

LORRAINE HILL

Reclaiming Your *joy*

Leader's Guide

A BIBLE STUDY ON
CONQUERING YOUR
JOY-STEALERS

Introduction



Welcome!

I am so excited that you have decided to lead the *Reclaiming Your Joy* Bible study. The heart of this study is that people will experience the amazing joy that Jesus readily offers us – not a partial joy dependent on circumstances and people, but a full joy based in Him and in His promises.

By choosing to lead this study and help lead Christians deeper into God's Word, you will be given the opportunity by God to change people's lives and impact them for eternity. I can't wait to hear how God's Word grows and changes your group. Thank you for your willingness to be used of God in this way!

This Leader's Guide will equip you to lead this study by providing administrative information and general instructions. These are only suggestions, however, because each of you has the magnificent Holy Spirit in you, and He can equip you far better than I in leading this study. Even more importantly, the Holy Spirit knows the participants of your group and knows their needs so I strongly urge you to follow His guiding hand. Thank you again for your willingness to lead this study. I can't wait to hear your stories! And if I don't hear them in this lifetime, then we have all of eternity to catch up!

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Lorraine Hill

Overview of the Study

The *Reclaiming Your Joy* study is an eight week in-depth Bible study. Each week contains daily homework for five days. The estimated time to complete the homework is about thirty minutes. The homework includes a variety of questions, like fill-in-the-blank statements, multiple choice questions, yes/no questions, and matching questions. This allows the participant to take the material and personally apply it to his or her life. There are also Challenge questions, which allow a participant to go deeper into the Word.

Overview of the Study



The Bible study is divided into three main parts:

PART I: EMBRACING OUR DESTINIES

Week 1 – Our Great Calling

Week 2 – Abiding Joy

The first part of the study provides the participant with a basic understanding on the nature of joy, as well as allows the participant to evaluate his existing level of joy. These weeks also discuss what helps joy to flourish and what causes it to wither.

PART II: THE JOY-STEALERS

Week 3 – Weighed Down by Worry

Week 4 – Wearied by People

Week 5 – Downcast by Disappointment

Week 6 – Imprisoned by Unforgiveness

Week 7 – Troubled by Trials

Having discussed the nature of joy, the next section of the study focuses on specific joy-stealers: worry, people, trials, circumstances, and unforgiveness. Each joy-stealer is discussed for a whole week in order to allow the participant to truly delve into the area.

PART III: ENDURING JOY

Week 8 – Abounding in Thankfulness

The last week of the study discusses thankfulness, which is the jewel of joy. Thankfulness enables us to experience enduring joy by reflecting on our salvation.

Small Groups

Small group discussion is an important part of this study because it allows individuals the opportunity to share what God has revealed to them through the study and ask questions of other believers to increase in their own understanding. It also creates community and builds fellowship, which is important within the body of Christ. Participants can listen, encourage and pray for one another. It is amazing how God often places people who need each other in the same groups so that they can minister to one another during the study.

Suggestions for Small Groups

- ***Facilitate the discussion every week.*** As you do the study every week, mark questions that are especially meaningful to you. Select a few key questions from each day to discuss. You will not have time to discuss all the questions. There are also suggested discussion questions listed at the end of this Leaders Guide. If you are asking questions but receiving little response, then try asking a more general question, like “What spoke to you most in this day/week?” or “What unique insight did you receive from this day/week?” General questions seem to elicit discussion. You may also want to setup the chairs in a circle or semi-circle as this is welcoming to participants and makes them feel more comfortable sharing. Though it can be hard, try to also remain on target in your discussion and cover the respective week’s homework. This ensures that participants who have done the homework have the opportunity to share what they have learned. If the conversation has strayed, then gently steer it back.
- ***Avoid the temptation to always fill the silence.*** Most of us are uncomfortable with silence and so we tend to quickly offer an answer if no one says anything. But sometimes more reserved people need a little more time to open up. The silence can sometimes be the little nudge that they need.
- ***Take prayer requests and communicate them to the rest of the group.*** Try to limit prayer time to 5-10 minutes. You do not want to quench the Holy Spirit, but you also want to give people who have done the homework adequate time to share what they have learned. Encourage your group members to pray for each other. Satan wants nothing more than to distract and discourage us, so we need to remain diligent and pray for each other. As the facilitator, I encourage you to be especially diligent in prayer on the day of the study. For a twist, you could pair group members as accountability partners.
- ***Encourage the participants.*** Parts of this study are encouraging, but other parts are challenging, similar to anytime when we read God’s Word. Please encourage your group members to remain committed to the study and stay in the Word. God has amazing things to reveal to us, but we have to have an open and teachable spirit.

We have found the most effective size for small groups seems to be around 12-15 people.

A group of more than 15 people tends to not allow each individual the opportunity to share.

But let the Holy Spirit be your guide.

Small Groups



- **Follow up on participants who have missed.** Once participants miss Bible study, it is easy for them to give up and not return, especially if they have not done the homework. The nice thing about this study is that each week covers a different topic. So if participants miss a week or fall behind, they can always start fresh the next week. Hopefully that will encourage those who miss to remain in the study.
- **Enlist a “strong” sub for each facilitator,** someone who is able to lead in the absence of the facilitator and who regularly completes their homework. Inevitably most facilitators become sick or have unexpected emergencies and have to miss. A “strong” sub provides stability for the group since the rest of the group is already comfortable with her. It also provides another participant who can contribute to the discussion.
- **End on time.** As participants feel more comfortable, they will share more. Sometimes, this creates a challenge and small group time tends to run over. Try to end on time, especially if childcare is involved. You can always speak to someone privately if they are excited about sharing something but this allows the rest of the group the freedom to leave on time without feeling awkward. Groups that continually run over often lose members that have other commitments.

REMAIN ENCOURAGED

- As you facilitate or lead this study, Satan would like nothing better than to discourage and dishearten you and he will use any means he can. Don't let him. God's power is greater than anything Satan throws at you.
- When I first started teaching and leading, I became very disappointed with attrition in my studies. We would start so strong and then lose women and Satan used it mercilessly to discourage me. Instead of viewing the glass half-empty, I needed to view it half-full. Maybe ten or twenty percent of the people gave up on the study, but that meant that eighty percent completed it. Eighty percent were now deeper in God's Word. Eighty percent now had a better understanding of joy. Eighty percent now rejoiced more in their God. And that was amazing! Not to mention that several people later told me that even though they had dropped out of the study, they had still completed it. We never know what God is doing and so we must not use earthly eyes (like I did).
- There are many ways of leading this study. Everything listed above are only suggestions. Again, the most important thing is that you are open to the Holy Spirit's leading and allow Him to guide you. God has hand-crafted us all as unique people and so we each have our own unique and creative ways of leading.

If you have any **creative suggestions**, please share them with us. Or if any of your group members would like to share what they have learned, we would **LOVE** to hear!! It is always exciting to hear how the Lord is working in other people's lives. Email us at Info@LorraineHillMinistries.com.

WEEK 1: Our Great Calling



Day 1

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Scripture's resounding theme is that Christians should experience abundant, overflowing joy.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Who are three of the most joyful people that you know? What makes these people so joyful?

Day 2

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Joy remains elusive for some of us because we do not pursue joy—we pursue happiness, that transitory feeling of fulfillment.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Have you sought fulfillment through money and possessions? As you have achieved your financial goals, have you become content or created new financial goals?

Day 3

- **KEY THOUGHT:** The depth of joy we experience depends on the depth of our relationship with the Lord.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Is anything currently hindering you in your relationship with God?

Day 4

- **KEY THOUGHT:** A full relationship with the Lord means that we whole-heartedly devote ourselves to him and do not flirt with the world.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What are some things that divide your affection for the Lord? Which ones do you succumb to most?

Day 5

- **KEY THOUGHT:** No one takes our joy from us. We choose whether we will relinquish it because of a situation, person, or sin or whether we will cultivate and nurture it.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Can you think of some ways that Satan seeks to steal your joy?

Theme for the Week

As Christians, we should experience joy no matter the circumstances or hardships in our lives!

WEEK 2: Abiding Joy



Theme for the Week

We cultivate the fruit of joy by deepening our relationship with God, obeying His commands and submitting to His Word.

Day 1

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, produced naturally in us as we abide in Christ.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What are three of your greatest challenges for living a *daily* joyous life?

Day 2

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Obedience is the gateway that opens the flood gates of joy to us.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Share an instance in which obedience to God resulted in great joy.

Day 3

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Legalism is death to the Christian walk for it makes the Christian walk harsh and demanding instead of exciting and joyous.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Do you think legalism is a big issue or a small issue for the church today? Can you think of any legalistic rules that plague the church?

Day 4

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Because legalism grows slowly and subtly, it can easily creep into our lives if we do not diligently guard against it.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What challenges you most in your walk of liberty (freedom in Christ)?

Day 5

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Whenever we choose to sin, we are saying yes to a momentary satisfaction and no to lasting joy; we are choosing an earthly pleasure over an eternal fulfillment.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Do you have close friends that will rebuke you when you sin or do they tend to sympathize with you? Explain.

WEEK 3: Weighed Down by Worry



Day 1

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Worry causes us to squander the blessings of today by keeping us focused on the possible problems of tomorrow.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How do your worries hinder you *spiritually* in your Christian walk?

Day 2

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Worry and belief are rivals in our heart, warring against each other for supremacy; when worry wins, belief loses.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Do you ever say you trust the Lord, but then think of a second option just in case the Lord does not come through? Is this really trusting in the Lord?

Day 3

- **KEY THOUGHT:** One of the main reasons we worry is because we lose our focus, taking our eyes off the prize of Christ and losing ourselves in the problems of this world.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** If you were in the boat, would you have asked Jesus what Peter asked Him? Why or why not?

Day 4

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Through prayer, we release our burdens to the Lord and obtain the perfect peace of God, a peace that surpasses understanding.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Why is it important that we not only pray, but also redirect our worrisome thoughts?

Day 5

- **KEY THOUGHT:** We need to focus on God-ordained tasks instead of worldly focused activities, eternal pursuits rather than earthly diversions.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Based on the discussion in Day 5, do you think you need to slow down the pace of your life? If so, what changes do you need to make?

Theme for the Week

Worry steals our joy by diverting our attention away from the Lord and by causing us to doubt God's goodness and faithfulness.

WEEK 4: Wearied by People



Thank you

for caring for God's flock and encouraging them in the Word. I know it requires a tremendous amount of time and commitment on your part, but I am so thankful for your willingness. May the Lord continue to bless you, your study, and your participants!

Day 1

- **KEY THOUGHT:** God has poured his love into us so that we can shower other people with the love we have received.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Why does the Lord stress the need for us to love others (Romans 13:8-10)?

Day 2

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Much of the frustrations and irritations that we experience with people stem from differences in personality, dispositions, and traditions
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How can personality differences cause conflicts within the body of Christ?

Day 3

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Demonstrating compassion often entails sacrifice and inconvenience.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Has practicality ever inhibited you from expressing compassion to someone? Explain.

Day 4

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Loving others deeply is our witness to an unbelieving world.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How can praying for our enemies or for a difficult person help (Matthew 5:44)?

Day 5

- **KEY THOUGHT:** We must not try to please both man and God, or we may fail to truly please God.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How can seeking to please people hinder our Christian walk?

Theme for the Week

As we better understand how the Lord wants us to view people, they will not continue to steal our joy.

WEEK 5: Downcast by Disappointment

Theme for the Week

Disappointments often steal our joy because they shift our focus from the Lord to ourselves. During these difficult times, we tend to forget our Lord's great love for us and listen to Satan's deceitful whispers.



Day 1

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Though others may forget us or forsake us, our Lord always remembers us for he has engraved us on the palms of his hands.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What are some of the disappointments that you have faced in your life?

Day 2

- **KEY THOUGHT:** We must trust the Lord even when the light turns to darkness and when the mountain top becomes a valley bottom.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Which of Satan's lies do you tend to succumb to the most?

Day 3

- **KEY THOUGHT:** As we stand at the gates of eternity, everything will seem right.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How can maintaining an eternal perspective help us to deal with our disappointments?

Day 4

- **KEY THOUGHT:** God lavishes his love on us, always seeking our best from an eternal perspective.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Will God withhold something that is in our best interest (Psalm 84:11)? How does this encourage you?

Day 5

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Reflecting on the greatness of God enables us to move past the hurts and disappointments of this life.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How can focusing on the Lord keep you from becoming discouraged and disillusioned?

WEEK 6: Imprisoned by Unforgiveness



Day 1

- **KEY THOUGHT:** With God living in us, we have the power to forgive others just as Christ forgave us.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What do you learn about forgiveness from the Matthew 18 passage?

Day 2

- **KEY THOUGHT:** The heart of forgiveness rests our understanding of how much we have been forgiven.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What does it mean to forgive? Why is forgiveness so difficult?

Day 3

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Revenge and retaliation are never the answer— they only create greater problems and more issues.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Have you ever felt betrayed by a family member or a friend? Explain.

Day 4

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Once the seed of bitterness takes root, it produces its sour fruit, imprisoning us by turning our gaze inwards and poisoning our lives with self-pity.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What should we take captive (2 Corinthians 10:5)? Why is this so important? What happens when we do not take our thoughts captive?

Day 5

- **KEY THOUGHT:** In forgiving others, we allow God, as our protector and avenger, to administer perfect justice and to right our wrongs.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How does it encourage you to know that the Lord has seen every hurt and offense ever committed against you?

Can you believe that we are almost done with the study?

Hopefully, God has enabled your group to better understand the nature of joy and how to overcome some of their joy-stealers.

If some of your members seem to fall back into their old habits, you may want to gently remind them that God did not redeem us because we were a perfect people, but because we were a sinful people. We will make mistakes and we will fail at times. Thankfully God's grace carries us!

Theme for the Week

We will never experience true abundant joy if we have seeds of bitterness, unforgiveness, or resentment in our hearts.

WEEK 7: Troubled by Trials



Day 1

- **KEY THOUGHT:** The road to glory is strewn with hardship and suffering, yet God's joy for us is deeper than any situation we face.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Does righteous behavior always receive a positive *earthly* reward? Explain.

Day 2

- **KEY THOUGHT:** God's primary concern for our life is not our comfort but our character.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How does Paul and Silas's behavior impact those around them in Acts 16:25-34?

Day 3

- **KEY THOUGHT:** God lovingly allows us to be sifted because there is chaff in our lives that needs to be removed.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Why does Jesus allow Satan to sift Peter? Why does Jesus allow Satan to sift us?

Day 4

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Our suffering becomes sweet as we realize that trials are special times with our Lord, treasured moments of growth.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Share what you learned in the exercise with the personalized scale.

Day 5

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Trials are a divine appointment by God sovereignly orchestrated to help us grow and mature in our faith.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Compare what happened to James to what happened to Peter in Acts 12:1-11. How do you witness God's sovereignty in this situation? How can you apply this to your life?

Theme for the Week

Remembering that trials prove our character, enable us to know God more fully, and will provide an eternal harvest enable us to rejoice during difficulties and hardships.

WEEK 8: Abounding in Thankfulness



Day 1

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Thankfulness magnifies our joy as we reflect on God's goodness to us.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Have you ever had to lose a blessing in order to realize its value and become thankful for it? Explain.

I cannot believe our time has come to an end. Thank you for persevering and encouraging your participants. I know it has not always been easy for you as the Leader, but the harvest is great!

Because of you people are able to better know the Lord, His Word and His desires for their lives.

Thank you!!

Day 2

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Complaining and criticizing often stem from a sense of entitlement, in which we feel that we deserve better or are entitled to certain privileges.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** As the people grumble to Moses and Aaron, against whom are they really grumbling (Exodus 16:8b)?

Day 3

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Realizing that God did not have to make us, but willingly chose to do so and that he rejoices over us should create great joy and thankfulness in us.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What are some creative ways in which Christians can curb their complaining?

Day 4

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Creating memorials in our lives helps us to remember God's gracious provision and goodness to us.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Why do you think it is important to not forget what the Lord has done for us?

Day 5

- **KEY THOUGHT:** If standing at the foot of the cross does not cause us to overflow with thankfulness and joy, then we have not stood there long enough.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How has your salvation changed your life? How can reflecting on your salvation enable you to remain more thankful and joyous?

Theme for the Week

Thankfulness is the jewel of joy because as we reflect on God's goodness to us through creation and salvation, we overflow with joy

Notes

