

**Grace Church of Santa Rosa**  
**Women's Retreat 2026 "Never Alone"**  
**Session 3: True Everlasting Joy: The Joy of God!**  
By Kylie McCarthy

Various scriptures.

**Nehemiah 8:9-12** "9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "**This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.**" For all the people wept as they heard the words of the Law. 10 Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, **for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.**" 11 So the Levites calmed all the people, saying, "**Be quiet, for this day is holy; do not be grieved.**" 12 And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them."

**Nehemiah 12:43** "43 And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for **God had made them rejoice with great joy**; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away."

### 1. Introduction/Prayer

What gives you joy?

What is robbing your joy? What lies are you believing that take your eyes off of Christ?(lies: If God truly loved me, my life wouldn't be so hard" (Rom 5:3-4) FOMO, the what if and if only.

Is it possible to remain joyful all of the time?

### 2. What is the joy of the Lord? What is true/biblical joy?

#### A. Definitions of joy

1. **Webster Dictionary:** joy-a feeling of great happiness or pleasure, delight; *a source or cause of delight*

2. **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance:** joy-gladness, delight; **verb:**to rejoice

3. **John MacArthur** "True joy is an unwavering constant in a Spirit-filled life. It is not produced by a bed-of-roses experience, of tranquility, and peace, and comfort, and safety. It is produced by the presence of God and His Holy Spirit, even if you're sitting in the prison waiting for possible news about your execution, as Paul was. He had joy. He had joy, the result of his eternal relationship with a living God through Jesus Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit within him. And because he was so near to God, he was full of joy. Circumstances aren't a factor. **It's your nearness to God that determines the level of your joy.**"

4. **Happiness vs. Joy?** — happiness is often defined as external, temporal and based on circumstances...however, Happy=Blessed as well. Perhaps it is more like spiritual Christ-centered Joy/Happiness vs. Wordly fleshly joy/happiness. God wants us to be glad, happy, & joyful.

**B. The joy of the Lord is a gift** given by God to believers at salvation driven by the Holy Spirit. So if you are a believer, you don't have to search for joy, it has been given to you. If you are not a believer, may today be the day of your salvation so you too can enjoy this true spiritual joy. The joy of salvation.

1. **Psalm 4:7** "You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound."
2. **Galatians 5:22-24** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"... fruit of the spirit; not an emotion that you have to conjure up.
3. **Psalm 51: 12**, "Restore to me **the joy of your salvation**, and uphold me with a willing spirit." restore to me the joy of my salvation
4. **Romans 15:23** "13 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."

**C. The joy of the Lord is ultimately in God, Himself. God is joy- He is the source and object of joy!** Joy is not just an emotional experience found in religion; but it is found in the person and that person is God, our Father, Our Friend, Our Jesus Christ, and Our Helper.

1. **Psalm 16:11** "You make known to me the path of life; **in your presence there is fullness of joy** at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."
2. **1 Peter 1:8-9**"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**, 9 obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

**C. How can I have or cultivate this true spiritual joy?**

1. **Repent and Obey. Neh 8:9** "...This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep..." Repeated 3 times..The Jews had returned from their exile; they had nothing left and spiritually dead/felt far from God.. the reading of the law convicted their hearts and reminded them of God's faithfulness & His promises to them so they cried...God is faithful though they were faithless. God is gracious & merciful. Sin separates us from God and hinders the joy of God. However, after repentance, their joy is restored! Nehemiah reminded them of the joy in the Lord and how that will give them strength to press on despite their struggles! They have God and don't have to fear! We too have God and lack nothing so we too don't have to be afraid. Repent of sin and rejoice in His forgiveness!

- a. **1 John 1:9** "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God is faithful to give us grace upon grace so come to Him for forgiveness and be free from all of these

condemnations. On this side of eternity, we will continue to struggle with sin but with the Holy Spirit, we are able to fight/conquer sin.

- b. **Psalm 51: 12**, restore to me the joy of my salvation.
- c. **1 Thes 5:16-18** “Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
- d. **Phil 4:4** “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.”

**2. Know the Lord is doing His work through our circumstances and will bring us to glory with Him. We are secured in Him and in His promises. We can trust Him.**

- a. **James 1:2-4** “**2** Count it all joy, my brothers,[b] when you meet trials of various kinds, **3** for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. **4** And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” despite trials or circumstances. Trials though hard will bring great joy as well.
- b. **Romans 5:3-5**, “**3** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” **rejoice in suffering.**
- c. **2 Cor 6:10** “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.” **sorrowful yet rejoicing.**
- d. **Hebrews 12:2** “**2** looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, 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.” Jesus looking past the cross
- e. **1 Peter 1:3-6** “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, **4** to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, **5** who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. **6** In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials” Know our inheritance and future hope of glory.
- f. **Psalm 30:11** “You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.”
- g. **Phil 4:11-12** secret of being content.

**3. Abide in God, draw near to God-** John 15:4 “**4** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.”

a. **Read & rejoice in the Words.** Ezra delightfully read the Book of the Law to the Jews (remnant of Judah) which brought convictions of sins and reminded them of God's

grace & faithfulness to them. **Psalm 119:162** “I rejoice at your word like one who finds great spoil.”

b. **Pray, pray & pray**-commune with God & have sweet fellowship with God.

c. **Meditate & Set our minds on things above, Col 3:1-3** “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. **2** Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. **3** For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” God is all we need **Psalm 73:25-26** “Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength<sup>[a]</sup> of my heart and my portion forever.”

d. **Trust in the Lord.** His will be done (Matthew 6:10); everything will work together for good to those who love Him and for His glory (Romans 8:28)

**4. Fellowship with one another & serve one another. Accountability and protection from isolation and discouragement. Sharing that joy will increase your joy because you continue to proclaim the gospel.** (And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.” Neh 8:12 and Neh 12:43).

- a. **1John 1:3-4** “ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. **4** And we are writing these things so that our<sup>[b]</sup> joy may be complete.”
- b. **2 Cor 1:24** “Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.”

#### **E. Conclusion: The joy of the Lord is our strength!**

How is the joy of the Lord our strength?

Strength can also be translated as “stronghold, fortress, refuge, protection, a safe place in time of trouble. The joy of the Lord is our strength: stronghold, fortress, refuge, protection...” the strength to ....

Sisters, our nearness of God will determine our level of joy. How is your walk with God? Are you drawing near to Him? Where are you finding your joy? Are you delighted in the Lord? Is God your source of joy? May our joy grow as we abide in the Lord!