Week 4



Devotional Book



**Jan Stratton**

**Sowing Seeds of Joy**

**James 1:2 - 3**

**Count it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.**

“Joy” is something that we all wish for.  There is a certain peace about the word “joy”.  Even better than happiness because happiness can be superficial and temporary. God has used songs to minister to my heart throughout my years.  As a youngster in VBS, I especially remember the song “Into My Heart” - Into my heart, into my heart , come into my heart Lord Jesus, come in today, come in to stay, come into my heart Lord Jesus.  Another popular song then and now is “I have the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart.”  I am thankful I had that opportunity to ask Jesus into my heart at a young age.

So where does real joy come from?  It comes from knowing Jesus as our Lord and Savior and having a relationship with Him and an underlying peace that passes all understanding. As Psalm 118:24 says “The joy of the Lord is my strength.”

To have this joy we can simply put it this way:

1. Admit your need for a Savior. Romans 3:23 “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

2. Be willing to turn away from your sins and repent. Romans 6:23 “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.”

3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross and rose from the grave.  Romans 10:9 “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

4. Through prayer invite Jesus Christ to come in and control your life through the Holy Spirit.  Receive Him as your Lord and Savior.  "Behold I stand at the door and knock.  If anyone hears my voice and opens the door.  I will come into him and eat with him and he with me."  Rev 3:20

When you become a Christian Jesus is with you every step of the way.  And even when trials come and we face difficult challenges we can “Count it all Joy” because Jesus walks with us through our storms and lightens our burdens.

During one of my visits to the ER (which has happened several times in the past few years).  I was being evaluated for another lung infection. They were waiting for a return phone call from my pulmonologist in Rochester.  Deciding what to do with me and what antibiotics I might be able to take.  I was having difficulty breathing and my respirations were about 40 per minute.  I was on oxygen. The doctor said we might not be able to keep you here because we don’t have a ventilator for you.  And I thought “Ventilator”! I do not want to have to go that route. The doctor left the room and the tears started to come and I said “Lord you have to help me here, I don’t want a ventilator, please help me get through this.”  Help me to breathe easier.  God did help me calm down and when the doctor came back a little later he said they had heard from the doctor in Rochester and he thought I would be ok here in this hospital and they had discussed the meds and treatments he thought I should have.  Oh, thank you Lord, thank you, thank you.  The song that came to mind and has often been my stabilizer is “Leaning on the everlasting arms”.  Different phrases in the verse and chorus speak to me.  “What a fellowship, what a **joy** divine, leaning on the everlasting arms.”  “What a peace is mine.  Safe and secure from all alarms - Leaning on the everlasting arms."

**Faith Step:** Jan just shared a time when she needed to find joy. Think of times in your life when you felt God providing joy in a difficult circumstance. Spend some time journaling about that experience. Then, pray if God would prompt you to share that experience with someone today. That is our goal at FaithPoint, that we would share this joy we have received from God with the world, sharing the good news of Christ, and bringing Faith to Life.

**Cara Flemig**

**Sowing Seeds of Joy**

**John 15:10 - 12**

**When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.**

As I sat down to write this devotional, I was eager to jot down my thoughts and let the word of God work through my words to share a story of His joy in my life. Not one minute later, I was interrupted by the sounds of my children fighting, followed by a call for help from my youngest in the bathroom, then there was begging for television, someone needed help in the kitchen, and another one needed help finding his prized Pokémon cards. How quickly an hour went by and instead of joy and eagerness, I was filled with frustration and exhaustion.

Finally, when things calmed down, I turned once again to the Bible verse I hoped to write about and just smiled. According to Jesus’ words, my very circumstances leading to frustration were exactly where my joy should be greatest.

Joy through and for Christ isn’t based on our circumstances. It’s based on knowing Jesus and following his commands. In these verses, He reminds us of the most important command “Love each other in the same way I have loved you.” With a bad attitude, helping my kids feels like an inconvenience. But serving them, with an attitude focused on pleasing God, becomes a form of ministering to my children and family by following the greatest command.

I’ll be honest and say that I don’t always feel “happy” while completing all these parenting responsibilities. But in the midst of the chaos and challenges, God provides a way for me to still be joyful through Christ. It’s up to me to choose to embrace the joy I’ve been given. We all have this choice. When we choose joy, our acts of service please God, and our joy overflows into our children, family and communities.

**Faith Step:** This week, find an act of service in which you need to approach with a different attitude. Pray for God’s guidance to complete this act with the joy that only He can provide and let it overflow into other areas of your life.

**Marla Mayer**

**Sowing Seeds of Joy**

**1 Thessalonians 5:16**

**Be joyful always.**

My topic today is choosing joy. This might be a little tough these days with so much uncertainty and upheaval in our world. In order to choose joy, I think we first have to understand the difference between joy and happiness. Happiness tends to be a feeling that is dependent on our circumstances.

For those of you, like me, who plan and try a little too hard to control our circumstances – Covid19 has thrown us completely out of whack. I think now more than ever, I understand how much is out of our control.

These circumstances we find ourselves in today can be pretty dire and overwhelming to many. But luckily joy is not dependent on our circumstances. You see, joy isn’t the absence of sadness. 1 Thessalonians 5:16 tells us to be joyful always.

Joy isn’t optional, it is essential. **God created us to rejoice. He even commands it!** God also tells us what the subject of our joy ought to be: The goodness of God that has provided salvation for our souls and gives us hope.

Choosing joy has nothing to do with how we feel and everything to do with how we obey. We cannot control the outcomes of our circumstances, but we can control our choice to trust God and obey His word.

**What do you do when you don’t feel like choosing joy?**

As we mature in our faith, we realize that life is not all about what we want or how we feel. Our purpose is to submit to God and invite Him to shape the way we live our day-to-day lives. Even when it isn’t easy. Especially when it isn’t easy.

**So, what do we do when the anxious thoughts creep in and take over?**

We start by recognizing how we feel, taking those thoughts captive and surrendering them to God. When we give it back to Him and allow Him to be in control it lifts a huge burden off of our shoulders!

Resent or Rejoice – every trial asks you to choose. If you are suffering, ask Him to help you know His comfort and joy. Take hold of this truth today: God has a gracious purpose for you even in life’s most trying events.

We will not always understand the Why’s because we cannot see what God sees. God will use our trials to strengthen us and glorify him. And I’ve been seeing that every day – stories of people coming together in new ways and helping others like never before.

God’s highest purpose for us is not escape from trials. The goal is for Christlike joy in doing the Father’s will. The gospel does not promise freedom from suffering in this world. The gospel promises salvation from sin and new life in Christ with power to choose and enjoy what is good. This is where true joy comes from. Though things in our world are changing everyday, our God never changes. Our hope and salvation is in Him. And we can find joy in that and rejoice always!

**Faith Step:** Write down in what ways you are feeling anxious. Then write down this phrase “Heavenly Father, I choose to be joyful today. I surrender these anxious feelings to you.” Then, draw a line through the words you have written.

**Scripture Readings for Sowing the Seeds of Joy Week**

**Scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation**

**Monday, March 29**

**James 1:2 - 3**   Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy.  For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow.

**Tuesday, March 30**

**Psalm 28:7** The Lord is my strength and shield.  I trust Him with all my heart.  He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy.  I burst out in songs of thanksgiving.

**Wednesday, March 31**

**Psalm 100:1 - 4**  Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth!  Worship the Lord with gladness.  Come before Him, singing with joy.  Acknowledge that the Lord is God!  He made us, and we are His.  We are His people, the sheep of His pasture.  Enter His gates with thanksgiving; go into His courts with praise.  Give thanks to Him and praise His name.

**Thursday, April 1**

**Romans 14:17**  For the kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

**Friday, April 2**

**Luke 15:6 - 7** When he arrives, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying, “Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep.” In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven’t strayed away!