

Joy is a Choice

The "American way" is to be a problem-solver. As resourceful Americans we want to be strong and independent. Some people take problem-solving to the extreme, gravitating into worry as they go overboard with an obsession on problem solving. When a person's main focus in life is constantly on their problems, they lose sight of the blessings they have already received. They are consumed with the uphill journey of trying to solve problem after problem, and fail to actually live life as God intended. Sarah Young, author of *Jesus Calling*, says: "Joy is not dependent on our circumstances." God intends for joy to be a "by-product of living in His Presence." (Sarah Young).



So, how do we live in His Presence? The Bible tells us to turn our issues over to God. God has already worked out His solution, which may differ from ours but is the best for the long haul. Then, you can approach life with a sense of Joy because God is in control. You accomplish this by communicating with the Lord through constant prayer. Ask Him to take on your burdens, and then let them go. Sarah Young wrote, "If you make problem-solving secondary to the goal of living close to God, you can find Joy even in your most difficult days." I know this is easier said than done, but give it a try. Give your burdens up to God.

Instead of trying to wrestle control of your life away from God, place your life in His hands. He is the ultimate problem-solver. Even in difficult times, *In all things God works for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28)*. The verse says "all things." The Bible tells us: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances..." (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Communicate with God throughout your day, making him the guide for your everyday life. Our Pastor has often said, "When you draw closer to God, He draws closer to you. Ask God to help you and trust that He is with you. God's Word reminds us that *the LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged*" (Deuteronomy 31:8).

When things are difficult, our first reaction is to be down on life – the opposite of joy. *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. (James 1:2-4)*. At times, it is difficult to embrace this verse because we always want things to be going well. Give God a chance to work something good through even the most difficult circumstances. As each issue comes up, go to the Lord in prayer. In your prayer, don't tell him what your answer is but listen for His voice in your mind. Build a close working relationship with Him. Then, you can live in Joy because He loves you.

Choose God! Choose Joy!

Questions: What problems are you trying to deal with alone and haven't given them up to God? Could you feel God's Presence when you put them in God's hands?

The Bible says: *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. For I am the LORD, your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, Do not fear; I will help you (Isiah 41:10 and 13).*

Closing Prayer: Dear Lord. It is difficult for us not to micro-manage life, trying to problem-solve instead of trustingly putting our lives in your hands. We pray that we will learn to turn our lives wholly over to you and seek your peace. We want to live in your Presence. Amen.

The original idea for this devotion is from Our Daily Bread, September-November 2023 issue, and Jesus Calling, by Sarah Young.