

## You Can Have It Both Ways

In my days as a soccer referee, I occasionally ran into game situations when several fouls were called against one team, and no fouls were called against the other. The officiating seemed one-sided. Moments later, there was a very minor contact, and the team that was feeling slighted expected a foul to be called on the opposing team. Invariably, I heard a lone voice from the crowd saying, “Call it both ways, ref.”



Is it possible for followers of Jesus to have it both ways – to be joyful and afraid simultaneously? There are many frightful times in the Bible when an angel appears and says, “Don’t be afraid.” Often, they are at times when God is intervening in a human situation, ready to announce some good news. So, how can we be afraid and joyful at the same time?

When the women came to Jesus’ tomb and found it empty, they were afraid. They had good reason. Jesus had been crucified right before their eyes and now the Lord’s body was missing. Where had the Romans taken Jesus? The women were unaware of the joyful “good news” to follow. Then, the angels appeared and said, *Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, he has risen, just as He said He would.* What happened next shows we can be afraid yet joyful at the same time. *So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell His disciples (Matthew 28:8).*

God wants you to experience joy despite the situations of your life. “Expect difficulties and refuse to let adversity keep you from the joy of knowing that God is with you.” Trust God, and walk confidently along your life path. “God doesn’t want you to give in to joyless living by letting worries about the present or the future weigh you down.” Remember *that neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God ... (Romans 8:38-39).*

When life seems out of control, put everything in Jesus’ hands. “Do not be afraid” is written throughout the Bible because trusting Jesus during difficult times is central to our faith. We know that Jesus is with us always. When things are tough, train your mind to focus on Jesus so that Jesus’ joy comes into you. Obey his commands, walk with courage, and remain in his love (read John 15:10-11 below). God wants you to be joyful even in your darkest hours. *You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence .., (Psalm 16:11)* Joy supersedes circumstances. You can be joyful because you are in the presence of God – now and forever more.

### Be comforted by these two passages:

- *So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you (John 16:22).*
- *If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

**What’s the Point?** With God at your side, deep sorrow *can* co-exist with an even deeper joy. God is with you. Let joy reign because of His presence.

**Closing Prayer:** Walk with me, Lord, and guide my path. Let me feel the joy of your presence. Amen.

The idea and quotes in this devotion are from Jesus Always, by Sarah Young, January 6, 8, and 9 devotions.