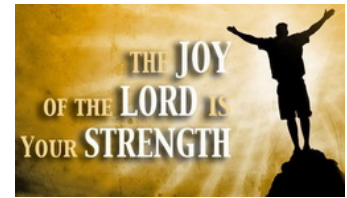


7

WAYS TO DEVELOP AND NURTURE JOY IN YOUR DAILY LIFE



Introduction

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. 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 1:3-9).

1. I have known people that held to a very erroneous view of what it means to be a Christian. They believed that it simply meant (i) attending services on Sunday and Bible class during the week, (ii) reading a passage from the Bible every day and saying a short prayer before retiring, and (iii) living a good life (not stealing, lying, committing adultery, etc.). Whatever free time they had was spent in pleasure seeking and having fun. As for *spiritual* joy, they supposed that it was only something to be experienced in the main worship service on the first day of the week. One lady said, “Life is so hard and we go through so many difficulties and trials, and so we need to go to worship every week to get a taste of joy that will help us get through the week ahead”. Do you think there are those that have the same views today?

It is when we are walking in a relationship with God and allowing the Spirit to govern every aspect of our lives that we will experience joy; not just moments of joy, but a joy that is permanent and settled in our hearts and minds.

2. It is essential to understand that being a Christian is more than simply attending worship once a week, reading a passage from the Bible every day, and living a good life - being a Christian is about (i) walking in a relationship with God and (ii) it is a way of life that affects *every* aspect of our daily lives. It is when we are walking in a relationship with God and allowing the Spirit to govern every aspect of our lives that we will experience joy; not just moments of joy, but a joy that is permanent and settled in our hearts and minds.
3. There are, unfortunately, some Christians that fail to develop a relationship with God and are merely practicing the outward forms of religion. These brethren rob themselves of true joy and peace in believing (Romans 15:13); not to mention that their souls are in jeopardy! Some have been in this condition since the day they were baptized and have just lived each day with the feeling that “something isn’t right”, and yet failed to seek a way out of this condition. The aim of this lesson is to help, somewhat, toward living an abundant life (John 10:10) of joy and peace in believing (Romans 15:13).

Note: In this lesson we are attempting to deal with seven ways to develop and nurture joy in one’s daily life, and we cannot possibly cover each subject fully in the brief amount of time allotted. So it is best to think of this lesson as an introduction to the topic, which, hopefully, will prompt you to study each subject more fully for yourself.

7 WAYS TO DEVELOP AND NURTURE JOY IN YOUR DAILY LIFE

1. Experiencing joy in believing (Psalms 32:11; 37:4; 40:16; Romans 15:13; Acts 16:34).
2. Experiencing joy in your relationship with God (Psalms 37:4).
3. Experiencing joy in the assemblies (Psalms 100:1-5; 122:1).
4. Experiencing joy in the home (Proverbs 5:18; Ecclesiastes 9:9).
5. Experiencing joy at work (Ecclesiastes 5:18-19; 9:10).
6. Experiencing joy in trials (Luke 6:22-23; James 1:2-3; Philippians 1:29; 3:7-11).
7. Experiencing joy in good works (Acts 20:35; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8, 14; Hebrews 10:24).

7 WAYS TO DEVELOP AND NURTURE JOY IN YOUR DAILY LIFE

1. EXPERIENCING JOY IN BELIEVING (Psalms 32:11; 37:4; 40:16; Romans 15:13; Acts 16:34)

a. Let us begin by looking at some conversions in the book of Acts and notice what is said of those that obeyed the gospel:

1) When a great persecution arose against the church, the disciples were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Philip went to the city of Samaria and preached the gospel to them (Acts 8:1-7). Luke records, **“And there was great joy in that city”** (Acts 8:8). **“Joy resulted because so many had been liberated from demon possession, cruel physical illnesses and their own sins”** (Mark Dunagan).



2) Philip was then directed to go to a road that connected Jerusalem and Gaza. It was here that he encountered an Ethiopian eunuch, to whom he preached the gospel. When they came to some water, the eunuch said, **“See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”** So Philip immersed him. **And then the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away (Acts 8:26-39a).** Now notice what Luke says of the eunuch: **“... and he went on his way rejoicing”** (Acts 8:39b). The eunuch was rejoicing in his salvation.

3) Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel to the Jews in Antioch, Pisidia, but when they opposed them, they turned to the Gentiles. Many of the Gentiles came to believe, but the Jews stirred up prominent women and men of the city and raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and they were expelled from the city (Acts 13:14-50). Notice what Luke says of the Gentile converts in Antioch: **“And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit”** (Acts 13:52). There is a joy that results from believing.

4) Paul and Silas came to Philippi, Macedonia, to preach Jesus. After casting out a spirit of divination from a slave girl they were arrested, beaten and cast into prison. It was at midnight that an earthquake caused all the doors of the prison to be opened and all the prisoners’ chains were loosed. When the jailer saw this he supposed the prisoners had escaped and he would have fallen on his sword had not Paul prevented him (the jailer would have been put to death had his prisoners escaped). Paul then preached the gospel to him and his whole household, and they were all baptised (Acts 16:11-33). After that they all sat down and had a meal together, and Luke says that the jailer **“rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household”** (Acts 16:34).

b. A growing and abiding joy:

1) Believing and obeying the gospel results in joy! Why? The word “gospel” is from the Greek word *euaggelion*, which basically means “good news” (Strong). The good news is that Christ died for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3). Hearing the good news brings joy, and it is in having our sins washed away by the blood of Jesus that brings us into a realization of that joy – we have been reconciled to God and saved from wrath through Him (Romans 5:9), and “having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). And as long as we continue believing, we will experience joy and peace in believing (Romans 15:13).

**Joy And Peace
Are The Rewards Of Faith**
“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).

2) The joy does not end there, though! Our joy increases as we continue: (i) To grow in knowledge (Proverbs 2:10 NLT). For example, our joy is increased as we learn more about all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14). This is why Paul says “be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18), which means to “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Colossians 3:16). (ii) To walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 25). This simply means to allow the Spirit to govern every aspect of our lives through the word He has revealed. For example, the Spirit urges us to provide for orphans and widows (James 1:27), and don’t we all experience joy in helping others (Acts 20:35)?

- c. If a person is burdened with guilt and lives in fear of death and judgment, then his heart will be lifted when he hears the good news, and his obedience to the gospel will result in peace and joy. If we focus our thoughts daily on the love of God, the Savior who bore our sins on the cross, and the lively hope of a resurrection from the dead unto eternal life, then we will be filled with joy; a lasting, settled joy. Yet for the babe in Christ there is yet more joy set before him as he grows in the faith and develops his relationship with God.

2. EXPERIENCING JOY IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (Psalms 37:4)

- a. David said, “Delight yourself also in Jehovah” (Psalms 37:4). “Let your relationship with Jehovah be your joy” (David Collins, Commentary on Psalms). There are some babes in Christ that begin their new life in Christ full of joy and meet with their brethren at the appointed times, but fail to develop their relationship with God. Such brethren rob themselves of joy and find no real pleasure in meeting with the saints. So it is essential for every Christian to develop their relationship with God.
- b. How, then, do we develop a relationship with God? First we need to think about what is involved in a relationship and then make the application in regards to our relationship with God:
- 1) I thought of ten things that are involved in a normal relationship: (i) conversation (all relationships begin with a conversation and are maintained by conversations) (ii) love or friendship (the type of relationship will depend on several variables), (iii) mutual respect and honor (these make for a happy lasting relationship), (iv) getting to know one another (character, likes, habits, etc), (v) trust (said to be the most important thing in any relationship), (vi) doing things together, (vii) a desire to please one another, (viii), imitation (we often find ourselves imitating the behavior and mannerisms of those we admire), (ix) submission (especially necessary in the home), and (x) having common interests.
- 2) All these things can be applied to our relationship with God. Indeed, they are necessary!
- a) Conversation. (i) We speak to God through prayer: we are exhorted to *devote* ourselves to prayer (Acts 2:42; Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Peter 4:7). The idea of “devoting” ourselves to prayer involves *hours* rather than minutes. (ii) God speaks to us through His word, which means we ought to read (Deuteronomy 17:19; Ephesians 3:4), meditate (Psalms 119:15, 48, 148), and study the scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:1-3) with a *passion* to know what God has to say to us (Colossians 1:9).
- b) Love. (i) God has demonstrated His love for us in the giving of His Son for our sins (John 3:16; Romans 5:8), and He continues to love us by directing our steps (Psalms 32:8; 1 Samuel 2:9), providing our needs (Matthew 6:25-34; Psalms 37:25), and disciplining us (Hebrews 12:6-8; Deuteronomy 8:5). (ii) We demonstrate our love for God by keeping His commandments and loving our brethren (1 John 4:20-21; 5:2-3).
- c) Fear¹. (i) To fear God is to worship Him in reverence and awe (Hebrews 12:28-29), and to hate evil (Proverbs 8:13; 16:6). (ii) If we fear God then we will receive glory, honor, and immortality (Romans 2:5-10).
- d) Knowing. (i) It goes without saying that God already knows us (Psalms 44:21) and especially those that are His (2 Timothy 2:19; Psalms 4:3). (ii) We, though, must get to know God (John 17:3), which we can only do by reading and studying the scriptures.
- e) Trust. Trust is essential in any relationship and we must learn to trust God (Psalms 4:5; 9:10). Job’s attitude was, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him” (Job 13:15). We can trust God because it is impossible for God to lie (Hebrews 6:18). Paul said, “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself” (2 Timothy 2:13).
- f) Fellowship (doing things together). Do we and God do things together? Anyone who shares the gospel with a person is a sower and another who continues teaching that person is a waterier. Paul says, “Now he who plants and he who waters are one” (1 Corinthians 3:8). He then says that the sower and the waterier are “God’s co-workers” (1 Corinthians 3:9 ISV).

“But let all those rejoice who put their trust in You; let them ever shout for joy, because You defend them; let those also who love Your name be joyful in You” (Psalms 5:11).

¹ “The fear of God is an attitude of respect, a response of reverence and wonder. It is the only appropriate response to our Creator and Redeemer” (Nelson’s NKJV Study Bible, 1997, note on Psalm 128:1).

- g) Pleasing. (i) Our goal as Christians is to be pleasing to God (**2 Corinthians 5:9**). We must be continually transformed in order to be able to determine God's will – determining what is pleasing to Him (**Romans 12:2**). The reason we study and grow in knowledge is “so that you might live in a manner worthy of the Lord and be fully pleasing to Him” (**Colossians 1:9-10 ISV**). We can please God by offering our bodies as living sacrifices (**Romans 12:1**), supporting preachers (**Philippians 4:18; Galatians 6:6**), obeying our parents (**Colossians 3:20**), and caring for our parents in their distress (**1 Timothy 5:4**). (ii) God also seeks to please us! God established the institution of marriage to be pleasing to us, which is why He says, “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth” (**Proverbs 5:18**). God provides all good things to fill our hearts with gladness (**Acts 14:17**). “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy” (**1 Timothy 6:17**).
- h) Imitation. It is quite common to imitate those whom we love or admire. Paul wrote, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (**1 Corinthians 11:1**). John says, “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (**1 John 2:6**).
- i) Submission. (i) In human affairs. Paul says, “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God” (**1 Corinthians 11:3**). While it is true that we are all to “be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility” (**1 Peter 5:5b**), it is also true that there are those in authority to which we must especially show submission: government (**Romans 13:1**), elders (**1 Peter 5:5a; Hebrews 13:17**), husbands (**Ephesians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:1**), parents (**Ephesians 6:1**). (ii) Submission to God. James simply says, “Submit to God” (**James 4:7**). We are to particularly submit to Christ because He has all authority (**Matthew 28:18**) and God has made Him to be head over all things to the church (**Ephesians 1:22**). This submission chiefly involves ensuring that we do all things by His authority (**Colossians 3:17**), which means proving all things by the scriptures (**2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:21**).
- j) Common interests. A relationship is based on common interests. (i) Our ultimate desire is to go to heaven (**cp. Matthew 19:16**) and this also is God's desire, which is why Jesus came to this world: “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (**John 3:13-15; cp. John 14:2-3**). (ii) While we work out our salvation or live out our lives here in this world (**Philippians 2:12**), we must ensure that all our interests are aligned with those of God's interests. God desires “all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (**1 Timothy 2:4**). We must seek to develop the same passion as Paul: “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel. For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (**1 Corinthians 9:16-22**).
- c. In all these aspects of our relationship with God there is cause to rejoice:
- 1) Conversation. Listening to the voice of the Spirit (God's word) brings joy (**Psalms 119:162**).
 - 2) Love. The message of God's love, when believed, results in joy (**Acts 8:8; 39; 13:52**).
 - 3) Fear. Fearing God results in joy (**Psalms 2:11; Nehemiah 1:11**).
 - 4) Knowing. Coming to know God results in joy (**Psalms 37:4**).
 - 5) Trust. Putting our trust in God results in joy (**Psalms 5:11; 33:21**).

- 6) Fellowship (doing things together). We work together with God in preaching the gospel, and there is joy for us (John 4:36) and joy in heaven (Luke 15:7).
- 7) Pleasing. We are filled with joy when we please God (2 Chronicles 6:41) and God is filled with joy when He pleases us (Psalms 149:4).
- 8) Imitation. John says, "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (1 John 2:6). We walk as He walked or imitate Him, which results in joy. How so? We imitate his love, fear, trust, etc., and, as we have seen, such results in joy.
- 9) Submission (obedience). True happiness comes in hearing and putting into practice (i.e., obeying) God's word (Luke 11:28; cp. Isaiah 11:3).
- 10) Common Interests. Saving souls is a common interest and working to save souls brings joy (John 4:35-36; Luke 15:7).

3. EXPERIENCING JOY IN THE ASSEMBLIES (Psalms 100:1-5; 122:1)

"I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to Jehovah" (Psalms 27:6).

a. David wrote, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of Jehovah'" (Psalms 122:1). A sincere Christian looks forward to meeting with the saints and it ought to be a time of rejoicing. David says, "Serve Jehovah with gladness" (Psalms 100:2).

- 1) There are some that do not look forward to meeting with the saints and find no joy at all in any of the weekly activities. You might ask, "So why do they even come at all?!" One could speculate regarding their motives, but only they know the answer to such a question. However, while they are attending, there is always the hope that they will be truly moved by the message of the cross and stirred to worship the Lord with gladness (cp. 1 Corinthians 14:24-25).
- 2) There are others that look forward to meeting with the saints (Psalms 118:24) and yet find no joy in any of the activities! They wish they did, but they don't! This might be due to the want of some simple attitude adjustments.

"Serve Jehovah with gladness; come before His presence with singing" (Psalms 100:2).

b. We will now take a look at several activities that are sources of joy:

- 1) Singing. In regards to singing, some only find joy in big crowds, angelic voices, and beautiful melodies produced on musical instruments. Remove these elements and they find no joy in singing. The correct attitude is set forth by the following scriptures: (i) The source of joy in singing is "in You" (Psalms 9:2; 71:23), (ii) the melody is made "in your heart" and directed "to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19), and it is essential that we focus on the words and understand what we are singing (1 Corinthians 14:15). In short, our singing should primarily be directed to the Lord and we should focus on the words and sing them heartily. This will result in joy.
- 2) Prayer. (i) It is essential that we "pray with the understanding" and we ought not to say "Amen" unless we have understood, lest we unknowingly agree with something that is not in accordance with God's will². (ii) Speaking to God ought always to be joyful: (a) Read the joyful prayers of David (Psalms 16:5-11; 30:1-12; 71:19-24), the joyful prayers of Hannah (1 Samuel 2:1-10) and Mary (Luke 1:46-55). Writing to the Philippians, Paul said, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy" (Philippians 1:3-4). (b) As we offer prayers of thanksgiving it stirs up joy, as we set forth our petitions and intercessions it stirs up joy because we know that God is able to do all things (Jeremiah 32:17; Luke 1:37; Ephesians 3:20).

² (i) If you are not able to hear or understand the person leading in prayer, then you should speak to them and, in a nice way, ask them if they would speak a little louder and clearer so as to be understood by everyone. (ii) Us men that lead in prayer must pray loud enough to be heard and clear enough to be understood. It helps to face the congregation and hold your head up. We must not be offended when someone asks us to speak up or speak clearly. If someone does approach us, they have probably had it on their mind for a while and found it very difficult. They may have put off approaching us for so long for fear of offending.

3) Teaching. (i) When the teacher comes forward to preach or teach, there are some that inwardly sigh! To sit through a forty-five minute lecture is something they endure, and they're hoping the time passes quickly. Some listen, but only to judge the lesson either good or bad, or to find fault, and not to apply. These are those that take no delight in knowledge and learning. A friend of mine said, "In every instance, I found that those who showed no interest in sermons or Bible classes also had no interest in private Bible study. They would rather spend their time having fun and socialising..." (David Collins). (ii) But for those who desire to mature and that realise how essential Bible study is for knowledge, wisdom, understanding, insight, and spiritual growth, studying God's word is a passion (1 Peter 2:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). (iii) Those that crave the pure milk of the word and devote much time to reading, meditating, and studying know how addictive it can become, because with an increase in knowledge comes much joy. "For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy" (Proverbs 2:10 NLT). Understanding the value of knowledge and the aim of teachers will birth a desire to listen and apply what is taught.

"The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7).

4) Giving. A local congregation provides the opportunity for its members to contribute toward the works that God has assigned to it (edification, benevolence, and evangelism). (i) Some people give just a token amount as they do to a chugger³ in the mall. There is no genuine motivation, no purpose, no zeal, no sacrifice, and no joy associated with their giving. (ii) A sincere Christian, though, understands that God purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28), Christ established it (Matthew 16:18 > Acts 2:1-42) and continues to build it (Acts 2:47), and is its head (Colossians 1:18), that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15), and that all its works are appointed by God; its greatest work is that of preaching the gospel. A sincere Christian has the same passion to save the lost as the Lord (Mark 16:15-16; 1 Timothy 2:4) and it is his privilege to share in the preaching of the gospel. A Christian gives generously, sacrificially, and joyfully to the greatest work on earth (Acts 4:34-37; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:7; Philippians 4:15-16).

There are some that give into the treasury each week so that "they" can do the work of the church. Thus they exclude themselves from the body of Christ.

5) Communion. We partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week (Acts 20:7). On the one hand it is something we all do together (1 Corinthians 11:20, 33; Acts 20:7), but on the other hand it is something each individual does alone. In partaking of the bread we remember Jesus' body which was broken for us and in partaking of the fruit of the vine we remember His shed blood for our sins (Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25). Meditating on these things might very well stir sad feelings, but there is also an occasion for rejoicing in the redemption (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13-14) and reconciliation He secured for us. "And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Romans 5:11).

c. Meeting with the saints ought to be a joyful occasion. We can ensure that it is so by ignoring all worldly distractions, circumstances, and outward appearances, and keep our eyes fixed on things above. Say to yourself, "I will keep my focus on pleasing God and all that I do – whether singing, praying, learning, giving, or partaking of the Lord's Supper - will be to glorify the Father through His Son, and my Savior, Jesus Christ. I will worship in the beauty of holiness and rejoice greatly in His grace and mercy".

4. EXPERIENCING JOY IN THE HOME (Proverbs 5:18; Ecclesiastes 9:9)

a. It was God that established the institution of marriage (Genesis 2:20-24), and the home was designed to be a place of joy: "Live joyfully with the wife whom you love..." (Ecclesiastes 9:9). Maintaining a happy marriage and a happy home is achieved by following all the scriptural guidelines.

1) The divine order and roles (Genesis 3:16; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7).

³ A chugger is a person that approaches passers-by in the street asking for subscriptions or donations to a particular charity.

- 2) Keep the Lord in the centre of your home. This means keep the Lord in the forefront of your minds at all times; ensuring that motives, purposes, speech, behavior, decisions, activities, etc., are in accordance with the will of God. It means letting the Spirit govern every aspect of your home life through the word that He has revealed (**Psalms 32:8; 37:5; 119:133; Galatians 5:25**). Also, live by the law of love (**1 Corinthians 13:4-7**).
 - 3) Maintain the right attitudes. Paul writes, “Let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes” (**Ephesians 4:23**).
- b. It is essential to abide in biblical principles to maintain a happy home. But it is not just doing the right things that matter, it is the attitude behind what we do that is essential; it is the right attitudes that result in joy.
- 1) Wives are told, “Submit to your own husbands”, with the attitude: “As to the Lord” (**Ephesians 5:22**). We joyfully submit to Christ, so to submit to one’s husband as to the Lord also results in joy.
 - 2) Husbands are told, “Love your wives”, with the attitude: “Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her” (**Ephesians 5:25**). Loving one’s wife with this attitude results in joy.
 - 3) Parents are responsible for raising their children, which is not an easy task, but it is bringing “them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (**Ephesians 6:4**) that makes it a joy.
 - 4) A family can also find joy in spiritual activities: bible study, prayer, singing, etc.
 - 5) Solomon wrote, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might” (**Ecclesiastes 9:10**). Whatever work there is to do in the home, do your best; strive for excellence, and you will find joy in a job well done.
- c. Whatever is involved in home life can be a joyful experience if everything is done *unto the Lord* and to bring glory to God. Paul says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (**1 Corinthians 10:31**).

5. EXPERIENCING JOY AT WORK (**Ecclesiastes 5:18-19; 9:10**)

- a. In order to support our families and have something to give to those in need, we must work (**Ephesians 4:28; cp. 2 Thessalonians 3:10**). (i) Some are happy in their work, but their attitude is, “It’s just a job”. (ii) Many find that going to work is unpleasurable (to say the least). It may be because the work is unpleasant, the boss is harsh, our work colleagues are ungodly, we’re underpaid, etc. Thus many are discontented, unhappy, bitter, etc. Knowledge and a change of attitude will make going to work a more meaningful and joyful experience.
- b. So let us consider a few things that will change our whole outlook toward work:
- 1) Above all else we need to realise that it is God that has ordered our circumstances. Paul says, “Only, as the Lord has distributed to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches” (**1 Corinthians 7:17**). The three quotes below from Barnes, The Pulpit Commentary, and David Collins, all say the same thing – it is God that orders our circumstances. This is so crucial to understand because it means that whenever we grumble or complain in regards our lot, then we are actually grumbling and complaining against God that ordered our circumstances. The shock of this realisation ought to provoke and motivate us to renew our minds and adopt the right attitudes toward our circumstances.

“The phrase ‘as God hath distributed’ refers to the condition in which people are placed in life, whether as rich or poor, in a state of freedom or servitude, of learning or ignorance, etc. And it implies that God appoints the lot of people, and orders the circumstances of their condition; that religion is not designed to interfere directly with this; and that people should seek to show the real excellence of religion in the particular sphere in which they may have been placed by divine providence before they became converted” (Barnes).

“It is a distribution of God a lot. Our station, occupation, relationships, are of Divine appointment. He assigns us our lot (Psalms 16:5-6) and determines the bounds of our habitation (Acts 17:26)” (Pulpit Commentary).

“This is a general rule that is repeated in two other places (verses 20 and 24). The meaning is that the conditions and circumstances into which one is born have been determined by God, or as Barnes says, ‘God appoints the lot of people, and orders the circumstances of their condition’. One’s mental capabilities, talents, and status, are all appointed and ordered by God. It is the responsibility of each individual to show forth the excellency of religion and adorn the doctrine of Christ in that sphere in which divine providence has placed him” (David Collins).

- 2) The attitude we are to have toward our “masters” is set forth by Paul: (i) We must count our employers worthy of all honor (1 Timothy 6:1a) and be obedient with fear and trembling⁴, working with sincerity of heart⁵, “as to Christ” (Ephesians 6:5). We must serve our employer as if we were serving the Lord Himself (Colossians 3:23). (ii) To serve in such a way for a good employer is easy to do, but what if our employer is ungodly, unpleasant, and treats us unfairly? Peter says, “Servants, be submissive to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the harsh” (1 Peter 2:18). This may be difficult but it is commendable before God. “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). The right attitudes and the right behavior adorn the doctrine of Christ (Titus 2:10), but to disobey these instructions will lead people to blaspheme the name of God and His doctrine (1 Timothy 6:1b).

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE
Whatever Your Occupation

The Greatest Heavyweight Boxer of all time, Muhammed Ali, was once asked what job would he have done if he hadn't got into boxing? His reply was...

“I don't know what I would have done. But even if I was a road-sweeper, I would have been the best road-sweeper of all time!”

Strive For Excellence

- 3) Solomon says, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Whatever our occupation we ought to do it with all our might. In other words, whether you’re a road-sweeper, janitor, painter and decorator, estate agent, translator, bus driver, surgeon, etc., strive to be the best; strive for excellence.

c. There is joy in serving the Lord (Psalms 100:2) and when we work “as to the Lord” then will experience that joy that comes from knowing that we are pleasing Him.

6. EXPERIENCING JOY IN TRIALS (Luke 6:22-23; James 1:2-3; Philippians 1:29; 3:7-11)

- a. It is just a fact that when a person suffers for what he passionately believes (whether religious or political), he rejoices. The joy one feels in suffering for what he considers righteousness more than compensates for any suffering. Two examples: (i) You wives that have children - you know what a painful experience it is giving birth to a child, but how did you feel when you held your baby in your arms seconds later (John 16:21)? (ii) The apostles were arrested for the second time for preaching the gospel, but this time they were beaten, i.e., they received 39 lashes of the whip. When they were released, Luke says, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. 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 1:3-9).

- b. There is so much we could say about this subject but we will just let these few points suffice:
- 1) Suffering for the Lord’s sake ought to be viewed as a privilege (Philippians 1:29) and an occasion of rejoicing (Acts 5:41).

⁴ “With respect for the rightful authority of the master and keen anxiety to leave no duty undone” (Erdman).

⁵ “We therefore do our duty without hypocrisy, pretence, or simple formality. Our work is done with sincerity, not with ill-will” (Caldwell).

- 2) There are many benefits that trials and sufferings bring, which is an occasion for rejoicing (**James 1:2-3**).
- 3) Our suffering is a seed that reaps a harvest of a great reward in heaven, which is an occasion for rejoicing (**Luke 6:22-23**). We must adopt Paul's attitude: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (**Romans 8:18**).
- 4) The most important point about suffering is expressed by Paul and Peter...

a) Paul says:

"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and **the fellowship of His sufferings**, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (**Philippians 3:7-11**).

b) Peter says:

"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you **partake of Christ's sufferings**, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (**1 Peter 4:12-13**).

... When we suffer for the sake of the Lord we are *sharing in His sufferings*. We are experiencing something of what He suffered from wicked men and, thereby, being identified with Him. This comment helped me to understand what these passages are saying: "My son, Alex, died at the age of five months and I felt that no one could understand my loss and grief; it was unbearable and I was beyond consolation. But then a member of the congregation, whom I barely knew, came to me and said, with tears flowing down her cheeks, 'I too lost my daughter at just three months of age.' From that moment, we became great friends and found consolation in the sharing of our loss; the common suffering that we shared brought us closer together. Paul desired to share in the suffering of his Savior that he might experience a closer fellowship with his Lord" (David Collins).

- c. Whatever kinds of trials, sufferings, and persecutions we suffer for righteousness' sake or for the Lord's sake are not in vain: Peter said, "Blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" (**1 Peter 4:4**), and in all our sufferings we can rejoice. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (**Romans 8:18**).

7. EXPERIENCING JOY IN GOOD WORKS (Acts 20:35; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8, 14; Hebrews 10:24)

- a. It almost seems superfluous to say that it is better to give than to receive because we have all experienced the joy of giving, and yet Jesus said it (**Acts 20:35**); perhaps to encourage us to give and to show that giving meets with divine approval. There are many ways of giving and it is just one of many types of good works. Once a person has experienced the joy of giving, or doing any good work, he will be eager to do more.
- b. Paul says, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (**Ephesians 2:10**). This is a very important verse because it states very clearly that (i) We have been spiritually created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, and (ii) the good works in which we are to walk are - not just anything we decide to be a good work – **which God has prepared**.
- c. It is essential to understand that a Christian must be continually engaged in good works, as the following scriptures indicate...

"Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, **zealous for good works**" (**Titus 2:14**).

“And let our people also **learn to maintain good works**, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful” (Titus 3:14).

“And let us consider one another in order to **stir up love and good works**” (Hebrews 10:24).

Ephesians 2:10

What are we to make of the person that is not walking in that for which he was created in Christ Jesus?

... A sincere Christian is not content to live in a routine bubble or comfort zone and only step out to perform a good work when he feels that his peers have a high expectation of him doing so, but will walk in that for which he was created in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10) and, indeed, actively *pursue* good works. Those that are zealous for good works and pursue them will continually feast on joy, but those that only do good works incidentally, not only walk in disobedience, but deprive themselves of joy.

Conclusion

1. A Christian’s joy results from believing, maintaining our relationship with God, faithfully attending the assemblies of the saints, and adopting the right attitudes in every sphere of our life.
 - a. Believing. There is a joy that results from believing (Romans 15:13). But it should be understood that this “believing” is more than mere intellectual belief (James 2:19); a true believer is one that is walking in obedience to the will of God (James 2:20-24).
 - b. Our Relationship With God. Merely observing outward requirements – attending services, participating in the work of the church, doing good works, etc. – is not walking in a relationship with God. A relationship with God means: (i) One must devote himself to conversing with God (prayer and Bible study), (ii) Loving God (which means keeping His commandments) and loving one’s brethren, (iii) worshipping God in godly reverence and hating evil, (iv) getting to know as much as we can about God by reading and studying the scriptures, (v) trusting God to provide our needs and guard our souls in every activity of life, (vi) working in partnership with God in, for example, sharing the gospel or teaching new Christians, (vii) finding out what pleases God, (viii) imitating God and Christ and being conformed to His image, (ix) submitting to God and Christ in all things, and (x) finding out what things interest God and developing the same interests. Joy naturally results from our developing relationship with God.
 - c. Attending Services. Faithfully attending services is something we are commanded to do for two main reasons: that the body of Christ might be edified and that we might do the work that God has assigned to the church. There is much joy that results in meeting together.
 - d. Adopting Right Attitudes. We have to live in the world and there are various spheres in which we function (family, government, work), and it is essential to adopt the right attitudes in every sphere that we function to experience a joyful life.
2. If we pursue all these things then we will experience the joy that every sincere Christian enjoys. Yes, there is truly a joy that comes from believing. It is a joy that will increase as we continue to grow spiritually.

JOY IS A REWARD

Joy Is The Reward Of Believing
Joy Is The Reward Of Obedience
Joy Is The Reward Of Sincere Worship
Joy Is The Reward Of Doing Good Works
Joy Is The Reward Of Giving
Joy Is The Reward Of Preaching
Joy Is The Reward Of Suffering