

You've Lost it. Get it Back.
Restoring the Joy of Your Salvation
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TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

John 10:10 (NLT)

10 The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

Proverbs 4:23-27 (NLT)

23 Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

24 Avoid all perverse talk; stay away from corrupt speech. 25 Look straight ahead, and fix your eyes on what lies before you. 26 Mark out a straight path for your feet; stay on the safe path. 27 Don't get sidetracked; keep your feet from following evil.

Psalms 32 (NLT)

1 Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! 2 Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! 3 When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. 4 Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat.

Interlude

5 Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the Lord." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.

Interlude 6 Therefore, let all the godly pray to you while there is still time, that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment.

7 For you are my hiding place; you protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory.

Interlude 8 The Lord says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you.

9 Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control." 10 Many sorrows come to the wicked, but unfailing love surrounds those who trust the Lord. 11 So rejoice in the Lord and be glad, all you who obey him! Shout for joy, all you whose hearts are pure!

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Have you ever had anything stolen? Describe that experience and how it made you feel.

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- **Read John 10:10.** What did Jesus come to give us? Who is the thief and what is his purpose? Why is that his purpose?
- On a level of 1 to 10 how joyful are you? What do you think is stealing your joy most days?
- **Read Proverbs 4:23-27.** Pastor Troy said the mind informs the heart and the heart determines the direction of our lives. Are your media choices (apps, music, movies, etc.) affecting your life for good or bad? Are your media choices bringing joy to you or stealing it from you?
- Some churches and some Christians try to govern media choices by restricting certain music or movies. What's the danger in doing this?
- How do **Galatians 5:16** and **Psalms 32:8-9** inform our choices better than rules?
- **Read Psalm 32.** What was unconfessed sin doing to David's life and joy? What happened when he confessed his sin and finally gave it up?
- Have you ever tried to hide sin from God and others? What did it do to your level of joy and happiness?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- **1 John 1:9** says "But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness." If you have unconfessed sin and desire to be freed from its hold, take time this week to confess.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Pray that each person in your group desires to live a life of joy in salvation through Jesus Christ. And that you all confess your sins and repent of them, so that you may experience the richness and refreshment of His presence.

Acts 3:19-21 (NLT)

19 Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. 20 Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and he will again send you Jesus, your appointed Messiah.

Galatians 5:16 (NLT)

16 So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.

Question: "What is the joy of the Lord?"

Answer: The joy of the Lord is the gladness of heart that comes from knowing God, abiding in Christ, and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus was born, the angels announced “good tidings of great joy” (Luke 2:10). All who find Jesus know, with the shepherds of the nativity, the joy He brings. Even *before* His birth, Jesus had brought joy, as attested to in Mary’s song (Luke 1:47) and by John’s response to hearing Mary’s voice as he “leaped for joy” in his mother’s womb (Luke 1:44).

Jesus exemplified joy in His ministry. He was no glum ascetic; rather, His enemies accused Him of being too joyful on occasion (Luke 7:34). Jesus described Himself as a bridegroom enjoying a wedding feast (Mark 2:18–20); He “rejoiced in the Holy Spirit” (Luke 10:21); He spoke of “my joy” (John 15:11) and promised to give His disciples a lifetime supply of it (John 16:24). Joy is reflected in many of Jesus’ parables, including the three stories in Luke 15, which mention “rejoicing in the presence of the angels” (Luke 15:10) and end with a joyful shepherd, a joyful woman, and a joyful father.

Nehemiah told the repentant Israelites that the joy of the Lord would be their strength (Nehemiah 8:10). The early church was characterized by gladness and the joy of the Lord (Acts 2:46; 13:52), and “joy in the Holy Spirit” is a distinguishing mark of the kingdom of God (Romans 14:17). Those who are part of the kingdom share in the kingdom’s delight.

Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). In fact, it is our Christian duty to rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 3:1; 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16). In Christ, the believer is “filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy” (1 Peter 1:8).

Because of its supernatural origin, the joy of the Lord—our gladness of heart—is present even through the trials of life. We know we are children of God, and no one can snatch us away from Him (John 10:28–29). We are heirs to “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade,” and no one can steal it from us (1 Peter 1:4; Matthew 6:20). We see the Author and Finisher of our faith, and, let the enemy rage ever so much, we know who wins in the end (Hebrews 12:2; Psalm 2).

Faith is the victory that overcomes the world, and the joy of the Lord is our strength. Adverse circumstances, instead of hindering our faith, can actually enhance our joy. Paul and Silas knew adversity as they sat with their feet in the stocks in a Philippian jail cell. Their legal rights had been violated. They had been arrested without cause and beaten without a trial. At midnight, since they couldn’t sleep, they sang—loudly—the praises of the Lord they were serving (Acts 16:25). A miracle soon followed (verse 26).

The apostles in Jerusalem were arrested—twice—and ordered not to preach in Jesus’ name. The second time they faced the court, they were beaten. Unfazed, they returned home “rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” and ready to preach some more (Acts 5:41). Of course, the apostles were only following the example of our Lord, who had “for the joy set before him . . . endured the cross, scorning its shame” (Hebrews 12:2).

The joy of the Lord may be inexplicable to the one who does not possess it. But, for the believer in Christ, the joy of the Lord comes as naturally as grapes on a vine. As we abide in Christ, the True Vine, we, the branches, are full of His strength and vitality, and the fruit we produce, including joy, is His doing (John 15:5).