



connect to reflect

INTRODUCTION

increasing joy **06**
joy is the inevitable consequence of communion



the challenge to believe

When God re-forms us into his image and draws us into ever deeper communion with him, ever greater joy is the inevitable result. To what extent is joy a consequence of your own experience with God? If joy is not so much part of your life now, what might be the problem?



deepening dependence

Spend some time to pray that your life may be filled with a joy that flows from intimacy with God.



steps to re-connecting our hearts to God

1. Ask the Holy Spirit what he wants you to learn from this lesson. What do you sense the Holy Spirit teaching you?
2. This week, what practical steps do you need to take to apply what the Holy Spirit is teaching you?
3. What evidence will you see that indicates that you are successfully applying what the Holy Spirit is teaching you?



passing it on

- INTERCESSION** For whom can you pray, that they experience the joy of communion with God?
- WORDS** Who can you talk to about the joy that comes from communion with God?
- CHARACTER** How might the joy of communion with God be visible in your own life?



Why should we reflect Jesus—is it just to fix something that has been broken—the image of God in us? It has been a great discovery of mine that God's purposes are all about joy!

It is a joy that is intended to permeate every part of our existence, and I think from God's point of view, is intended to permeate the deepest part of his cosmos. Just look at how joy has always been God's theme.

As God fashioned a world that reflected his glory, He was full of joy. As He put down his tools each evening, God could not help repeating that "it was good", and "very good" (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31).

Indeed, as a celebration of his remarkable creation, God made an extra day simply to enjoy what He had made, "And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done." (Genesis 2:3)

The angels and heavenly beings watching God creating in his own image were filled with joy. They were so amazed at the magnificence of his creation that they burst into song, "the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy" (Job 38:7).

Even the arrival of sin could not halt this joy. As Jesus worked to re-form mankind back into the image of God so we would live out the ways of his Father's kingdom, joy was his goal, "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed 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 15:10-11) For those wondering if such a life is a legalistic burden, Paul clarifies that "the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17)

Peter picks up this theme of joy in the salvation process, "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:8-9)

Joy is the destiny of the saved. Indeed, like a hallmark inside a ring that assures the wearer that the gold is genuine, so joy is an identifying hallmark that God is truly work in us. For the fruit of the Spirit, the same Spirit that lives within us, "is... joy". (Galatians 5:22.)

So when God is at work, seeing His joy and being thrilled by it, is unavoidable. Even under pressure it was because of "the joy set before him [that Jesus] endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:2)

But joy is also God's intention for those who participate in this work for others. As Paul explains to the Philippians, "If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if

any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose..." (Philippians 2:1-2, 5)

And as John writes about God speaking a word of re-creation in Christ, he adds, "We write this to make our joy complete." (1 John 1:4)

In a later epistle, John states unequivocally, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." (3 John 4)

No greater joy? Imagine that! Joy forevermore!

God sees an eternity ahead of us that is completely filled with joy. As He looks ahead to a world without sin and sees his new creation eternally restored into his image – just as He always intended it – joy overflows between him and his people, "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more." (Isaiah 65:17-19)

Indeed, during our very first moments in this eternity, all John seems to be able to hear are sounds of joy, "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Revelation 19:6-8)

Finally, the nakedness of Adam and Eve, and all their children who have trusted in the lamb, has been forever covered. God has provided them with clothes that reflect the very glory of His own soul. His children are now prepared to fill the earth with the glory of God, and experience a joy that will never cease.

And the years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character. As Jesus opens before them the riches of redemption and the amazing achievements in the great controversy with Satan, the hearts of the ransomed thrill with more fervent devotion, and with more rapturous joy they sweep the harps of gold; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of voices unite to swell the mighty chorus of praise. (Great Controversy, 678)



Joy is a hallmark that reveals that God is successfully re-forming himself in us