

## **Lesson 9: Living Joyfully as a Jesus-Follower**

If following Jesus is such a life-giving, soul-saving adventure, if friendship with God brings rest, restoration, and renewal, why are so many believers so...grumpy?

Why doesn't knowing Jesus change everything? Isn't experiencing a joyful life part of the deal?

Both of you will discuss joyful living today. Expect to come away with a new definition of "joyful," and a new way of looking at any troubles that come stampeding at you this week.

**Read:** John 15:11 "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

**Key insight:** Joy is not a goal—it's a byproduct of abiding in Jesus.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR MENTOR/DISCIPLER:** Share how you've experienced joy as a Jesus-follower. What helps you stay joyful even when life is hard?

### **A Conversation About Living Joyfully**

#### **Core Idea 1: Sources of Joy**

Joy comes from one of two places:

- **Circumstantial joy** — When things go your way (a promotion, good news, etc.). This depends on what others do and how events favor you.
- **God-centered joy** — A deep-seated satisfaction that doesn't depend on circumstances. It comes from three truths you discover as you follow Jesus:

**Read:** Psalm 139:1-6 "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain."

**Read:** 1 John 3:1 "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

**Read:** Romans 8:38-39 "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, 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 that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

**Read:** Nahum 1:7 “The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.”

**Discussion:** Which of these three truths do you find easiest to trust... and which is hardest? Why?

## **Core Idea 2: What You Can Do to Experience Joy**

Lasting joy is fed by abiding in Jesus—not by circumstances.

### **• Abide in Jesus**

Stay mindful of Him, depend on Him, and obey Him.

**Read:** John 15:1-11 (Jesus describes Himself as the vine and you as the branches)

**Read:** Galatians 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

### **• Practice stewardship**

Use your time, talents, and finances intentionally for God’s kingdom. You’ll experience purpose and passion.

### **• Choose gratitude**

Even in hard times, thank God. He works all things for good.

**Read:** Romans 8:28 “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

### **• Experience community**

Commit to a faith community where you know and are known.

**Read:** Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor...”

### **• Wholeheartedly embrace Kingdom living**

No hedging your bets. Serve Jesus with your whole heart.

**Read:** Matthew 6:24 “No one can serve two masters...”

**Discussion:** On a scale of 1 to 10, how are you doing with abiding in Jesus? What gets in your way?

### **Core Idea 3: Difficult Times**

Trials will come. James says to “consider it all joy” because testing produces endurance and maturity.

**Read:** James 1:2-4 “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Difficult times don’t come with easy answers, but they come with hope. God has all eternity to work out the good. Trials can strengthen your faith and help you know God in deeper ways.

### **Closing**

#### **Memory verse to consider**

“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God’s people—the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven...” (Colossians 1:3-5).

“Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5).

#### **This Week’s Action**

During the next week:

1. Choose one area (abiding, gratitude, or community) and take one concrete step to strengthen it.
2. When something difficult happens, pause and thank God that He is working it for good.
3. Share your story of joy with one person this week.

### **How can I pray for you?**

Pray for each other: Deeper joy that doesn’t depend on circumstances, strength to abide in Jesus, and the ability to consider trials as joy because God is at work.