

Rejoice in the Lord!

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ... Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

–Philippians 4:4, 6

Rejoicing is, more often than not, a choice. We all love spontaneous rejoicing. Such comes from answered prayer, the answers to our questions, the manifestation of the miraculous, the success and prosperity we wanted. It takes little faith to rejoice when it is precipitated by happy, external circumstances. But the command to rejoice comes because we don't always feel like rejoicing—and yet Paul said to do it all the time. Not rejoicing because of all that has happened but rather “in all circumstances” (1 Thess. 5:18, emphasis added). The choice we make to rejoice comes because we simply don't feel like rejoicing. We just have to do it.

How do you rejoice when you don't feel like it? The answer is, you find things for which you certainly should be thankful and then discipline yourself to voice that gratitude. I go through my journal every morning, item by item of the previous day, and thank the Lord in detail for everything. I have been doing it for over fifteen years. My wife, Louise, and I frequently do this together. Once, when returning to Key Largo in Florida (where we now live) from the airport, Louise said, “Let's thank the Lord for twenty-five things that took place over the weekend.” We had a wonderful weekend in Connecticut. We began taking turns and naming particular things. When we finished, Louise said we had mentioned fifty-three things. I think God liked that.

Showing gratitude is the sort of thing you can make yourself do whether you feel like it or not. There are always things you can thank God for if you look around. In other words, even if you don't feel like it, do it anyway.

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