

Rejoice!

The Bible tells us to “Rejoice in the Lord always” but how can we find joy in difficult times?

Introduction

Depending upon the circumstance, it can be easy to find joy. The Bible tells us to “Rejoice in the Lord always” but how can we find joy in difficult times? It is easy to rejoice when life is good or we just received good news or a breakthrough that we have been praying for.

If rejoicing means to show great joy or delight, then to rejoice always must be a behavior that can be developed. We can have glad and joyful hearts when we have a heart committed to Jesus. Even in the darkest times, the Holy Spirit, the Great Counselor, will turn a heavy heart into one that rejoices.

The Apostle Paul talks about rejoicing in the Lord and how to maintain a joyful attitude. Let’s read Philippians 4:4-8

Philippians 4:4-8

(4) Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (5) Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. (6) Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (7) And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (8) Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

This passage of scripture starts with an exhortation of rejoicing in the Lord always. It doesn’t say to rejoice only sometimes or when you feel like it. It doesn’t say to only rejoice when you see great things happen or witness a miracle, the scripture tells us to always rejoice. The author didn’t stop with this instruction, no, instead, he tells us how to always have a joyful heart. He gives us the prescription to follow so that we have the right heart attitude.

Display Gentleness

The first step to rejoicing in the Lord is to have gentleness.

Philippians 4:5

(5) Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Gentleness is talked about a lot in the Bible, especially when describing Jesus. It also is often coupled with humility. Jesus often referred to himself as gentle and humble.

Matthew 11:29 says

Matthew 11:29

(29) Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.



I have never met a person who was humble and gruff. I have never met a humble person who struggled with anger. As a matter of fact, when I think of humble people, the ones who stick out in my mind are very gentle. They are people who are gentle with their words, they are gentle with their relationships, and they are gentle in their actions.

To allow our gentleness to be evident to all means to be humble like Jesus. When we are gentle with others we are kind, empathetic, loving, without judgment, and meek.

Do not be Anxious

The second step to rejoicing in the Lord always is to not be anxious about anything.

Philippians 4:6-7 says:

Philippians 4:6-7

(6) Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (7) And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

There is a lot of things that can cause anxiety in our day-to-day lives. With so much uncertainty in the world, violence on the rise, the lack of healthy relationships, addictions, and many other things, it is hard to not allow worry into our lives.

However, the Bible gives us the prescription for worry and anxiety, and it is prayer. Not just pleading or bargaining with God. It is more than that, it is heartfelt gratitude. Why do you think these verses say, “by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.”? It is because when we change our focus from the “what if’s” and worrisome thoughts. Instead, shifting our thoughts to what we are thankful for. When we do this, our flesh loses the battle as we turn our eyes upward toward Jesus and what he has done for us instead of thinking inwardly about our circumstances and emotions.

When we choose to hold every thought captive by bringing our requests to God with thanksgiving, then we are promised peace. Not just any kind of peace, this peace transcends all understanding. In other words, it cannot be comprehended. It is a peace that replaces turmoil. It is a peace that replaces heartache, it is a peace that replaces anxiety. This peace doesn’t make sense because logically, in difficult times, the world says we should be anxious, we should be worried, we should be struggling to sleep at night or concentrate at work. This peace is only found in a relationship with Jesus. This peace is the peace that tells the storm to “Be still!” This is a peace that comes when we rejoice in the Lord always.

Hold Every Thought Captive

The third step to rejoicing in the Lord always is to hold every thought captive. Philippians 4:8 says:

Philippians 4:8

(8) Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.



To have a heart full of joy means to be thinking the correct things. This scripture tells us the thoughts we are to have in our minds. The reason for this instruction is that our battle is not against flesh and blood. There is an enemy of your soul who lies to you. Satan tells you things that are not true. He wants to breed anxiety and depression. He does this by getting you to believe things that are not true. We must hold every thought captive. Let's read what the Bible tells about this in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

2 Corinthians 10:4-5

(4) The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. (5) We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

This scripture says that we have the power to make our thoughts obedient to Christ. How do we do that? When we have thoughts of judging others, anxious thoughts, sinful or lustful thoughts, there is only one thing we can do. We rebuke these thoughts in the name of Jesus. If we are exposing our eyes or ears to something that is provoking these thoughts, we remove those things from our lives.

We then choose to think about things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, and excellent or praiseworthy. In doing so, we replace the evil thoughts with good thoughts. This takes practice as many of us struggle with negative self-talk. Some of us are conditioned to think the worst instead of the best. Taking captive of every thought means being proactive and anticipating what will lead to negativity. For example, watching the news or reading the newspaper. If you find yourself worried or depressed after these activities, avoid them.

Conclusion

To rejoice in the Lord always takes practice. It is possible. We can have a joyful heart in every situation, good or bad. Philippians lays out the prescription:

1. Display Gentleness
2. Do not be Anxious, and;
3. Hold Every Thought Captive

So, friends, rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice!

