



## FOCUS VERSE

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### Romans 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

## FOCUS TEXT

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### John 16:21–24

21 A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

22 And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

### Galatians 5:22–26

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.



## FOCUS THOUGHT

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Every person has been promised joy in his relationship with the Lord. Righteousness, peace, and joy come with the infilling of the Holy Ghost.



## CULTURE CONNECTION

### The Source of Absolute Joy

**T**he Holy Spirit is the true source of lasting joy. Paul wrote, “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17). Sadly, this world’s concept of true joy fails to square with Paul’s definition of its source.

In his Bible study titled “Bible Study on Joy: 7 Things You Need to Know,” Robert Driskell observed, “The joy that the world offers is a pale imitation of the true joy only God can give us. The joy that unsaved people experience is a temporary joy that comes and goes depending on the situation that person is in at the time. If things are going well, there is joy. When things are difficult, there is no joy”

([www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com](http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com), Robert Driskell, accessed November 9, 2015).

While depression sometimes has a physiological cause, could it be that some depressions are caused by an unbiblical understanding of true joy and unrealistic expectations in life? When people fail to achieve their expectations, they often plunge into the depths of sadness, disappointment, and perhaps even despair, which certainly could trigger or contribute to a state of depression.

For believers, however, we have received the Holy Ghost, which is the source of all true joy. However things may be going in life, we can have absolute joy.

### OUTLINE

#### I. THE SOURCE OF JOY

- A. Receiving the Holy Ghost
- B. Fruit of the Spirit
- C. Answers to Prayer
- D. Exhortation

#### II. JOY AFFECTS OUR EMOTIONS

- A. The Expressions of Joy
- B. The Strength of Joy

#### III. EXAMPLES OF JOY

- A. Moses—Deliverance
- B. Mary—Revelation
- C. Paul—Adversity
- D. Pentecost—Salvation

#### IV. OUR HOPE AND JOY

- A. Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory
- B. Joyfully Awaiting the Return of Jesus Christ

or situations about which we may not be happy; however, because we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we still can have a deep sense of abiding joy. The joy the Spirit gives us is foundational, certain, and lasting, even when we may experience unhappiness.

Joy involves “great happiness,” and it is fundamentally deeper and more substantial than a mere state of happiness, which involves “feeling pleasure and enjoyment.” Joy is deeper and more substantial than happiness because of its source. Joy comes by and through the presence of the Lord. The Lord is the origin of true joy and lasting contentment.

*“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psalm 16:11).*

### CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

While the words *happiness* and *joy* are similar and associated, they represent two fundamentally different levels of the emotional experience. Happiness tends to be a more shallow emotional expression; the emotion of joy emanates from a deeper experience. For example, there could be many circumstances

Only in the pure presence of the Lord are we able to scale the heights of perfect and full joy. While the patriarchs and prophets were able to encounter the presence of the Lord, we have the awesome privilege of hosting His Holy Spirit within—the source of true and abiding joy that is “unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

### I. THE SOURCE OF JOY

The Holy Spirit of God is the source of true and lasting joy. In addition to one's initial reception of the Spirit, there are several spiritual disciplines that facilitate God's spiritual work within our lives, cultivating our joy as believers.

#### A. Receiving the Holy Ghost

*"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:13).*

*"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Romans 14:17).*

A person may experience certain levels of happiness and contentment apart from the Spirit, but no measure of pleasure and enjoyment compares to the satisfaction one experiences by receiving the Holy Spirit. Isaiah prophesied of the joy that would accompany redemption: "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). Isaiah spoke of the joy that would overtake a person through the refreshing waters of salvation.

Jesus also utilized the analogy of flowing water to symbolize the flow of the Holy Ghost. "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)" (John 7:38-39). The flow of the Spirit in a person's life is the ultimate source of great joy and refreshment!

*"And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 13:52).*

Jesus' disciples experienced this association of joy and the Holy Ghost. Joy always accompanies the Spirit because the Lord is the source of true joy. When we observe someone receiving the Spirit, it is clearly displayed on that person's face and in body language. A broad smile is absolutely predictable! Any Spirit-filled believer probably smiles

just remembering that moment of first receiving the Holy Ghost. Because the Holy Spirit is the source, real joy is a fruit of the Spirit.

#### B. Fruit of the Spirit

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).*

A person who receives the Holy Ghost will exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. Just as an apple tree produces apples and an orange tree produces oranges, so the Holy Spirit produces joy, among numerous other characteristics. Joy is one of nine fruit, or attributes, identified by Paul as products of the Spirit's presence and work in one's life. It would be abnormal for a person to receive the Holy Spirit but fail to experience and exhibit true joy.

#### C. Answers to Prayer

In addition to the fruit of joy produced by the Spirit, believers have the promise of answered prayers, which cultivates a deep sense of abiding joy. Jesus said, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

It is important to point out that receiving answers to prayer does not mean we always receive the very answers we desire. There are at least three possible answers God may give us when we pray: yes, no, or wait.

We love to receive an affirmative yes in answer to our prayer requests. We are much less thrilled to receive a no. Also, because we tend to be impatient by human nature, neither are we excited when God says, "Wait." Having to wait means we will not see an affirmative answer immediately. Still, there is joy in knowing our prayers do not fall from our lips dead, dormant, or unnoticed. The Lord hears us when we pray, and He will answer in His time and according to His holy will. (See I John 5:14-15.)

#### D. Exhortation

We also can experience joy through receiving the exhortation of God's Word. The source of joy is the Lord, and the Bible is the Word of God. Consequently, when we hear the

exhortations of Scripture, they can stimulate spiritual knowledge and joy within us.

*“And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:4).*

There are several ways the Word of God produces joy in the hearer.

*Hearing the preached Word of God.* We grow as individuals through the preaching of the Word, and we also grow as a corporate body of believers, producing joy, love, unity, and fellowship among the many members.

*Discipline of daily Bible reading and prayer.* God speaks to us through His Word. Making reading His Word a daily discipline assures us of the joy His Word can cultivate within us.

*Bible study groups.* Whether church classes, the sanctuary Bible class, or home fellowships, groups that gather for the purpose of studying God’s Word produce joy in those who participate.

*Teaching home Bible studies.* This is a source of great joy because we are learning from the Word and also leading our neighbors to Jesus Christ, another stimulator of pure joy.

## II. JOY AFFECTS OUR EMOTIONS

That joy *affects* our emotions is undeniable; clearly, it does. Interestingly, as some individuals have pointed out through the years, the expressions of joy also can *effect* joy within us. In other words, we can shout, sing, clap, or dance to express the joy we are sensing, but we also can do those things when we may not sense abiding joy within. When we perform those expressions in genuine worship to God, we soon discover the joy of the Lord is still present, even if we are not sensing it. Worship reignites our emotions and sense of joy as we celebrate the greatness of God.

We should not be drawn into the unending debate of whether we are worshipping “because” of joy or “in order to obtain” joy. Joy is present because it came via the Spirit of the Lord, but sincere worship is the best way to express it and exercise it, keeping it alive and vibrant within.

### A. The Expressions of Joy

*Shout for joy (Psalm 132:9).* The terms “to shout” or “shouting” for joy are primarily Old

Testament concepts. Today we have much more to shout for joy about than all the people of God throughout the entire Old Testament. That is not to minimize the greatness of God they witnessed and experienced; it is just that God’s greatness now is present within us.

There are at least two Hebrew words and ideas about “shouting” in the Old Testament. One word suggests a “response.” Perhaps it would be similar today to one shouting “Amen” in agreement with a point the preacher made while speaking. The other word conveys the idea of “crying out” or “crying aloud.” Clearly the idea of shouting for joy is crying out in response to the strong sense of joy or agreement we are feeling. And nobody has more to celebrate than born-again believers who have experienced the glory and power of redemption in Christ Jesus.

*Sing for joy (Psalm 67:4).* The joy the Spirit gives us causes our emotions to bubble up and out of us in various external expressions. One of those expressions of joy is singing. Even individuals who feel they cannot sing often feel a song of joy within their hearts. Luther Bridgers expressed this emotion well in his old song titled “He Keeps Me Singing.”

*There’s within my heart a melody  
Jesus whispers sweet and low,  
Fear not, I am with thee, peace, be still,  
In all of life’s ebb and flow.*

*Clap for joy (Psalm 98:8).* Another expression we may often witness in Pentecostal churches is clapping for joy. But the expression did not originate in modern-day Pentecostalism; there are several references to clapping in the Old Testament. Of the numerous times the Hebrew word is used in Scripture, it often refers negatively to “smiting” or “hitting.” In two instances, the word is used of a joyful expression, but applied metaphorically with the trees and waters doing the clapping (Psalm 98:8; Isaiah 55:12). In another psalm, the psalmist referred to the people of God joyfully expressing their sense of victory and triumph unto the Lord (Psalm 47:1).

*“O clap your hands, all ye people;  
shout unto God with the voice of triumph”  
(Psalm 47:1).*

*Dance for joy (Psalm 149:3).* Dancing for joy is another emotional expression. There are times when our sense of joy becomes so strong we just feel like we have to physically express it. For some individuals, that expression comes through a joyful dance.

We all are individuals and we express our emotions differently, but clearly, the Lord appreciates sincere worship expressed outwardly, even physically. For example, God blessed David mightily in all his life, and in response David loved to praise the Lord. Of all his expressions of praise, dancing in worship unto the Lord was among David's great joys.



**“What was David’s meat was Michal’s poison. What was sweeter than honey to David was gall and wormwood to Michal. The things that had become dearer and dearer to David’s heart every day, those were the very things that drove Michal absolutely mad; furiously and ungovernably mad that day on which the ark of God was brought up to the city of David” (Alexander Whyte, *Bible Characters*, Vol. 2, *Gideon to Absalom*).**

## B. The Strength of Joy

There is a clear association between joy and spiritual strength. The psalmist David wrote, “The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him” (Psalm 28:7). Knowing that the Lord is our strength causes our hearts to experience joy, and the more joy we experience, the more we recognize and value the Lord’s strength within.

The Scriptures reveal that a joyful spirit strengthens us physically: “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (Proverbs 17:22). In contrast, when a person becomes sullen, downcast, and broken in spirit, that feeling drains his strength right down to the bones—and it also negatively affects those who come into contact with him. Truly the joy of the Lord is our strength!

## III. EXAMPLES OF JOY

There are numerous examples in Scripture of those who experienced great joy:

characters from both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

### A. Moses—Deliverance

God destroyed the Egyptian army that was pursuing Moses and the people of Israel, whom He had delivered from Egyptian servitude. (See Exodus 14.) Following their great deliverance through God’s supernatural intervention, Moses led the people in singing a joyful song celebrating their deliverance (Exodus 15). Almost the entire chapter of Exodus 15 is devoted to their song of celebration.

*“Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him. The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. Pharaoh’s chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. The depths have covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy” (Exodus 15:1–6).*

### B. Mary—Revelation

The Lord sent the angel Gabriel to Mary to reveal to her God’s plan. He revealed she would conceive by the Holy Spirit and bear a son—the Son of God—who would be the Redeemer for the whole world. (See Luke 1:26–38.)

*“And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. . . . And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. . . . The*

*Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:26–35).*

Thrilled by the joy of her revelation, Mary went to visit her cousin Elisabeth. Elisabeth confirmed the holy work God was doing in Mary, and Mary expressed her great joy (Luke 1:45–55). Some look at her words as a song; others may see them only as prose. In any case, Mary’s words revealed a joyful celebration from her heart.

*“And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed” (Luke 1:45–48). (See also verses 49–55.)*

### **C. Paul—Adversity**

In Romans 5, Paul wrote about tribulations, or adversity, he had encountered. Yet he mentioned no less than three times the joy he possessed through Jesus Christ. Interestingly, the Greek word *kauchaomai* is translated into three different English words:

- Romans 5:2: “rejoice”
- Romans 5:3: “glory”
- Romans 5:11: “joy”

In each instance Paul was referring to the joy he had despite his sufferings of adversity. Our hope and joy do not rest in this world but in our relationship with Jesus Christ our Savior.

### **D. Pentecost—Salvation**

Following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached to those present that they must repent of their sins, be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and receive the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38). This is the pathway to forgiveness of sins and redemption through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.

The same chapter revealed the believers continuing “in the apostles’ doctrine and

fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). The picture presented is one of joyful, contented disciples of Jesus living in harmony and fellowship and the blessings of salvation. The final two verses of Acts 2 sum up the joyful experience of the early disciples. Verse 46 specifically states they ate “their meat with gladness.” The Greek word translated “gladness,” *agalliasis*, means “exultation, extreme joy, gladness.”

*“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:46–47).*

## **IV. OUR HOPE AND JOY**

### **A. Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory**

Perhaps Peter best expressed the joy believers have through the reception of the Holy Ghost and experiencing a redemptive relationship through Jesus Christ. He wrote, “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8). As believers, we have the opportunity to experience unspeakable joy that is glorious beyond words.

### **B. Joyfully Awaiting the Return of Jesus Christ**

Receiving the Holy Ghost does many things for the Christian. Obviously, and most importantly, it is the initiating experience of salvation. Receiving the Spirit is the spiritual work of new birth in believers—the earnest and seal of their experience in Christ Jesus. But receiving the Spirit is only the beginning; we receive spiritual power when we receive the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:8).

The Spirit empowers us to live victoriously as believers. The Spirit gives us power to discern spirits. The Spirit cultivates the fruit of the Spirit in our lives—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. All these characteristics and more that the Spirit empowers within us are

wonderful traits in our new life with Christ Jesus. However, perhaps the greatest trait of them all is the ability to watch and wait for Christ's return to earth with joy, peace, faith, and hope.

*"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost" (Romans 15:13).*

We encounter many trials and tribulations in this life; life is not always easy. But we always have the hope of eternal life—hope that Christ will fulfill His holy promise by coming to receive His children unto Himself. It is a blessed hope that fills our hearts with unimaginable joy: "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

The hope we have for Christ's return—and the joyful heart that keeps us focused on victory through Him while watching for Him—are the very things that comfort us through every difficult circumstance of life and challenging situation. Indeed, we shall behold Him!

*"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:17–18).*

## INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

One of the greatest benefits of Christian living is the joy we receive by the Holy Ghost. We may sometimes experience sorrow and

times of unhappiness, which are caused by the ever-changing circumstances of life. But through these situations and circumstances—no matter how challenging or difficult they may be—we can have joy through the Holy Spirit.

As we approach the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Spirit keeps our hearts through His abiding joy. It is not a temporal joy that comes through pleasant and edifying encounters in life. Rather, it is a supernatural joy—an abiding sense of joy—that is a fruit of His indwelling Spirit within us.

In our lesson text, John used the illustration of a woman in travail as she approaches the time of giving birth (John 16:21). Her sorrow from the pain and struggle increases intensely as she approaches the time of birth. However, an interesting thing happens when the child is born: she forgets the anguish of childbirth. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world" (John 16:21). Suddenly, she is focused no more on the pain and travail of birth, but on the arrival of her beautiful baby! What is it that can so quickly erase the pains of childbirth? Joy—the pure joy of having brought her baby into the world.

John went on to mention a joy that no one can take from us (John 16:22). The joy Jesus gives us is undeniable and indestructible by external forces. The only one who can destroy our spiritual joy is ourselves—by walking away from our relationship with Jesus. As long as we continue to abide in Him, He will abide in us—along with the abiding joy that He alone gives.

## REFLECTIONS

- What is the fundamental difference between happiness and joy? Compare the two and discuss.
- What is the source of true joy? Discuss.
- Discuss some of the outward expressions of inward joy. Is it acceptable for believers to express their individual joy differently?
  - Name some of the biblical examples of true joy relative to deliverance, revelation, adversity, and salvation. Discuss.
  - How can a mother who has just delivered her child forget so quickly the pain and sorrow of travailing in childbirth? Discuss the joy of focusing on the newborn baby.