



<http://blog.healingstreamsusa.org/the-joy-of-the-lord/>

## The Joy of the Lord (And How to Get It Back)

Ages ago Nehemiah declared that “the joy of the Lord” is our strength—and he was right! With this joy flowing in us, we positively glow and grow. Joy gives us a confidence for anything and puts a fresh song in our hearts. With it we sail over the normal obstacles of life, feeling invincible even in the midst of trouble.

**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." Nehemiah 8:10 ESV**

Joy isn't the only thing that can power up our faith confidence like that, but nothing lifts us easier or with more delight. That's certainly reason enough for the enemy to try every trick in his book to steal it from us. I know. I spent a decade or two without this joy filling my sails. To be sure, I stayed at the oars, pulling my life along in the right direction, but, oh, what a difference it makes to get the joy of the Lord back!

Happily, we don't have to be victims of the spiritual weather surrounding us, languishing in the doldrums with nothing lifting our spirits. Oh no, we are more than conquerors and that certainly includes fighting to get the joy of the Lord back where it belongs. So don't be passive, giving in to joyless Christianity as if that were your lot in life. You have been created to (eventually) become deliriously happy—all of the time. If the balmy breeze of joy isn't blowing your way, there are three tremendous access points for recovering it:

- 1) The Joy of His Blessings
- 2) The Joy of His Salvation



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### 3) The Joy of His Presence

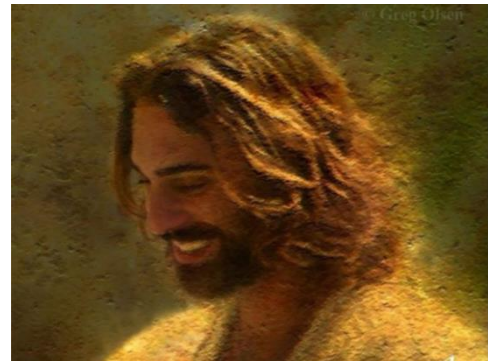
In three sections towards the end, I will describe each one to you and show you the best ways I have found for accessing joy. These are solidly Biblical ways for getting His joy back. First, let's look at the joy of the Lord.

## The Joy of the Lord

The joy of the Lord is a wonderful thing in itself. Think about it: Would you really want God to be anything but joyful? Sure, there might be times when you are hurting and want to know that He grieves with you. Even then, however, you would want Him to also have joy, or there would be no hope you could get yours back. What we really don't want is for God to be angry, unpleasant and impatient. Thank God He's not!

Our God is full of joy and that includes Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I loved the line in "The Color Purple" where Shug said, "You have to get that angry, old white Man out of your head." That's excellent advice. If we have any anxious concerns that God our Father is anything but open-hearted and loving towards us, joy will leak out of us like air from a popped balloon. Just as the sun is our ever-exploding source for life and light, so the Father's joy is the ever-radiant source of all that makes life worthwhile.

The joy of the Lord as we *receive it* is based upon two things: the actual joy-fullness of God and our faith ability to access it. This is why the gospel message is so powerful. Paul said he was "not ashamed" of the gospel because it is "the power of God for salvation" for all who believe it. If we are losing the joy of the Lord, we need that power! Therefore, we need to re-connect our faith with what the gospel (the good news) is trying to tell us about our God. Since it is Jesus who reveals the Father (and His joy), let's turn now to Him.



## The Joy of Jesus

The life of Jesus poses a riddle: How can the "Man of Sorrows" also be the One who is anointed with the "oil of gladness above His companions"? As God, Jesus has always known the joy of the Lord in its infinite fullness. As man, however, Jesus journeyed through sorrow towards joy.

Certainly, His life on earth began with all the natural joys of childhood. To this well-spring of joy Jesus would have added none of the sorrows that befall us through our sins and sinfulness. Yet, as He grew, our sorrows began to enter His heart through compassion for us. By the time His compassion carried Him to the cross, His identification with us in our sorrows was so complete that Isaiah could rightly say of Him, "He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."



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I'm taking time with this because I want you to see that the journey of our sorrowful Savior culminated at the cross. Many Christians seem fixated on the suffering of Christ. They hold fast to the image of Jesus dying on the cross the way those who grieve (mistakenly) hold fast to the image they may have of their loved one's final agony.

There is a place for this in our devotion as in our grief, but it is not the main place. If our loved ones are in heaven, they don't want us focused on the painful moments that got them there. It's similar with Jesus. He is NOT now on the cross. He is Risen! He is now forever on the other side of the cross—the resurrection side—and has Ascended into joy.

**You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions. Psalm 45:7**

Our spiritual eyes need to gaze upon Jesus primarily where He is—raised to the highest place. God the Father restored Jesus to the full joy of the Lord with this added to it: the joy of being the God-Man Savior of the world! He can still mercifully identify with us in our sorrow and share in our grief, but through the Ascension He is anointed with the oil of gladness beyond any comparison. What's more, the writer of Hebrews tells us that it was “for the sake of the joy set before Him,” that Jesus embraced the cross in the first place.

We, too, at times have to journey through sorrow to get to joy. An unwanted cross of suffering often crosses our path. But on the other side of whatever we may be going through, just waiting for us to access it, is the endless joy of the Lord. You can wait for joy to drop in on you, OR you can learn how to reach for it whenever it is slipping away. Me? I hated feeling those low spirits, got tired of waiting for my ship to come in, so I pressed in to learn these three main Biblical ways of accessing His joy!



## **The Joy of His Blessings**

**The Joy of His Blessing is so closely akin to happiness** that the two are often confused. Our English word happiness comes from a root word (Middle English *hap*) that indicates chance or good luck. When good things “happen,” it makes us happy. Piece of cake! There is nothing wrong with this as long as we are talking about legitimately good things.

God is the secret Giver of all good gifts and even unbelievers can feel overjoyed with happiness at those “Zip-a-dee-doo-dah” times when everything is going their way. Our Father evidently delights in causing happiness to abound and doesn't care if we don't know Him to thank Him for it. ***Just look at the great, good time little children are having.***

**There are (unhappily) several significant problems with happiness.** First, it never lasts. Something always interrupts it and spoils the mood. Second, the feeling of being happy can be



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notoriously hard to recover. Some never again feel the idyllic happiness of their lost childhood and don't know where to go to find a replacement. Third, as problems mount up it takes more and more "good things" to make one happy (on balance). Fourth, the effort to "pursue happiness" robs us of happiness along the way. We get so fixated on what we imagine will produce happiness that all else gets steamrolled. Last, but not least, ***with happiness you have no one to thank!***

## **The Shift to Joy**

**That's where the Joy of His Blessing** shows its superior quality. From beginning to end, if you have a faith relationship with the Living God through Jesus Christ, then you know that the good things that are making you happy are actually "love gifts" from heaven. We didn't just get lucky; our Father in heaven intentionally blessed us. The same gift, which in an unbeliever produces happiness, in a believer produces a love message that lifts us into the Joy of the Lord. We have a double joy—the "happiness" caused by the good thing happening and the joy of realizing that it is a blessing from our God.

**Not only that**, but when the sense of joy in His blessings gets interrupted, we can relax better, knowing that it will return, because our Best Friend loves blessing us. In addition, there are joys unique to our relationship with Jesus which unbelievers can know nothing of: taking delight in His word, the pleasure of sharing faith with other believers, recognizing His Hand upon nature and upon events of the world around us, etc.

On top of all this, when we count our blessings, we don't have to arrive at a total that shifts the balance as unbelievers do, we simply have to count our blessings until we remember that we have Someone who is sending them. ***Then the joy of the Lord lifts us all the way up!***

**You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.** Psalms 4:7 ESV

**Now, get ready** for one of the most amazing facts about the joy of His blessings. He has placed us in charge of them! Don't worry, God fully intends to keep dropping all kinds of good things into our lives "out of the blue"—without regard for our merits, but has set before all of us the ability to choose "life or death, blessing or cursing." We are in the driver's seat. If we freely choose to lean into Jesus for wisdom, guidance and strength to walk in a way that pleases Him, the flow of blessings will dramatically increase.

This is especially true of those blessings we call the fruit of the Spirit. Peace, love, joy, confidence and inner freedom all immediately show up inside of us whenever we trust Jesus with what He allows and are willing to follow Him in whatever He may ask of us. ***That's something you can learn to do every day!***

## **Tips for Access**



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The number one way to recover any lost sense of the Joy of His Blessing is to start counting your blessings. When we were missionaries and away from home at the big holidays, we all felt a bit dispirited, especially at the Big Meal. I hit on the idea of having each of us at the dinner table say one thing we were grateful for, then go to the next person in a continuing loop. At first the kids were slow to find any blessing to mention, but as the wheel turned they eagerly piled on until we had a rapidly spinning merry-go-round of joyful thanksgiving.

In counting blessings, you can start low and slow with little, obvious ones that are laying about for easy picking, such as good weather, fair health and faithful friends. I prefer to jump-start my gratitude with the bigger ones. Try this on for size: “Thank You that I’m not going to hell. Thank You that You love me. Thank You that I am going to heaven.” If you can’t easily muster up gratitude for those immense blessings, you need to work out with the gospel message and your faith until you do. Then watch your spirit lift.

**PRIMING THE PUMP:** Having a hard time feeling grateful? Here is something I wrote to get my heart moving in the right direction even during difficult times: *No Matter What Happens* (One-page PDF). It’s free – [download now](#).



## The Joy of His Salvation

**The joy of His blessings** is tremendously uplifting in those times when you’re going down the road of life doing reasonably well. You’ll need something far sturdier when you’ve driving your spiritual car into the ditch. This is the joy David reached for when he was confessing how badly he blew it in Psalm 51. You don’t have to be a believer to take joy in what you can do to rescue your life from one problem to the next. Any heathen can do that. But you do have to be a believer in Jesus to take joy *in what He is doing* to rescue you!

**Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with a willing spirit.**  
Psalms 51:12 ESV

**Best of all, this joy is not based on anything you are doing.** That’s a real bonus because on close examination none of us are hitting the mark.

In all honesty, what mostly gets us down is the sight of how badly we are doing in one area or another. Ironically, that’s where this joy gets ignited. The dismal sight of our sins and failures “makes us” turn to see that we have an all-purpose Savior in Jesus, who not only wants to get us to heaven, He is willing to rescue us in any situation *right now*. What do you need? Mercy or help? He’s got both!



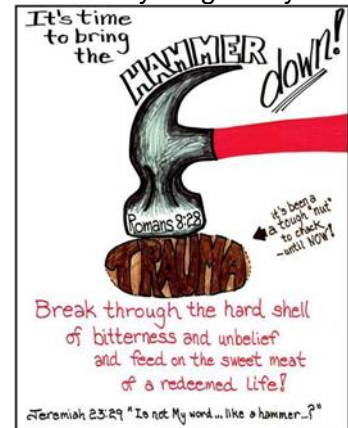
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## We Need Mercy!

**Your sins and failures** can push you into the joy of His salvation better than anything. They will get you saying, “Thank God, at least You’re still rescuing me from the hell I deserve. Thank God, at least You’re going to get me to heaven, anyway. Wow!” Now, you’ve got your joy back! The very thing that the enemy uses to rob us of our joy—our sins and failures—becomes a God-graced way of restoring us to the joy of HIS salvation. You don’t even have to crash and burn to get this joy back. Just have a lively sense of your sin potential and it will push you into fresh gratitude and joy any moment of the day.



The “**mother lode**” of our joy is the joy of His salvation. The great problem that everyone on earth has is sin and death. Death would be no problem if it weren’t for sin. Even little sins separate us from God and deserve hell. He saves us from each sin that separates us from Him (as we confess and repent) and He saves us from eternal torment in hell (when we repented and believed the “good news”).

Exercise your faith to believe any one of these three truths in any moment: 1) that He covers your sinfulness (with the Blood and His mercy), 2) that He is ready to forgive each sin you confess, 3) that He is saving you from the unimaginable torment in hell that you deserve—and *voila!* You have just received another heady dose of the joy of your salvation!

[Bring the Hammer Down!](#)

## We Need Help!

Even so, the Joy of His Salvation includes far more than covering us in our sinfulness. He promises not just to forgive us for any sin, but to help us with any need. I don’t know about you, but my need for His help is vast. The sight of my challenges/problems represents an ocean of difficulty which all-too easily could capsize my emotional state and ship wreck my life—if He didn’t lend a Hand. Thank God for prayer! I have experienced the Joy of His Salvation coming to my rescue in countless ways.

**With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.** Isaiah 12:3 ESV

## Tips for Access

There are two ways to receive this joy. The sure and certain way is to keep praying for mercy or for help and wait until they show up. He absolutely and unconditionally promises that ALL who call on His name “will be saved”—will receive saving mercy or help (Romans 10:13). As that happens, it is easy to rejoice. Your heart naturally goes off like a Roman candle when you see Him come to your rescue. But there is another, better way.



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Since He guarantees that His mercy and/or saving help will come to us, why not learn to access the Joy of His Salvation in advance? Peter tells us that it is by means of God's promises that we "partake of His divine nature." We actually can access His joy by believing His promise that mercy and grace are on their way. Once I caught on to this, I started using the magnificent promise of Romans 8:28 for all I was worth.

This promise tells us that God makes everything work for our good. I hold it out over past problems, future problems, present trouble, imagined trouble—you name it. What a joy it is to believe the message of the promise, rather than the (false) message of the adversity. Don't expect joy to jump into your lap just because you picked the promise up. You may have to thank God vigorously and extensively until your heart catches on. Then the joy can begin.

**The Nut Cracker:** Would you like to recover joy even in adversity? Break free of any hard shell of unbelief you encounter with this powerful list: *25 Ways God Works All Things for Good* (One-page PDF). It's free – [download now](#).

# 3

## The Joy of His Presence

**This joy takes off** once the other ones get you going. As you see (yet again) how good He is at blessing you, or forgiving you, or rescuing you, keep looking His way. Search deeper into the joy of discovering how good His love for you really is.

Then keep looking to "see" how good He is in Himself—the joy-filled Lover of life. That's the joy that will fill us in eternity. Living with Him and in Him and for Him and through Him will be an endless delight! It starts now...



**In some ways this is the easiest joy of all,** because whenever we have a sense of His presence drawing near to us, our hearts either melt down or explode into joy—we need do nothing at all. No blessings to count, no calling on Him for rescue, and no faith needed to turn the access keys. Just being near Him produces joy automatically!

Think of it this way. When the sun comes out in summer, everyone feels the heat. That's like the overpowering sense of Jesus' presence coming to you. But try to feel the sun's heat on a cold, rainy winter's day. That's an image which describes what it means to seek being drawn into His presence at all other times.

## Tips for Access



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**If you don't want to be "left out in the cold,"** then learning to enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise is a must. This is the pathway of praise and worship. Since the Lord says that He inhabits the praise of His people, our best point of access to the Joy of His Presence is often through corporate worship. Find a church or fellowship group that takes you higher than you can get on your own. The Lord gives us anointed worship leaders for just this purpose. He desires the worship, yes, but His overriding pleasure is for us to enter His joy.

We can also practice deep surrender. Anything in us that resists yielding to the Lord on any point will keep us shut out from the full joy of His presence. That's not necessarily because He is holding our disobedience against us. Rather, our lack of surrender will keep us from getting "too close for comfort"—close enough to hear Him remind us of what He wants us to do. Try not to despair if you see inward resistance. Anything that gets in the way of getting closer to Him is something that we can call on Him to help us with.

**At this point** the joy of the Lord gets so intimate and personal that no one can coach you how to draw nearer. It takes the Holy Spirit within us to set our hearts on fire, to show us what we need to throw into the fire, and to help us find the way to yield our entire being into His Hands. Then we can be drawn ever closer. ***May you go deeper and be drawn closer than you ever imagined possible!***

**You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalms 16:11 ESV**



## **In Closing**

Please don't be discouraged if you aren't able to get into the joy as quickly and easily as you'd like. I pressed in on all of these points for years. I had many moments of joy along the way, but never really received the mother lode. Now, it is much easier for me to reach for these points of access and enter into His joy, but it sure wasn't that way in the beginning.

So, don't quit. Keep pressing in. Above all, keep believing that the main reason He has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, is that your joy may be full. His joy WILL become yours—He wants that for you as much as you do!

**Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. John 16:24 ESV**

**About the Author:** [Steve Evans](#)



Through Forerunners4Him Steve Evans has been showing how we can be saved for heaven and teaching the way to live a Spirit filled life on earth. Go now to receive a completely free primer, [Getting to Heaven](#) and/or an introduction to [Living in the Spirit](#) at our website.



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