

7 Secrets to Keeping Your Joy

Are you enjoying your life? If not, God wants you to. Jesus said in John 10:10 that Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy, but He came that we “may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows)” (The Amplified Bible). I believe this means God wants us to enjoy every part of our lives—not just little bits and pieces here and there.

Many people today live their lives in a constant state of stress and turmoil. But as Christians, we don’t have to live that way. Why? Because God’s Spirit lives in us, and a fruit of His Spirit is joy.

Now this joy is not just a “happy feeling” based on our circumstances or on the things we possess—it is an unshakable stability in our inner man (spirit). Joy can range anywhere from a calm delight to extreme hilarity, and it is the joy of the Lord that is our strength (see Neh. 8:10)

Many years ago, I spent most of my time uptight and upset about something. The reason for this was because my happiness was based entirely on circumstances. If things were going my way, I was happy. If we had money in the bank, I was happy.

If it was Friday night, a holiday, or if we were on vacation, I had joy. But since these things accounted for only a small part of my life, the majority of the time I was sad and discontented.

As my relationship with God grew, I got tired of being happy only if and when things were going my way. I was weary and worn out from the constant mood swings, and I just wanted to be happy.

God’s Word said that I could live my life with joy, and I finally decided that I was going to do whatever it took to

have it. As I really started to seek God about this issue, He began to reveal to me several important principles that are critical to receiving and keeping our joy. Following are seven of these life-changing essentials:

1. Be led by the Spirit. One of the most dynamic ways to keep our joy is to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in the way we should go. Proverbs 16:9 says, “A man’s mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps and makes them sure.”

Probably one of the hardest things in the world for people is to walk away from doing something they have done for a long time. In many ways, I can’t stand to do the same thing for too long. For example, I have several pairs of pajamas because I just don’t like to look at the same ones all the time. But in certain areas I’m not like that—I would probably be happy with the same hairstyle until Jesus comes!

If we do the same thing the same way too long, it just becomes old and stale, and it means nothing. But one of the things I have learned about the Holy Spirit is that if we follow Him, He keeps everything fresh. Life does not get stale when we follow the Lord.

The Holy Spirit will lead us to change things on purpose just to make us pay attention to Him. God may lead you simply to take a different route home from work. He may want to show you a new tree or something beautiful on your way home.

Don’t just keep doing things the same way if you are no longer joyful when you do them. You will lose your joy if you are not willing to get out of the boat.

2. Simplify your life. Don’t try to do too much. Satan works hard to complicate your life so he can steal your joy. If you want to live a less complicated life, you may have to simplify it by not doing so much.

I used to whine and grumble about my schedule saying, “How can

anybody do all this? I never have any time to rest. I never take a vacation." God finally told me one day, "You're making the schedule. If you don't want to do it all, then just don't do some of it."

If you're too busy, I suggest that you take an hour or so and write down everything you are doing or want to do. Then look at which events are not bearing any fruit and mark them off your list.

Before I uncomplicated my life, I never had time to enjoy my home. I never enjoyed my kids. I loved them, but I never really took time to enjoy them.

I encourage you to spend time with your family and friends. Enjoy your relationship with God. Many people are too busy to even take a walk. Take a little bit of time to look at some of the things God has created.

Learning how to simplify your life is possibly one of the most important principles to understand because Satan wants to steal your time. He steals your joy by making you too busy to enjoy all God has given you. Take time to laugh. Take time to enjoy your life!

3. Pray with boldness. Jesus said, "Ask and keep on asking and you will receive, so that your joy (gladness, delight) may be full and complete" (John 16:24).

I believe there are people who are not receiving from God what He wants them to have because they won't ask boldly of Him. Hebrews 4:16 tells us to come "boldly" before God's throne that we might receive grace and help in our time of need.

Many Christians feel as if they need to "clean themselves up" before they can come to God in prayer. But our righteousness is in Christ alone, and no amount of good works will make us right with God. If we are in Christ, God sees us as righteous

right now!

A few years ago, I stepped out in faith and prayed, "God, I'm asking You to let me help every single person on the face of the earth." My mind said, Now that is stupid. But I kept praying that prayer anyway, and our television ministry has expanded greatly since that time.

The Bible says we do not have because we do not ask (see James 4:2). I would rather ask for a lot and get part of it than ask for a little and get all of it!

Be bold and confident in God when you pray; don't be double-minded when you ask for His blessings. Don't think, I wonder if I have been righteous enough for God to grant my request. Just ask for what you need, boldly and in faith, without wavering, hesitating or doubting, knowing that your righteousness is in Christ.

4. Be quick to forgive. Joy is restored to your life when you learn how to forgive and forget, and these two virtues go together. God tells us He forgives our sins, puts them as far as the east is from the west, and He remembers them no more (see Ps. 103:12; Is. 43:25).

Frequently, we try to forgive people, but forgiveness can't do its redemptive work because we want to remember what they did to us. We continue to think and talk about them. Remembering a past offense reopens the wound and feeds anger—then anger in turn feeds unforgiveness.

Why do we need to forgive other people? Because our faith won't work if we don't. Unforgiveness is like dirt and mud on our spirit. It blocks our fellowship with God, and that prevents our spiritual growth.

Actually, we end up torturing ourselves when we hold grudges and don't forgive others. While we are miserable and upset, the person who hurt us is out enjoying his or her life, not

even thinking about it. I often say that holding unforgiveness is like taking poison and hoping your enemy will die!

Have you lost your joy because of unforgiveness? If so, I suggest that you start forgiving people right away. Make a list of people you need to forgive. Ask the Lord to give you the power to forgive these people, then let it go.

5. Obey God. I can tell you from experience that walking in obedience to God is one of the best ways to have a joyful, outrageously blessed life. Psalm 37:4 says: "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart" (NIV).

Every day we need to submit our will and our plans to God. We need to learn to wait on Him and listen to what He is telling us to do—then simply obey Him. God knows what is best for our lives, and He will lead us into His perfect plan if we give Him permission to do so.

When we are new believers, we have our own plans and walk in our own ways. However, as we surrender to God to really follow Him, there will be things He will ask us to do that we may not want to do—at first. But if we really love Him, we will let Him have His way in our lives (see John 14:15).

Are you in a position right now in which God is asking you to do something you don't want to do? I strongly urge you to submit to Him. Your joy depends on it!

I believe that as we obey God more, it will bring such outrageous blessings that our love for Him will grow deeper and deeper. As our love grows, we will want to do what God wants us to do, and our obedience will give us great joy.

6. Be yourself. Being satisfied and happy with yourself is a very important key to enjoying your life. It was so liberating to me when I discovered that I did not have to be like anyone else.

I used to try to be easygoing like my husband, Dave. I even tried to be soft-spoken and sweet like my pastor's wife. But all of that was only making me frustrated because God didn't anoint me to be them—He anointed me to be me!

Many people think they must become what another person is. That kind of thinking will steal our joy. We don't have to compare anything about our lives to another person's life. All we're required to do is be who God created us to be.

God has made every one of us unique. He personally made you and gave you gifts, talents and abilities. Just think about it: Nobody else in the world is exactly like you. That means what is best for someone else may not be best for you.

So, when you are tempted to say to God, "I wish I looked like someone else," or "I wish I could do this or that like them," don't say it. Be satisfied with who God made you to be. Remember that He made you exactly who He wants you to be. If you try to be like somebody else, you will miss the beautiful life God has planned specially for you.

7. Let God invade every area of your life. A major change that God helped me make years ago was to stop dividing my life into what I thought was spiritual and non-spiritual. Somehow I had fallen into a religious trap of feeling like the only time I was pleasing God was when I was doing something spiritual such as praying, reading the Bible or ministering at church.

But the Bible says that whatever we do, we are to do it as unto the Lord (see Col. 3:23). This means that God wants to be included when we are shopping for groceries, pumping gas and combing our hair just as much as when we are praying or reading the Word.

The truth is none of us can live in a church service, a Bible study or on our knees in prayer. There are many practical aspects to our lives, and God expects us to take care of them

too. In fact, I believe He anoints us to live ordinary, everyday lives in victory and with joy.

When we decide to let God out of our “Sunday morning box” and into every area of our lives, we’ll begin to experience His joy and peace more than ever before.

Remember, enjoying the abundant life Jesus died to give you is based on a decision you make—not on your circumstances (see John 10:10). Joy is God’s gift to us, but some of us have never even opened the package! God is just waiting for you to do so. He is the glory and the lifter of our heads (see Ps. 3:3). Satan wants to pull us down, but Jesus came to lift us up!

Start celebrating your life. Don’t just endure your days—enjoy your days. Smile. It will give your face and your spirit a lift.

Find some good, clean entertainment or get with some Christian friends and cut loose and laugh. “A happy heart is good medicine and a cheerful mind works healing” (Prov. 17:22, The Amplified Bible).

Every morning when you wake up, before you even get out of bed, I encourage you to declare out loud, “I am going to enjoy this day!” Decide to be happy right where you are and to enjoy the life you have right now—on the way to where you are going.

Make a firm decision to enjoy your journey. When you do, you will begin to experience the abundant, joy-filled life that Jesus died to give you.

Joyce Meyer is the prolific author of several best-selling books. Portions of this article were adapted from *Seven Things That Steal Your Joy*. Published by Warner Faith.