

Secrets of Joy
Psalms 21, 30, 92, 126; Proverbs 15
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When is a secret not a secret? . . . When what was once hidden is now broadcast far and wide. This lesson on the Secrets of Joy is insight hidden to a world who will not listen to the good news of Jesus Christ. But to those who have heard and responded, we shout the memory verse, "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy!" (Psalm 126:3)

That's where it all starts – with the Lord. Throughout this year we have studied a lot about God . . . He is our maker, our monarch, the author of wisdom, the object of worship, the source of our salvation, our deliverer. We've learned about fear of the Lord, repentance and His forgiveness. We identified His delights and disgusts, heard His reproofs, advice and warnings as well as His promises and priorities. He showed us a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ in the psalms and proverbs. And we learned some lessons about good and evil, discipleship, moral purity, self-worth and integrity, old age and mortality, friends, enemies and relationships, stumbling blocks, walking in the way of obedience, and the importance of our words and communications.

All this was pointing us toward developing godliness, trusting God and His judgment and justice, and all the while immersing ourselves in prayer and thanksgiving. Who wouldn't be joyful down to the core of his soul for this magnificent Lord who shares so freely the truth of what the abundant life is all about!

So . . . the secret of joy? – God Himself. Let's look at our psalms for this lesson and find the secret of joy in each.

Psalm 21 was written by David.

*Psalm 21:1 "O Lord, the king rejoices in your strength.
How great is his joy in the victories you give!"*

Psalm 21: A secret of joy is having the strength of God for victories.

Aren't you glad you're not in this life of spiritual warfare alone? Satan would love to defeat you by having you believe you need things to be happy, or others to provide joy in your life, or convincing you it's always somewhere in the future if this or that happens. Three joy-killers are: 1) worry, which is inordinate anxiety about something that may or may not occur; 2) stress, intense strain over situations we cannot change or control; and 3) fear, dreadful uneasiness over the presence of evil, or pain, or danger. But praise God! Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:4) We are not alone. Dressed in the full armor of God, we have everything we need for victory in this life and the next because He has overcome the world. We are joyful because we have God's strength for victory.

Another secret of joy in Psalm 21 is the presence of God for eternal blessings in this life.

Psalm 21:6 "Surely you have granted him (this is king David speaking) eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence."

Eternal life is something we all have . . . the question is where will you spend it? For the Christian, assurance of being in the presence of God Almighty for eternity is a blessing we enjoy here and now. Why? Because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. He teaches us, guides us, convicts us of sin, fills us with the fruit of the Spirit, and motivates us to serve others out of love for the Father, not because we're trying to do "good works" in order to merit heaven. That was all settled at the cross by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can rest and enjoy the blessings of grace, peace and joy because of God's Holy Spirit presence in us.

Psalm 30 was written by David with the inscription 'for the dedication of the temple.' We know that God did not allow David to build the temple because of the blood on his hands including the murder of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. But with David's wholehearted repentance, God allowed him to make the plans for the temple which Solomon would construct. So, David wrote:

Psalm 30:4,5 "Sing to the Lord, you saints of his; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."

Psalm 30:11 "You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy."

Psalm 30: An important secret of joy is the forgiveness of God for repentant hearts.

Through Christ's shed blood, we are forgiven and clothed with robes of righteousness.

Isaiah 61:10 "I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, . . ."

Jude 24 says we will be presented before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy. What an awesome joy to know we're fully forgiven when we confess and repent and can have perfect fellowship with the Creator of all things.

Psalm 92 has a superscription that says it's a 'song for the Sabbath day.' That's a time of rest from labor and reflection on God Himself. For most of us today that's Sunday.

*Psalm 90:4,5 "for you make me glad by your deeds, O Lord;
I sing for joy at the work of your hands. How great are your works, O Lord, how
profound your thoughts."*

Charles Spurgeon said, "holy fellowship brings heavenly joy." We come together weekly for fellowship, for worship with praise and music and to hear God's Word. Those "profound thoughts" of God are in His holy Word – our Bible. But we must be more than just Sunday listeners of the Word. One of the quickest ways to lose our joy and the fun of Christianity is to stop studying Scripture and feed only off someone else's meals whether it's pulpit, television or radio. You, however, have proved yourselves to really be People of the Word by your attendance at this weekly Bible study. The task is to consult God's Word for ourselves – to find direction, correction, and principles to live by and then to pass it on to the next generation. It's such a great joy not only to lead someone to the Lord, but also to know that they are growing in the truth.

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy."

We will be rewarded in heaven with the crown of joy (or exultation), which will be given to those who have a passion for the lost. It's sometimes called the soul-winner's crown.

Patrick Henry had this thought: "My most cherished possession I wish I would leave you is my faith in Jesus Christ for with Him and nothing else can you be happy, but without Him and all else, you'll never be happy."

Psalm 126 is the last of the psalms for this lesson. It reflects the joyful time when the Jews were returning to Jerusalem from their seventy years of captivity in Babylon. They had dreamed of this restoration to their land.

*Psalm 126:3 "The Lord has done great things for us and we
are filled with joy."*

*Psalm 126:5 "Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of
joy."*

Psalm 126: The secret of joy is knowing the faithfulness of God in troubled times.

Becoming a Christian isn't a passport to an existence of easy living with no problems. Every one of us can attest to that. But it is a passport to intimacy with our God who cares and will never leave us or forsake us. Annie Johnson Flint wrote a poem titled

WHAT GOD HATH PROMISED

God hath not promised
 Skies always blue.
 Flower - strewn pathways
 All our lives through;
 God hath not promised
 Sun without rain,
 Joy without sorrow,
 Peace without pain.

But God hath promised
 Strength for the day,
 Rest for the labor,
 Light for the way,
 Grace for the trials,
 Help from above,
 Unfailing sympathy,
 Undying love.

Sometimes our problems and trials are of our own making – like the Jews who were disobedient to God and suffered captivity in Babylon as a punishment. But God's faithfulness brought them home again. We'll be studying about the restored kingdom in our series this coming September.

Sometimes our problems and trials are from God as a refining process – and only Christians can see God's perspective and have the hope needed to sustain joy regardless of those circumstances knowing that *"God works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose."* (Philippians 2:13)

Lastly, sometimes our problems and trials are just fallout of living in a lost and dying world. But God makes those circumstances work for good when we love and trust Him. Romans 8:28 *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose."*

Joy through trials comes from deliberately choosing, as an act of our free will, to delight in God, His world, and His people regardless of circumstances. Joy comes from seeing our faithful God interact with His world and His people through His answers to our prayers.

So, secrets of joy found in Psalms:

- God's strength for our victories
- God's presence to enjoy eternal blessings in this life
- God's forgiveness for repentant hearts
- God's faithfulness in times of trouble

As we close this lesson with Proverbs chapter 15, I've chosen three verses to focus on. **They all focus on attitude . . . and certainly isn't that a secret to joy?**

An attitude of inner peace is a secret of joy.

15:13a "A happy heart makes a face cheerful . . ."

Joy is not confined to a specific time or circumstance; it is a condition of the spirit. We can have that inner peace because we know that in the end God wins. C. S. Lewis closes his autobiographical book, *Surprised by Joy*, by declaring that "joy is really a road sign pointing us to God; once we have found God, we no longer need to trouble ourselves so much about the quest for joy. The quest is over. The joy is just "there." It comes with our Lord's prepaid package of salvation, direct from heaven." And I would add this, "Joy is the flag that flies over the castle when the king is enthroned."

An attitude of giving to others is a secret of joy.

Proverbs 15:23 "A man finds joy in giving an apt reply – how good is a timely word."

An attitude of giving brings so much joy to the giver. Whether it's a word of appreciation (a timely word), or an apt reply (I'd be delighted to do that for you), whenever we extend ourselves for others, it is a reflection of the model giver we had in Jesus Christ. Charles Spurgeon said, "Our joys begin and end with manifestations of Jesus' love." Certainly, giving is at the core of God's character. Our potential to give happiness to others is so great.

John Greenleaf Whittier wrote this:

Somehow, not only for Christmas
But all the long year through,
The joy that you give to other
Is the joy that comes back to you.
And the more you spend in blessing
The poor and the lonely and sad,
The more of your heart's possessions
Return to make you glad.

Be a giver. In fact, I read this little saying, "You should do something every day to make other people happy, even if it's only to leave them alone."

Lastly,
An attitude of encouragement is a secret of joy.
Proverbs 15:30 "A cheerful look brings joy to the heart and good news gives health to the bones."

I look at you and see you smile . . . that's encouragement. The hand extended, the arm around the shoulder, a hug, kind words, taking time to talk, giving of your full attention . . . all encouraging signs. It not only gives joy to the heart, but we walk taller and feel better when we know that someone cares about what is happening to us. For the recipient, it's a joy to be encouraged; and for the encourager there is joy in the obedience to 1 Thessalonians 5:11 that says, *"Therefore, encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are now doing."* I pray that each of you find the joy of being a Christian characterized by the attitude of encouragement.

Sherwood Wirt has a little book titled *Jesus, Man of Joy*. He had two little sayings that really struck me: first, he said, "Knowing God is like a piece of angel food cake and joy the frosting." The other was "Heaven may seem a steep climb, but joy is the chair lift."

Joy really isn't much of a secret. In Psalms we've seen the secret of joy is God Himself. In Proverbs the secret of joy is attitude. The Westminster Short Catechism of 1648 asks the question, "What is the chief end of man?" Answer – To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Amen.

Well, I guess you couldn't close out a message about joy without referring to the epistle of joy – the book of Philippians. In chapter one verse 4 Paul says, "I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." I want you to know I truly appreciate each and every one of you who have partnered with us this year as we've studied the books of Psalms and Proverbs and I'm grateful for your show of support that People of the Word might continue in a new venue. It's been a joy for those of us in leadership, and I hope you've grown spiritually and seen some new things in a fresh way.

In Philippians 4:1 Paul wrote, *"My brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!"*

That is our prayer for you also . . . stand firm by staying in the Word even through the summer. Perhaps reread Psalms and Proverbs . . . but above all be ready to join us in September for a study titled "In the Beginning . . . Beginning Again." It will cover the books of Genesis, Job, and the Restored Kingdom – Ezra, Haggai, Malachi, Nehemiah and Esther.

And finally in Philippians 4:6-9 Paul writes words for us to part with: *"Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you."*

Let's pray: Father, we truly rejoice in what we have learned from the Psalms and Proverbs this year. Your Word has spoken to our hearts, admonished us and encouraged us. Our eyes have been opened to see these two books in a new and deeper way. We're so grateful for Your holy Word. Bless each family represented here, keep us healthy and safe until we meet again in September. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth! We praise you in the name of our Lord Jesus.

Amen.

Let's once more stand together and joyfully sing the Doxology.
Have a wonderful summer!!