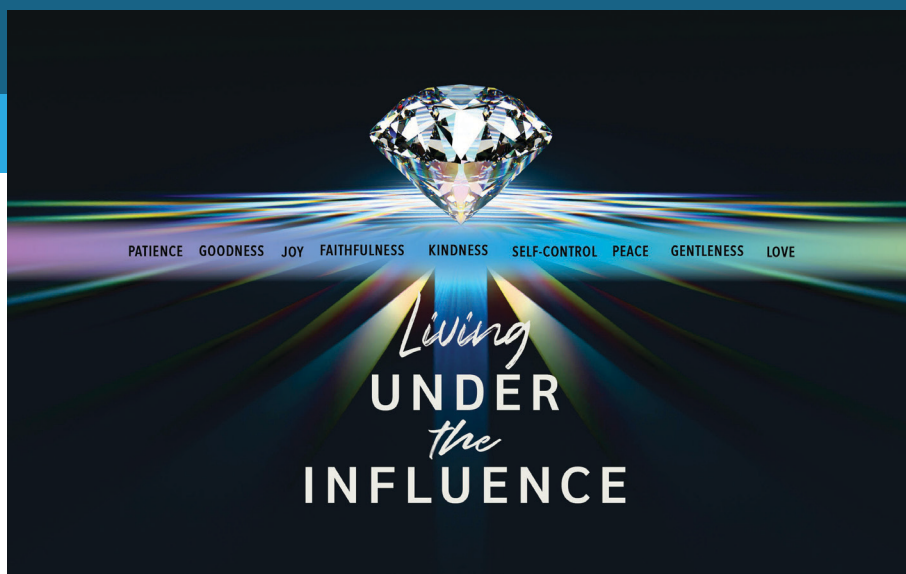


DAILY DEVOTIONAL

A 5-Day Reflection Guide

Joy



SERMON SERIES:
LIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

WEEK & TOPIC:
WEEK 3 / JOY

DATES:
JULY 20–24, 2026

This Week's Big Idea

Joy is not something Jesus simply gives us—it is something He shares with us. The fruit of the Spirit is not our version of joy; it is His joy growing in us. Happiness depends on what happens to me. Joy depends on Who lives in me.

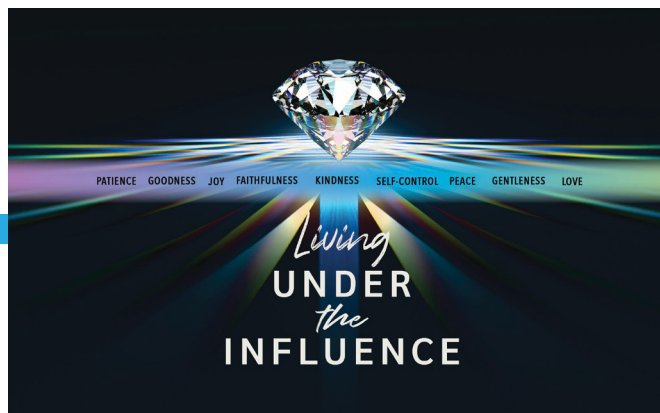
LIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Day 1: My Joy

TODAYS SCRIPTURE

John 15:11 (NLT) “I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!”

Galatians 5:22 (NLT) “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace...”



TODAY'S SEED

When you hear the word **joy**, what comes to mind? Maybe you picture someone smiling, laughing or celebrating. Maybe you think of a vacation, Christmas morning, or a special moment with your family. Those moments certainly bring happiness. But are they the kind of joy Jesus was talking about?

In John 15 Jesus doesn't simply promise joy He says, “**My joy**.” That changes

everything. Jesus isn't offering us a better mood. He's inviting us into His own life.

Think about where these words are spoken. Jesus is just hours away from the cross. He knows betrayal and suffering is coming. He knows the disciples will scatter. Yet, in the shadow of the cross, He talks about joy. Not because life is easy, but because **His joy isn't rooted in circumstances, it's**

rooted in His relationship with the Father. That's the joy Jesus wants to share with us.

The fruit of the Spirit isn't asking us to manufacture a cheerful personality. It is the Holy Spirit reproducing **the joy of Jesus** inside us. That's why true fruit always reveals its source. An apple reveals an apple tree. A grape reveals a vine. And the fruit of joy reveals a life connected to Jesus.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

The Greek word for **joy is chara** (χαρά), a word closely related to **charis** (χάρις), meaning grace. Maybe you think of joy as accidental, because biblical joy grows out of God's grace. Joy isn't produced by favorable circumstances; it is produced by God's presence and His undeserved favor remaining in our lives. When Jesus says, “**My joy**,” He is doing something extraordinary.

Notice the progression in John 15. Remain in Me, remain in My love, Then... “**My joy may be in you.**” Joy isn't the starting point, abiding is. The closer we remain to Christ, the more His joy begins to shape our lives.

DON'T MISS THIS

**Jesus didn't promise a life without trouble.
He promised His joy in the middle of it.**

TEND THE GARDEN

Spend a few quiet moments reflecting.

1. When you hear the word joy, how have you typically defined it?
2. How is Jesus' joy different from the world's idea of happiness?
3. Is your emotional state usually determined more by your circumstances or by your relationship with Christ?
4. What would change in your daily life if you truly believed Jesus wants to share **His joy** with you?

WATER THE SEED

Today, every time something unexpected interrupts your plans, pause before reacting. Instead, quietly pray: "Jesus, help me respond from Your joy rather than my circumstances. Let that simple prayer become a reminder that your source is not what happens around you—it is Who lives within you."

GROW THIS IN ME

Father,

Thank You for sending Jesus, who not only saved me but invited me to share in His very life. Forgive me for the times I've looked for lasting joy in temporary things. Teach me to remain connected to Jesus, trusting that as I abide in Him, His joy will begin to shape my thoughts, attitudes, and my responses. Holy Spirit, continue producing the fruit of joy in my life. May people see something different in me—not because life is always easy, but because Christ is alive within me.

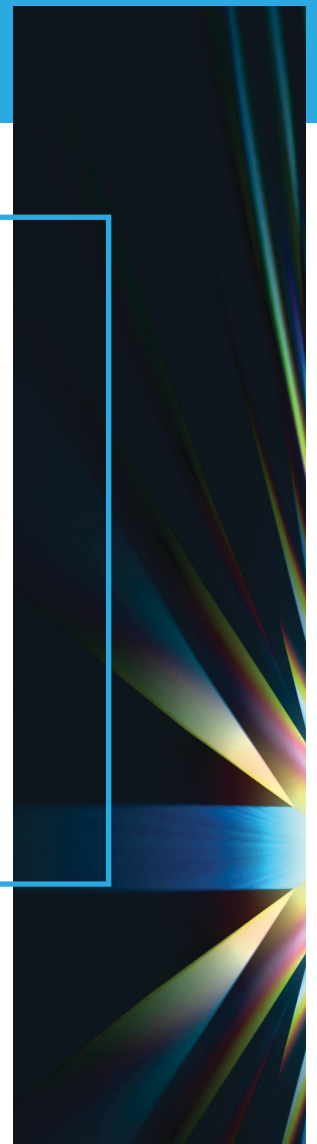
In Jesus' name,
Amen.

**GOD PRODUCES THE FRUIT. WE CREATE THE CONDITIONS.
STAY CONNECTED TO THE VINE. STAY PLANTED. TRUST THE
PROCESS. THE FRUIT IS COMING.**

LOOKING AHEAD

Day Two – Two Different Currents

The world spends billions of dollars promising happiness. Jesus offers something completely different. Tomorrow we'll discover why happiness and joy aren't simply different emotions—they're two entirely different currents flowing from two very different sources.



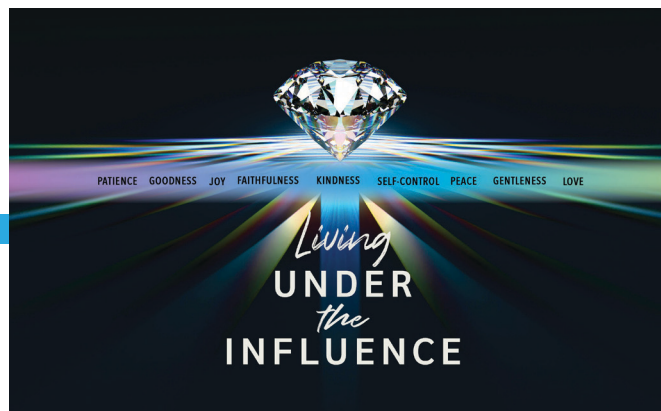
LIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Day 2: Two Different Currents

TODAYS SCRIPTURE

John 15:4–5 (NLT) “Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine... Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will produce much fruit.”

Galatians 5:22 (NLT) “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: ... joy...”



TODAY'S SEED

Have you ever noticed how often people use the words **happy** and **joy** as if they mean the same thing? “I just want to be happy.” “I hope they find happiness.” “If it makes you happy, go for it.” Our culture has built an entire philosophy around happiness.

But Jesus offers something much deeper. Imagine someone handing you your favorite candy bar. For a moment, you're happy and you enjoy every bite. But before long, it's gone. The moment passes and the sugar rush fades. Soon you're looking for

something else to satisfy you. There's nothing wrong with enjoying a candy bar. Or a vacation. Or a promotion. Or a beautiful day with family. Those are gifts from God.

The problem comes when we expect temporary things to produce lasting joy. That's a burden they were never meant to carry. Jesus never promised a life where everything would go our way. He promised something better. He promised Himself. That's why He says, “**Remain in Me.**” The branch doesn't survive because the weather

is perfect. It survives because it's connected to the vine.

The same is true for us. Our joy doesn't grow because life is always pleasant. It grows because Christ's life continues flowing into ours. The world chases happiness. Followers of Jesus cultivate abiding. One depends on changing circumstances. The other depends on an unchanging Savior. Those are two completely different currents. One current pulls us toward whatever feels good in the moment. The other carries us toward becoming more like Christ.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

The New Testament word **remain** (Greek: *menō, μένω*) is one of John's favorite words. It means **to stay, continue, dwell, make your home, or remain connected**. Jesus uses it repeatedly in John 15 because fruit doesn't come from striving. It comes from abiding.

Branches don't produce fruit by trying harder. They produce fruit by remaining connected to their source of life. The same is true spiritually. The Holy Spirit produces joy not because our circumstances are favorable, but because Christ's life continues flowing into ours. This also helps explain why biblical joy can exist alongside hardship and sorrow, because joy was never dependent upon outward conditions. Joy is rooted in an abiding relationship with God.

DON'T MISS THIS

Don't miss this: Happiness comes from what happens around you. Joy grows from Who you remain connected to.

TEND THE GARDEN

Spend a few quiet moments reflecting.

1. What circumstances tend to determine your happiness?
2. Have you ever expected temporary things to give you lasting satisfaction?
3. Which current has been shaping your responses lately—the current of happiness or the current of Christ?

WATER THE SEED

Practice abiding instead of reacting.

Throughout today, pay attention to your reactions. When something good happens... Thank God. When something frustrating happens... Pause before reacting and remind yourself: **“My joy isn’t determined by what happened to me today. My joy is rooted in Christ.”**

GROW THIS IN ME

Father,

Father, Thank You for every good gift You’ve placed in my life. Help me enjoy those blessings without depending on them for lasting joy. Forgive me for the times I’ve looked to temporary things to satisfy needs that only You can meet. Teach me to remain in Christ every day, trusting that His life is enough. Holy Spirit, keep drawing me back to Jesus. Let His joy become stronger than my circumstances, deeper than my emotions, and steadier than the changing seasons of life. May my life reveal that my greatest source of joy is not what happens around me, but Who lives within me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

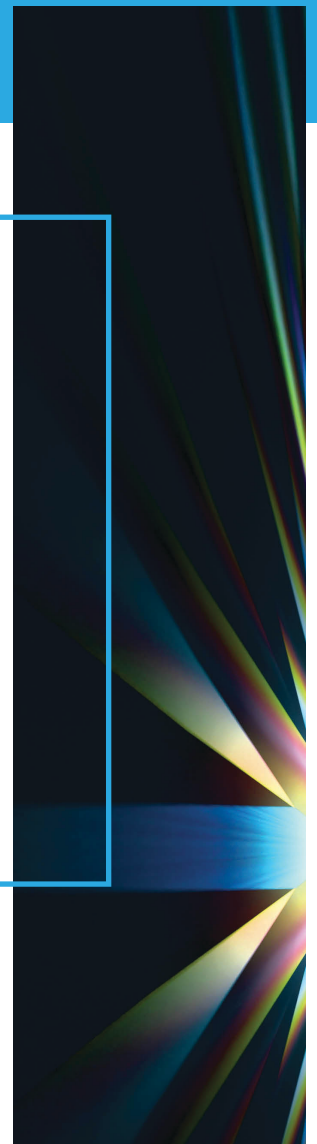
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LOOKING AHEAD

Day Three – The Joy Set Before Him

Jesus was called “a Man of Sorrows,” yet Hebrews says He endured the cross “for the joy set before Him.” Tomorrow we’ll discover that biblical joy isn’t the absence of suffering—it’s the presence of a purpose greater than suffering.



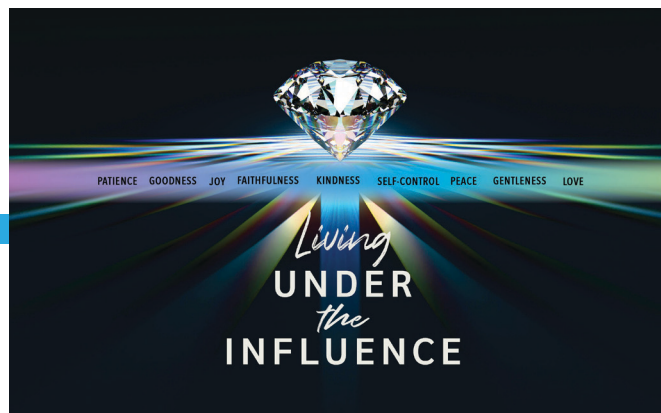
LIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Day 3: The Joy Set Before Him

TODAYS SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 12:2 (NLT) “Because of the joy awaiting Him, He endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now He is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne.”

Isaiah 53:3 (NLT) “He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.”



TODAY'S SEED

If someone asked you to describe Jesus, would the word **joyful** come to mind? Many people picture Jesus as serious, focuses, compassionate, wise and powerful. But joyful? Sometimes we struggle to imagine that.

I think that part of the reason is because Scripture also calls Him **“a man of sorrows.”** Jesus knew grief. He wept at Lazarus’ tomb. He experienced rejection, He was betrayed by a close friend and even misunderstood by His own family. He was mocked, beaten, and crucified. Yet Hebrews tells us something powerful. **“For the joy set**

before Him, He endured the cross.”

It doesn’t say Jesus enjoyed the cross. The cross wasn’t pleasant. It was agonizing. **Joy didn’t remove the suffering. Joy gave Him the strength to endure it.**

This is an important difference. Our world often believes joy means the absence of difficulty. Jesus shows us something far deeper. Joy is the confidence that God’s purpose is greater than today’s pain. Jesus could endure Friday because He could see Sunday. He could embrace the cross because He knew resurrection was

coming. He could suffer because He knew redemption was being accomplished.

The kind of joy He offers us is not the promise that life always be easy, or that there will never be any suffering. There are seasons when you may not feel happy, there will be times where tears and disappointments will bring questions. Even then, the joy of Christ can remain.

Joy doesn’t ask, “How can I escape this?” Joy asks, “How will God use this?”

BENEATH THE SURFACE

The writer of Hebrews says Jesus endured the cross **“for the joy set before Him.”** The phrase **“set before”** describes something placed in view, like a runner keeping his eyes fixed on the finish line instead of the pain of the race. Jesus wasn’t ignoring the suffering. He was looking beyond it. Throughout Scripture, joy is often connected to hope. Not wishful thinking, but confident expectation rooted in God’s promises. This explains why biblical joy and sorrow can exist together. The apostles grieved. David wept. Paul experienced heartbreak. Jesus Himself shed tears. Yet none of those experiences cancelled joy because joy was anchored in God’s faithfulness rather than temporary circumstances. **Biblical joy doesn’t deny reality. It interprets reality through the promises of God.**

DON'T MISS THIS

Don’t miss this: Joy doesn’t remove the cross. It gives us the strength to carry it with hope.

TEND THE GARDEN

Spend a few quiet moments reflecting.

1. Are you waiting for your circumstances to improve before you believe you can have joy?
2. What difficult situation might God be using to shape something eternal in your life?
3. How does Jesus' example change the way you view suffering?
4. What promise of God can you hold onto today, even if life feels uncertain?

WATER THE SEED

When you encounter a difficult moment today, resist the urge to ask, **“Why is this happening?”** Instead, try praying, **“Lord, help me see what You’re producing through this.”**

Purpose doesn’t erase pain. But it often gives us the strength to endure it.

GROW THIS IN ME

Father,

Father, Thank You for sending Jesus, who understands every sorrow and every struggle I face. Thank You that He never asks me to walk a road He hasn’t already walked Himself. When life is difficult, help me keep my eyes fixed on You. Give me the kind of joy that isn’t shaken by disappointment or fear. Teach me to trust that You are working even when I cannot yet see the outcome. Holy Spirit, produce within me the joy of Christ—a joy rooted in hope, sustained by purpose, and anchored in Your unchanging promises. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

In Jesus’ name,

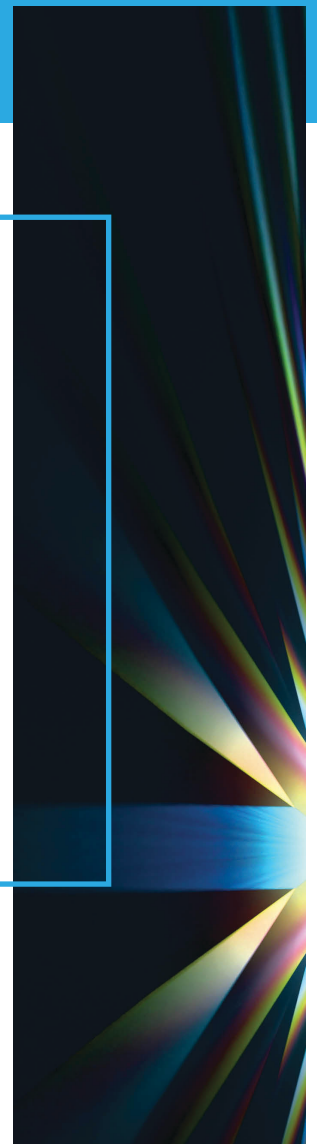
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LOOKING AHEAD

Day Four – None of These Things Move Me

Paul knew prison was waiting. He knew suffering was ahead. Yet he kept walking toward God’s calling. Tomorrow we’ll discover why the joy of Christ gave Paul the strength to say, **“None of these things move me.”**

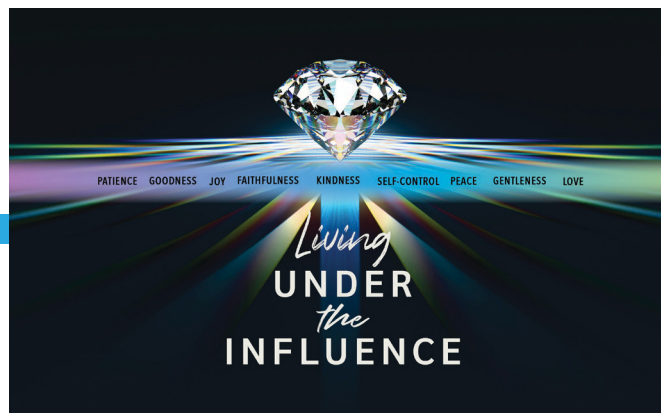


LIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Day 4: None of These Things Move Me

TODAYS SCRIPTURE

Acts 20:22–24 (NKJV) “And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem... except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus...”



TODAY'S SEED

What would it take to make you quit? Maybe disappointment, criticism, failure, fear or just simply getting tired?

For Paul, it was something much greater. The Holy Spirit had already told him exactly what was waiting in Jerusalem. Chains, arrest, suffering, and imprisonment. And if that wasn't enough, Acts 21 tells us that a prophet named Agabus takes Paul's belt, ties up his own hands and feet, and declares, **“This is what will happen to the owner of this belt.”** The believers begin pleading with Paul. “Please don't go.” Can you blame them? From a human perspective, their advice made perfect sense.

If your highest goal is comfort...stay home, if your greatest priority is avoiding pain...choose another road. But Paul was living under a different current. He quietly says, **“None of these things move me.”** At first glance, that sounds almost fearless. But Paul isn't pretending suffering doesn't matter. He's saying something much deeper. **His circumstances no longer determine his direction.** Why? Because he had already settled the question of what mattered most.

Paul continues, **“I do not count my life dear to myself...”** In other words, “My comfort isn't my highest value.” “My calling is.” Then he gives the reason.

“...so that I may finish my race with joy.” That changes everything. Paul wasn't trying to survive. Paul wanted to finish with Joy!

Joy gave him the strength to keep moving toward God's purpose. That's exactly what Jesus did as well, the joy set before Him didn't eliminate the cross, instead Joy enabled Him to endure it.

And now that same joy was carrying Paul toward his own calling, Jesus Joy had become Paul's joy and that's what the Holy Spirit wants to produce in us. **A life so rooted in Christ that hardship no longer gets the final word.**

BENEATH THE SURFACE

When Paul says, **“I do not count my life dear to myself,”** he uses the Greek word **logizomai**. This is a bookkeeping term that means **to calculate, reckon, evaluate, or assign value**. Paul is describing a decision he had already made. The accounting was finished and the books were closed. He had already determined what mattered most. Nothing held greater value than finishing the mission Christ had entrusted to him.

Earlier in the verse Paul says, **“None of these things move me.”** The idea is that suffering would not determine his direction.

DON'T MISS THIS

Don't miss this: Joy doesn't keep difficult things from happening. It keeps difficult things from deciding who you become.

TEND THE GARDEN

Spend a few quiet moments reflecting.

1. What circumstances are most likely to tempt you to give up?
2. What “chains” or challenges are you facing right now?
3. If you were to “do the math” like Paul, what would you say matters most in your life?
4. Is there an area where God is inviting you to choose purpose over comfort?

WATER THE SEED

Today, when something discouraging happens, don't immediately ask, **“How can I get out of this?”** Instead ask, **Lord, how can I remain faithful in this?”** Joy often grows strongest when we keep taking the next faithful step.

GROW THIS IN ME

Father,

Father, Thank You for the example of Paul, who refused to let fear or hardship determine the direction of his life. Thank You for reminding me that Your calling is always greater than my comfort. Help me settle the question of what mattered most before difficult days arrive. Give me the courage to keep walking with You even when the road is uncertain. Holy Spirit, fill me with the same joy that strengthened Jesus and sustained Paul. Let that joy become my strength to remain faithful until I finish the race You've marked out for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In Jesus' name,

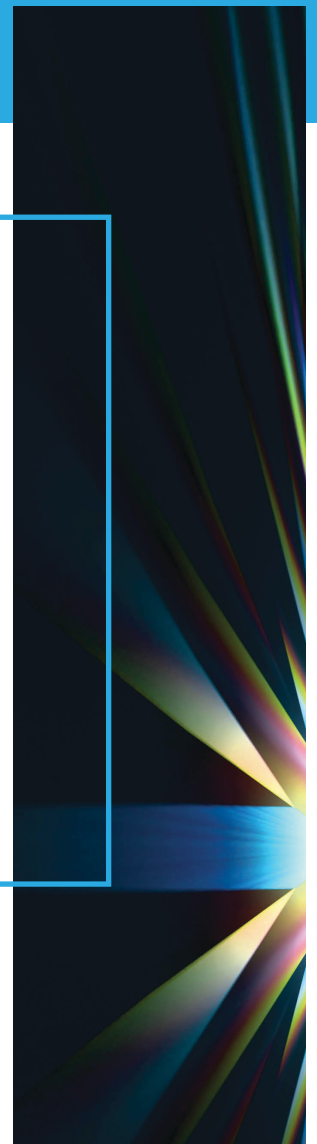
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LOOKING AHEAD

Day Five – The Joy of the Lord Is Your Strength

Jesus promised **“My joy.”** Paul demonstrated that joy. Tomorrow we'll discover why Nehemiah could declare, **“The joy of the Lord is your strength,”** and why that same joy is still enough to carry us all the way to the finish line.



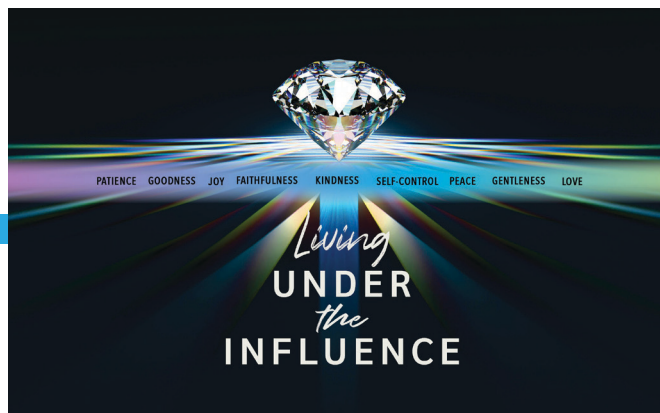
LIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Day 5: The Joy of the Lord Is Your Strength

TODAYS SCRIPTURE

Nehemiah 8:10 (NKJV) "...Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

John 15:11 (NLT) "I have told you these things so that you will be filled with **My joy**. Yes, your joy will overflow!"



TODAY'S SEED

Have you ever noticed whose joy Nehemiah talks about? He doesn't say, "Your joy is your strength, or, when everything is going your way you'll be strong." He says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

That's exactly what Jesus promised hundreds of years later. "My joy..." This week we've discovered something beautiful. Jesus doesn't simply give us joy, instead He shares His own joy with us. That means **the strength we need isn't something we have to manufacture**, it flows from remaining connected to Him.

When Nehemiah spoke those words, God's people had just returned from

exile. Jerusalem's walls had been rebuilt. Ezra stood before the people and read the Book of the Law. For many, it was the first time they had heard God's Word in years. As they listened, they began to weep. As they realized how far they had wandered, how much they had lost, and how desperately they needed God.

Then Nehemiah says something unexpected. **"Do not sorrow..."** Why? Because there was nothing to grieve? No, there was plenty to grieve. The consequences were real and there were many challenges still facing them. Yet in that moment, God wanted His people to understand something.

Their **strength** would not come from dwelling on yesterday's failures. Their strength would come from His presence with them today. That is still true for us. The joy of the Lord doesn't erase our struggles, it gives us strength in the middle of them. It strengthens us to forgive. To persevere. To keep loving, serving, believing and running to win the race.

Joy isn't merely a pleasant emotion, Joy is spiritual strength for the journey. This is why Paul could finish his race. It's why Jesus could endure the cross and you and I can keep walking with Christ today. Not because of your strength, but because His joy has become your strength.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

The Hebrew word translated strength in Nehemiah 8:10 is **ma'oz**. It can describe **a place of refuge, a fortress, a stronghold, or a source of protection and strength**. Nehemiah isn't merely saying God's joy makes us feel stronger. He's saying God's joy becomes a place of security, a refuge. The joy of the Lord is a place of stability when everything else feels uncertain.

Jesus says, "My joy..." Paul says, **"None of these things move me...so that I may finish my race with joy."** Nehemiah says, **"The joy of the Lord is your strength."** Three different writers, from three different generations, all with one unchanging truth. God's joy gives His people the strength to remain faithful.

DON'T MISS THIS

Don't miss this: The joy of the Lord isn't simply a feeling to enjoy, it is strength to faithfully finish the race God has given you.

TEND THE GARDEN

Spend a few quiet moments reflecting.

1. What has God taught you about joy this week that you didn't understand before?
2. How has God's joy already sustained you through seasons you never thought you would survive?
3. As you look ahead, what would it mean to live from Christ's joy instead of your circumstances?

WATER THE SEED

Today, thank God for one difficult season that ultimately deepened your faith. Not because the hardship was good. But because God proved Himself faithful through it. Then ask Him to help you carry that same confidence into whatever lies ahead.

GROW THIS IN ME

Father,

Father, Thank You for this week and for showing me that true joy is found in Jesus alone. Thank You that You don't ask me to manufacture joy, but invite me to share in the joy of Christ Himself. When I grow weary, remind me that Your joy is my strength. When life becomes difficult, help me remain connected to Jesus, trusting that His life is flowing through mine. Holy Spirit, continue producing the fruit of joy in me until it becomes evident in the way I think, the way I love, the way I serve, and the way I endure. May my life point others to the One whose joy never fades. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

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PROCESS. THE FRUIT IS COMING.**

This week you've discovered that joy is far more than a positive emotion. You've seen that happiness rises and falls with circumstances, but joy is rooted in an unchanging Savior.

The fruit of joy isn't something we produce for Jesus. It's the life of Jesus being reproduced in us by the Holy Spirit. As you continue this journey, remember that every fruit builds on the one before it. Patience taught us to trust God's process. Goodness taught us to trust God's character. Joy has taught us to endure because Christ Himself lives within us.

