

The Test of Joy
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Introduction: We want to know the beginning stages of a tragic disease.

- A. In the physical world we may begin to lose a natural function of our body as a warning something is wrong. (Such as a loss of appetite.)
 - 1. When the symptom appears we begin to look for the cause in the body.
 - 2. This is true in the spiritual realm also.
- B. A healthy heart will possess “the fruit of the Spirit.” (**Gal 5:22-23**)
 - 1. Please notice this is the “fruit” of the Spirit and not “fruits.”
 - 2. If the Spirit of God has impacted your heart then all of these will be present!
 - 3. Let us have spiritual check-up! Today’s test: *Do you have a joyful life?*

I. God’s joy is certain and constant

- A. This joy is based upon our relationship to God. (**Jn 15:9-14**)
 - 1. Joy is a natural by-product of God’s love for you! Did He die for you too?
 - 2. Joyful people are obedient people.
- B. God’s joy comes through pain and will never be taken away. (**Jn 16:19-24**)
 - 1. The apostles went through pain like childbirth until they finally understood the nature of their relationship with God. *Do you really understand it?*
 - 2. When they knew they served a living Lord that would never leave them they had a joy that men could never take away!
 - 3. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (**Rom 8:35-39**)
 - 4. We have joy because we are not the victims of circumstance but always will have the victory over circumstances. (**Rom 8:28**)
 - 5. *Do you have this kind of confidence in God in your heart?*

“Happiness is caused by things that happen around me, and circumstances will mar it; but joy flows right on through trouble; joy flows on through the dark; joy flows in the night as well as in the day; joy flows all through persecution and opposition. It is an unceasing fountain bubbling up in the heart; a secret spring the world can’t see and doesn’t know anything about. The Lord gives his people perpetual joy when they walk in obedience to him.”

II. What God’s joy will do for me

- A. It will give me great strength to serve God in all circumstances.
 - 1. How was Jesus able to overcome the cross? (**Heb 12:3**)“I cannot choose to be strong, but I can choose to be joyful. And when I am willing to do that, strength will follow.”
 - 2. God through Nehemiah wanted the people to understand this very important principle. (**Neh 8:10-11**)
 - a. Notice how this joy came from an understanding of God’s word. *Is your Bible study this way?*
 - b. This joy is not produced by artificial circumstances that are manipulated by men. Many use carnal productions to create a temporary emotion.
- B. It will help my health like medicine. (**Prov 17:22**)
- C. It will allow me to glorify God.

1. God will bring us to sorrow that leads to repentance and a restoration of our relationship with Him. **(Psa 30:5-8)**
2. We always will have a heart overflowing with praise and a life that will glorify Him. **(Psa 30:11-12)**
3. Jesus fulfilled this great prophecy about Him and His people. **(Isa 61:1-3)**
4. *Did you worship Him today with a heart overflowing with joy?*

III. Things in my life that will produce joy

A. My present salvation. (Lk 10:17, 20)

1. This is a joy shared by heavenly beings.
2. This salvation should always be new within our hearts. What will happen if we forget? **(2 Pt 1:9)**
3. Do you remember the joy that followed your baptism? **(Acts 8:39; Mk 16:16)**

B. The daily work of God in my life. (Psa 5:11-12; Heb 13:5-6)

1. When I start my day with prayer it brings me an awareness of the presence and care of God. *Have you been in the presence of God today?*

“Joy is never in our power, and pleasure is. I doubt whether anyone who has tasted joy would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasure in the world.” - C. S. Lewis

2. We must learn how to see the unseen God. **(Heb 11:27)**

“Happiness is a feeling. Joy is an attitude. A posture. A position. A place.”

C. Great sacrifice and pain in serving Him. (Jas 1:2-4)

1. *Do you have a “religion” that cost you nothing?* Then you have no joy. **(2 Sam 24:24)**
2. In worldly things we can understand this. Who was your favorite teacher in school? (Ex. What does a championship team experience to win?)
3. Do you rejoice in persecution? **(Lk 6:22-23; Heb 10:34)**
4. Joy in your life will be a major reason others will open their hearts to you!

IV. Things that destroy joy in my life

A. When I fail to repent and confess my sin. (Psa 51:8-12)

1. The pain of repentance is great but it is followed by healing and joy.
2. What happens if a man does not go to a doctor to set a broken bone?

B. When I try to please God by a system of works. (Eph 2:8-9)

1. Some think God’s love is “performance based.”
2. Is your confidence upon the things you do or the things that God does?

C. When I focus on men and their approval. (2 Cor 10:12, 17-18)

D. When I dwell on the negative. (Phil 4:8-9)

1. Some struggle greatly with this! In time you will be isolated from everyone.
2. Negative people will run and quit because people have hurt and disappointed them in the past. God wants to teach you how to think!

Conclusion: Have these tests found joy in your life?

A. Some need to repent and be baptized to begin a relationship with God. (Acts 2:38, 46-47; 8:38-39; 16:31-34)

B. Others need to repent and renew your first love. (Psa 51:12; Rev 2:4-5)