

THE JOY SERIES

The Joy Series

How do you practice joy?

Philippians 4:4–9

Father, we thank you that you give us the power and means to grow in joy.

Thank you for the gifts of celebration, prayer, gratitude, and contemplation.

Give us the courage and endurance not only to start practicing joy but persevere in practicing joy.

May your Holy Spirit work in, through, and with our practices not only to produce joy within us but transform us into people of joy.

In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen

If you want to be joyful, you have to intentionally practice being joyful.

Philippians 4:4–9

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. **5** Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; **6** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made

known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. **9** What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Celebrate the Lord's goodness

- "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice" (v. 4).
- Everything worth celebrating comes from the Lord's goodness
 - "Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart" (Psalm 73:1).
 - "No good exists in any creature except that which comes from and through him. He is the efficient, exemplary, and final cause of all good" (Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2:212).
- Even in the darkest hour, God's goodness can be seen
 - "Joy is not so much a spontaneous emotion as a response formed in those who can read the economy of God's activity in particular ways and are able to act in conformity with that unfolding story" (Stephen Fowl, *Philippians*, 181).
 - "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28).
- How has the Lord been good to you? Celebrate it!

Pray about everything

- "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (vv. 6-7).
- God wants to know the things that keep you from joy
 - "Freedom from anxiety is not a matter of self-mastery" (Stephen Fowl, *Philippians*, 183).
 - "The way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything" (Peter T. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 472).
- God wants to give you the peace that accompanies joy.
- What is keeping you from joy? Give it to God!

Express gratitude for the gifts

- "with thanksgiving" (v. 6)
- When we're humble, we become grateful.
- When everything is a gift, you can't help but be grateful.
 - The Four Facets of Gratitude:
 - Intensity – depth of feeling that someone experiences

- Span – number of things to be grateful for
- Frequency – how often a person is grateful
- Density – number of persons to whom one feels gratitude
- What do you have to be grateful for? Thank God!

Contemplate the good

- “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (v. 8).
- Despite evil, good things exist.
- What we think about shapes our ability to experience joy and be joyful.
 - “The simple act of gazing on the truth” (Thomas Aquinas).
 - “What we give our attention to will shape the persons we become. What we think about we become” (John Mark Comer, Live No Lies, 92).
- Are your thoughts leading to joy? Think about the good!

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