storm

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4: 4)

Paul wrote these words while imprisoned in Rome. He was chained to a Roman soldier. He was thus never alone for a single moment—the soldier was always there. Whether he was praying, receiving visitors, dictating letters, or whatever he was doing, the soldier was always present.

Wasn't that a dreadful situation? Who would not have become irritable and depressed in such circumstances? Not Paul. No letter of the Apostle is so filled with expressions of joy and calls to rejoice as this letter to the Philippians. He knew this joy in the Lord—always. That is why he could encourage others to share in it as well.

In the course of time, many of the things that once gave us joy have passed away. But one source of joy has remained unchanged: joy in the Lord. Indeed, right at this time, this joy proves itself to be of lasting value. Even when everything shakes and breaks: Jesus prevails, and His grace endures forever. He remains the same. That is what Paul wants to say to the Philippians. That is something we must take to heart.

It is especially in difficult times that we can experience and prove Him faithful! Being a Christian when life is good—that's not hard. But in tough days and nights, one first truly realizes what it means to have Him.

Paul Gerhardt lived through the hard period of the Thirty Years' War. He had to bury his children. He had to forfeit his position. He experienced much tribulation and hardship. And yet he could sing:

*My heart with joy is springing  
and can no more be sad;  
my soul is filled with singing,  
see only sunshine glad.  
The sun that cheers my spirit  
is Jesus Christ, my King;  
the heav'n I shall inherit  
makes me rejoice and sing.*

*Paul Gerhardt  
Eng. trans.: Richard Massie*

I have a friend—a devout pastor. His house was hit by a firebomb and quickly became engulfed in flames. His friends, knowing his deep love for music, risked entering the burning house to rescue his grand piano

and a chair. Once they had set both on the street, the man sat down at the piano and began to play and sing:

*Shall I not sing praise to Thee,  
Shall I not give thanks, O Lord?  
Since for us in all I see  
How Thou keepest watch and ward.*

*Paul Gerhardt  
Eng. trans.: Catherine Winkworth*

He knew something of this rejoicing “always.”

In a certain locality, I often stayed at the home of two elderly sisters when I was preaching in East Frisia. One morning they went into town to run some errands. The air-raid siren sounded. They hurried to the nearest bunker. The attack was heavy, destroying a large area of the city. They had to remain in the bunker for hours until the onslaught finally ended. But upon arriving home, they had no home. The house that had been their home for 56 years—where their father and mother had lived and died—was nothing but a smoldering pile of rubble. And there the two sisters stood by the ruins and sang:

*Though exiled from home, yet still I may sing:  
All glory to God, I'm a child of the King.  
I'm a child of the King, a child of the King;  
With Jesus my Savior, I'm a child of the King.*

*Hattie E. Buell*

They knew something of rejoicing “always.” And when they had found shelter in another town, they wrote to me: “We've even been able to borrow a bed! How rich we are now!”

That is what the Lord God can do. That is how He can fill a heart with peace and joy through His Spirit.

Oh, that we too might learn it—you and I—to rejoice in the Lord always. How Jesus Christ would be glorified by it! What a witness that would be to those around us. May God grant that we learn what the apostle writes to the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always.”

*Ernst Modersohn*

# How Can We Rejoice Always?

“Rejoice always.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16)

“Rejoice!” That sounds appealing. But “Rejoice always”? As we look around at the difficulties, suffering, and uncertainty in our world, who can truly be joyful at all times? At first glance, one might think that the Apostle Paul spoke these words without knowing the realities of suffering. But the Scriptures reveal the opposite. Few people endured as much as Paul—persecution, danger, poverty, hardship, and disappointment.

The command, “Rejoice always” was given to Paul by the Holy Spirit. It was written to believers, and only they can truly understand it. They are the ones who have found the source of everlasting joy. Christ, who was once sorrowful even unto death, bore their anxieties and fears to the cross. There He dealt with them once and for all. Therefore, fear and dread no longer have the final word in the life of a believer.

Jesus says in John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Here we see the contrast between “in Me” and “in the world.” In the world you are afraid; in Me you are not. Here we see that the great privilege of being joyful at all times is for believers.

It is not only a privilege but also a commandment. Unfortunately, many believers do not obey it—but not because they are not true believers. Jesus told His disciples several times that their joy should be full. But joy is only perfected when it endures through difficulties, hardships, sorrows, and sicknesses. True believers know that all things work for the good to those who love God.

They can say, “If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God

which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:31–39).

Paul writes to the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4). Here too, we can apply the contrast between “in the Lord” and “in the world.” What is not possible in the world is possible in the Lord! The source of this joy is still available. Christ is the source of eternal joy. Nehemiah, the man of God in the Old Testament, knew this when he said: “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

True joy is so strong that it can even triumph in the midst of tribulations. Believers are able to recognize the blessing God has hidden within the trial. They count it pure joy when they face various tests, knowing that the testing of their faith produces perseverance (see James 1:2–3). Because they trust their Father’s love, they do not become discouraged when He disciplines them (Hebrews 12:5). While discipline is never pleasant in the moment and seems anything but joyful, it later produces a harvest of righteousness and peace. Again and again, God’s promises assure us that believers can rejoice always.

The three men in the fiery furnace praised and glorified God. Paul and Silas praised God while in prison. During the great persecutions of Christians, those who were led to the stake could not be stopped from praising the Lord.

When Jesus says to us, “I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20), do we still have reason to despair? Some say that Christians are gloomy or downcast. That is certainly not true! Children of God have every reason to rejoice, and this joy gives them strength to face life in a way that brings glory to God and blessing to others.

“Rejoice always.” This word is also for you who may feel misunderstood in your family. It is for you who have lost a loved one. And it is for you who must endure pain and suffering. Yes, this call is for all of us— young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated alike. Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, desires to grant us this joy!

R. Stefan

*Children of God  
have every reason to  
rejoice.*

# The Danger of Self-Centered Joy

*“Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name’. And He said to them, ‘I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’” (Luke 10: 17–20)*

Why did the Lord rebuke their joy? Is it wrong to rejoice, when we receive victory over sin and all the power of Satan? Are we not allowed to rejoice when the Lord equips us with the power to help others, so that they too may be freed from all the power of the enemy? Yes, we are allowed to rejoice. In Acts 8:5–8, we read of Philip’s ministry in a manner similar to that of the seventy—that the unclean spirits came out of the possessed. Many who were crippled and lame were also healed, and there was great joy in the city. The same is written in Acts 15:3, when Paul and Barnabas told of the conversion of the Gentiles in the churches. This brought joy to all the brothers.

Is the Gospel not good news for the messenger and for those who wholeheartedly accept it? Even their enemies saw the joy of Peter and John and were amazed. Why did the Lord admonish the seventy not to rejoice that the spirits were subject to them? Did the Lord Himself not rejoice over the success of the seventy? Yes, He Himself rejoiced at that very moment (Luke 10:21–22), because His life’s work was beginning to bear visible fruit. He had received co-workers; His prayers were beginning to be answered: first twelve, then seventy. Satan’s power and dominion were breaking; he was being driven out of people’s hearts. Satan, the mighty one, had to give way to the Almighty. Yes, that was cause for rejoicing and giving thanks to God.

Why, then, was the Lord not fully pleased with the joy of the seventy? It may be that the Lord, who sees all things and is the searcher of hearts, detected something self-centered in their joy. Sadly, He had observed this tendency more than once among the twelve disciples. They said, “The demons are subject to us in Your name.” But Jesus replied: “Do not rejoice that the spirits are subject to you.” Alongside the Lord and His

name, they still saw “themselves.” Their attention was partly on their own accomplishments.

Their joy would have been pure if all honor had been given to the Lord. But it became impure when they focused on themselves in a self-seeking way. There was a danger that this self-centered joy could develop into pride. The Good Shepherd, who loved them so deeply, warned them for this reason and said, “Do not rejoice that the spirits are subject to you.” It reflected the unsanctified condition that existed before Pentecost—a condition that is still all too common today.

Even today, the Lord’s eye still sees this self-centered tendency in those who have been born again—a tendency that reveals itself not only in impure joy, but often in many other areas as well. Again and again, the Lord drew His disciples’ attention to these selfish inclinations. Through His own example and teaching, He showed them what true and perfect love looks like. He saw the shortcomings in His disciples’ hearts and prayed for their sanctification, as we read in John 17:20. And even today, He still intercedes for His disciples—for you and for me. The Lord also gave His life so that all who are born again might be sanctified through the truth. The truth not only frees us from our actual sins but also from this corrupt self-centered tendency within us. Then, even in times of great blessings, we are able to rejoice with a pure heart and give all glory to God. This is what the Lord meant when He said we should rejoice that our names are written in heaven. He wanted to turn the attention of the seventy away from themselves and toward the grace of God.

After the disciples were sanctified on the day of Pentecost, we read wonderful accounts of their successes in the Lord’s work. Great joy filled not only their hearts but was also evident on their faces. But they gave God

all the glory from the depths of their hearts. Their joy was pure. In 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul speaks of his successes in the Lord's work: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God *which was with me.*"

Now, dear brother or sister, let me ask you: When things are going well for you in the work of the Lord—in preaching, in answered prayers, in the healing of the sick, in the casting out of demons, in the conversion of sinners, or in your service as a choir director, singer, musician, Sunday School teacher, or in any other ministry—is your joy pure? Or is there perhaps something self-centered mixed into it?

When God blesses you in earthly matters, who do you give the credit to? The nature of your joy reveals much about your standing before God. Have you not yet been sanctified, and does something selfish still show itself in your rejoicing? The Lord will lovingly warn you, lest it produce evil fruit. And He will say to you, just as He did to the seventy: "Do not rejoice in this, but rejoice that your name is written in heaven." In other words: Give all the glory for your success to God! Earnestly seek the experience of sanctification!

Do sanctified believers no longer face temptations to act from selfish motives? Yes, they certainly do! We remain human beings and must continually reckon with the pull of "self." Even our Lord was tempted in this way. Before He began His public ministry, Satan tried to entice Him to use His power for selfish purposes. He was tempted to perform miracles for His own benefit rather than in submission to the Father's will. But Jesus recognized the enemy and the danger behind the temptation, and He resisted. Instead, He waited for God's timing and then performed mighty works according to the Father's purpose. He did so from the purest motives possible—not out of self-interest, but out of love for God and for others.

To keep Paul from falling into this kind of misguided joy when reflecting on his successes, he was given "a thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7). This kept him humble and dependent upon God. Let us also remain prayerful, so that no impure motives may mingle with our joy. Then we will be able to rejoice from the depths of our hearts at all times. After all, the greatest blessing of all is this: that our names are written in heaven.

*Salomon Weissburger*



# The Joy of Salvation

*“Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.” Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And in that day you will say: ‘Praise the LORD, call upon His name; declare His deeds among the peoples, make mention that His name is exalted.’” (Isaiah 12: 2–4)*

This verse, which urges us to draw water with joy from the well of salvation, held special meaning for me as a new believer. I had sought satisfaction from many other wells, but they brought me neither joy nor salvation. The experience of salvation is the greatest blessing a person can know in this life, for true salvation brings with it a deep, genuine, and abiding joy.

When fear and doubt threaten to overwhelm me and weaken my faith, I think back to the day of my conversion. I recall how the Spirit of God guided and led me, and I compare that to my life before my conversion, thanking the Lord for saving me from sin. Then I ask myself: Do I still enjoy the full assurance of salvation today? This helps me recognize where I stand spiritually and strengthens my faith.

Many people lack assurance of salvation. Just recently, I spoke with a friend. He told me that he wasn't sure of his salvation. People have come up with many substitutes for the assurance of salvation. Some of these substitutes may be good in and of themselves, but they do not give a person the joy of salvation.

For many people, turning over a new leaf—trying to start a new life through sheer willpower—has become a substitute for a genuine conversion experience and the assurance of salvation. A young woman once said to me, “Yesterday I decided to start a new life. From now on, I will live honorably and do what is right. I will avoid evil, stop lying, and leave my old ways behind.” I replied, “Those are worthy goals, and

I respect your determination. But apart from the salvation Christ offers, you will never be able to live the truly new life that God intends for you.”

A person can't just start hanging out with a religious group and expect to be saved. Judas spent years associating with the right people—even with the Lord Jesus Himself—and yet he still missed the mark.

Neither can someone gradually grow into salvation. It is unfortunate that in some churches, young people are raised within the congregation, participate in its traditions, and follow its teachings as best they can. When they reach a certain age, they are accepted as faithful church members. They consider themselves to be Christians because they belong to a congregation, yet this alone cannot bring a person into a saving relationship with Christ. Many carry the name of Christian throughout their lives without ever experiencing genuine conversion and the assurance of salvation.

To know the reality of salvation means to live a life renewed by the Holy Spirit. When we open the New Testament, we find exhortations such as: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). “Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The sinner must repent, leave the path of sin, and enter the path of salvation.

Those who have repented, turned away from sin, and been born again know “that we have passed from death to life” (1 John 3:14). Assurance of salvation cannot be obtained in any other way. We may rejoice



in the knowledge that our sins are forgiven, that we stand in God's favor, and that we are God's children. And this joy cannot be replaced by anything else.

Years ago, King Charles V borrowed a large sum of money from a merchant in Antwerp. When the debt came due and the money was to be repaid, the king was unable to do so. The kind lender burned the deed of debt right before the king's eyes, leaving nothing of it behind. Deeply moved, the king embraced his benefactor and wept with joy.—We are all debtors to God and could never pay our debt. Yet we have the privilege of confessing our sins to Him and imploring His forgiveness. And everyone who comes to Him in the way prescribed in Scripture receives this forgiveness and can then truly rejoice. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

The greatest joy a person can experience is a true experience of salvation, when they are redeemed from their sins through Jesus Christ and thereby receive the assurance of being a child of God. When I turned to the Lord and received assurance of salvation, I experienced the greatest joy of my life. And because the Lord has sustained me by His grace to this very hour, I am still able to rejoice. When the Lord Jesus has become our personal Savior, He is with us, and that makes life truly worth living and joyful.

Have you experienced this true joy, dear reader? Do you know the joys of salvation from personal experience? Jesus is ready to give you salvation, along with all the joys that come with it. These joys are not just for this life, but for all eternity.

*H. C. Rice*



## Joy—A Fruit of the Spirit

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, one of the most precious fruits that a healthy spiritual tree bears. The world knows nothing of the real joy that true Christianity holds within it. The soul that has learned to live in the presence of the Lord has joy in abundance. “You will show me the path of life; in Your presence *is* fullness of joy; at Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16: 11).

David had an intimate relationship with God, enabling him to consciously place himself in God’s presence and experience the fullness of joy. Even today, the fullness of joy is found in the presence of the Lord. In Psalm 84, the psalmist says that one day in the courts of the Lord is better than a thousand elsewhere. The joys of this world cannot be compared to the joy of salvation. The world, with all its joys and pleasures, will pass away, but the joy of salvation endures forever.

When David sinned against the Lord, he lost this joy, and we hear him praying and pleading for its return. “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me *by Your* generous Spirit,” he prays in Psalm 51: 12.

Oh, how many people in our day know nothing of the joy of salvation. They have a form of religion, but it does not satisfy the deepest needs of their hearts, nor can it give them lasting joy. When they hear true believers speak of the joy the Lord has given them, they find it difficult to understand. They cannot imagine how someone could be genuinely joyful without finding pleasure in the temporary entertainments and passing attractions of this world.

However, the Lord’s redeemed possess true and lasting joy. Through the new birth, we have become citizens of the Kingdom of God. Through spiritual birth, we enter God’s Kingdom, and this Kingdom is “not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14: 17). Whoev-

er has entered the Kingdom of God also has the realities of that Kingdom within their heart. “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35: 10).

Why should not the hearts of those who have been redeemed from their sins by the blood of the Lamb be full of joy? Jesus says that we have reason to rejoice, if only because we know that our names are written in heaven. The certainty that we are at peace with God, that heaven is open to us, brings joy to the soul that was once burdened by sin and guilt, under condemnation, and often plagued by fear and doubt.

Joy in the Lord is a fruit of the Spirit—a joy deep within the soul that remains no matter how much the outside world may try to crush it. As long as the redeemed person seeks to do God’s will according to the light and understanding they have received, they possess joy in the Lord. External circumstances cannot rob them of this joy.

Yet many who have once tasted the gracious word of God and the powers of the age to come become spiritually sluggish. They neglect private prayer and the nourishment of their spiritual life. They speak more than is beneficial for the soul’s well-being, become overly occupied with the things of this world, and forget the apostle’s admonition to “seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (Colossians 3: 1). They fail to share with others the blessings with which the Lord has blessed them, or they do—or fail to do—something else that robs the soul of its joy.

Therefore, all the redeemed must be diligent to abide in the will of God so that the joy in the Lord may always be their strength. “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” ■

# Happiness in Every Circumstance

*Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.” (Genesis 39: 1–2)*

Here we encounter Joseph as a slave in Potiphar’s household. What a contrast to his life up to this point! Joseph grew up free and unfettered, enjoying the sunshine and fresh air of his homeland. Now this wealthy man’s son was reduced to the lowly labor of a slave. Is this not cause for despair?

Indeed, I would not have been surprised to read, “When Potiphar bought Joseph, Joseph surrendered to despair.” However, that is not at all what happened. Rather, we read “The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a successful man.”

Considering the dire circumstances, this description reveals something remarkable about young Joseph. He was able to maintain his joy and confidence despite his situation—a lesson for us all.

It is immediately clear that Joseph’s happiness was not based on favorable outward circumstances. Things could hardly have been worse. He was living in a country whose language he did not know, surrounded by idolatry and paganism. No one there knew anything about the living God, and no one cared about Joseph. He was alone in a cold, foreign environment, with little reason to expect that his circumstances would ever improve.

Yet Joseph possessed a source of joy that was independent of his external situation. That source was, as Scripture tells us, that “the Lord was with Joseph.” His happiness flowed from fellowship with God. He knew it, and he experienced it: I am His, and He is mine, and no one can separate us!

Yes, that is true happiness. This happiness does not collapse when you lose your possessions or when you must mourn the loss of loved ones. Rather, the happiness found in communion with the Lord is enduring and lasting. It survives even the storms of death and

enables us at the sickbeds and graves of those we love, to say with the Psalmist, “Whom have I in heaven *but* You? And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; *but* God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73: 25–26).

Do you know this happiness? Do you possess it in your heart? Don’t let Joseph stand as a rebuke to you. After all, we know God far better than he did. We know Him as our Father through Jesus Christ! We have His promise: “I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age” (Matthew 28: 20). He has given us His Holy Spirit, who dwells within us, and Christ Himself makes His home in our hearts.

In many ways, you have far greater privileges than Joseph. With no Bible and no fellowship with other believers, he could do little more than cling to God in prayer and remember the truths he had learned from his father.

You, by contrast, possess both the Old and New Testaments, and you can gather with fellow Christians for worship, fellowship, and prayer! There is abundant encouragement and joy to be found in these blessings. How much easier they make it for you to rejoice in the Lord.

Are you happy? If not, it may be because you are not living consciously in the presence of God, who is the source of every good thing you receive. You may ask, “Truly everything?” Yes, absolutely everything—even the grace needed to forgive someone who has wronged you as deeply as Joseph was wronged by his brothers. God’s grace will enable you to overcome. It will make your life a blessing to others and bring glory to the Lord.

*E. Modersohn*

# *Happiness Lies at Your Door— Have You Discovered It?*

**T**ime and again, people have sought the secret to true happiness, and it seems that only a few have truly found this “precious pearl.” The reason is that most have not looked in the right place. True happiness is not out of reach for any of us. It is not even that far away. We often overlook the secret of true happiness not because it is too difficult to discover, but rather because it is so close that we completely miss it, since we are looking far off into the distance.

It is said that before the discovery of the rich diamond fields in South Africa, people walked right over these precious stones every day for years. One day, a man noticed the peculiar appearance of a stone that he had also walked over many times. A closer examination revealed that it was a diamond. It soon turned out that this diamond was just one of many lying all over the surface and beneath it. This led to the discovery of the richest diamond field in the world. Before that time, no one had benefited from the treasures that were there, even though they lived right in the immediate vicinity.

The things we need to do to become genuinely happy are often just like these diamonds. They are not hidden from our view or concealed from our eyes. They are not far away at all but lie easily within reach. When we embrace them, we are granted the richest blessings of heaven.

The Apostle Paul concludes from Jesus’ words that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). Here we discover a simple rule for living that, when followed, brings us happiness and contentment. We all take joy in receiving a gift. However, the joy of receiving is far less than the joy of giving. If people were not so preoccupied with earthly possessions and their own enrichment but instead focused more on the well-being of their fellow human beings and sought to give more, they would be happier and more content.

## **Everything was created to be given**

When God created the sun and set it in its course, when He made the moon and the stars and placed them in

their positions, Scripture tells us He, “set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth” (Genesis 1:17). God called all these heavenly bodies into existence as bearers of light, and they fulfill their purpose and their task. The earth gives its fruit to its inhabitants. The earth’s interior gives us its rich treasures. All these things were created to give. They all reflect the character of the Creator, who is Himself the greatest of all givers. “He gives to all life, breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25). Can we not say that human beings, too, were created to share with others, to give to others? Surely even the most outstanding of all creatures, created in the image of the Creator, is destined to give and therefore finds its highest bliss in imitating its Creator in this capacity.

## **God’s greatest gift**

God gave His only Son. Even if we were to ignore all other proofs of our heavenly Father’s love and fail to recognize His character as a Giver, we could still not doubt His love for us, since He gave His Son for us. He saw our great need and gave the best He had. He had no other Son He could have given. This was God’s greatest gift to humanity.

Jesus gave. He laid down His life for us. “[He] gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawlessness deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). Jesus saw a world lost in sin. People sought happiness and contentment but could not find either. The greatest obstacle was their selfishness. One of the main teachings Jesus gave His disciples was that they should seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and not concern themselves primarily with what they would eat, drink, or wear. He urged all His disciples to give, and in certain cases He even urged them to sell their possessions so they could give to the poor (Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33).

Jesus knew the secret of true happiness in both this world and the world to come. He gave Himself as a ransom for all and called upon people to follow Him.



When He saw the people following Him without food, He said to His disciples, “You give them something to eat.” The sight of their hunger touched His Savior’s heart. He demanded that the last loaf of bread and the last fish be given to the hungry. He said that He and the Father loved the world, and He proved it through His actions. The Father gave His Son; the Son gave His life. Both knew that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

### **Giving, the law of grace**

The period following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was a time when giving was at its peak. This period was also a time of refreshment from the presence of the Lord. “They sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need” (Acts 2:45). “And great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33). Here we find grace and giving hand in hand. A great measure of grace enabled

the believers to see a great need, and this need was met with generosity.

Were these early Christians happy? Did they rejoice in their giving? Without a doubt, for they were not forced to give, but gave voluntarily. They recognized that clinging to earthly wealth cannot bring heavenly and spiritual blessings but helping to spread the Gospel and alleviating the needs of the poor certainly can. They had discovered the secret of true happiness.

If we desire to share in all the spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ, we must give. We belong to Christ, and He desires that the blessings He gives us should flow through us to others. If we allow ourselves to be used by Him for the blessing of our fellow human beings, we ourselves will be blessed most of all. Oh, that we may always remember that it is more blessed to give than to receive!

*J. C. B.*

# Reflections on Holiness

**L**ast month we considered the topic of Holiness. A recent survey of Christians in Germany gave insight into what holiness meant for them. Here are the two survey questions followed by some of the answers received.



**What feelings does the term “holiness” evoke in you?**

**Answer:** The word “holiness” evokes positive feelings in me. God has cleansed me from sin, and for that I am very grateful. Since God is holy, and yet I am allowed to draw near to Him in prayer, this word has to do with closeness and intimacy. The word “holiness” also evokes a certain sense of solemnity and respect in me, since as a child of God I live in the world and therefore bear the responsibility of preserving my white robe of salvation. I associate holiness with the words of 1 Peter 1:14–16: “As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance; but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

**Answer:** I immediately think of Isaiah 6:3: “And one cried to another and said: ‘Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts; The whole earth *is* full of His glory!’” I also think of Leviticus 11:44: “For I *am* the LORD your God. Therefore you shall consecrate yourselves and be holy, for I *am* holy.”

God, in His holiness, wants to dwell among His people, and the prerequisite for this is that we, too, must be holy. Adam and Eve were created in God’s image and had fellowship with Him. Through sin, they lost that fellowship, but God brought salvation through His Son so that we might return to this state of holiness. Through Him, we can lead a holy life.

This is not merely a theory, but a promise and an experience to which all are invited: to enter into the presence of God—the holy Triune God—through Je-

sus Christ, and to walk before Him in holiness. “Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate” (Hebrews 13:12).

**Answer:** I associate holiness with a genuine new birth (Ephesians 4:24) and with a life pleasing to God: “To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74–75).

**Answer:** What do I feel when I hear the word “holiness”? Deep inner joy, a sense of awe, and a longing to live in holiness before God and man.

**Answer:** The word “holiness” causes me to fall silent in awe. God’s holiness reminds me of my inadequacy, my weaknesses, and my dependence on Him. And yet I am aware that God gives humanity the opportunity to live in holiness. The awareness that the eternal, exalted, and holy God can and wants to dwell in my heart helps me better understand what holiness truly means.


**Answer:** When I hear the word “holiness,” I associate it with a state of intimate union with the Triune God, who is the very essence of holiness, purity, and absolute righteousness. Holiness is the fruit and result that flow from this dependent relationship with God (Romans 6:22).

On the one hand, the word “holiness” fills me with awe, making me realize how incapable I am, in myself, of living a holy life. On the other hand, God’s Word opens up a perspective that gives me hope in the face of my inability to be holy, since I am allowed to place my faith entirely in His Son, Jesus Christ, through grace (1 Peter 1:13).

Because of this, I do not think of “holiness” as an authoritarian command from a domineering God wishing to impose a burdensome lifestyle on His children, but rather as a promise. The words, “Be holy, for

I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16), are a promise that, through His unconditional love, God transforms me from being lost in this world and in the depths of my carnal nature into His likeness. To the extent that I allow His Holy Spirit to work in my heart, my thoughts and actions are shaped, controlled, and guided by Him (Galatians 5:16–18).

Therefore, “holiness” represents for me the highest calling, one that gives my life security, purpose, meaning, fulfillment, and salvation.

 **What does the word “holiness” mean to you?**

**Answer:** By “holiness” I understand: a) the purity of God in contrast to sin, and b) that as children of God we are set apart from sin and make ourselves available to God for service.

**Answer:** To me, the word holiness means absolute sincerity of heart, moral and spiritual purity, chastity, perfect obedience, as well as separation, tranquility, and peace of mind. Holiness brings security.

**Answer:** The word holiness represents a very important task for me. As Peter said: “Be holy in all *your* conduct” (1 Peter 1:15). No one can do this on their

own, because Jesus also said, “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

In the New Testament, God’s children are often simply called saints. This word appears more than 60 times in the New Testament. The Old Testament also states that God takes great delight in “the saints who *are* on the earth” (Psalm 16:3).

Thus, it was already possible in the Old Testament to live in holiness, even if only a few succeeded. Yet in the New Testament, this is the express will of God. Holiness does not make anyone a superhuman. In humility, weakness, and fallibility, the children of God have faithfully served Him in times past and continue to do so today. The daily guidance of the Holy Spirit makes this possible. Yet none of the saints has proclaimed himself to be holy. Eternity will make it known.

**Answer:** Isaiah 6:3–5 shows us that it was impossible to approach God because of His holiness. But through Jesus, we receive His righteousness, which enables us to stand before God. For this reason, I feel gratitude for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who grants us access to the Father through Himself.

Although we do not become “holy” through our own righteousness, the Word of God calls us to live in holiness and to allow God to transform us. Thus, I also associate holiness with God’s expectation that we should be different and make a difference through our lives. ■

## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

**August 14–19, 2026 – Camp Meeting in Blaubeuren, Germany**

**August 17–28, 2026 – Bible Course in Edmonton, AB**

**September 5–6, 2026 – Church Conference in Edmonton, AB**

## Trust



**A**t dinner, Nicholas said excitedly, “Mom, Dad, we’ve had a new classmate for three days now!”

“At the end of the school year?” his mother asked in surprise.

“Yep! We haven’t talked much yet, but he seems really nice.”

“We’re glad to hear that,” said his father.

“Does he sit next to you?” asked his sister Laura.

Nicholas shook his head. “No, he sits one row in front of me. I think we’ll become good friends.”

“We’ll pray for that,” his father said with a smile.

“Thanks!” Nicholas replied with a grin.

The next day at school, Nicholas was talking with his friend Simon.

“Don’t you also think our new classmate is pretty cool?” he asked.

Simon shrugged. “I thought so at first. But today I heard him talking badly about one of his old friends.”

“Really? What did he say?” Nicholas asked.

“He said that his friend had let him down. Then he started saying mean things about him in front of other people.”

Nicholas thought for a moment. “I can understand why he was hurt. It’s painful when a friend disappoints you. It can make you sad or even angry.”

Simon nodded. “That’s true. But it’s still not right to talk badly about someone, even when they’ve hurt you, is it?”

“No,” Nicholas agreed. “And if he talks that way about a good friend, he might talk that way about us someday too.”

Simon looked thoughtful. “That’s true. We would never do that to each other, would we?”

Nicholas smiled. “No. I know I never would. You’re my best friend!”

Simon laughed. “Because we’ve been through so much together? And because you can tell me your secrets without worrying that I’ll tell anyone else?”

“Exactly,” said Nicholas. “And when something good happens to me, you’re happy for me too!”

“That’s true,” Simon said with a grin. “You can’t do that with everyone. But it’s the same for me. You’re my best friend too, and I trust you more than anyone else.”

## True Friendship

**H**aven't we all experienced the hurt of being disappointed by someone we thought was our friend? Sooner or later, most people go through this. Sometimes we become friends with someone very quickly, but later we discover that when difficult times come, the friendship is not as strong as we thought.

The Bible also teaches us that people are not perfect and can let us down. Moses climbed Mount Horeb to receive God's law. While he was gone, the people became impatient. They asked Aaron, Moses' brother, to make them an idol to worship. Sadly, Aaron gave in to their demands. How disappointed Moses must have been when his own brother failed to do what was right!

We can also think of Jesus. One of His own disciples betrayed Him. Judas had spent years with Jesus, listening to His teaching and seeing His miracles. Jesus knew it would happen, but it must still have been painful when Judas betrayed Him with a kiss.

These stories should not make us suspicious of everyone. Instead, they teach us to be wise when choosing our friends. We should ask ourselves: Are these friends helping me grow closer to God? Do they encourage me to do what is right? Do they strengthen my faith and pray with me? Or do they pull me away from God?

In the Gospels, we read about four friends who carried a man who could not walk to Jesus. When they could not get through the crowd, they made an opening in the roof and lowered their friend down to Him. The Bible



says, "When Jesus saw their faith . . ." (Mark 2: 5).

These friends did not just care about their friend—they acted. They worked hard to bring him to Jesus, and they trusted that Jesus could help him. Because of their faith, their friend was healed. That is true friendship!

King Solomon wrote, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17: 17). A true friend stays by your side when life is difficult. Sometimes a good friend can feel almost like a member of your family. That is why we should value good friends. True friendship is a gift from God, and we should thank Him for it!

*Katharina Raiser*

*A friend loves at all times,  
and a brother is born  
for adversity.  
Proverbs 17:17*





# Materialism

## AND DISCONTENTMENT

**W**hen we look at the advertisements plastered in magazines and on billboards, we see how the world plays with people's feelings of discontent. We are constantly told that we shouldn't be satisfied with our appearance, what we're wearing, or the things we own. The world promises contentment and happiness through material things that can be purchased or earned. However, it's impossible to buy true and lasting contentment. If we were able to buy a material thing that satisfied us completely, every store would be selling it, and once purchased, nothing else would be needed. The world doesn't really want to fix our discontent but rather to feed it, so that it grows.

Jesus warns in Luke 12: 15, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." The Greek word for covetousness used here is "pleonexia," which means "a greedy desire to have more." This greedy desire is rooted in discontent, or in a person's dissatisfaction with his or her circumstances. The danger in seeking contentment through the material things of this world is that they can never satisfy the soul. Seeking contentment in them just perpetuates discontent within us. Discontentment can grow into covetousness and envy, or even into self-hatred and depression.

We know that Jesus Christ alone satisfies the discontent of the lost soul. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst" (John 4: 13–14). Jesus satisfies. Yet sometimes we, as believers, still face discontentment. Satan tries to stir up discontentment in our hearts so that we no longer feel completely satis-

fied in Jesus. Perhaps we've become dissatisfied with our circumstances. Maybe we feel as though someone has cheated us out of something that we believe was meant for us. Then we begin to pity ourselves. Perhaps things aren't going the way we had planned, and we feel as though God has forsaken us because of the valleys we are passing through. When discontentment begins to take root in a person, it turns into grumbling, disunity and self-seeking ambitions.

God's Word tells us to be content in every situation. But is that even possible? Paul writes in Philippians 4: 11–12, "I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." How did Paul learn this?

First, he placed his focus on the eternal. Paul writes to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6: 6–8: "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." Paul knew that the things of this world are temporary and cannot satisfy. Our life is so much more than the physical. Material possessions are meant to serve the needs of the body. The physical is temporal and fleeting; the spiritual is eternal.

Paul writes in 1 Timothy 6: 9–10, "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Likewise, Jesus illustrated the danger of seeking after riches while neglecting the soul. In Luke 12, He speaks of a rich man who "yielded plentifully" and built for himself greater barns and took joy in his worldly riches. Yet that night, the rich man perished, and Jesus asked, "then whose will those things be which you have provided?" (Luke 12: 20b).

Jesus says, "Life is more than food, and the body *is more than clothing*" (Luke 12: 23). This doesn't mean that we shouldn't work hard or that it's wrong to be financially wealthy; it means that we shouldn't fall into the extremes. One extreme is the constant worry about our material needs. The other extreme is that we forsake God and things of God in pursuit of wealth or temporary material gain. God promises to provide for our material needs if we seek His kingdom first; He does this so that we can focus our lives on storing up heavenly treasures (Matthew 6: 33).

A second way we can learn to be content in every situation is by focusing on the needs and interests of others, especially those less fortunate than us. Paul writes to the Philippians: "*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others" (Philippians 2: 3–4). When we are concerned about others, we learn to be more selfless and caring. Sometimes we don't recognize how materially blessed we are until we see others who are in need. The desire for the latest and greatest running shoes tends to go away when we see someone else who doesn't have any shoes.

In the heart of every lost person lies spiritual discontentment. Jesus offers complete satisfaction through His cleansing blood and the filling of the Spirit. Satan, through worldly means and materialism, wants us to transfer our attention from God onto ourselves. Paul teaches us how to be content in every situation. We place our focus on the things of eternal worth, not on the material things of this world, and we put the interests and needs of others before our own. In doing so, we will forget our own selfish desires and learn to be more content in every situation.

David Knelsen  
Hamilton, ON

# Old and Joyful—Really?

Joy is real.

You would expect to find an article about joy on a page for children or youth, wouldn't you? Somehow, the idea prevails that joy belongs mainly to the young. Really? Why should we leave joy to the younger generation and—if I may describe it this way—head down-hill, depressed, and growing older without gladness? Does joy evaporate after the age of fifty?

When Paul takes his quill and appeals to people to rejoice, he is not addressing a youth group in Philippi, but the entire congregation.

Here are his words: “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4a). And what is remarkable is this: these words appear in one of his prison letters. Paul is incarcerated in Rome, and yet he calls his readers to be joyful! He wants them—and that includes us—to rejoice in every situation, regardless of their circumstances. And in case anyone thinks they may have misunderstood him, Paul adds once more: “Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4b).

I'm supposed to rejoice?

- *I wear glasses because my vision is failing.*
- *My ears need hearing aids just so I can understand what people are saying.*
- *I depend on my dentures to eat.*
- *I can only get around with a walker.*
- *When I wake up in the morning, I no longer ask, “What hurts?” Rather, I ask, “What actually doesn't hurt today?”*
- *My calendar is filled—not with invitations—but with medical appointments.*

And often there's nothing left but a long, deep sigh.

Life is tough, and the Bible does not hide this reality. It too speaks openly about the challenges of aging. King Solomon describes this season and calls it “the evil days”—days that bring us no pleasure (Ecclesiastes 12: 1–8).

It is possible to become so consumed by these negative things that we eventually get stuck in a rut. Negativity then takes over and begins to control our lives, making them miserable—not only for ourselves, but also for those closest to us.

That is precisely why the call to rejoice is so important. And notice this: it is repeated in the very same verse.

My wife Doreen and I were recently driving through unfamiliar territory. It brought to mind days long gone—when you used to keep a road map in the car. Usually, I was at the wheel while she sat beside me, telling me where to turn.

Those days are history. The map has been replaced by a navigation system. Now I hear a different voice: “In 150 meters, please turn left.” Recently, it gave a very specific instruction: “Please make a U-turn at the earliest opportunity.” I was no longer on the right route. I could have kept going, but it would not have been in my best interest. So we accepted the correction, turned around, and soon found ourselves—thankfully—back on the right road toward our destination.

The Apostle's words sound a bit like that to me. To people who have lost their joy and can see nothing but life's difficulties, he calls out—almost like a GPS voice: “Please make a U-turn!” Or, in his own words: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” Not about the roadway—but about the attitude of the heart. One might say it is a route recalculation.

When we look at this verse closely, we quickly notice that Paul does not simply say, “Rejoice.” He says, “Rejoice in the Lord.” The addition of these three words make all the difference. Why does he say this? What is he emphasizing?

I enjoy comparing various translations—it helps us understand the text more fully and sheds additional light on it.

Listen to how other translations render this verse:

“Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!” (NLT).

“Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful” (NIRV).

“May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord. I say it again: rejoice!” (GNT).

Our joy is not rooted first and foremost in our circumstances. It is not dependent on what is happening around us; it is not situation-dependent. Our joy does not consist in what we have, but in Whom we have—the Lord Jesus Christ.



To rejoice “in the Lord” means that our joy is tied to Him. It is personal. He Himself is the source of our joy. And so we turn our focus away from ourselves—away from our physical limitations, loneliness, and insecurity—and fix our eyes on Jesus Christ.

- *He is the same—yesterday, today, and forever.*
- *He is always with us and beside us.*
- *He carries us—even in the darkest hours of life.*
- *He is faithful.*
- *He is trustworthy.*

We can expand this thought by counting the many blessings we have received. As we do so, it becomes obvious that our joy is grounded in what Christ has done for us:

- *Our redemption—the forgiveness of our sins*
- *Reconciliation with God*
- *A relationship with our heavenly Father*
- *God’s presence in our limitations*
- *The assurance of eternal life*
- *The hope of a world free of suffering and disabilities*

- *God’s promises to help us*
- *The Word of God with its divine comfort*
- *The privilege and power of prayer*
- *Past experiences of God’s faithfulness*
- *God’s leading in our lives*
- *And many more blessings besides*

The GPS directed us: “Please make a U-turn.” Perhaps that same challenge applies here. Whoever focuses only on the losses that come with aging—on weakness, unanswered questions and limitations—may easily spend the rest of their life without joy.

“Please make a U-turn” means: rethink. Change your course. Allow yourself to be reoriented today. Fix your eyes on Christ. You too can rejoice “in the Lord.” And then tell others about this joy—it is contagious.

Joy is not age-dependent—it is God-dependent.  
Rejoice!

“Be full of joy in the Lord always. I will say again, be full of joy” (NCV).

*Harry Semenjuk  
Wetaskiwin, AB*

# THE SECRET OF THE SINGING HEART

C. W. Naylor

The desire to be happy is nearly universal. For many people, it is one of the strongest driving forces in life. Yet happiness is not something that happens by accident. Like everything else governed by order and cause, it grows out of certain principles. It is the result of how we live, what we value, and the direction we choose.

One important truth is often overlooked: happiness is not found by pursuing it directly. It is more like a destination we reach while traveling another road. Along that road, we learn responsibility, walk in what is right, practice love, embrace humility, remain faithful and sincere, and pursue a life of inner purity. Somewhere along that path—often when we are no longer looking for it—happiness finds us.

## Worthy motives

A common mistake is to think that happiness comes simply from satisfying our desires. While pleasure has its place, it is not the foundation of lasting happiness. In fact, when life is driven mainly by selfish desires or shallow pleasures, disappointment is often the result.

Human experience reveals a consistent pattern: the quality of our happiness rises or falls with the quality of our motives. When our desires are low, self-focused, or purely physical, the happiness they produce is short-lived and often leaves emptiness behind. But when our motives are higher—centered on goodness, truth, and love—the happiness that follows is deeper and more enduring.

Physical pleasure may bring moments of enjoyment, but it cannot satisfy the deepest needs of the heart. Many of the carefree expressions of happiness promoted by the world fade quickly because they are rooted in things that do not last. Joy built solely on pleasure eventually weakens itself. By contrast, the deepest joy grows out of purity, kindness, and love. It comes from hearts that care for others, from homes where genuine affection is present, and from lives shaped by goodness. This kind of joy does not collapse under pressure—it deepens and matures.

True happiness flows from the highest parts of who we are. When our minds and hearts are engaged in what is good, noble, and meaningful, joy naturally

follows. There is a peace-filled happiness that does not depend on circumstances. It belongs to a life that is inwardly settled and outwardly aligned with what is right.

Selfishness, however, blocks that path. It creates a barrier between us and real happiness. A life centered only on self cannot produce lasting joy.

## In harmony with God

Happiness grows out of harmony—within ourselves, with others, and with God. When our lives are aligned with truth and goodness, there is a sense of order and peace that cannot be manufactured any other way.

This harmony is not determined by our surroundings or possessions. People often assume that happiness depends on where they live, what they own, or how comfortable their circumstances are. Yet experience repeatedly proves otherwise. A person may have every outward advantage and still feel empty, while another with far less may possess deep contentment. The difference lies within. If the inner elements of happiness are missing, no amount of external comfort can replace them.

One of the greatest sources of happiness is a clear and peaceful conscience—a sense of being right before God. When we live in that kind of inner clarity, it produces a quiet but powerful joy.

Unfortunately, some have been taught that a life of continual failure and guilt is unavoidable. This belief has discouraged many and drained the joy from their faith. If we expect constant defeat, it is no surprise that we struggle to experience lasting happiness.

Yet the message of the New Testament presents something very different. It describes a life marked by forgiveness, renewal, and peace with God. It calls us to joy—not occasional joy, but a steady and enduring one. “Rejoice always” is not an unrealistic ideal; it is a reflection of what becomes possible when we are truly at peace with God.

## A new life

The Christian life is not meant to be defined by constant failure. It begins with forgiveness and leads into a new way of living. It is a life shaped by grace rather



# THE ROAD TO HAPPINESS

Part 7

than an endless struggle to meet impossible standards.

This contrast is clearly seen in the writings of Paul. In Romans 7, he describes the frustration of trying to live rightly without inner transformation—a cycle of failure and discouragement. But he does not remain there. In Romans 8, he portrays a life of freedom, peace, and renewed strength through Christ. From that point forward, his life reflects deep joy and purpose. This is not the picture of someone trapped in defeat, but of someone living in close relationship with God.

A genuine spiritual life is not about rebellion or constant guilt. It is about relationship. God is not distant; He is our Father. Those who walk with Him are not striving in fear, but living in trust and obedience.

It is also important to understand the nature of sin. Not every mistake or weakness is the same as deliberate disobedience. Sin involves the will—a conscious turning away from what is right. Confusing human weakness with intentional rebellion can create unnecessary guilt and rob us of peace.

The life God intends is one of sincere desire to do what is right, combined with a growing ability to live it out. It is a life of walking with God, not running from Him.

## Unselfish devotion

Another key to happiness is unselfish devotion to what is good. When we give ourselves to something higher than our own comfort—to truth, love, service, and righteousness—we begin to experience a deeper kind of fulfillment.



Life operates on a principle of return. What we choose, we eventually reap. Harmful choices carry consequences that often begin immediately and grow over time. In the same way, good choices produce their own rewards—sometimes quietly at first, but steadily

and surely.

Ignoring our best instincts and highest values leads to regret. It weakens hope and leaves a sense of failure. It is like adding poison to something that could have been life-giving.

But when we remain true to the highest ideals God has placed within us, something different happens. Our lives begin to take on clarity and strength. There is a growing sense of purpose, and with it comes a deeper happiness.

## The secret of a joyful heart

If we want lasting happiness, we must stop pursuing it as an end in itself. Instead, we must focus on living rightly—cultivating purity, sincerity, humility, and love. Happiness is not found in selfishness, indulgence, or constant self-focus. It is found in a life that is aligned with the truth of God's Word, shaped by love, and grounded in a right relationship with God.

The Secret of the Singing Heart is simple, though not always easy: to live on a plane above the mire of sin, selfishness and sensual gratification, and to walk in harmony with God.

When we live this way, happiness is no longer something we are desperately trying to grasp. It becomes something that quietly grows within us—and remains. ■

## WHERE ARE THE WORKERS?

The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:36–38).

When Jesus saw the crowd, He looked beyond the surface. He saw not only their appearance but also each person’s inner need. Seeing that they were exhausted, neglected, and scattered like sheep without a shepherd, Jesus spoke seriously and with compassion, pointing out how great the harvest was and how few workers there were. He followed up by encouraging His disciples to ask the Lord of the harvest to send more workers into His harvest. These words offer both a clear diagnosis and an open path to finding help. The Lord sees what is lacking, but instead of instructing His people to fill those gaps themselves, He points them to the living God (Matthew 9:36–38).

Isn’t it striking how closely this mirrors our own day? Today, too, there is a lack of workers sent by God. Much rests on few shoulders; faithful brothers have grown older; and communities need shepherds. We may sometimes hear people wondering how all this will end. These concerns are real; however, we do not need to focus on them. Instead, we can start with the gaze of Jesus. Our situation is not hidden from Him; He sees the plight of His people better, deeper, and more truly than we do ourselves.

Because Jesus sees us, we need not fall into despair or seek refuge in earthly productivity and busywork. Instead, we can follow Jesus’ instruction and, in faith, ask the Lord of the harvest for help. Christ himself directs our gaze to the Source of help. Real workers in His fields are not primarily the result of smart planning or human strategies; they are God’s gift. The church community certainly also has responsibilities; it should perceive with open eyes what God has given, and where God has given gifts, the church should make ministry possible.

However, only the Lord Himself can issue a call into His service. Therefore, filling the gaps is not primarily a matter of better methods but rather of real dependence on God.

### Light in deep darkness

At this point, the account of Gideon provides valuable insight. It takes us not only into a period of external oppression, but also into the heart of a spiritual crisis. I have often reflected on Gideon’s story and the issues it raises.

When the Angel of the Lord meets him, his heart is filled with questions that still move many believers today: “If the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about?” These questions do not reveal unbelief in the atheistic sense. Rather, they arise out of the pain of a wounded heart. In his suffering and yearning for the living God, Gideon was unable to properly process his pain (Judges 6:13).

We know that the field to be harvested is large and that the workforce is small. We hear of earlier times when God seemed to work more obviously, when He awakened men and women, brought congregations together, convicted sinners, and confirmed His word with power. Seeing a contrast, we may ask ourselves a number of questions: Lord, where is Your help today? Where are the workers You are sending? Where is the spiritual authority that works through weak people to do great things?

It is significant that God does not reject Gideon for these questions but instead wonderfully encourages him. Scripture already mentions the actual cause of the suffering: Israel had done what was evil in the eyes of the Lord. The people’s weakness was not proof of God’s faithlessness, nor was it a sign that His power had waned. Rather, it revealed the state of the people themselves. Even then, when Israel cried out to Him, God first sent a prophet to shine a light into their conscience. Before bringing



## THE CALLING OF A PASTOR (PART 7)

rescue, God first opened their eyes (Judges 6: 1, 7–10; Isaiah 59: 1–2).

When God wants to help, He does not comfort superficially. He has the truth preached in love, and He reveals what is hidden—not to put us down but to heal us. He shows us obstacles because He wants to clear the way for His help to arrive.

That is why it is so important that Gideon's first task is directed not against Midian but against the altar of Baal in his own house. It is not the enemy outside that takes priority but the one that is darkening God's glory inside. This, too, is a serious but loving lesson for our time. There can be things that inhibit God's free work among His people. They may not be openly pagan or obvious, but they are real. Where human certainty takes the place of trust in God, where order displaces living dependence, where activity replaces prayer, where one laments the need but inwardly relies on forces other than God, there is a foreign altar in the figurative sense (Judges 6: 25–26).

### **Everything under God's authority**

The problem with this foreign altar is not necessarily taking good gifts for granted. It is true that revealed knowledge is precious, order in the house of God is important, and responsibility is necessary; however, everything loses its true value if it is not placed under the complete rule and priority of God. In that case, regardless of how well things look on the outside, the lack of real workers still reveals a need. This lack is not due to God being unable to help; it is because He does not build His work on a false foundation.

This is where hope comes in. Crucially, the story of Gideon does not stop at diagnosis. God is not only the one who gives light but also the one who saves, calls, and equips. The Lord Jesus, who saw the scattered flock, did not withdraw His promise. God does not want to leave His

people without shepherds. Moses already asked that the church of the Lord should not remain like sheep without shepherds after his death. God answered this prayer by calling Joshua—a man filled with the Spirit of God. Some time later, through Jeremiah, the Lord promised to send shepherds after His own heart who would feed His people with knowledge and understanding (Numbers 27: 16–18; Jeremiah 3: 15).

### **Hope in our time**

We must remain hopeful despite all the hardship. The Lord is alive, and His power has not changed. He stands by His promises! He can and wants to send workers today. He can call and capture people with holy fire—people who do not seek themselves but dedicate themselves to His ministry. He can reawaken communities. He can guide prayer, strengthen faith, and open ways where we can see none.

Which way will we choose? The Son of God simply says, “Ask the Lord of the harvest.” Gideon's story adds a few instructions: remove the obstacles God shows us; be willing to let the Lord truly be Lord of His Church today; and know that help does not start with big programs but with internal truth, humility, and new ears to listen. Where this takes place, the way is cleared for Him to call, send, and equip once again (Isaiah 57: 14–19).

Perhaps this is the message we need today: not more worry but more faith. Instead of first looking at what is lacking, look at the One who can give. Start not with human answers but with quiet, serious confidence that the Lord of the harvest lives. He has not forgotten His people. When the time is right, He will send out the workers His work needs today.

*Hermann Vogt*



# *Abundant Joy in the Lord*

Abundant joy, say, is that not a lie,  
In a world full of sin where crime is high?

Abundant joy when many are starving  
And innocent folk die undeserving?

Abundant joy amidst terror and war?  
Is that not mocking God, whom we adore?

Abundant joy in such chaos and strife,  
That many lost souls despair of their life?

Abundant joy, when Christians are not one,  
But split into groups when conflict has come?

Abundant joy, knowing sinful pleasures  
Have destroyed marriages beyond measure?

Abundant joy, when we see corruption  
And sinful ways headed for destruction?

Still, abundant joy will not be denied  
If we trust in Jesus to be our guide!

Abundant joy is there for ev'ryone  
Who believes in Jesus, God's loving Son.

Lasting joy, peace passing understanding  
Despite circumstances so demanding.

Abundant joy, experience it today;  
Do not let the enemy lead you astray.

Bring all the burdens to God in prayer  
And you will find joy awaiting you there.

Eugen Roth