

Joy

Part 1 – Acts 2:1-21

1. Read Acts 2:1-21
2. How does the following reflection make you feel?
“Someone once said that God never seems to laugh in the Bible, but that’s not true, because our joy is the echo of God’s laughter, our joy is the sounding board of God’s pleasure, our joy comes from God (Nehemiah 8:10), and on that day, on that first day, on that Pentecost day, God’s belly laugh exploded through their souls and just to make sure that they were absolutely clear, whose feelings they were riding, God gave them a miraculous sound-track of wind and an awe inspiring light-show of fire, that said to them all; this is Me!” (Steve Everist)
3. What gives you joy?
4. The following passages group the many things that the Bible has to say about joy, read them through and answer the questions.

The joy of the Lord

The Book of Psalms have more references to joy than any other book in the Bible and the psalmist wrote a lot about joy and much like what Nehemiah wrote, *“the joy of the LORD is your strength”* (Nehemiah 8:10) for *“all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy”* (Psalm 5:11). The psalmist wrote that God *“put more joy in my heart”* (Psalm 4:7) and in God’s *“presence there is fullness of joy”* (Psalm 16:11). Shouldn’t your worship services overflow with joy and make you *“shout for joy over your salvation”* (Psalm 20:5) because God’s presence will *“make him glad with the joy of your presence”* (Psalm 21:6).

Question: For the psalmists, where does joy come from?

The joy of Worship

Psalm 27:6 says we should *“offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy”* and to all the *“righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart”* (Psalm 32:11). Indeed, *“Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright”* (Psalm 33:1) and *“Let those who delight in my righteousness shout for joy and be glad and say evermore”* (Psalm 35:27). The psalmist didn’t just have joy, he had *“exceeding joy”* (Psalm 43:4) and not just joy but *“joy and gladness”* (Psalm 45:15) so why not *“Shout to God with loud songs of joy”* (Psalm 47:1) for we have much to be joyful about so again I say *“Shout for joy to God, all the earth”* (Psalm 66:1)!

Question: Have you ever found joy in worship, what is that like?

The joy of His disciples

Peter wrote about this as with having the knowledge of Jesus, writing *“Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory”* (1 Peter 1:8). Even in our trials James writes that we should *“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds”* (James 1:2). This helped Jesus endure the cross *“who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12:2).

Question: How can there be joy in drawing close to Jesus?

A fruit of the Spirit

Paul mentions some of the fruits of the Spirit like *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness”* and many others so joy is one of the fruits or the results of having the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. You cannot fake joy...you either have it or you don't. Paul writes to the church at Thessalonica that *“for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit”* (1 Thessalonians 1:6) indicating that joy is associated with God the Holy Spirit and that the *“righteousness and peace and joy [is] in the Holy Spirit”* (Romans 14:17) and finds its source in God as even *“the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 13:52).

Question: If you cannot fake joy how do you find joy?

The joy from others

Paul received joy from Philemon from which we see him writing *“I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you”* (Philippians 1:7) and in his remembrance of Timothy by writing *“As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy”* (2 Timothy 1:4). Paul got much joy from just thinking about the churches and in Thessalonica he wrote *“For you are our glory and joy”* (1 Thessalonians 2:20) and with *“thanksgiving can we return to God for you, for all the joy that we feel for your sake before our God”* (1 Thessalonians 3:9). The church at Philippi might have been Paul's favourite church and some call the Book of Philippians “the joy book” or letter as he wrote *“complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind”* (Philippians 2:2) and considered this church his *“joy and crown”* (Philippians 4:1). Even to the church at Corinth he wrote *“I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all”* (2 Corinthians 2:3). The Apostle John described this feeling as having *“no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth”* (3 John 3:4). Paul prayed for the church at Rome, *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope”* (Romans 15:13).

Question: How do we find joy in the company of brother and sister believers?