

## Instant Joy

### *Rejoice Always in Jesus' Good News*

Few phrases bring as much joy to our daughter's heart as the four words: "We're going to Disneyland!" One year, as we started driving to California, we surprised her with the news that she'd soon see Mickey — and she lost her mind! Good news has a way of bringing instant joy and anticipation (Prov. 15:30).

We're moving on from discussing servanthood in our [Cross Training](#) journey, to another Christlike quality — joy. Joy comes when we receive the gospel, build our hope, respond with thanksgiving, and teach others through evangelism. Wherever the gospel goes, joy seems to follow (e.g., Acts 2:46; 8:8,39; 13:52). What is it about the good news that gladdens people's hearts?

### **What You Need to Know**

The gospel — or good news — declares the reign of a new King — "our God reigns!" Right before Isaiah introduces the Servant "*pierced for our transgressions*" (Isa. 52:13-53:12), he proclaims:

*"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (Isa. 52:7).*

The news of God's kingdom brings with it peace, happiness, and deliverance from our worst oppressors. Our king's victory is our victory. Jesus, our God and King (Isa. 9:6-7; John 20:28), arose to reign — and so we will live with him as heirs of God (Rom. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:11-13; Gal. 3:26-29). Jesus has "*abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*" (2 Tim. 1:10). In his death and resurrection, he defeated sin (Heb. 9:26), "*triumphing over*" the rulers of darkness that used to reign over us (Col. 1:13; 2:15). He came to "*destroy ... the devil and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery*" (Heb. 2:14-15).

Imagine you're imprisoned on death row, and someone walks in and says, "you're free to go now." That's what happens when you receive the gospel: your execution stayed, your innocence declared, and your shackles unbound. It's hard even to process our enormous reversal of fortune!

We don't just have hope for a better future; the gospel changes our life now, as we "*rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory*" (1 Peter 1:8). The burden of guilt, fear, and hatred lifted (1 John 4:10-21), we see God's love for us and discover a new identity, purpose, and strength (Eph. 3:16-21). God's Spirit leads us to different choices and a new intimacy with God (Rom. 8:13-17), mirroring Christ's closeness (Gal. 4:6).

### **What You Need to Do**

Make rejoicing your "new normal" — something you "*always*" do (1 Thess. 5:16) and notice when it leaves you. Nehemiah counseled people not to "*be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength*"

(Neh. 8:10). If strength comes from our joy, it shouldn't surprise us when Satan tries to bury it under a mountain of forgetfulness and trouble. There's a time to be sad (Eccl. 3:4), but our joy "*in the Lord*" can stabilize us even in seasons of "*trouble*" (Phil. 4:4-14).

Don't hide your gladness. Joy can become contagious (cf. Acts 2:46-47) when you put it "*on a stand*" instead of under a basket (Matt. 5:14-15). The Thessalonian disciples "*received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit*" and "*became an example to all*" as "*the word of the Lord sounded forth from*" them (1 Thess. 1:6-8). Rejoice when you see the gospel spreading (Phil. 1:15-18; Rom. 16:19) and look for opportunities "*to proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*" (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Reflect often on where you'd be if you never heard about Christ. Jesus spoke of some who received the word with joy but never grew deep enough roots to persevere through difficulties (Mark 4:16-17). Some forget their first love (Rev. 2:4), but others deepen their devotion, appreciation, and joy with each passing year. May we say with the old hymn, "I love to tell the story for those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest."

### Through the Week

- **Read** — Luke 2:22-38; Acts 8:26-39; Rom. 15:8-13; 1 Thess. 1:2-10; Isa. 52:7-53:12
- **Reflect** — Ask yourself, "*Do I allow troubles to rob me of my joy?*"
- **Request** — Pray, "*Oh Lord, make known to me the path of life and fill me with joy in your presence*" (cf. Psalm 16:11).
- **Respond** — Post a list of ways your salvation gives you joy somewhere others can see it.
- **Reach Out** — Ask someone, "*How would your life be different if you never obeyed the gospel?*"