



*Ministry of Biblical Studies*

**THE**  
**J** **JOY** **Y**  
**OF LIVING IN CHRIST**

**July Bible Study Series**

**July 17th: Joy in Trials and Suffering**

"Finding Joy Even in Difficult Circumstances" | James 1:2-4



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**Welcome to the Metropolitan Community Church**  
**Ministry of Biblical Study Classes**  
July 17, 2024

**“Joy in Trials and Suffering:  
Finding Joy Even in Difficult Circumstances”**  
James 1:2-4

**Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, we gather today to explore how we can find joy in the midst of life's trials. Open our hearts and minds to your Word, and help us to understand and embrace the joy that comes from knowing and trusting in you. Amen.

**Introduction**

Biblical joy is not something that comes and goes; it is not dictated by our circumstances. Biblical joy is something that exists even when we are suffering or going through a heavy trial, because it is based on the knowledge that God is present, walking with us in our trials, producing good fruit in us as we go through the trial, and will use it as a platform for him to be seen by others.

A few years ago, the word "Joy" became my word after God had ushered me into a season of some exceedingly difficult circumstances. This season lasted not for a few days or a few months but for several years. It was the longest amount of time that I had ever personally experienced where nothing made sense, and I had to trust God, one day at a time, not knowing if or when the season would end.

One night, when I could not sleep, I quietly tiptoed to my living room, sat on the couch, and wrapped myself in a warm blanket. The only light in the room came from 3 letters on a shelf: "J-O-Y." As I sat there, I reflected on what a

difficult season I was in and began to ask God how I could begin to experience His kind of joy – a joy that was present despite my circumstances. A joy that was found in Him.

That night I knew God wanted me to learn His definition of joy. Not merely an intellectual knowledge of the definition. He wanted it to be my heart and soul, a deep experience. He wanted me to experience the joy that can only be found in Him. I came to the end of every resource I had been clinging to and was forced to sit alone before the Lord. He opened my eyes to the fact that I have often found joy in all the wonderful things He has provided for me and allowed me to be a part of.

Things such as having family and friends, and being involved in ministry and mentoring – all these things gave my life so much purpose. I was not regularly finding my joy in the One who had provided all these wonderful blessings. It became evident that I needed to begin learning what it meant to find joy in Christ alone. A joy that did not fade when my circumstances changed or became difficult.

We often associate joy with happiness, good times, and positive circumstances. However, the Bible teaches us that true joy can be found even in difficult situations. Today, we'll explore how we can experience this joy through faith, perseverance, and trust in God's promises.

### **Scripture Readings**

1. James 1:2-4 - "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

2. Philippians 4:4-7 - "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

3. 1 Peter 1:6-9 - "In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

### **Discussion Questions**

1. James 1:2-4

- a. How can we view our trials as opportunities for joy?
- b. What does perseverance look like in your life?
- c. How can perseverance lead to spiritual maturity and completeness?

2. Philippians 4:4-7

- a. What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord always?
- b. How can prayer and thanksgiving help us to experience God's peace?
- c. How does God's peace guard our hearts and minds during difficult times?

3. 1 Peter 1:6-9

- a. What does it mean to rejoice greatly even in the midst of suffering?
- b. How can trials prove the genuineness of our faith?
- c. How does believing in Jesus fill us with inexpressible and glorious joy?

### **Practical Application**

1. Count Your Blessings - Start a gratitude journal. Write down things you're thankful for each day, even during tough times.
2. Stay Connected - Join a small group or find a prayer partner to share your struggles and pray together.
3. Serve Others - Find ways to serve others, even when you're struggling. Helping others can bring joy and perspective.

## Find Biblical Joy by Focusing on God

1. Thank Him for Who He Is - Father, thank you for being My Exceeding Joy. You are in the center of these difficult circumstances. What is happening in my life did not surprise you. Joy that is found in You is not dependent on my circumstances or feelings. Thank you for loving me enough to make that kind of joy available. You are truly My Exceeding Joy.

2. Thank Him for His Faithfulness - Father, you are faithful. Help me to remember all the ways that you have been faithful over my entire lifetime, and please use those memories to encourage my heart during this difficult season. Please use them to lift me out of this hard place and put me in a place of hope and joy.

3. Thank Him for His Promises - Father, thank you for your promises that tell me that there is more to life than the temporary life we experience here on this earth. Thank you for the hope you give when I read your countless promises that tell me that one day there will be no more pain, tears, or suffering.

4. Thank Him for His Provisions - Father, thank you for providing me with Your Word and its promises. Thank you for the Holy Spirit, who empowers me to persevere in tough times. And thank you for the people you have placed in my life, in this moment, that can give me counsel and help bear my burdens. You are so merciful. You are so good.

### Reflection

Reflect on a time when you experienced joy despite difficult circumstances. How did your faith help you through that time? How can you apply these lessons to your current struggles?

### Closing Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for the joy that you offer us, even in the midst of our trials. Help us to rely on you and to find joy in your presence. Strengthen our faith and guide us to live with perseverance and hope. Amen.

