



**FROM: THE DESK OF PASTOR CARUANA**  
**TO: The People of Zion**  
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## JOY ... WHAT IS IT?

Well, first of all, it's a short but powerful word that appears 88 times in the Old Testament and 57 times in the New Testament. (If you're looking for something to do, you may want to try to find all 145 occurrences of the word in your Bible! Just a thought!!) Can you think of a moment of joy in your life? It might be the moment of your marriage or the birth of a child.

At the same time, we've been taught and intuitively know that we define joy by more than a moment -- it's more than circumstances. Happiness is dictated by circumstance ... but not joy. Joy has more "meat" to it. Joy is more like a deep feeling or emotion that lasts for a longer time.

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines joy as "the emotion evoked by well-being, success, good fortune, or by the prospect of possessing what someone desires." But, truthfully, I think that definition is lacking something. I think joy is more a state of mind and an orientation of the heart. It's a state of contentment, confidence, and hope. It's something or someone that provides a source of happiness.

The Hebrew dictionary's definition for joy is blithesomeness or glee; gladness, mirth, pleasure, or rejoicing.

The Greek dictionary says joy is cheerfulness (for example: calm delight and gladness).

Christians should always find reasons to be joyful. There are many ways to define joy. Joy isn't just a smile or a laugh. Joy is something that's deep within us and doesn't leave quickly. When we have the joy of the Lord, we'll know it and so will others. Since joy is given by God and is something he wants us to have, we need to be joyful! In addition to being joyful, we should let others have their joy and not bring them down when they are excited about good things. *The only thing worse than not having joy is stealing someone else's.*

Now, let's think about spending eternity in heaven with God, the saints, and the angels. That's truly something incredible, and I'm sure it triggers deep feelings of emotion ... deep long-lasting joy. That's what I call the epitome of joy!!

If we can't find reasons to be joyful, we need to change our perspective. God lets us have blessings of joy every day. We should be able to see those blessing of joy and thank God for them. In fact, we need to be bold enough to ask for God's blessings when we can't find joy around us!

Some people think they should be blessed with joy automatically, but that's not what it we hear God say in the Bible. God says, "You do not have joy because you do not ask for it."

(John 15:16) Keep in mind that God's Holy Spirit produces joy -- a product of Christlikeness. When we look for God through his word and prayer, we will receive joy! And to that I say, "Thanks be to God!"

If you're lacking in joy, hear some of the ways God gives us joy and see how these thoughts resonate with you.

- Remember, peace and joy go together. Give good advice and give peaceful advice. When we try not to fight and hate others, and decide to get along, we will experience peace and joy.
- God's Holy Spirit produces joy. Joy is a product of Christlikeness. When we seek God through his word and prayer, we will receive joy! Thank God that joy is something he wants us to have!
- "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice!" Then, joy will be yours ... yours to keep and yours to pass on.
- "Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but counselors of peace have joy." Be a counselor of peace.
- "It is a joy for the just to do justice, but destruction will come to the workers of iniquity." Place justice ahead of destruction so joy showers down upon you.
- "For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in his sight." Do as God wills you to do.
- "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." God's joy will be with those who rejoice and those who weep.

## **A Joyful Summary**

John Piper, a Baptist pastor and teacher of Preaching and Vision zeroes in on the joy that is unique to Christians, when he writes, "Christian joy is a good feeling in the soul, produced by the Holy Spirit, as he causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the word and in the world."

Rick Warren, an American pastor and author of *A Purpose-Driven Life* and *A Purpose-Driven Church*, defines joy with these words: "Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of life, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright, and the determined choice to praise God in every situation."

I think these two ideas drive us closer to the real definition of joy. Joy is a feeling, yes. But it's also confidence in Jesus Christ. It's knowing that all of our life comes from Jesus Christ, but it's also the future expectation that everything is going to be okay as we draw life from Christ ... regardless of our circumstances.

I must say, all these ideas and thoughts about joy make me pause. They make me ask, “How are you and I doing in our living in joy?” Do we have that confident assurance of a present and a future based on Jesus Christ?” Does joy drive us to live for others, to do our best work, and to give generously?

Take time to think about these questions? And then ... let the peace and joy of our Lord Jesus Christ abide within you now and always!



*Love, Peace & Joy*