

"How can I experience joy in my Christian life?"

Joy is something we all long for but that often seems difficult to grab hold of. Experiencing joy should be a part of every Christian's life. Joy is a [fruit of the Holy Spirit](#), produced by God's work in us, and it is part of God's will for us.

We know that even the most mature of God's people experience periods of joylessness. For instance, Job wished he had never been born ([Job 3:11](#)). David prayed to be taken away to a place where he would not have to deal with reality ([Psalm 55:6–8](#)). Elijah, even after defeating 450 prophets of Baal with fire called down from heaven ([1 Kings 18:16–46](#)), fled into the desert and asked God to take his life ([1 Kings 19:3–5](#)). If these men struggled, how can we experience consistent joy in the Christian life?

The first thing is to realize that joy is a gift from God. The root word for *joy* in the Greek is *chara*, which is closely related with the Greek *charis* for "grace." Joy is both a gift of God as well as a response to the gifts of God. Joy comes when we are aware of God's grace and relish His favor.

With this in mind, it's evident that one way to experience joy is to focus on God. Rather than dwelling on our difficulties or those things robbing our contentment, we can dwell on God. This is not to say we should deny our discontent or stuff negative emotions. Following the example of many of the psalmists, we can pour out our hearts to God. We can tell Him bluntly all the things that ail us. But then we submit those things to Him, remember who He is, and are happy in Him. [Psalms 3, 13, 18, 43, and 103](#) are good examples.

The book of Philippians has much to say about joy, even though Paul wrote the epistle from prison. [Philippians 4:4–8](#) gives some guidelines for experiencing joy in the Christian life: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! . . . The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 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." Here we see the importance of praising God, remembering that He is near, praying about our worries, and keeping our minds focused on the good things of God. We can experience joy when we intentionally praise. David wrote that the study of God's Word can bring us joy ([Psalm 19:8](#)). We experience joy by communing with God through prayer. And we experience joy by keeping our focus on godly things rather than on difficult circumstances or discontentment.

Jesus also gave some instructions regarding joy. In [John 15](#) He talked about abiding in Him and obeying Him. He said, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 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. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete" ([John 15:9–11](#)). One of the keys to joy is living in obedience to God.

Another way to experience joy in the Christian life is through community. God gave Elijah rest and then sent a man, Elisha, to help him ([1 Kings 19:19–21](#)). We, too, need friends that we can share our hurts

and pains with ([Ecclesiastes 4:9–12](#)). [Hebrews 10:19–25](#) says, “Brothers and sisters . . . let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Because of the grace of God, we know we can approach God confidently in prayer ([Hebrews 10:19](#)). We know we are cleansed of our sin ([Hebrews 10:22](#)). And we are joined into a new community, a family of believers. With our fellow believers, we hold firm to our faith, trusting in the character of God. We also encourage one another. Christians do not belong to this world ([John 17:14–16](#); [Philippians 3:20](#)). We long to be with God, finally restored to our original design. Life can be lonely and discouraging. Others help remind us of truth, carry our burdens with us, and strengthen us to continue on ([Galatians 6:10](#); [Colossians 3:12–14](#)).

Joy is meant to be a hallmark of the Christian life. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and a gift of God. We best receive this gift when we focus on the truth of who God is, commune with Him through prayer, and rely on the community of believers He has provided.