



Joyfully His

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES **2016**

PROMOTIONAL WEEK
RESOURCE PACKAGE

CANADA AND BERMUDA TERRITORY



Joyfully His

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016

NEW YEAR 2016

'I have told you this so that my **JOY** may be in you and that your joy may be complete'.

John 15:11 (NIV)

Dear Sisters in Christ,

As we face a new year, it is an opportune time to reflect on the many positive and God glorifying outcomes of the 2015 Women's Ministries challenge to 'Go and Tell' the good news of the gospel.

We are also afforded, at this time of year, the opportunity to look forward.

Throughout 2016 we are going to concentrate on being 'JOYFULLY HIS' – an experience made available to us as the fruit of the Holy Spirit flourishes within us. This theme aims to communicate the importance of knowing the joy of the Lord in our lives, which is then evident in us and reflected in our service.

The gospels remind us that even when faced with Calvary, Jesus took the time to pray that his disciples might have his joy within them. I find this remarkable! It indicates how high it was on his agenda. He knew that in an unknown future, the joy of the Lord would be their strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

The reality is that life can be hard -- troubles abound, difficulties and challenges come our way – but my prayer is that through God's love, the outpouring of Jesus' life and the Holy Spirit's power, we will be strengthened by divine joy and take pleasure in being 'JOYFULLY HIS'. Such joy will communicate itself to those around us and consequently men, women, boys and girls will be drawn to Jesus.

God bless you.

With my warmest greetings,

Silvia Cox

Commissioner
WORLD PRESIDENT OF
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES



OFFICE OF
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January 2, 2016

Dear Ladies:

The Women's Ministries Resource Material for 2016 is being uploaded along with this letter. As you know the International Theme for Women's Ministries for 2016 comes from General Andre Cox's dream for The Salvation Army. JOYFULLY HIS! We need to reflect the joy of the Lord that is our strength always, and we need to welcome others into that joy, sharing with them the reason why we can be joyful even in the midst of a world gone awry.

Commissioner Silvia Cox chose the Scripture verse from John 15:11 to support the theme for 2016: ***"I have told you this so that my JOY may be in you and that your joy may be complete."***

You will find among the materials that have been provided a Bible Study written by the women of International Headquarters and circulated around the world. How exciting that we can join with our sisters from every corner of the globe in the same study of God's word! In addition, 13 of our own women officers, from across the territory, have developed some excellent tools and helps to be used by you during 2016. Be sure and check back during the year as we will add other tools and materials periodically.

Through Women's Ministries we have the ability to reach out in so many ways to women, young women and families, bringing the message of hope through Jesus Christ. How wonderful to share with them that they too can belong to Him, and know the Joy of Salvation through His sacrifice on the Cross.

We are only limited by our own imagination, so I hope to hear wonderful stories of how God is working through you to grow His Kingdom.

May God bless and use you mightily in 2016!

Sincerely,

Susan McMillan
Commissioner
TERRITORIAL PRESIDENT OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES



January 1, 2016

It is my privilege to provide you with the resource package for the 2016 Women's Ministries Promotional material with the theme **JOYFULLY HIS!** I love the theme and can only imagine the wonderful ideas, events, and ministry that will happen as a result of your creative thinking and planning with this theme.

Our ministries are diverse and the foundation of all we do to equip, encourage and empower others, makes a dynamic difference in the lives of women, children and families as we provide opportunity for education, spiritual growth and worship, fellowship and service.

I am grateful for those who have contributed to the development of material for this package. Thank you for your time and interest in providing a tool for the encouragement and use of others.

God bless you and your ministry!

JOYFULLY HIS!

Shirley

Shirley King

Major

Coordinator of Women's Ministries Resources



Joyfully His
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016

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BIBLE STUDIES



Joyfully His
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016

Moms and Tots

JOY IN OUR LIVES

Submitted by Major Rhonda Smith

Session One:

Over the next few days, we are going to look at joy and what it has to say to us as women - what does it mean to have joy in our lives?

- * First I want to share with you a skit entitled "Joy Comes from the Inside" (www.skitguys.com)
- * Can any of you identify with the three stages of life described in our skit? What does this have to say to us about joy?
- * Let's look together at the following Psalms:

Psalms 30:5 – *"For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime;*

Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning".

Psalm 51:12 – *"Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me".*

Psalm 126:3 – *"The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy".*

The word *joy* is mentioned specifically 34 times in the Bible, and the word *rejoice* or *rejoicing* is mentioned 15 times.

- * What does it mean to be joyful – is it walking around all the time with a smile on our faces? Or perhaps children who listen to every word we say and do everything we ask?

No?

- * As we look at the following verses about joy, I hope that you will pick one as your own for the whole week:

Psalm 4:7 – *"You have filled my heart with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound".*

Psalm 21:6 – *"Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence".*

Psalm 43:4a – *"Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight".*

Psalm 66:1 – *"Shout with joy to God, all the earth!"*

Verses which talk about rejoicing

Psalm 118: 24 – *"This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it".*

Luke 10:20 – *"However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven".*

Philippians 4:4 – *"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"*

Isaiah 61:10 – *"I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels".*

- * Introduce journaling – an opportunity to write down thoughts, prayers and concerns or thanks for what God has done).

(Use soft music in the background)

Session Two

(The following sessions can be used separately or as one session. They are meant to be interactive and to focus on time for individuals to write in their journals)

Hold up glass of water - ask the question – is it this glass half full or half empty?

This is a classic example of optimism versus pessimism. That can be part of our whole mind-set when we face the world every day. If we are truthful, how many of us wake up as a half empty person and have to push ourselves to be half full people? It seems like you are having a perfectly pleasant morning, and then you come in contact with people and that goes out the window?

Need to be reminded of Psalm 118:24 – *“This is the day that the Lord has made; we WILL rejoice and be glad in it”*. Our children may remind us of that - did your kids wake up happy this morning? Do we wake up like that? How do we face the day - do we have a child like joy in the morning - is it before your morning coffee ... or after? Not always easy to keep that idea of joy at the centre of our lives - sometimes, joy takes work.

So how can we change our own perspectives to one that is more joyful?

We are going to look at the Psalms and the idea of being joyful. There are 150 psalms.

They are broken into books - chapters 1-41, chapters 42-72, chapters 73-89, chapters 90-106, and chapters 107-150. Many of the Psalms are attributed to David. The author gives us a glimpse into his struggles, and concerns, his fears, anger, anxiety, and perseverance – and yet he does not give up. We can think of the Psalms as a way for David to write down his thoughts, to have alone time with God - like a journal.

David was a young shepherd boy who became a great warrior, but also a man who spent a lot of time running and hiding because the king, Saul, wanted to kill him. These psalms outline his struggles: his self-doubt, and his questions as to why things were happening to him.

And, yet he always seems to bring his thoughts back to God - he questions, and he rants, but yet he still trusts that God is in control, and that he will not walk alone. David feared for his life, trapped and in hiding - he could have let it take over, but he chose to face things by putting his trust in God.

in Psalm 4:7-8, David says *“You have filled my heart. with greater joy than when their grain and new wine abound. I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety”*.

Let’s look together at Psalm 30. Please read it over and highlight the verses that speak to you – have you been in the depths and need a reminder that you are not alone? Have you wept and now you are ready to rejoice? Have you called out to him for mercy? Or has your wailing turned into dancing?

- * Take some time to read this passage and write in your journal what you feel the passage says to you - what stands out?
- * Give time for journaling and then finish with prayer.

Session 3

Welcome everyone.

Our previous session introduced us to David and how his experiences influenced his communication with God. Those experiences did not keep him from experiencing joy – a glass half full kind of situation. He certainly had enough reason to be less than joyful, and I'm sure he didn't always wear a smile, but he had something to cling to when times got difficult - that was his relationship with God.

We talked a little about this yesterday - we all have things which can keep us from what God has for us. In our world, we sometimes call it baggage - experiences, relationships, hurt, bitterness that keep us from experiencing the joyful life that God has for us. The world around us can sometimes come between us and God.

Do you know anyone who has a lot of baggage? What is that like?

I have a video I'd like you to watch called baggage - watch it in light of David's struggle with keeping joy in his life (Baggage, video can be purchased from www.skitguys.com)

Video (10 minutes)

What stood out for you in the video? Could you identify with the idea of baggage that can pull us down - things like low self-worth, self-doubt? Often we take it out on other people, we carry that baggage and let it get between us and the joy God has for us. Can you think of a time in your life when the baggage you carried, got in the way of you having a joyful day?

Looking at the idea of baggage in regard to David and the Psalms - do you think David fit into this idea of letting go of his baggage - everything that was dragging him down? Through all the ups and downs that David experienced, he always came back to the God that he had placed his trust in. He made a conscious decision to cling to the God he loved - to allow joy to be part of his whole life experience. He allowed his trust in the God of joy to lift him up from the despair he was feeling, from everything that was dragging him down, and focus on what God had given him – even if the end of his troubles was not in sight.

I'd like to take the next few minutes, and focus on some passages in the book of Psalms which relate to the idea of letting go of our baggage and focusing on the joy that comes from knowing God.

First let's look at Psalm 119:105-112. Do you see anything in this passage that relates to the idea of baggage - letting go of it? What stands out for you? What about verse 11 - "your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart". When we let go of the things which can steal our joy, our baggage, we can claim that joyful heritage – when we trust in God, he has great things planned for us. An inheritance gives us hope in what is to come; when things seem difficult, we can cling to the life, the joy, God has for us. We can even share that joyful heritage or legacy with those around us including our children. Think about the ways we could leave a joyful heritage to our children – what are they?

There are other verse which remind us how important it is to let go of the baggage that keep us from experiencing the joy that comes from knowing God. Read the following passages, and then write in your journal the things you identify with – which passages stands out for you?

Psalm 4:7 Psalm 66:1 Psalm 2:11

Psalm 21:6 Psalm 100:2 Psalm 66:6

Psalm 43:4 Psalm 30:5

Allow time for journaling and prayer



Joyfully His-Prepared by Captain Denise Saunders

Scripture: John 15:9-27

Introduction

When you think about the word *'joy'* or *'joyfully'*, what do you think about? (Briefly discuss personal ideas.)

Something to Think About

What is it that brings joy to you? Is it your family? A happy marriage? Your job and accomplishments? Your house? Your cottage? Good health? Money? Many of us tend to cling to our pleasures and treasures for happiness, and these do include our children, our spouse and those people important to us. However, what happens when these treasures are no longer there? So many of us know how great life is when things are going well in our family, and life is just great. We feel like we're on cloud nine! However, when all of a sudden sickness, loss of a job or a tragedy comes our way it feels like the whole world has been turned upside down.

History

The Jews had been feeling so happy because they had Jesus with them and that they were able to do the Father's work together. They had been expecting Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom and overthrow Rome. They thought that now that Jesus was here things would be better for them and for the people in the future. They would no longer have to cope with the Roman rules. However at the last supper in John 13, the disciples discover that Jesus will only be with them a short while longer and so they struggle to understand all that is happening. They have so many questions and they are afraid. How were they ever going to be able to do what Jesus requires of them without Him? Their world has been turned upside down.

In John 14 Jesus tells the disciples to trust in God and also in Him because He is preparing a place for them and that one day they will join Him. He also goes on to assure them that He and the Father are One and that they won't be alone because the Father will send another Counsellor, the Holy Spirit to be with them forever(vs.16). The Holy Spirit will help them to remember the things that Jesus taught them. Jesus encourages them to continue to obey His teachings and to continue to love each other.

Bridging to Context

As we begin reading John 15 Jesus uses the imagery of the grapevine to explain His relationship with the Father and our relationship with Him. They would have been familiar with how grapevines work and would have understood that in order to be a fruitful plant the branches would have to remain connected to the vine and at times have to endure pruning by the gardener. Jesus tells the disciples that He is the vine, and God is the gardener who cares for the branches to make them fruitful. The branches are those who claim to be followers of Christ. The fruitful branches are true believers who by their living union with Christ produce much fruit. But those who become unproductive – those who turn back from following Christ after making a superficial commitment – will be separated from the vine. In Verses 5-8 Jesus says that the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to Him, like a branch attached to the vine. Apart from Christ our efforts are unfruitful. As we see in verse 8, when we bear much fruit, God is glorified.

Context

Let's unpack the theme "Joyfully His". In verse 9 of our text Jesus doesn't beat around the bush and tells us that He loves us as the Father has loved Him. And then He tells us to remain in that love, to remember that love just as He has remembers the Father's love for Him. Because He loves God the Father, He obeys His commands and does what is expected of Him. Therefore, He wants us to obey Him as well. Verse 11 says, "I have told you this that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." In other words, Jesus **wants** us to have joy in our lives. We cannot have real joy without really following Jesus, without having a personal

relationship with him. The things of this earth, while they may bring joy, will only last a short time. Earthly joys die in the very act of being enjoyed. Earthly joys (gratification of some appetite) become stale, and left behind as we move forward. They so often become less and less satisfying as time goes on. Jesus wants us to know joy on a deeper level and gives us the instructions and assurance that we won't be alone because he wants us to know the same joy that He has had in following the will of the Father. Joy comes from a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ. The joy of living with Jesus daily will keep us level-headed in the midst of our high and low circumstances of life. This same idea is brought up again in John 16 where Jesus makes it clear to the disciples that He does indeed understand that as long as they live in the world there will be difficulties to face. He understands that His leaving them is breaking their hearts. Again Jesus reminds them that as long as they remain in Him, they will have peace. Verse 33 says, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." The type of peace or joy that Jesus is talking about is serenity in the midst of confusion and is far superior to the "easier" peace. The joy and peace that Jesus is talking about stays with us while we work through and conquer life's obstacles rather than avoiding them. This peace is a condition, a way of life, that while taking life's uncertainties seriously, is like a seagull riding the turbulent seas is able to climb swells but yet drop into valleys without worry. Following Jesus and being obedient to Him will give us an inner joy and peace that will help us to be brave soldiers in the battles of life. The words Jesus uses, "Take heart" are telling us to not be afraid, to be courageous. He has overcome the world by being obedient to the Father. Basically He says, "I have faced your enemy and vanquished him. I have fought the same battles as you face in human experience. I have overcome the enemy and I can do it again in you. Remain in me and my victory is yours." What tremendous joy and peace there is in knowing that we are not alone!

As Jesus continues He tells us that the most important command is to love each other as He has loved us. We are reminded that He laid down His life for us. How's that for being loved! He then tells us that we are his **friends** and not His servants. Friends know each others' business. He laid down His life for His friends. I am sure you agree that friendship is special. Friendship is not something that we are forced into. It is a choice between the individuals involved. In 16 Jesus tells us that He **chose** us and appointed us to go and bear fruit. Wow! Chosen by Jesus! I am sure we know how great it feels to be chosen to be a part of a team or to be chosen for a job. It makes us feel pretty good, like we're an important part of something. Scripture tells us over and over again that we are a chosen people, that we are children of God, that he is the Father (2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 2:9, John 1:12, 1 John 3:1). We recognize that being children means that we ought to obey our parents, after all, the rules are there in our best interest, in this case, that we would know true joy. It also means that we are under their care. We are under the Father's care and guiding hand. As the chorus so beautifully says, "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God. I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by his blood. Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod, for I'm part of the family, the family of God." Belonging is so important and belonging to the family of God brings great promises! Belonging to God brings great joy! We are "Joyfully His!"

Questions

1. What is it that brings you joy? If these were taken away, what then?
2. What word comes to mind when we say, "obedience"? Why?
3. Read 1 John 3:21-24. How can these verses help us to live joyfully?
4. Read 1 Peter 4:13 and James 1:3. How is it that we can go through difficulties and yet still have joy?
5. What does it mean to be "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Cor. 6:10)? Where is the balance between joy and sadness?
6. Read John 15:5. How does the symbolism of the vine and branches give you a sense of belonging?
7. Read Psalm 23. In the midst of whatever you face, how does this Psalm remind you that you are "Joyfully His"?

References

NIV Life Application Study Bible

Burge, Gary M. *The NIV Application Commentary* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2000.

CALL TO WORSHIP AND OTHER MEETING RESOURCES



Joyfully His
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016

Joyfully His-Submitted by Captain Tracy Savage

Theme Verse: John 15:10-11

Call to Worship:

(based on Psalm 89)

I will sing about the wonders of your love forever, O God!

I will tell everyone I meet about your faithfulness to all generations!

I will declare that your love stands firm,

that your faithfulness is as enduring as the heavens above!

Blessed are those who know you as their God,

for they walk in the light of your presence!

I will sing of the tender mercies of the Lord forever!

Young and old will hear of your faithfulness.

Your unfailing love will last forever.

Your faithfulness is as enduring as the heavens.

Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship,

for they will walk in the light of your presence.

Happy are we who hear the joyful call to worship,

for we walk in the light of God's presence!

Let's worship God together—

celebrating who he is and all that he has done!

For God is our strength and our protection,

the One in whom we trust.

Prayer:

Prayer of the Day

You raise your hand

and gently begin

the concerto of creation:

birds carry the melody

while stars keep the beat;

mountains dance in merriment

and little children clap

their hands with joy.

Love's Composer,

our new songs are lifted to you.

The old, old song

is made new in our hearts:

Christ is Risen!
Sing Alleluia!
You invite us to sing to a world
deafened by despair
and haunted by the tunes of fear.
Lord of the Dance,
our new songs are lifted to you.

Believing we cannot
carry a tune,
we hesitate to join in
the chorus of praise
sung by all creation.
So, you softly and gently
hum the melody in our hearts
until they burst with you,
raising a rousing chorus
of Amazing Grace.
Music-making Spirit,
our new songs are lifted to you.

Every song, old and new, is offered to you,
God in Community, Holy in One,
even as we lift the prayer Jesus teaches,
Our Father . . .

(written by Thom Shuman)



Submitted by Major Cathy Simms

Call to Worship

Reader 1: Stand up and bless the Lord your God from everlasting to everlasting: Blessed be your glorious Name which is exalted above all blessing and praise. You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven with all its host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them, and you preserve all of them.

Congregational Response: We stand in awe, and our hearts rejoice in you.

Reader 2: O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us come into his presence with thanksgiving. The Lord is a great God; he made the heavens and earth. Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker.

Congregational Response: We bow in worship, and our hearts rejoice in you.

Reader 3: Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the lands! Serve the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his. We are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him; bless his Name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures for ever; and his faithfulness to all generations.

Congregational Response: We sing our praise, and our hearts rejoice in you.

Reader 4: Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to the children of men. Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and tell his deeds with songs of joy.

Congregational Response: We bring our offering, and our hearts rejoice in you.

All: You make known to us the path of life; you fill us with joy in your presence!

Immediately following the reading, the congregation can enter into a time of worship.

I would suggest: "The Joy of the Lord is My Strength" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyIGnuDwBKA>



Joyfully His-Worship Resources-Submitted by Lieutenant Laura Hickman

Call to Worship/Responsive Reading

- Leader: Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
Come before him with joyful songs. (Ps. 100:1-2)
- Women: Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,
always giving thanks to God the Father for everything,
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph. 5:19b-20)
- Leader: Know that the Lord is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. (Ps. 100:3)
- Men: Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
Give thanks to him and praise his name. (Ps.100:4)
- Leader: Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Phil. 4:4)
- Congregation: Clap your hands, all you nations;
Shout to God with cries of joy. (Psalm 47:1)
- Leader: For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
His faithfulness continues through all generations. (Ps.100:5)
- Congregation:
- Come, let us bow down in worship,
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;
For he is our God
And we are the people of his pasture,



**Call to Worship based on the theme Joyfully His
submitted by Captain Heather S. Samuel, BA**

WHAT IS JOY?

Four readers are needed.

All: What is joy?

Joy is...

One: The love of God.

Two: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.' (John 3:16)

All: Joy is...

Three: New life in Christ.

Four: 'You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.' (Psalm 30:11)

All: Joy is...

Two: Forgiveness.

One: 'Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.' (Psalm 51:12)

All: Joy is...

Four: God in Creation.

Three: 'The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy.' (Psalm 65:8)

All: Joy is...

One: Giving thanks in everything.

Two: 'I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed, or hungry; whether living in plenty or in want.' (Philippians 4:12)

All: Joy is...

Three: Singing Praises.

Four: 'Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him... Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, shout for joy.' (Psalm 33:1&3)

All: Joy is...

Two: Calling.

One: 'Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.' (1 John 4:11)

All: Joy is...

Four: Complete!

Two: 'To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore.' (Jude 24-25)

All: In all things, Joy is...



CHORALE READINGS



Joyfully His
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016

Chorale Reading Submitted by Captain Krista Andrews

Psalm 98

All: Shout to the Lord!!

Reader #1: Sing to God a brand new song

Reader #2: He's made a world of wonders!

Reader # 3: He rolled up his sleeves, He sets things right

Reader # 1 &3: God made history with salvation, He showed the world what he could do

Reader # 2: He remembered to love us, a bonus to His dear family, Israel-indefatigable love.

Reader # 2& 3: The whole earth comes to attention. Look-God's work of salvation!

Reader # 1: Shout your praises to God, everybody! Let loose and sing! Strike up the band!

Reader # 1 &2: Round up an orchestra to play for God, Add on a hundred-voice choir.

Reader #3 : Feature trumpets and big trombones, Fill the air with praises to King God.

Reader # 3: Let the sea and its fish give a round of applause, With everything living on earth joining in.

All: Let ocean breakers call out, "Encore!" And mountains harmonize the finale-

Reader #1 A tribute to God when he comes,

Reader 1&2: When he comes to set the earth right.

All: He'll straighten out the whole world, He'll put the world right, and everyone in it.

All: Shout to the Lord!!



Creative Reading-Selected Verses from Psalm 139-

Submitted by Captain Krista Andrews

Piano playing in the background Song# 44/TB# 668-His Love Remains the Same

All Readers in Round (**Reader 1** will begin and the following readers begin on the word "Searched"). You have searched me, Lord , and you know me.

Reader 2: God, I want you to investigate my life; get all the facts firsthand.

I'm an open book to you; even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking.

Reader 3: You know when I sit and when I rise, you know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You know when I leave and when I get back; You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. I'm never out of your sight.

Reader 1: I look behind me and you're there, then up ahead and you're there, too-your reassuring presence, coming and going.

All: This is too much, too wonderful-We can't take it all in!

Reader 2: Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

Reader 3: If I climb to the sky, you're there!

Reader 1: If I go underground, you're there!

Reader: 2: If I flew on morning's wings to the far western horizon...

All: You'd find me in a minute—

Reader 3: You're already there...

Reader 1: ...waiting...

Reader 2: ...for me...

Reader 3: ...for me...

Reader 1: ... even me... (*Dramatic Pause*)

Reader 2: For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. . I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking! Body and soul, I am marvellously made! I am joyfully Yours! I worship in adoration—what a creation!

Reader 3: You know me inside and out,

Reader 1: you know every bone in my body;

Reader 2: You know exactly how I was made,

Reader 3: bit by bit,

Reader 1: how I was sculpted from nothing into something

Reader 2: NOTHING into SOMETHING!

Reader 3: I was NOTHING and now I am SOMETHING!

All: The days of my life all prepared before I'd even lived one day. I am joyfully Yours!

Reader 1: Investigate my life, O God,

Reader 2: Find out everything about me;

Reader 3: Cross-examine and test me,

Reader 1: Get a clear picture of what I'm about;

Reader 2: See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong

All: Search me, God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

Someone (or congregation) can sing Song #44/TB#668 – His Love Remains the Same



Choral Reading-Submitted by Captain Krista Andrews

Psalm 150 (NIV)

Everyone: *(This to be said in a 'round' or a 'domino' affect. Each sentence should emphasize a different word. When 'breath' is spoken, the next person begins)*

"**Let** everything that has breath praise the Lord!"

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"Let everything that has **breath** praise the Lord!"

"Let everything that has breath **praise** the Lord!"

"Let everything that has breath praise **the** Lord!"

"Let everything that has breath praise the **Lord!**"

Everyone: *(Shouting together)*

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!

Reader 1:

Praise Him in his sanctuary!

Reader 2:

Praise Him in his mighty heavens.

Reader: Praise him with GREAT JOY all the earth for He has made us and we are His.

Reader 3:

Praise him at school... at work and at home...

Reader 4:

At Home??

Reader 3:

Yes! Even at home!

Reader 5:

Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his unsurpassing greatness. Shout for joy all the earth for we are His! The sheep of His pasture.

Everyone: *(This to be said in a 'round' or a 'domino' affect. Each sentence should emphasize a different word. When 'Life' is spoken, the next person begins)*

Everyone: (Shouting together)

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!

Reader #1: Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet. (cornet play 2 bars of 'Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee)

Reader #2: Praise him with the harp and the lyre

Reader #3: Praise him with the tambourine. (play short formation on timbrel)

Reader #1: And with dancing!

Reader #2: Praise him with the strings and the flute! Praise him with the clash of cymbals (Drummer crash the cymbals on the drumset – readers jump and look over with a frown)

Everyone: (shouting together)

With the crash of cymbals??

Drummer: Yes! Praise him with the resounding cymbals! (play trap for 2 bars)

Everyone: (This to be said in a 'round' or a 'domino' affect. Each sentence should emphasize a different word. When 'thing' is spoken, the next person begins)

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"

"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"

Everyone: (Shouting together)

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD!

Congregation sing 'Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee)



CHORUS



Joyfully His
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016



Chorus:

Words Written by Colonel Lynette Rowe

(Tune: "Lord Reign in Me.")

Jesus is my Lord, He makes me glad
For He saved my soul, when lost and sad,
And His joy He brings, For each new day,
So I can say, "Joyfully His!"

Joyfully His and His alone,
He is the King, My heart His throne,
Abundant life to all He brings,
So I can sing, "Joyfully His!"

STRENGTH FOR THE JOYFUL SOUL
DEVOTIONAL MESSAGES

SUBMITTED BY MAJOR JUDY BARROW



Joyfully His
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016

DAY 1

JOY IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 Thessalonians 1:6-7: *"And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia."*

A relationship with the Holy Spirit gives us power to live a life of joy. It's only by the filling of the Spirit that we have access to the deep and overflowing joy that's in the heart of God our heavenly Father. **Galatians 5:22** says that one of the fruits of the Spirit is joy-- so as temples of the Holy Spirit we need to rely on Him to teach us how to live out this joy every day.

The Bible is full of verses that equate the Holy Spirit with joy. **Romans 14:17** says, *"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."* **Acts 13:52** says, *"And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."* **1 Thessalonians 1:6-7** says, *"And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia."*

We can't work up this joy within ourselves, it can only come from the Holy Spirit living in us and through us. When the New Testament followers of Christ were filled with the Holy Spirit, their lives changed completely. They used to be fearful, wavering followers of Jesus but they became joy-filled, sacrificial and powerful world changers. In **Acts 17** some of them were dragged to the rulers of Jerusalem and this was the accusation against them: *"These who have turned the world upside down have come here too."* They had joy in the midst of great persecution because of the power of the Holy Spirit inside them.

We have the same Holy Spirit the disciples had, and he longs to do the same kind of work in you and me today. He longs to fill us with joy in the midst of any trial or pain. He longs to heal and transform our hearts into greater reflections of God's goodness. He longs to make us a people so joyful that there is no other explanation for our joy other than that God is with us.

So, how do we allow the Spirit to display the fruit of joy in our lives? It all starts with humbling ourselves before God in prayer. The Holy Spirit never forces us into deeper relationship with him. He is peaceful, powerful, loving and patient. We have to make time to respond to his small tugs on our hearts if we want to grow in grace and get to know Him more. To receive more of Him we need to give Him more of ourselves. As we take time to search His word His love and faithfulness will cast out any fear or reservation about a lifestyle of total commitment of our lives to Him. We can ask Him to fill the empty places in our lives with Himself and direct our living so that our days bring fulfillment and lasting joy.

The Spirit knows all about us so He knows how to guide our hearts. He knows how we're made - if we're more introverted or extroverted; intuitive, or logical. And he knows the perfect ways to guide us into deeper, more fruitful lives.

Dear Lord, please lead me into a life filled with more joy. Help me listen as You speak to me. As I rest in Your loving presence teach me the joy of reaching greater depths of relationship with You.

DAY 2

THE JOY OF THE LORD

Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

Though weeping is necessary at times in our lives, it is not the final message God has for us. To show this, Nehemiah and Ezra speak up and correct the people. What a powerful statement of the effect of the Word of God! When people understand it, it brings joy. The joy of the Lord is your strength. What a great word for grieving people who see the evil in their lives and the lives of those around them and mourn over what it has produced! We see so many of them in our world today. It is no surprise that one of the best-selling nonfiction books of all time is *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. We long to have meaning. And we are willing to be driven—something we don't normally want—if it will make a difference.

One reason we are always attracted to a serious call to a purpose-driven life is the state of the planet. According to a recent report from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, world hunger is only worsening. Nuclear threats grow daily in the Middle East. Human trafficking is expanding. Billions are mired not just in poverty of material needs but also poverty of spirit. In light of all this, the good news of Jesus Christ leaves some people conflicted, because it announces joy when everything is falling apart, just when today's experts offer "sober assessments of the current situation," and can only say they remain "cautiously optimistic." Who in their right mind can talk about joy? To put on joy when so many are dressed in the rags of anxiety, grief, and despair—seems heartless.

But the word that brings joy is forgiveness. God can forgive! He does, and He will restore. That is what Jesus meant when He said, *"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."* (Matthew 5:4). I don't think we'll ever be comforted until we learn to mourn. When we see the hurt, pain, and despair that sin can produce and we grieve over it, then we're ready for the comfort of forgiveness.

What does the joy of the Lord mean? It means that we know in our hearts that God has found a solution to these problems of sin. He has provided a way back to sensible, sober, wise, helpful, wholesome living. How? By learning to think like He thinks. Begin to see the world from His point of view. Before Nehemiah instructed the people in how to conduct themselves in the joy of the Lord, he tells us in **verse 3** that: *"All the people listened attentively to the book of the Law."* Don't take your philosophy of life from what people are saying or the advice others are giving. **Listen to the Word of God.**

"Do not be afraid," the angel tells the quaking shepherds. *"I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."* Our message to the world as the Church is no different. *"Do not be afraid,"* we announce to a world shivering in the dark. *"We bring good news of a great joy—for everyone!"* That is the answer. It will heal your life. *"He sent forth his word and healed them,"* writes the psalmist (Psalm 107:20). The ministry of the Word of God is to heal us and create in us a desire to share that healing with others. Nehemiah urges the people to send portions of food to those who had nothing prepared. This is always the result in those who find their lives beginning to be healed by the Word of God. They start thinking of others who are hurting and want to share with them what they have learned.

No matter how sincere we are, we can't fix the world. It has already been fixed, and Jesus will prove it when He comes again. But until then, we as His people are given life-changing work to do: to heal the socially sick, to raise the spiritually dead—among other jobs that God alone can give us power to do!

Thank you Lord for the joy of the presence of Jesus, the joy of deliverance from sin, the joy of love for each other, and then the joy of working for God. Thank You for paying for all these blessings with the precious blood of Your Son. And thank you for the power of your Spirit working in me and allowing me by Your grace to be the answer to my own prayers. Today I totally surrender everything to You. Fill me with joy, so I may experience your strength for whatever I might face.

DAY 3

BRINGING JOY TO OTHERS

Philippians 2:1&2: *“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, 2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”* Being in Christ should equip us to strengthen other Christians’ joy.

So if God says to me, “Fill someone else with joy,” I can do it, by the power of Christ who lives in me. He will show me how to love sincerely with a pure heart, through the fullness He gives me day by day. If he commands me to love my neighbor as myself, I can do it. If he says to love my enemy, I can even do that, from being plugged into Christ. Whatever burdens He asks me to bear, or temptations He makes me face, or trials He guides me into, or losses He allows me to experience, I can do it all by the consolation and encouragement that I find in Christ.

Paul is talking about the incentive to give joy to others that we find in Christ’s love for us. The apostle Paul felt gripped by the love of God. He knew that nothing could ever separate him from it; not for one moment would Jesus’ love be switched off and hatred rule in the courts of heaven or in the kingdom of God on earth. We know that God has a good purpose in all the hard things that happen to his people. He is true to His promise in **Romans 8:28:** *‘We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.’* My only responsibility is to love God. He’ll work out the rest.

“By being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (v.2). Of course we could all encourage one another a lot more. The New Testament is full of examples of praise and thanks being given to fellow believers.

Helen was a schoolteacher who taught a class of fifteen year-olds. She was not enjoying this year of teaching. A mean, irritable spirit had developed in her class and one day there was a really unpleasant outburst of contempt among the students. So Helen passed out a list of the names of all their fellow pupils to each one of her teens. Then she asked the class to write opposite each student the best thoughts they had about them. There was a lot of pencil-chewing for the next half hour, but they finally finished. That night she listed the comments and the next day she presented the papers with the positive things their fellow students had written about them to each of them. There was a deep silence as each student read those shy words of appreciation from other members of the class. The atmosphere of the class changed; the belittling criticisms died away and there was more patience, affection and humanity in the classroom. It turned out that most of the pieces of paper were carefully folded and kept for years. That is one way that the world can stimulate a joy that we seem to be losing today, but the church knows a better way. Paul in this second verse is urging them as those united to Christ and in the fellowship of the Spirit to be of one mind, one love, one spirit and one purpose. That alone is going to make his joy complete. They can do this because of the limitless power of the Holy Spirit God has given them.

So the great challenge to this Philippian congregation was: What is more important to them – promoting their own agendas, or giving this apostle who had brought them the gospel – the joy of seeing them think together, and love together, and be one in spirit and purpose? It is not enough for us to say, “Well, my only concern is to give joy to Christ.” No. It is as Christ sees us giving joy to others by lives of peace and love that He rejoices. If we are born again by the Spirit of Christ, we belong to His church.

Will what we are saying and doing bring joy to others in the fellowship? If we allow Him, God will shape our perspective on life and motivate our words and actions. Paul says, *“I need no other happiness than to know that the church is thinking and working together possessed by the same spirit.”* Then possessed by the powerful Spirit of God we can expand our horizons and move out into the world for Him and be the influence God intended us to be.

DAY 4

DON'T SURRENDER YOUR JOY

"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and not cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior." Habakkuk 3:17-18

There are a thousand little things that come into our lives and often disturb us: temptations to unloving feelings, sharp words, and hasty judgments. Sometimes we've let another person or persons rob the joy out of our lives. Jesus said joy is important. **John 15:11**: *"I have told you this that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."* He wants us to have complete joy. The apostle Paul echoed the same thing in **1 Corinthians 1:24**: *"Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, because it is by faith you stand firm."* **Philippians 1:25**: *"Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith."* So Paul writes to two different churches wanting the same for them - joy.

David says in **Psalms 43:4**: *"Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the lyre, O God my God."* **Psalms 16:11**: *"You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."*

Joy is evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit. **Galatians 5:22**: *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, JOY, peace..."* The preacher Billy Sunday said, "If a believer doesn't have Joy, they have a leak in their Christianity."

A marriage is strong when it's full of joy. A family that's full of joy is strong. Once bickering and bad feelings set in, they fall apart. Satan weakens churches by sending in his servants who don't come as nasty and ugly and easy to spot. He sends them in the form of everyday people who can rob others of joy. Critical, legalistic, worldly people in the guise of God's children who cause dissention and suck the joy out of the fellowship and Satan rejoices because this weakens the ministry. **John 10:10**: *"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy, I have come that they may have life and have it to the full."*

Satan knows that a joyful Christian is an effective Christian, who worships, gives, serves and gets along with others. If all our sins are forgiven and God has accepted us as His children, we are to live in joy. He wants us to enjoy life, to have good marriages and families and strong ministries. Why would we let anyone rob us of our God-given right, our gift of joy?

God gives us instruction in His Word and power through His Holy Spirit to take ownership - take control of our attitudes and reactions. **James 1:2** tells us to: *"Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters whenever you face trials of many kinds."* We are in control of our joy. We can have it in any kind of situation, any kind of trial unless we give it up.

People steal our joy by making us mad or sad. But people can't steal our joy unless we let them.

If something someone does cause us to fuss and fret and get angry or bitter, we have let go of our joy. **Habakkuk 3:17-18** says: *"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and not cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior."* What is stopping you from having that attitude? Why should it matter what anyone else thinks when we have the God of creation as our Savior?

One of the awful things terrorists in our world often do is take people hostage. These people have no choice but be in bondage, but we do. Some people want to hold you hostage to their emotions. They will use anger or guilt or condemnation to control our Joy. Because they are joyless, they want us to be joyless. When we let them have their way, we volunteer to be their hostage. When we're upset and going over and over what we've said or done, we're volunteering to give up our joy. Are we really going to trade our joy in just to give someone a little sinful pleasure? By the way, anyone who is out to rob us of joy is sinning. Oh, they might do it self-righteously but it doesn't change the facts.

Refuse to do that. Change your focus to something that brings joy. Remember **Romans 8:39** assures us that: *“nothing in creation can separate you from the love God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

1 Corinthians 16:13 urges us to: *“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong”*. Joy is a gift. Don't throw it away. We need to keep in mind that the one indispensable person in our lives is Jesus.

Lord, make me aware of the influence of Satan on my life that can rob me of Your joy. Give me strength to overcome. I pledge to you today that my only surrender will be to You – all of me, all the time, for your purpose and glory.

DAY 5

FINDING JOY IN THE ORDINARY

Ecclesiastes 3: 12-13: *“I perceived that there is nothing better for [human beings] than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil — this is God’s gift to man.”*

It’s Friday. God has carried us through another week of work, and we are on the verge of a new weekend. For many of us these next two days are free from work duties. It’s an opportunity for rest and leisure, and for taking time to think about our lives in God’s sovereign plan. And thankfully we are not left to our own speculation. The book of Ecclesiastes is realistic. It teaches us that life under the sun is often empty, futile, and absurd, but still it does not run us into the rocks of despair. The conclusion of the book is the lens, the perspective, by which the whole book should be read. **Ecclesiastes 12:13–14:** *“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil”.* When we understand that this world isn’t paradise on earth, we are reminded that nothing is more important than a right relationship with God.

Ecclesiastes reminds us of our limitations and finiteness. We read in **Ecclesiastes 3:11:** God *“has made everything beautiful in its time.”* He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”

Life is a blend of beauty and mystery. We see the beauty of life in the waves of the ocean crashing ashore, in the rain pouring down in a thunderstorm, and in seeing the sun streaming through the trees while walking in woods. We see the beauty of the created world, but at the same time we yearn for eternity. We long for something that transcends time. We sense there is something more than just this life. We realize that such beauty is found only in God himself, in Jesus Christ. He is beautiful, and he offers us beauty in the living water of union with him, which quenches the thirst in our souls. (**John 4:14:** *“whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*)

But even though God has put a desire for eternity and for beauty in our hearts, there are many mysteries in life that we can’t understand. We *can* sense beauty in the world God has made; we *cannot* master our lives. Life doesn’t always make sense to us. We can’t always see how God is working. And we can’t make what is crooked straight (**Ecclesiastes 7:13:** *“who can make straight what He has made crooked?”*). Life is full of many puzzles and mysteries and sufferings that we can’t solve. We can’t explain why babies die, why the godly suffer, while the wicked are spared. Many of the deepest questions in life are beyond our understanding. None of us can see what God is doing from beginning to the end.

We do know that God does everything for his glory but we don’t always understand how the specific things that happen in our lives bring him glory in the end. Pascal says, “Reason’s last step is the recognition that there are an infinite number of things that are beyond it.”

Ecclesiastes teaches us that life on earth is full of suffering and tragedy. But still he calls us to enjoy life. **Chapter 3: 12-13** says: *“I perceived that there is nothing better for [human beings] than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil — this is God’s gift to man.”* We are not being told here to eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die. We are being told how to live our lives during this present evil age. God gives us time to enjoy the rewards of our work, whether we are in the workforce or a busy mom at home with the kids all week. Whatever we do in life, there is joy God intends for us to experience.

The key to joy is humility. God calls us to be content. Pride makes us want to be gods, but humility accepts the truth that we can’t master time. We are flesh and blood creatures; we are made of dust. So we accept our work every day from God. We can’t unravel all the mysteries of the universe, but we can live and work and rest in God.

We give thanks to God for what he has called us to do. We thank him for the jobs we have. We don't know what the days ahead will bring. But we put our trust in God, and eat and drink every day with joy. We give thanks for our daily bread. We find joy in the ordinary things of life: in taking walks, in exercising, in regularly attending church, and in meeting with friends. If our days are good, if we are spared suffering, that is a gift of God. Ordinary days have their own glory. Every piece of toast with jam on it is a gift of God. When we receive life as God's gift, we see the glory in the ordinary.

Ecclesiastes says, *"Don't try to unravel and figure out the reason everything happens in the world."* It is beyond your ability. **Deuteronomy 29:29** says: *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."* When days are good, enjoy them. Enjoy the days God has given you with your family, and your friends. Receive them as a gift of God and see God's goodness in them. That's the key to joy.

Lord, help me find joy in You every day, despite my circumstances. Fill me with peace and help me choose joy on purpose. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

DAY 6

GIVE THANKS IN EVERYTHING

“Then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert” Isaiah 35:6

Do you need jumper cables for your battery of joy? That jumper cable is ‘thanksgiving.’ It changes us from the inside out. Instead of being down and discouraged, spreading gloom and despair everywhere we go, we can radiate the joy of the Lord. The best witnesses for Christ are those who are facing life’s trials with a song of thanksgiving on their lips.

We need to train ourselves to be thankful in everything. **1 Thess. 5:18:** *“Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

Life is not perfect, and every moment is not filled only with wonderful things. But life changes for the better, when we realize that **our circumstances do not determine our experience of life, our attitude does!** There are people who have faced more struggles and disappointments than most, but found grace for an attitude that reflects who they are, instead of what has happened to them. There are others who have a relatively easy life but they still can’t find much to be joyful or thankful for. When we choose to deliberately focus on what we are thankful for, it changes our outlook in life. There are things to be glad about in every situation, but we have to be looking for them. That’s what thankful people do – they count their blessings rather than wasting time grumbling and complaining.

“When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing...The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad.” - Psalm 126:1-3

God’s people had been held captive so long and then, suddenly, they were on their way home. It was a long trip that would have taken weeks, perhaps even months to prepare for, but it happened, and they returned home to Jerusalem singing this song. It is a message of hope to those of us who find it hard to have the spirit of thanksgiving because we’ve been struggling with difficult circumstances for such a long time.

“Always be full of the joy of the Lord, and always thankful.” Colossians 1:11-12

Lord, let my life be more the fragrance of Your presence, than the odor of my experience. May it be a thankful and joyful testimony of Your grace.

DAY 7

JOY FOR THE FUTURE

John 16:20-22

20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. 21 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. 22 So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

We grieve over the loss of a loved one for sure. But grief can include the loss of a house, a spouse in divorce, a child that leaves home, a job, a pet, as well as financial crises. We grieve in different ways for different things in life. The closer we are emotionally and physically to people, or things, the greater the grief. But the truth is, everyone and everything in this world will someday be lost. Either they will move, get sick, die, or we will. All the important things will be left behind. But that is not true with Jesus, if He is in our lives by faith.

Jesus was preparing the disciples to start on an unbelievable path. They would minister in the power of the Holy Spirit to unreceptive people as well as hearts that were prepared to receive the truth. They would do miracles in the name of Jesus. They would never grieve over losing Jesus again because He would be with them in the person of the Holy Spirit. They would talk with Him and He would guide them and empower them every day. They would experience His love, presence and relationship. And that would not end at death but only increase in glory.

In **verse 21**, Jesus uses the analogy of giving birth. A mother-to-be experiences weakness, sickness, change of emotions, temperature, and sometimes depression. And the actual delivery is very painful. But when a healthy baby is brought into the world those nine months and even the pain of delivery are worth it. When the little life cries out and we witness the miracle of birth sorrow turns into joy.

In the book of Isaiah the nation of Israel is pictured as a woman about to give birth. Jesus sees the disciples, all Jews, as faithful Israel who will experience the birth pangs of bringing forth the promised Son of God. They have sorrow now, but just like the joy of a new mother, they will experience joy when Jesus sees them again. Jesus contrasted grief and sorrow of this temporary world with the joy that we will have when the pain of this life is over and we are brought into the glories of heaven in His presence for all eternity.

In our world today we see that there is often rejoicing when Jesus is not around. There is happiness when people eliminate any godliness because they want to rule their own lives. When Jesus was on earth the religious and political leaders; the crowd all wanted Him gone. Jesus forces people to confront the painful truth of their rejection of God, so they run from Him. Many in the world today are very uncomfortable with Jesus. They want to eliminate the Bible and hate anything Christian. In many places Christians are persecuted for their faith.

We would think the joy Jesus talks about here would come from our seeing Jesus. Of course that will bring joy, but that's not what Jesus says. **Verse 22** says the joy comes when Jesus see them: *"I will see you again and you will rejoice."* How will being seen by Jesus cause us to rejoice? How does being seen by anybody affect us? It all depends on how we think that person feels about seeing us. If we think they're happy to see us, we'll be happy. If we think they're sad to see us, we'll be sad. It's usually not that difficult to tell. Someone's face usually gives away how he or she feels.

If we think they're happy to see us, we'll be happy. If we think they're sad to see us, we'll be sad. It's usually not that difficult to tell. Someone's face usually gives away how he or she feels.

Jesus saw Peter, James and John first. He saw Nathaniel first under the tree. He called people to Himself out of His love and He calls us to be His followers today. We love because He first loved us. Clearly, being seen by Jesus is a source of joy for His disciples.

You may be sorrowful, feeling somehow that Jesus is far away, maybe you feel as if Jesus wouldn't want to see you, you are not worthy, or you are not the way you want to be. This causes us inward anxiety. Jesus knew all about Thomas and his doubts, all about Peter and his failures. He knew all about the heart of the disciples who down deep thought they were really better than the others. He knew all about the anger problem with James and John, the fear, the pride, the selfishness within us, yet He still says we're going to be so happy when He sees us again. So it is true for you and me. After grief comes joy.

Jesus' death was followed by the joy of victory from the grave. It brought hope far beyond the disciple's dreams. They realized that even this world was temporary. We will experience loss in this world, but Jesus reminds the disciples here and us too that at the end of life we will be rewarded with great joy. Jesus is looking forward to seeing us in Heaven!

Dear Lord, thank you for the reminder that in you there is victory! Help me to intentionally raise You up in my life to the position of first priority. Guide me through whatever changes that will mean for me. I claim Your victory in my every day. Thank you!



CREATIVE WORSHIP TOOLS & RESOURCES



Joyfully His
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016

Theme: Joyfully His!

Women's Promo 2016

Creative Worship Idea

Provided by Captain Ashley Bungay

Make a JOY Word Cloud

- 1) For this idea you will need to purchase a large canvas, and either paint/paint brushes or Sharpie permanent markers in various sizes and colours.
- 2) Before you plan to execute this idea you will need to outline the word JOY in "bubble letters" or a fancy font of your choice. You will need to outline the word JOY in this way so that there is plenty of space on the inside of each individual letter. Once this is complete, you're ready to start!

Example:

- 3) Have the worship team choose a number of songs/choruses that suit the theme, and invite the congregation to come forward during these songs to write words on the inside of the outlined J.O.Y.
 - a) These words can be other synonyms for joy, (*happiness, delight, pleasure*)
 - b) They can write the practical that bring them joy (*family, friends, coffee, nature*)
 - c) They can write the spiritual things that bring them joy (*salvation, grace, redemption*)
 - d) They can answer the question, "What does joy mean to you?" (laughter, freedom)
- 4) You may want to have this canvas available for a week or two (or throughout your Women's Ministry Promotional Week Activities) to allow more people to add their words. This canvas can then be placed in your building as artwork.

My commitment to be Joyfully His

Let's be a community of women, gathered together to live more whole-heartedly, to sharpen, challenge, love and inspire one another to then scatter back out to our worlds bearing the mandate to be women that love.

Idelette McVicker wrote:

Let us RISE to the questions of our time.

Let us SPEAK to the injustices in our world.

Let us MOVE the mountains of fear and intimidation.

Let us SHOUT down the walls that separate and divide.

Let us FILL the Earth with the fragrance of Love.

Let us be women who Love.

Let us be JOY FULL women.

We are smart. We are brave. We want to change the world. We run marathons to benefit our sisters, not so that we can lose weight. We have more to offer to the church than our mad decorating skills. I look around, and I can see that these women can offer strategic leadership, wisdom, counsel and even, yes, teaching. We want to give and serve and make a difference. We want to be challenged. We want to read books and talk politics, theology and current events. We want to wrestle through our theology. We want to listen to each other. We want to worship, we want to intercede for our sisters and weep with those

JOYFULLY HIS!

A monologue written by Captain Heather Samuel, BA

This is a monologue about how no matter what adversity, we can be joyfully his because of who he is and what he does for each of us.

Do I know joy? True and lasting joy? Absolutely! I know this because I know the giver of joy intimately, possibly more intimately than most. He has been with me most of my life. He has been the source of my greatest joy in the world, and also during my greatest time of sorrow. He has been there through all the ups and downs of life.

I was raised in a home that feared God and tried to live according to His laws. My parents were very religious and followed the Scriptures, and brought us up to do the same. We were taught about faith from an early age, and followed in the faith that our parents taught. We were, and still are, God-fearing people.

So, when it happened, it was devastating. How could I have brought such shame on my family? No one would believe the truth of what happened. In fact, I understand that people still have trouble believing what happened, even today. My whole family lived with the stigma, the sneers and jeers, the gossip, the glances. It was not easy on anyone, me, my family, my husband, anyone! There were times, all throughout my life, when I wondered if I had done the right thing, saying, 'May it be.'

But, through it all, I had joy – joy that comes from knowing that God was and is with me, whatever situation I may face. And boy, did I face them!! You see, my son, my firstborn gift from God himself has gone through much stigma and pain himself. Pain for his people, his world, much rejection despite great love. In fact, he has given his life for the whole world. Painfully, displayed for all to see, he lovingly gave his life so that all could experience the love of God and being joyfully his!

It was a hard thing to witness, your son going through so much pain. I can't even describe what it was like. But, from the news of the angel that I was going to give birth to him, through the stigma of being a teenage unwed mother who had cheated on her fiancé, even though this child was conceived of the Spirit and the true Son of God, to his horrific death on the cross, I knew that I could have joy because God was with me.

I have heard James say, 'Consider it pure joy...whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance (James 1:2-3).' My faith is stronger having gone through all I have gone through, and my joy is complete. I have found joy in being Jesus' mother, but my greater joy comes from knowing that Jesus is my Saviour, my King, and my Lord.

Day by day, moment by moment, I know that he is with me, and because of that I know that I am 'joyfully his.' Thank God, I am 'joyfully his.'



Music Suggestions provided by Major Darlene Anderson, Lieutenant Laurie Hickman, Captain Tracy Savage

Worship Songs:


Joy of the Lord (Ed Cash & Rend Collective, CCLI#7047091)
He Knows my name (Tommy Walker, CCLI #2151368)
Joy (Rend Collective, CCLI#7014646)
Trading my Sorrows
The river is here (Down the mountain)
Faithful One (so unchanging)
10,000 reasons (Bless the Lord O my soul)
Rise up & Praise Him (Paul Baloche & Gary Sadler, CCLI#2060552)
Exceeding Joy (Miriam Webster, CCLI#3713901)
Sing For Joy (Lamont Hiebert, CCLI#1861357)
In Your Light (Graham Moore & Jeremy Riddle, CCLI#6256726)
Surrender (Marc James, CCLI#3033179)
Knowing You (Graham Kendrick, CCLI#1045238)
Hello, my name is.. (Matthew West, CCLI#6439969)
Let it Rise (Holland Davis, CCLI#2240585)
I will come & bow down (Martin Nystrom, CCLI#12327)
There is joy in the Lord (Cheri Keaggy, CCLI#1184209)

Vocal Solos:

‘My life is in Your hands’ by Kathy Troccoli
“Holy Ground” by Geron Davis
“In the presence of Jehovah” by Geron Davis

Songs from The Salvation Army songbook:

All the promises of God are sure
Now I belong to Jesus
Fairest Lord Jesus
My times are in Thy hands
Leaning on the everlasting arms
Simply trusting
Living in the fountain #352 old songbook (Tune: Onward Christian Soldiers)



*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 15:10-11



Always
be joyful
in the Lord!

Philippians 4:4 GW

JOY

Prayer for Today

(Just a Moment, Lord-Revised and Expanded Edition: Flora Larsson)

Today my heart sings, Lord;
Everything within me rejoices.
Joy bubbles up in my soul;
Overflows and cascades like a stream
Leaping all barriers; the joy of knowing You,
The joy of union with You.
One with You, Creator of the world, and my Creator,
One with You, Saviour of the world, and my Saviour.
One with You, Spirit of the eternal God, and my God,
One with You, almighty King of kings and my Lord and King.
Joy! Joy at the heart of living;
Joy in doing; joy in being.
Sing for joy, my heart, for sheer joy, my soul.
The joy of loving You; the joy of following You;
The joy of serving You all the way 'long is glory.
Today my heart sings, Lord:
Everything within me rejoices,
Joy bubbles up in my soul, glory.....glory! Amen

“Shout with joy to God, all the earth! Sing the glory of His name....” Psalm 66:1



QUOTES ON JOY

Provided by Captain Heather Samuel, BA

'No one finds joy by trying to make everything perfect. One only arrives at joy – by seeing in every imperfection ***all that is joy***. It's counting the ways HE loves, this is what multiplies joy.'

Ann Voskamp

'You have a choice each and every single day:

I choose to feel blessed

I choose to feel grateful

I choose to be excited

I choose to be thankful

I choose to be happy.'

(found on Facebook)

'Today, take a few minutes to sit quietly and just be thankful for all that you have.'

(found on Facebook)

'Let joy live loud in your soul.'

Ann Voskamp

'Being joyful isn't what makes you grateful.

Being grateful is what makes you joyful.'

Ann Voskamp

Resources

I would recommend Ann Voskamp, [One Thousand Gifts](#)

I would also recommend Lysa TerKeurst, [The Best Yes](#)

Video Resources-Submitted by Major Cathy Simms

Below are some inspirational videos that speak of our belonging to Christ and references our joy in Him.

Scripture Lullabies – Nothing Can Separate Me

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccgX7ID7yos&index=5&list=PLlm79x_24RK1LVhYMmybdXRJQ3Iw6H1hI

Scripture Lullabies – Wonderfully Made

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igYWIzrC9Ko&list=PLlm79x_24RK1LVhYMmybdXRJQ3Iw6H1hI&index=1

Scripture Lullabies – I Can Do All Things

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWWZ7jHmMJs>

Cheri Keaggy - There Is Joy In The Lord

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LsfC2V2s_rg

10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord O My Soul)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSxocnIaNOA>

Skit Guys offers some great resources with the theme of 'Joy'. Below are some I would recommend.

(Note: there is a cost for downloading these videos/resources)

A Psalm of Worship – Call to Worship - Video

<https://skitguys.com/videos/item/a-psalm-of-worship>

I Am With You Always – Video

<https://skitguys.com/videos/item/i-am-with-you-always>

Romans 15 Benediction – Video

<https://skitguys.com/videos/item/romans-15-benediction>

Skit – Joy Comes From the Inside

In the scenarios that follow, notice how life often determines our joy or lack of joy, instead of joy determining how life will play out for that day. <https://skitguys.com/scripts/item/joy-comes-from-the-inside>

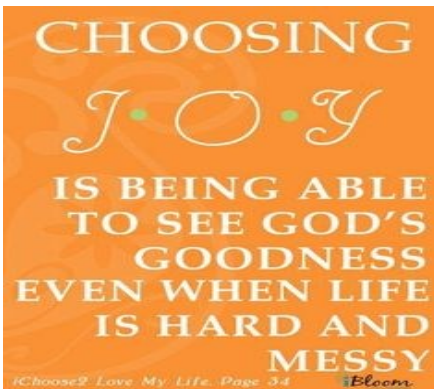
This NEWLY REVISED EDITION of the classic concise guide to hosting World Café covers the basics of the World Café process. It includes brief outlines of each principle, a description of Café Etiquette, an outline of key elements of the World Café conversations, and tips for creating Café ambiance.

Visit the site below to download your free guide to hosting a World Café:

<http://www.theworldcafe.com/tools-store/hosting-tool-kit/>

Sample questions for the Café on the theme of 'Joyfully His'. This would be a great activity to use for Bible Study that engages the learner and promotes personal application.

- ◇ What is the difference between joy and happiness, or are they one in the same?
- ◇ Paul writes in Philippians 4:4: 'Rejoice in the Lord always.' How is this even possible?
- ◇ How does this idea of belonging to God produce joy in our lives?
- ◇ What can we do to maintain joy, even when our circumstances are less than ideal?
- ◇ What does the Bible say about joy? Record some of the verses that inspire joy.
- ◇ May want to have Bibles available and concordance, or use www.biblegateway.com
- ◇ How does this perspective change the way we approach situations that are less than joyful?



**"I choose joy...
I will refuse to see any problem as anything less than an opportunity to see God."**

- Max Lucado

SERMONS & SERMON OUTLINES



Joyfully His
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016

JOYFULLY HIS

Submitted by Captain Pamela Pinksen

"I was never told I was loved as a child," an ordinarily reserved lady shares openly during a weekly morning bible study. This certain morning, the topic of the day is the "royal law of love." The leader and the other women around the table sit shocked by her confession and a heavy sadness slowly fills up the room. Her revelation serves as a reminder that this world can be cruel and as broken humanity, we have the potential to wreak all kinds of damage in our own lives and in the lives of others. This confession gives the group permission to further discuss the offenses against children, the broken adults they become and the cycle of harm that is perpetuated. Bible study mornings can be like that - as this group of truth seekers tackle the realities of our human experience, as they share burdens and heartbreak and pray for the sick and the suffering. It can be heavy. It is what happens when people gather to honestly share together and reveal the scars of living in this world. It's that kind of time - it's that kind of world we live in. It can certainly challenge the notion of joy as we take a cold, hard look at our fallen race living in this fallen place. Joy feels like a fading echo in the overture of life.

Perhaps that is how the disciples felt in listening to Jesus prepare them for his departure. They had invested so much, they had hoped so much for this promising Rabbi and now Jesus is talking about things like his pending cruel death and his departure from them. He has already acknowledged in John chapter 14 that he knows their hearts are troubled by His revelation. He will continue encouraging them that although things will change drastically, they are not to be afraid, they are not to be troubled. It is a heavy discourse. Yet it's at this point in Jesus' last days of teaching that he over and over inserts a very small word with very large ramifications. In the midst of their distress, in the midst of their fear, in the midst of their grief, it is possible that their joy may be complete (16:24) (17:13). Joy seems inappropriate in this context, like a bright burst of sunlight in a darkened room bringing shocking pain to the unadjusted eye. But maybe that's exactly the point. Maybe when joy seems so alien to our circumstance is when joy is what we need the most. Maybe when life is hard and pain is deep and raw, that is when joy is most important.

So Jesus reveals to his listeners in John 15 how this joy will be possible. Although Jesus is leaving them, the relationship they share is so intimate that as his very own, they can remain in joy as they remain in Him. They are in fact, JOYFULLY HIS! And as followers in the 21st century, in the midst of living in a world that is broken, the relationship we share with Jesus makes joy possible no matter what. We too are JOYFULLY HIS! And being Joyfully His means three crucial blessings:

1) Joyfully His means the blessing of communion. Jesus says, "Remain in me and I will remain in you." (v.4) The Greek word for "remain" here reveals that this is a strong and close connection. It is a continual connection that endures. It is also an abiding place, a dwelling of sorts. So Jesus is saying that the continuing in the intimacy of communion with him is a mutual indwelling. Jesus is at home with us and we are at home with him. This is supported throughout scripture. In chapter 14, Jesus says that "in my Father's house, there are many rooms." (v.2) The Greek Word for "rooms" here refers to "dwelling places." What a wonderful image it gives of a sweet communion we can enjoy in the "now" as well as pointing to a future consummation when eternally "The dwelling of God will be with men, and he will live with them (Rev. 21:3)." The destiny of us as God's children is to remain in a state of mutual indwelling. The beautiful intimate relationship of the Trinity is open to include us, "My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (John 14:23). This truth of abiding is a source of true joy. As we share the blessed communion of fellowship with the Triune God, we realize that we are deeply at home. There is no greater comfort, peace or Joy then this! Abiding in Christ is the source of all life - it is the JOY that is our strength. It is because of Calvary that our homecoming is possible as the call of God goes out from the cross, "Come home and let us make our home with you." That, Don Postema says in *Space for God*, is like a warm shower after being out on a cold day; like an embrace after a time of loneliness; like the hug of a loving parent for a wayward child. It is the covenantal hug of God! This

has been God's intention from the time of creation - to live in a relationship with us, to allow us to share in the abiding presence of the Triune God. Joyfully His means the blessing of that communion.

2) **Joyfully His means the blessing of being God's beloved.**

Jesus says, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in that love. 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." (v. 9-11) The love of Christ for us is compared to the love the Father shared with Him. That love defines who we are – we are the beloved of God. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God." (1 Jn 3:1). Henri Nouwen wrote that being beloved of God is the core truth about our humanity, and when we are blessed with that deep truth, we can walk through life with a sense of well-being and true belonging. Yet we have trouble accepting that we are loved of God. As human beings, we are constantly looking for love and fulfillment in all the wrong places which only results in misplaced joy and crushing disappointment. A minor illustration of this happened for me just recently on my birthday. As women, we enjoy a little pampering from time to time. I had the special treat of going to the spa for a pedicure on my birthday. I was so excited! I thought that it would really make my day! I ended up in a crowded room with a faulty massage chair. The massaging apparatus was broken and it meant I spent the entire time with a large kneading arm sticking uncomfortably in my back. Then my pretty polished toes didn't even make it out of the parking lot as I awkwardly struck my foot on the car door smudging my biggest toenail. The disappointment was great because the expectation was great. I thought about that afterward – if we place our hope for joy and love in people and pleasures, we will always be let down. But when we place our hope in the Lord for all we need, we will find joy, because our value and our identity come from being the beloved of God. When we rest in His love and listen only to His voice about who we are, we hear his voice reminding us "you are precious and honored in my sight...I love you." (Is. 43:4). That is when we discover a deep seated joy and wellbeing in life. We respond to that love by trusting in His love for us, believing what he says is best and obeying Him. What the Lord has commanded for us is the best and only way. And as we live in that reality, we will find our joy to be complete. Joyfully His means the blessing of being God's beloved.

3) **Joyfully His means the blessing of fruitfulness.**

Fruit and fruitfulness is mentioned repeatedly throughout this discourse in John 15. Fruit is a natural consequence of abiding in Christ (v. 5). Pruning is also necessary at times in order that we might be even more fruitful (v. 2). This fruit is for the glory of God (v. 8) and it is fruit that will last (v. 16). As we are energized by the Spirit of God, the natural outflow of our communion is fruit that is not for our own good, but serves the eternal purposes of God. As we experience God's love, his presence and his pruning in our lives, we become fruitful. In turn, we live a life of love, which fulfills the command of Christ upon us and fills us with complete joy (v. 11-12). God's design for us and gift to us is to give us meaningful lives of love and glorious fruitfulness which fills us with purpose and joy.

In the 2013 film, *Gravity*, Dr. Ryan Stone, played by Sandra Bullock, is a medical engineer on her first shuttle mission, with veteran astronaut Matt Kowalsky, played by George Clooney. On a routine spacewalk, the shuttle is destroyed by a freak hail of space debris, leaving Stone and Kowalsky completely alone. According to one description of the film, "They are tethered to nothing but each other and spiraling out into the blackness." After the film's release, the German magazine *Der Spiegel* asked 69-year-old German astronaut Ulrich Walter to fact-check the film. Walter said that after becoming completely untethered, Sandra Bullock's character would have died. The interviewer commented, "That doesn't sound like a very nice way to go, drifting through nothingness in a spacesuit, waiting to die." How tragic it would be if we were to live our lives drifting, disconnected from the source of all life, in essence living lives without true purpose, just waiting to die. However, when we are "in Christ" as branches grafted in the vine, tethered and connected to Him, we find our purpose and live fruitful and joyfilled lives. Joyfully His means the blessing of fruitfulness.

Conclusion:

Any given day, we turn on the television and we see terrorist attacks, natural disasters, hatred, poverty, suffering, fear and injustice throughout our world. On social media just recently, a cartoon was being circulated of a beaten up planet earth personified with tears in its eyes. The caption simply said, "It hurts." Our world is hurting. Our own personal worlds are also filled with pain and suffering at times as well. But the truth remains that joy is possible because we are JOYFULLY HIS. Being His means that we share a life-giving joyful connection that reminds us that we share the sweet communion of the Triune God, that we find our worth and value in being the beloved of God and as we remain close to Him, he gives our life meaning and fulfillment in bearing fruit. Our very life, hope and strength come from being JOYFULLY HIS. Remain in Him and in the reality of that truth.



JOYFULLY HIS - Submitted by Captain Tracy Savage

Text: John 15:10-11

In a *Charlie Brown Christmas* Charlie Brown was having trouble getting into the Christmas spirit so Linus said, "Charlie Brown, you're the only person I know who can take a wonderful season like Christmas and turn it into a problem."

Unfortunately, some Christians today seem to have the same problem as Charlie Brown, they are down, discouraged and depressing, when we should be lifting up our Lord and Savior. We were created to be Joyful.

In John 15:10-11, Jesus says to His Disciples, "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.

We were chosen by God for Joy, when we remain in his love we belong to him and we are "Joyfully His" because we are obedient to his commands and through our obedience we are given the gift of being "Joyfully His".

Genuine Christian Joy is not the power of positive thinking, or the upbeat personality that one may have, being happy because we are living the life we want. Joy is not the half-glass full attitude the way many people live their lives. We have Joy because we are obedient to His commands and the Joy that we have in Jesus cannot be taken away from us when the circumstances of life get in the way.

Jesus says, it is my joy, keep my commands and you will remain in His love and you will be filled with His Joy. We are chosen to live our lives in Joy. We are His chosen people and chosen to be filled with the Joy of God. When we do the right things in our lives we are given joy. We are to be Christians filled with Joy. There is nothing more harmful to Christianity, than a gloomy, unhappy Christian.

It is true that as Christians we are sinners, but we have something going for us, we are redeemed. Therefore we are obedient to the calling on our lives to follow Jesus and we are filled with Joy because of His salvation for our lives. When we walk with God, we should be joyfully His and walk in Joy and love. Galatians 5:22 Reminds us that Jesus' Joy is in us, we cannot create this Joy in our lives but through the Holy Spirit we can generate great joy in our lives. Joy in Christ is a glorious gladness and cannot be taken from us when we walk through circumstances of life.

We are joyfully His when we are fully trusting God with our lives. It is easy to push our relationship with Him aside when things are going well. When we are doing well, we feel elated and sometimes give ourselves a pat on the back and it is easy to be joyful, but when we are facing trials it is easy to forget who has chosen us to live joyfully in Him. When we face the trials of health concerns, marital problems, in-fertility, loss of a loved one, loss of employment, we begin to sink. In the good times we may take our eyes off Jesus, and we focus on other things, and then the bad times hit us and we wonder where God is now.

Peter, took his eyes off Jesus, and he began to sink (Matthew 14:22, Mark 6:45, John 6:16), Peter was losing sight of the important issues at hand. We too at times forget to trust. When we trust in Him we become "Joyfully His".

A young woman named Anne Steele had encountered one trial and disappointment after another. Her mother died when she was three, and when she was nineteen she suffered a severe hip injury that left her disabled. Eventually she fell in love and was engaged to be married, but the day before the wedding her fiancé drowned.

Later Anne Steele penned the following song:

Father, whate'er of earthly bliss Thy sovereign will denies,

Accepted at Thy throne of grace, let this petition rise:

Give me a calm, a thankful heart, from every murmur free!

The blessings of Thy grace impart, and make me live to Thee.

True Joy comes in trusting in the good times and the troublesome times. Joy comes in His purging and Pruning. True Joy transcends the rolling waves of circumstance. Joy comes from our consistent trusting relationship with Jesus. When we intertwine our lives with his, we will have someone to walk alongside us through adversity, without the worries on sinking into the lows. With Jesus we are joyfully His because we have the joy of living with Jesus daily, no matter what our circumstances of live may be. We are chosen for Joy.

As a Parent we work continuously to teach our kids how to be independent. It takes a lot of time to teach our children how to do things for themselves, along with a great deal of patience. Our goal as parents is to train our children so that they will one day live their lives as independently as they can. I know as a mother I am always saying “you need to learn this, because one day I will not be there to help you with it, you can do it, I know you can.”

However, Jesus teaches the opposite. Jesus teaches us to be fully dependent on him, for power, wisdom and assurance. Jesus Teaches us through our scripture verse that we are to come to him, that he will be with us always, and that through our dependence on Him, we will be “Joyfully His” because we are redeemed.

Our Joy will be complete, because we have Jesus’ Joy in us. We are born to grow, but growth is not automatic, spiritual growth at times feels like it should happen automatically however for us to be filled with His Joy we must be willing to allow ourselves to put effort into reaching spiritual growth. Our Joy will be complete, when we pray for new attitudes, we set goals for Bible Study, devotional time, develop Joy in all times and all circumstances. We need to accept Jesus into our lives as our savior, as our joy and live for Him.

Because we are redeemed from sinful ways, our Joy can become complete and we will want to serve, worship and love. Jesus reminds us in our verse that it is our job to share the joy to others. To let others know how we can be joyfully His. Jesus lay down his life and endured the cross for the joy that set before him. We are called to live joyfully in all we do. We are called to serve joyfully. Serving is part of our worship; His Joy will keep us safe as we serve. By being “Joyfully His” we serve for the right reason. We serve because we worship a God who loves us and longs for us to love others.

George Muller was an evangelist and the director of an orphanage in Bristol, England in the mid 1800’s. He was well known for his faith and ministry. He cared for orphans, teaching them and loving them. George Muller’s love for serving came from his joy in serving and worshipping the Lord as Saviour. His prayer every morning included how he could have a happy soul, so his inner life would be nourished so he could continue to serve the way Jesus served.

We should and can work hard for Jesus, but if we are not doing it for the right reason, it is cold and empty. We must not lose the warmth of our love for Christ. Joy helps us serve in love rather than a religious duty.

“Never be so busy as not to think of others.” — Mother Teresa, she teaches us that because of what Christ has done for us, we should be willing to serve in love, and love to serve. Our life as a Christian has so much to offer, if we are willing to accept the gift that our Heavenly Father has given to us.

Today, our challenge is, are we going to accept the gift, and live as people who are Joyfully His. A Joyful believer is satisfied in Christ, we are joyful because He has given us safety, comfort, love and a willingness to serve others. Today, we can leave being Joyfully His in all that we do.



"Joyfully His"

Text: Psalm 16:9-11 and Ruth

By Major Janice Rowe

Introduction:

My husband has the most beautiful gift of hospitality, and although I have not always appreciated his spontaneous announcement of *"we have company"*, I have simply learned over our married life to step into the support role and watch as he joyfully prepares a meal while engaging our guests with conversation that will make them feel warm and welcomed. Not everyone can do that, but he can. Why does he do it? Because he discovered some years ago that hospitality is his spiritual gift, and ever since discovering it, he has claimed it "joyfully" as his way of serving his Lord.

Paul said to the Christians at Philippi, *"Always be joyful because you belong to the Lord. I will say it again. Be joyful."* Philippians 4:4(NIRV)

It is the Christian's privilege to joyfully belong to God. After all, God was pleased to create us in His image and to enjoy fellowship with us. As I think about the theme, "Joyfully His", I am drawn to the story of Ruth; a story of a young Moabite woman who found joy under the watchful care of her Heavenly Father, and then to a verse in Psalm 16 which was written by her great-grandson, King David. *"You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Ps 16:11).*

This verse may not mean anything to us on its own. But as we mingle it with Ruth's story, God wants to teach us how we can joyfully belong to Him

1. To be Joyfully His, We must Pick the Path of Life

The Psalmist declares, *"You have made known to me the path of life"* (Psalm 16:11a).

A young woman found herself wallowing in a pity party. She was going through a difficult time and unfortunately, her life up to this point had been difficult. And as we explored her journey through life, she said, "I'm almost 40 and I have nothing". Why can't I be like you? Why can't I have a husband, and a job and children who will listen to me, instead of driving me crazy? Why can't I be happy?"

And as the conversation progressed, we unravelled some of the choices in life that led her to where she was. The reality is that life is full of choices, and some of our choices have negative consequences. We pick a path in life, for there are only two paths, but the path she chose led in the opposite direction than mine. She was left with regrets; feeling unfulfilled, and without direction. The path I chose has been filled with life, but has left me with great joy.

Ruth's story in Chapter 1 started out with great misfortune. A famine caused a Hebrew man to take his wife and two sons and move to the land of Moab. We're no strangers to that way of life today. We see it all the time, don't we? Friends and neighbours packing up because they have no work, and they move, to find security, that will allow them and their family to get back on their feet again. Maybe someone here has found themselves in that kind of situation at some point. And that's what Elimelech was doing for his family. But after sometime in Moab, Elimelech died, leaving his wife and two sons. The two sons grew up and married Moabite women. Mahlon married Ruth and Kilion married Orpah.

But not long into their story, in verse 5, tragedy met the family again as both sons died leaving their mother, Naomi, without a husband, without children, and with two in-law daughters. Well, what's a mother-in-law to do? Naomi couldn't afford to provide for herself- especially in a foreign land. She would have needed to depend on her husband and sons for survival. And being aged herself, she was at a desperate place in her life.

So she prepared to go back to her home in Judah, where hopefully she would find provision. Ruth and Orpah packed to go with her, but in verse 11, Naomi told them to go back to their mothers, and stay in their homeland, where they might find husbands to care for them.

The in-law daughters wouldn't hear of it. So Naomi gave them a shake and said, *"Look at me. I'm too old for another husband. And even if I married today and gave birth to two sons in 9 months. Are you really going to wait for them to grow up to marry you?"* (1:12-13 paraphrase)

As sad as she was Orpah kissed Naomi and left to go back to Moab with her mother. And that's all we know of Orpah. But Ruth, the Bible says, clung to her mother-in-law, and made a bold promise. (1:16) *"Where you go, I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried."*

Ruth picked the path of life. It was path that was risky. She was accompanying an elderly woman who she would now have to care for, and could possibly share in her plight. She was leaving the familiarity of her homeland and moving to a foreign people. She left the gods of the Moabites and she welcomed the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and her mother-in-law, Naomi. She didn't have all the answers, but she was willing to take the risk. Her choice didn't mean that there weren't dark days, or challenges, or difficult times, but she stayed on that path through thick and thin. Ruth committed herself to the path of her husband- the path that would bring her great joy and fulfillment in her life.

And you know, sometimes we are guilty of straying off the path that God desires for us to take. A situation comes up and upsets us, and we turn our backs and start walking our own way. We have an argument with our spouse and before we know it we're saying things that are cruel and uncalled for. A layoff comes and instead of trusting more, we cry out Why God and forget the times when he was faithful.

But what I am learning as I stay on the path of life is that I need to trust God completely. Not just for one situation, but in every situation. I need to trust him for what I know is happening in my life now, and what will come in my future. That's picking the path of life- and let me assure you that if you do that, then you will know joy in your life. *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; lean not on your understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight."* (Proverbs 3:5-6)

David said, *"You have made known to me the path of life..."* David made choices in his own life that caused him to stray from the narrow way. But when he finally realized that God needed to be first in His life, he was restored and was able to celebrate like his great-grand mother that God revealed the path of life to him.

Jesus said, *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."*

2. To be joyfully His, we must Pursue the Presence of Joy".

David said of the Lord, *"You will fill me with joy in your presence"* (Psalm 16:11b)

You've probably heard this a hundred times or more, but I'm going to say it again...there is a huge difference between happiness and joy. Happiness depends on what's happening at the moment. You're probably happy right now because you just ate, or your child is doing well in school, or you are wearing a new dress. Happiness is an emotion. And chances are, if you aren't feeling happy, you're probably feeling something else, sad, or mad, or tired or energetic, blah or bored. Feelings come and go, depending on the kind of day you're having, but Joy is different. Joy is deeper. It's richer. It's long-lasting and it is something you know you have within, even if you are angry or sad or feeling blah- there's no questioning joy.

Joy is about learning to be content. I'm not always happy with the way things go in my home, but I am overwhelmed with joy to be wife and mother in my home.

Ruth learned to be content and many years later, David would pen the words of contentment of Psalm 16:11, when he said, *"you will fill me with joy in your presence"*.

I have a nephew who is amazing with numbers. If every letter in the alphabet has a value from 1 to 26, I can say any word to my nephew and he will give me a number which equals the number value of the letters. So, for example. A= 1; B=2; C=3- that's a value of 6.

If you add up the number value of the word *Attitude*, do you know what you will get? 100! Attitude is 100%. And I believe that Ruth learned to be content and to have her heart filled with joy because of her attitude. She gave 100% and pursued a life of joy.

Nothing that is worth something comes easy. We have to work at it. So Ruth learned to be content. This was her attitude:

- I have no husband, but I must go on.
- I am going to a new land, but I'll learn to get used to their customs and way of life.
- I won't know anyone in Israel, but I'll make friends.
- I am a foreign widow, who is caring for a aged mother-in-law- it is unlikely that I will be hired by anyone, but I'm willing to pick up the scraps of the barley with the other servant girls.

Her attitude goes against all odds, but she chose to pursue joy. When she made her decision to declare to Naomi, *"Your God will be my God"*, she was opening the way for her life to be filled with joy, because the source of joy was found alone in God.

Joy doesn't fall in our lap. We work for joy and cultivate it so that soon it grows and overflows our life into the lives of others. Ruth had to get to know the God of Naomi. She had to learn to live the way He wanted her to live. No longer could she serve God and carry around small wooden gods in her hand as a back up. Real joy comes when God is first and only in your life. And it is when we make that decision to follow God alone that Joy abounds to us.

Jesus said, *"I tell you [to remain in my love] so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete"*. (John 15:11)

In Chapter 2, Ruth went out to the fields and asked to glean behind the harvesters with the other servant girls. And she worked from sun up to sun down. And, Boaz, the owner of the field, who happened to be Naomi's relative, took notice of Ruth and asked who she was. And when he found out that she was the daughter-in-law of Naomi and the kindness she had shown to her mother-in-law, he made it possible for her to gather more barley than a servant girl would normally gather.

Her kindness, and her devotion to the path of life she chose caused Boaz to return that kindness. That evening Ruth went home with a load of barley. And Naomi asked, (2:19) *"where did you work today? And Ruth replied. The man's name is Boaz. And Naomi, filled with joy herself, said, "The Lord bless him!"* For a time we may mourn, we may be sad, we may be going through difficult times, but God is always faithful and *"joy does come in the morning"*.

Because of Ruth's willingness to put aside the temporary misfortune she was facing, she was given hope beyond anything she could have imagined. And Naomi encouraged her all the more to stay in the field of Boaz, and there she gleaned until the harvest was finished.

Is your life one that is filled with joy? Don't depend on happiness to live a life of contentment, because it will soon fade. Ruth had to set her mind to pursue joy in life, otherwise she would have been terribly miserable. I pray we'll do an attitude check of our own in these days and look to the source of our joy- Jesus Christ. And if you are here and you've been searching and you've come up empty, consider the difference Jesus Christ will make in your life. I promise you, He will make all the difference!

3. To be Joyfully His, we need to Participate in the Rivers of Pleasure.

Again David in Psalm 16:11c , “[you will fill me] with eternal pleasures at your right hand”.

If we back track just for a moment, Ruth’s story is a good news story for us. She had to journey through life, just as we do. I’m sure when she was a little girl, her dreams didn’t include marrying a foreign Israelite, becoming a widow at a young age, leaving her home and mother, taking care of an aging mother-in-law and trying to make ends meet by gathering the left-overs from the harvesters.

Maybe you’re living your dream, but not many of our childhood dreams are carried through. I guess the first choice we make is that we dream of a prince, but we start dating a frog 😊. We always say we want to marry a doctor, but we fall in love with a lumberjack. And then we grow up. Now don’t get me wrong. I’m not saying anything about lumberjacks, or carpenters (which my husband was) or pastors. Because we do find our prince in our spouse, he’s just not wealthy, that’s all.

So Ruth’s journey is really no different than ours. And as we go through life we have to at some point, grow up, take responsibility, and start living! Ruth’s choice was to pick the path of life. She chose the way of Yahweh- God. And in her decision she would realize that if she wanted joy in her life, she would have to pursue it.

In Ruth Chapters 3-4, Ruth learned what it meant to “participate in the rivers of pleasure”. The key word here is ‘participate’. It’s an action word. It requires us to do something. For *worldly* pleasures, you don’t have to do much. There’s a tonne of stuff out there today to take your mind off Christ. And you don’t have to do much to find pleasure, but that kind of pleasure only lasts while you’re engaged in it. But the pleasure I’m talking about today is everlasting. It doesn’t leave you empty or feeling dirty.

Naomi said to Ruth in 3:1, *“My daughter, should I not try to find a home for you, where you will be provided for?”* And she thought about the kindness of Boaz, and realized that Boaz being a relative, by law, had a responsibility to the widow of her son, Mahlon. In Israelite law, when a man died, his brother or relative was to take his widowed wife and marry her and bring her into the family. Because Mahlon’s brother was also dead, the responsibility shifted to the cousins or uncles...

And that’s when Naomi realized that if they were to ever be redeemed from the place they were in their lives- without husbands, without children, without hope for a future, they needed to take action.

With all that running through Naomi’s mind, she prepared her daughter-in-law to meet Boaz privately, and the Bible tells us that Boaz became her kinsman-redeemer. The man who would become responsible for her in life.

The story ends with Boaz honouring Ruth in marriage and there is great celebrating on the day that a son is born to them. And not only life’s pleasure for Ruth, but a legacy, and eternal pleasure for Naomi, the woman who lost husband, and sons, was given the joy to raise a grandson. A boy who would carry on the family name. Little did Naomi and Ruth know that Obed, would be the Father from whose line would come the son of God- Jesus.

Naomi’s daughter-in-law turned out to be better than 7 sons, the town women said. And the whole town celebrated and praised the Lord for bring eternal pleasure to these two women. (Ruth 4:13-15)

What do we do to find pleasure? Our search has to be for something that is not temporary but eternal. Paul reminded Timothy that a time was coming when people would be searching for pleasure in life rather than Godliness (2 Tim 3). Ruth’s story is one of redemption. Boaz saved Ruth and Naomi from despair and hopelessness. He was their redeemer sent by God to bring them life and joy and pleasure.

God’s whole plan for us is restore that relationship that says we are joyfully His. And He sees our stories no different than Ruth’s. And He wants to redeem us, set us free, give us an abundant life, and one day to allow us to participate in the rivers of pleasure in eternity.

Have we been guilty of picking our own path and doing this our way instead of asking for God’s direction for our lives? Have we been content to take every bit of happiness we can find and not really devote our attention to that which can bring us great joy? Are we caught up in what makes us feel good now, rather than focusing on what is best for us, and how God wants to bless us?

Let us reflect for a few moments, think about the direction our lives are taking. Maybe you're here and you feel that you are just where God needs you in your life right now. Celebrate it! You may be here and you have no idea what you're doing- just living day to day. You don't know real joy; you're not overly content with your life. I want to tell you that you have a Heavenly Father who loves you and wants to be in fellowship with you. He has a plan for your life but you need to be tune with Him. He wants you to pursue that relationship. And be an active participant in your relationship. He knows your very heart, because he formed it. He knows every tear you cry because He's watching over you. He wants you to joyfully belong to Him today. Make Him your choice today.

**I have a Maker- He formed my heart
Before even time began- my life was in His hands**

He knows my name

He knows my every thought

He sees each tear that falls

And hears me when I call

And hears me when I call

**I have a Father- He calls me His own
He'll never leave me- No matter where I go**

(written by Tommy Walker)



JOYFULLY HIS FOR ALL TIME—Prepared by Major Darlene Anderson

*Based on story of Elizabeth & Zechariah in Luke 1

Sermon Outline

Joyfully His.....

#1. In the Bad Times: Luke 1:5-7

-Elizabeth's "barrenness" - no children, grief, disappointment, suffering, feelings of inadequacy....yet remained 'faithful to the Lord'.

-extreme challenges of life that can bring feelings of helplessness and hopelessness

#2. In the Bewildering Times: Luke 1:8-23

-vision-visit of the angel

-crazy news of the impossible, farfetched

-bewildering, doubt, confusion, uncertainty,

-unbelief & consequences (Zechariah). Impact on Elizabeth

#3. In the Best Times: Luke 1: 24-25,36,39-45, 56-66

- becomes pregnant, shown favour

-'shared her JOY', rewarded for faithfulness, prayer answered, promise fulfilled

- grief taken away, replaced with joy Jeremiah 31:13

Challenge: Psalm 62:8 "Trust Him at all times..."

Psalm 9:9-10



JOYFULLY HIS-Prepared by Major Cathy Simms

Scripture Text: Psalm 95:1-7

Introduction:

Video Clip: The Pursuit of Happiness <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s5gZDJ8CbYw>

“This part of my life, this little part, is called happiness.”

Contrast Between Happiness and Joy

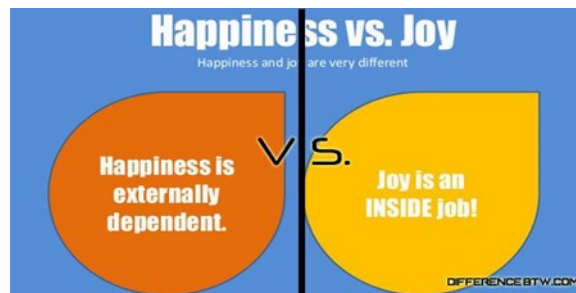
“Joy seems to me a step beyond happiness – happiness is a sort of atmosphere you can live in sometimes, when you’re lucky. Joy is a light that fills you with hope and faith and love.” Adela Rogers St. Johns

Happiness is dependent on happenings, joy dependent on Jesus.



Main Thought:

Joy is rooted and established in a relationship with our God.



I. SAVED BY CHRIST’S GREAT SACRIFICE

Vs. 1 ‘let us shout aloud to the rock of our salvation’

Our salvation experience speaks of acceptance, belonging, security, and generates within us a sense of well-being.

Supporting scripture: Isaiah 12:2-4

II PURPOSEFUL IN HIS GRAND DESIGN

Vs. 4-6 'In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to Him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Come let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker'

He is the Creator, we are the created. Obedience to God is essential in maintaining a healthy relationship with Him, and experiencing fullness of joy.

Supporting scripture: John 15:9-11

III SATISFIED IN HIS PERFECT LOVE

Vs. 7 'For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture, the flock under his care.

Finding contentment in Him and His love, despite the circumstances.

Supporting scripture: Philippians 4:12-13

CONCLUSION:



"Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day." Henri J.M. Nouwen



TEMPLATE RESOURCES



Joyfully His
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016



Giving
Hope
Today



**JOYFULLY
HIS**

**WOMEN'S
MINISTRIES
2016**

ACTIVITY CALENDAR*

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

* This is a guide only and can be adapted to your ministry.

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

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016

Joyfully His



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



WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016

Joyfully His



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



BIBLE STUDY
INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS



Joyfully His
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016



Gozándome en mi Dios

MINISTERIOS FEMENINOS **2016**

Gozándome en mi Dios

El tema de los Ministerios Femeninos a ser compartido durante 2016 en todo el mundo es Gozándome en mi Dios

En Gálatas 5:22-25 leemos:

En cambio, el fruto del Espíritu es amor, gozo, paz, paciencia, amabilidad, bondad, fidelidad, humildad y dominio propio. No hay ley que condene estas cosas. Los que son de Cristo Jesús han crucificado la naturaleza pecaminosa, con sus pasiones y deseos. Si el Espíritu nos da vida, andemos guiados por el Espíritu.

Es bueno saber que el gozo es una de las características del Reino de Dios; el gozo en el Espíritu Santo en todo momento. Un gozo que aun en tiempos difíciles permanece, porque su fuente es hallada en Dios.

Los estudios bíblicos de este año ayudaran a incrementar el conocimiento de cómo es posible hallar y mantener una actitud de gozo. Están diseñadas para ser flexibles y para permitir el uso de material adicional que será relevante para su cultura y contexto.

Cada estudio contiene cuatro secciones que pueden ser estudiados de la siguiente manera:

1. **Qué dice la Biblia** – donde explorar “¿Qué es lo que realmente dice el texto?” Es importante que leas la Biblia cuidadosamente y permitas que el contenido de tu estudio te hable y guíe.
2. **Nuestras vidas** – considerar preguntas tales como:
 - ¿Qué dice la lectura bíblica acerca de tu vida?
 - ¿Destaca algunos problemas de la sociedad?
 - ¿Qué desafíos presentan a la manera en que vives tu vida?
3. **Preguntas para discusión** – dependiendo de dónde estés usando los estudios, decidirás usar uno o dos que sean más adecuados para ti, o pedir a diferentes grupos que discutan otros aspectos, y si es posible y si tienen tiempo, compartir acerca de lo que han estado hablando.
4. **Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios** – está diseñado para darte algo que llevar y hacer antes de la próxima reunión. Si es apropiado, la próxima vez que se reúnan puedes compartir cómo han vivido “alegremente para Él”.

Que las bendiciones de Dios sean más evidentes a medida que hallen gozo, Su gozo, y a medida que estudien su Palabra y juntos compartan.

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Estudio Bíblico I

Gozándome en mi Dios

Les he dicho esto para que tengan mi alegría y así su alegría sea completa.

Lectura bíblica – Juan 15:11

Qué dice la Biblia

Durante la última cena y sabiendo que el tiempo era corto y que el calvario se avecinaba, Jesús tomó la oportunidad de pronosticar su muerte e inculcar muchas verdades importantes en las mentes y corazones de sus discípulos. Él demostró liderazgo de siervo al lavar sus pies; alentándoles a mantener su confianza en Dios; explicó algo de la trinidad al explicar que: “Yo estoy en el Padre y que el Padre está en mí” (Juan 14:11) mientras que también les prometía poder y paz con el derramamiento del Espíritu Santo quien sería su consolador, ayudador, abogado, intercesor y maestro. Insistió también que el amor era la clave para una vida fructífera y era vital “permanecer en su amor” (Juan 15:10). Él ilustra esto muy bien con una imagen de una viña, su Padre el viñador, Jesús “la vid verdadera” y los discípulos como ramas frutales.

Jesús siguió explicando que Él había compartido con ellos todas estas verdades importantes “para que tengan mi alegría y así su alegría sea completa” (Juan 15:11). Él estaba dolorosamente consciente de que sus discípulos estaban perplejos y reconoció que en un principio iban a afligirse con su muerte. Pero, Él estaba dispuesto a asegurarles que su tristeza se “convertiría en gozo” (Juan 16:20).

Cuando la cena llegaba a su fin, Jesús ofreció a su Padre una oración poderosa y de corazón, orando inicialmente por sí mismo y luego por sus discípulos, pidiendo que Dios “los proteja del maligno” (Juan 17:15). Le dijo a su Padre, “Ahora vuelvo a ti, pero digo estas cosas mientras todavía estoy en el mundo, para que tengan mi gozo en plenitud.” (Juan 17:13). Después (v. 20), Él extendió el alcance de su oración con las palabras, “No ruego sólo por éstos. Ruego también por los que han de creer en mí por el mensaje de ellos.”

Nuestras vidas hoy en día

Actualmente, como discípulos del mundo no podemos desanimarnos porque estamos incluidos en la oración de Jesús durante la última cena. Él quiere que seamos gozosos; ¡tener la plenitud de su gozo en nosotros! Esto no es algo superficial, no es un gozo de corto tiempo; ¡no es una máscara que ponemos en nuestros rostros mientras pretendemos que todo está bien! Es un gozo profundo que proviene del Señor. Es un gozo que puede ser de nosotros cualquiera sea nuestra circunstancia. ¡Es una experiencia de liberación! No dependemos de las cosas de este mundo para que nos proporcione gozo.

¡Nos sentimos alentadas y capacitadas para ser felices, para reír, para gozar!

Tristemente, algunos cristianos creen que no es recto ser gozosos y pueden citar las palabras de Marcos 8:34, “Si alguien quiere ser mi discípulo —les dijo—, que se niegue a sí mismo, lleve su cruz y me siga.” Sugiriendo que tal asunto tan serio no es uno de que gozar. Otros sienten que deben adoptar un rostro serio y grave.

Crecí en una familia cristiana, oí hablar de Él desde una tierna edad y pedí a Dios su perdón. Sin embargo; fue en mi adolescencia llena de dudas y temor que pedí a Dios que venga y more en mi vida. Fue entonces cuando entendí que mis pecados fueron borrados. Fui perdonada, y podía tener su poder dentro de mí. ¡Esto me lleno de gozo! Seguí cantando durante la semana siguiente. Era muy feliz. Si sólo tuviera una palabra para describir esa experiencia, esa palabra sería ¡gozo! Puedo también testificar que durante toda mi vida EL GOZO DEL SEÑOR ha permanecido en mí.

Jesús desea que nosotros, sus discípulas, de todas las generaciones, experimentemos los frutos de su Espíritu en nuestras vidas – frutos que incluyen ¡GOZO! Ver Gálatas 5:22. Este deseo fue muy importante para Él porque, incluso cuando se enfrentó al calvario, Él oro expresamente para que sus discípulos tengan gozo en ellos, ¡el gozo de saber que los pecados son perdonados, el gozo de saber que son hijos de Dios, el gozo de saber que son amados! ¡Su oración nos incluyó! La verdad es que ¡nosotras podemos “gozarnos en Él”!

Preguntas para la Discusión

1. El canción 898 del cancionero del Ejército de Salvación en inglés [edición 1986, coro 206] nos recuerda que ¡hay gozo al seguir a Jesús todos los días y todo el camino! ¿Cómo puedes explicar esto a un no creyente?
2. ¿Estás de acuerdo con Agustín de Hipo quien dijo que “un cristiano debe ser un aleluya desde la cabeza a los pies”?
3. ¿Por qué piensas que es importante tener el gozo del Señor dentro de nosotros? Y ¿es realmente posible?

Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios

Durante este mes, oremos con Samuel Logan Brengle: “¡O Señor, inunda el mundo con tu gozo poderoso!” (El Secreto del Ganador de Almas, capítulo 1)

Comisionada Silvia Cox – IHQ, del territorio de Suiza, Austria y Hungría (ha servido en los territorios de Suiza, Zimbabue, Finlandia, Sud África y el Reino Unido con la República de Irlanda)

Como Presidenta Mundial de los Ministerios Femeninos yo viajo por todo el mundo compartiendo el gozo del Señor con todos los que me encuentro

Estudio Bíblico 2

Gozándome en mi Dios a través de la Salvación

Jesús dijo, “No se alegren de que puedan someter a los espíritus, sino alégrense de que sus nombres están escritos en el cielo”

(v 20)

Lectura bíblica – Lucas 10:1-20

Qué dice la Biblia

La salvación que costo tanto a Jesús, nos provee con una multitud de dones, el más grande de ellos es que un día tendremos nuestros nombres escritos en el libro de la vida y un día viviremos en la eternidad con Dios. ¡Tenemos un futuro más allá de nuestra muerte terrenal! Dios ha dado a todos los creyentes una herencia protegida que es eterna, imperecedera, incorrupta e incorruptible (1 Pedro 1:4). Esta salvación descansa exclusivamente en la bondad de Dios.

La salvación trae con ella el perdón de los pecados cometidos y una oportunidad de cambiar nuestras vidas. Por esto tenemos toda razón para gozarnos con nuestro Señor con palabras similares a las de Isaías, “Me deleito mucho en el SEÑOR; me regocijo en mi Dios. Porque él me vistió con ropas de salvación y me cubrió con el manto de la justicia. Soy semejante a un novio que luce su diadema, o una novia adornada con sus joyas.” (Isaías 61:10).

Los ciudadanos de los tiempos de Jesús tenían sus nombres escritos en un registro público para ser conocidos y su herencia propiamente reservada. Se ordenó que cada niño nacido (y aun es el caso en muchos lugares) sea registrado en una sinagoga u otro lugar público de seguridad. Sus nombres serían removidos al morir, o como una consecuencia de mala conducta. Ellos conocían muy bien esta ley, por lo tanto estaban felices – sobre gozosos – al saber que sus nombres estaban escritos en el cielo (el libro de la vida) y que no, o no serían removidos cuando terminaran sus vidas en la tierra. Por el contrario vivirían eternamente con el Señor.

La salvación es provista a toda la humanidad a través de la muerte y resurrección de Cristo para todo el que cree (Juan 3:16). Somos “Ciudadanos del cielo”, amigos de Dios, y “aprobados” por Él. Nosotros un día moraremos con Él.

Los primeros versos de Lucas 10 nos dicen que Jesús envió 72 discípulos, de dos en dos para compartir el mensaje de Dios y para hacer milagros en su nombre. Jesús sabe que los humanos rápidamente se dan palmadas en la espalda y piensan que son importantes, o adoptan todo el crédito por lo que logran, entonces Él les recuerda que sus victorias fueron debido a Dios morando y obrando a través de ellos. Por lo tanto, es Dios quien debe ser adorado y en quien se deben regocijar.

Dios había demostrado su voluntad a través de ellos a medida que realizaban sus trabajos.

Nuestras vidas hoy en día

Esto es para recordar a todos los cristianos de hoy que nuestras vidas a través de la salvación que Él provee le pertenecen y que realmente las victorias que ganamos son en verdad victorias a través de las cuales Él nos ha conducido. Regocijarse frecuentemente en el Señor nos va a mantener cerca de Él y a estar sensibles a la dirección de su Espíritu. Con nuestros ojos y corazones dirigidos a Él vamos a estar menos propensas a alejarnos de Él y pecar. El regocijo nos libra y nos mantiene completamente suyas, para ser conducidas por Él, y para ser usadas por Él. El gozo es el resultado de nuestra salvación.

Cuando el rey David cayó en pecado, hallo que había desaparecido su gozo de vivir y amar al Señor. El oro, “Devuélveme el gozo de tu salvación” (Salmo 51:12). Una vez que hemos experimentado el gozo que es hallado en y a través de la salvación ofrecida a nosotros debemos protegernos para no perderla. El diario regocijo con todo lo que Dios nos ha dado y hecho se convierte en un recordatorio de su amor y mantiene vivo el gozo.

Preguntas para la Discusión

1. Leer las siguientes porciones de la Escritura y conversar sobre cómo se relacionan o qué que dicen acerca del regocijo en su salvación:
I Pedro 1:3-12
Filipenses 4:4-7
I Tesalonicenses 5:16
2. ¿Cómo han sido ampliados tus pensamientos acerca de regocijarse en su salvación?
Por favor compartir si no se siente incómoda.

Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios

Empieza y termina cada día con alabanzas de gozo por el amor, cuidado y la salvación que Dios te ha dado a ti.

Nuestro mayor gozo es saber que la autoridad de Dios está sobre nosotras y su presencia esta siempre con nosotras. Nuestra salvación no es acerca de lo que podemos hacer por Dios, pero en lo que Él ha hecho por nosotros.

Comisionada Nancy Roberts – CGI, del territorio Central de EE.UU (ha servido en EE.UU., Sud América Este, Kenia, Territorio Nacional de EE.UU).

“Jehová es mi luz y mi salvación; ¿de quién temeré? Jehová es la fortaleza de mi vida; ¿de quién he de atemorizarme?” (Salmo 27:1 RV). Como Secretaria Mundial de los Ministerios Femeninos, hallo gozo sirviendo a Él y compartiendo la Buena Nueva de la Salvación en todo el mundo. Mi gozo en Él me fortalece diariamente.

Estudio Bíblico 3

Gozándome en mi Dios, ante su Presencia

Has hecho de él manantial de bendiciones; tu presencia lo ha llenado de alegría.

(v 6)

Lectura bíblica – Salmo 21:1-6

Qué dice la Biblia

En el Antiguo Testamento, sólo el sumo sacerdote estaba permitido de entrar a la presencia de Dios. Una vez al año el sumo sacerdote entraría al Santo de los Santos y se acercaría a la presencia de Dios. No es sorprendente que el deseo de estar ante la presencia de Dios sea expresado en los Salmos unas cuantas veces.

“Anhelo con el alma los atrios del SEÑOR; casi agonizo por estar en ellos. Con el corazón, con todo el cuerpo, canto alegre al Dios de la vida.” (Salmo 84:2); “Oh Dios, tú eres mi Dios; yo te busco intensamente. Mi alma tiene sed de ti; todo mi ser te anhela cual tierra seca, extenuada y sedienta.” (Salmo 63:1). La versión bíblica La Voz, en inglés, usa la siguiente frase “Te he buscado con cada fibra de mi ser”. “Como el ciervo brama por las corrientes de agua, así mi alma suspira por ti, oh Dios” (Salmo 42:1).

En el Salmo 20 el rey se está preparando para ir a la batalla, se han ofrecido oraciones por su protección y retorno victorioso. En el verso 5 el Salmista se imagina la celebración del retorno invicto del rey: “Nosotros celebraremos tu victoria, y en el nombre de nuestro Dios desplegaremos las banderas. ¡Que el SEÑOR cumpla todas tus peticiones!” El Salmo 21:1-6 expresa una exuberante alabanza por el retorno seguro del rey y por todo lo que Dios ha hecho por él. Es importante ver que aquí no es el rey el que está siendo alabado, pero con razón, la alabanza es dada a Dios. Él ha contestado a sus oraciones. Aquí se ha usado un lenguaje tan extravagante para dar gracias a un Dios generoso: “Le has concedido lo que su corazón desea; no le has negado lo que sus labios piden. Has salido a su encuentro con ricas bendiciones; lo has coronado con diadema de oro fino” (Vs. 2-3). La culminación de este relato sobre la bondad de Dios está en el verso 6: “Has hecho de él manantial de bendiciones; tu presencia lo ha llenado de alegría”. ¿Por qué han sido concedidos al rey muchos deseos? (Salmo 20:6). ¿Por qué? Ha sido porque (el rey) confía en el nombre del Señor nuestro Dios. (Salmo 20:7).

Nuestras vidas hoy en día

Susannah Wesley, la madre de diez hijos quienes sobrevivieron a la infancia, incluyendo Charles y John, sabía lo que era estar ocupada. Al mismo tiempo de cuidar de su hogar y familia, también se hizo cargo de la tarea de educar a todos sus hijos. Ella era muy consciente de su propia necesidad para buscar la presencia regular de Dios y, porque el espacio era limitado, ella se sentaba en una silla en medio de la cocina y se sacaba el delantal y tenía un tiempo ante la presencia de Dios. Todos los niños sabían que no estaban permitidos disturbar a su madre cuando ella estaba hablando al Señor. Para Suzanna, pasar tiempo con el Señor era algo verdaderamente deseado.

Recuerdo esos tiempos cuando nuestros propios hijos eran aun jóvenes y nuestro hogar estaba lleno de actividad y bulla. Frecuentemente yo sentía, como lo hacían otras madres, que la vida era un acto de malabarismo, tratando de mantener en algún punto de balance las demandas de ser una esposa, madre y oficiala, aun cuando amaba cada una de esas áreas de mi vida – y todavía lo hago. Yo sabía que la fortaleza y sabiduría necesitadas para cada día sólo podían ser halladas en la presencia de Dios, pero ese era precisamente el tiempo descuidado: el tiempo con Dios fue interrumpido. Sin embargo; en ese tiempo escuche una canción titulada Extraño mi Tiempo Contigo. Esta canción dice claramente que Dios está esperando pasar tiempo con nosotros, que quiere que apartemos tiempo de estar ocupadas sirviéndole, para sólo pasar tiempo ante su presencia. Necesitamos aprender a estar cómodos con la tranquilidad, aprender a escucharle cuando nos habla en vez de que nosotros hablemos todo el tiempo. Cuanto más tiempo pasemos ante su presencia, más sensitivos nos volvemos con Él.

Lo maravilloso es que el gozo que recibimos a través de estar en la presencia de Dios es seguro: “Me has dado a conocer la senda de la vida; me llenarás de alegría en tu presencia, y de dicha eterna a tu derecha” (Salmo 16:11). Es la promesa de Dios para nosotros.

Preguntas para la Discusión

1. ¿Te has sentido alguna vez como se sintió el salmista, con una urgente necesidad de venir a la presencia de Dios? ¿Fueron ciertas las circunstancias que provocaron ese anhelo?
2. ¿Qué tan fácil es escuchar cuando Dios nos habla hoy? ¿Qué puedes hacer para reducir las distracciones que pueden dificultar escuchar a Dios?
3. ¿Cómo describirías a un no creyente la diferencia entre felicidad y el gozo que proviene de estar ante la presencia de Dios?

Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios

Durante el mes siguiente, has una cita con Dios para pasar tiempo en su presencia, sin distracciones. Goza del silencio sin sentir que tienes que hablar para llenar la tranquilidad. Deja que Dios te hable y comparta su corazón contigo.

Teniente Coronela Debbie Cachelin – CGI (del territorio de Suiza, Austria y Hungría)

He tenido el privilegio de compartir el gozo del Señor al servir en diferentes ministerios en Suiza, Australia, Reino Unido y actualmente junto a colegas oficiales del Colegio Internacional para Oficiales.

Estudio Bíblico 4

Gozándome en mi Dios en Adoración

Y te alegrarás en tus fiestas solemnes, tú, tu hijo, tu hija, tu siervo, tu sierva, y el levita, el extranjero, el huérfano y la viuda que viven en tus poblaciones. Siete días celebrarás fiesta solemne a Jehová tu Dios en el lugar que Jehová escogiere; porque te habrá bendecido Jehová tu Dios en todos tus frutos, y en toda la obra de tus manos, y estarás verdaderamente alegre.

Lectura bíblica – Deuteronomio 16: 14-15

Qué dice la Biblia

En la Biblia la adoración transmite la idea de “reverencia” “tratar con reverencia” y otras expresiones. La adoración fortalece la relación entre Dios y la humanidad. El Salmo 100 dice que hay acciones claras visibles durante la adoración. Ellas incluyen cantar con alegría, adorarle con regocijo, venir con canticos de júbilo, sabiendo que Él es Dios. Entrar por sus puertas con acción de gracias.

En el Antiguo Testamento el acto de adorar era evidente – significaba entregar. Para el propósito de este estudio veremos a la adoración en Deuteronomio. En estos versículos, la persona iría al tabernáculo (más tarde el templo) con sus ofrendas en sus manos. En el Nuevo Testamento, Jesús fue la ofrenda y entregó su vida como un sacrificio para todos. Por esta razón los cristianos le adoran y confiesan su nombre como Señor.

El Salmo 100 demuestra que estamos invitados a reunirnos alrededor del Señor y le adoremos. El Salmo 89:15 ilustra la bendición de estar cerca y caminar en la luz del Señor. Los seres humanos son creados como adoradores; por ejemplo, durante el tiempo de la liberación de los israelitas, Dios le dio a Moisés una palabra para el Faraón. Él debía decirle al rey que permita que los israelitas vayan a adorar a su Dios. Jesús mandó que en la adoración a Dios las personas deban amarse mutuamente y cuidar de su creación. La adoración es la respuesta de agradecimiento de los seres humanos al don de la vida de Dios.

Obtenemos gozo al ver a los demás gozar de lo que es bueno. Dios tiene la intención de que estemos en comunidad y hay un sentido en el cual nuestro gozo no es completo hasta que no lo hayamos compartido mutuamente. Actualmente, muchos cristianos necesitan usar los servicios de las iglesias para hablar acerca de Dios y adorarle en vez de disfrutar de la comodidad mutuamente. Sin embargo, algunos se reúnen simplemente para intercambiar cumplidos y compartir como les fue durante la semana. Ya sea que esto sea en un edificio o en una carpa, o afuera al aire libre, un servicio de adoración verdadero debe ser un tiempo intenso para someternos, para demostrar humildad y para vaciarnos de nosotros mismos hacia el Creador. Debemos admitir que la adoración nos debe impulsar fuera de nuestra zona de comodidad. Requiere una sumisión total más lejos de la música y las actividades. Adoración gozosa empieza en el corazón del creyente. Es también verdad cuando entramos a la adoración como comunidad o congregación.

Nuestras vidas hoy en día

Los cristianos somos invitados a adorar a Dios durante toda la semana. La adoración gozosa significa mucho para los creyentes. Debe ser diferenciada de la salvación. Es el medio de transformación de uno mismo. Los cristianos necesitan olvidar lo que queda atrás y abrazar lo que está delante como un don precioso de Dios, lo viejo pasó y lo nuevo ha llegado. De la manera que Pablo enfatiza en Filipenses 3:13 debemos olvidar lo que ha quedado atrás y esforzarnos para alcanzar lo que está delante.

En nuestra vida actual, vivir el momento presente como creyentes, nuestro deseo más profundo debe ser regocijarnos ante la presencia de un Dios glorioso. En nuestra adoración de hoy, por lo general expresamos de muchas maneras nuestro gozo, tales como proclamar, cantar y danzar, pero estas cosas no son la razón de nuestro gozo, pero simplemente son una manera de expresar nuestro gozo. La música es un gran instrumento que incentiva la adoración gozosa pero no nos hace gozosos. Nuestro gozo en la adoración no es hallado en las cosas que hacemos, pero en el Dios a quien adoramos. Dedicar un momento y pensar en como respiramos; no tratamos de cambiar el ritmo de nuestra respiración pero notamos que cada suspiro que damos dentro y fuera da gloria a Dios.

Preguntas para la Discusión

1. ¿Cuándo ha sido la última vez que has adorado a Dios como familia? ¿Qué te condujo a ese momento?
2. ¿Cuál es tu percepción acerca de la adoración en el mundo de hoy?
3. En el texto, nos damos cuenta que Dios bendice la cosecha y todo el trabajo de nuestras manos para que nuestro gozo sea completo. Comparte sobre cómo te ha bendecido Dios; y cuál es tu respuesta a esa bendición.

Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios

Dios quiere que le respondamos sinceramente, necesitamos reflexionar y hacer tiempo para recontar las bendiciones de la adoración gozosa y recordar cuán grande es Él. Dedicar algunos minutos para reflexionar sobre el cuidado de Dios en la vida y adorarle gozosamente.

Comisionada Florence Malabi – CGI, Territorio de Kenia Oeste

He compartido el gozo del Señor en Tanzania, Ruanda y Sud África. Como Secretaria Zonal para los Ministerios Femeninos, tengo el privilegio de viajar por África. Durante las visitas, yo siempre experimento el gozo de la adoración en los diferentes países de la zona, y siempre he sentido su calidez, amor y bendiciones, sabiendo que le pertenezco en mi adoración

Estudio Bíblico 5

Gozándome en mi Dios con mí Ofrenda

*Cada uno debe dar según lo que haya decidido en su corazón,
no de mala gana ni por obligación, porque Dios ama al que da con alegría.*
(2 Corintios 9:7)

Lectura bíblica – 2 Corintios Caps. 8 - 9, especialmente 9:7

Qué dice la Biblia

En esta carta, Pablo señala el ejemplo de los macedonios de dar liberalmente a los hermanos necesitados de Jerusalén (8:1-6) e impulsa a los cristianos en Corinto a cumplir su promesa de hacer lo mismo. Esto demostraría preocupación por los cristianos gentiles y judíos en Judea, y demuestra la unidad de los cristianos en el cuerpo de Cristo.

Este pasaje también trata de la actitud que uno debe tener al dar. Debe ser con alegría y generosidad. Dios no está ocupado principalmente con el tamaño del don, pero con el motivo que yace detrás de él.

La Biblia dice, “Ordénales a los israelitas que me traigan una ofrenda. La deben presentar todos los que sientan deseos de traérmela.” (Éxodo 25:2). Hechos 20:35 dice, “Ayudar a los necesitados, recordando las palabras del Señor Jesús: ‘Hay más dicha en dar que en recibir.’”

Jesús apreció la ofrenda de la viuda porque ella ofreció todo lo que tenía (Marcos 12:41-42). En contraste, Dios pensó muy diferente acerca de los motivos detrás de la ofrenda de Caín y Abel (Génesis 4:2-10). Nuestra ofrenda debe ser dada como resultado de agradecimiento y adoración. Se espera que demos para la gloria de Dios y para el crecimiento del reino de Dios. Y al dar, debemos ofrecer nuestros cuerpos como sacrificio vivo a Dios (Romanos 12:1)

Nuestras vidas hoy en día

En la actualidad, en muchas circunstancias, se da un gran énfasis en dar. Es un sentido de competencia que maneja a la gente a cuanto deben dar y hasta pueden enorgullecerse de eso. Algunas iglesias son persuadidas por pastores inescrupulosos y su falsa enseñanza para forzar a las personas a dar más. Nosotras mismos podemos quejarnos o sentirnos insatisfechos y sentirnos obligadas a dar. En adición, en este mundo tan ocupado, algunas personas no tienen cuidado de nada, no tienen tiempo de pensar o considerar cualquier cosa y frecuentemente no tienen confianza hacia cualquier individuo u organización.

Sin embargo, la Biblia dice que dar debe salir del corazón, y con un verdadero deseo de suplir necesidades, no para ganar una reputación en la iglesia o en público. La Biblia dice que cada uno debe dar de acuerdo a lo que ha decidido, no con pesar o por un sentido de deber.

En adición, nuestra generosidad va a complacer a Dios. Hemos recibido libremente, entonces demos libremente. Debemos ser observadores, alertos, buscando oportunidades para dar lo que va a incrementar el gozo y deleite de nuestros corazones. Dios entregó a su Hijo único como un don libre para nosotros. Esto nos debe alentar a suplir las necesidades del mundo. Los israelitas fueron ordenados a diezmar, el Nuevo Testamento no repite este mandamiento, aun cuando como lo hemos visto, nos enseña los principios de dar.

Es nuestra responsabilidad manejar apropiadamente nuestro dinero, porque nos es entregado como un fideicomiso de Dios. Por lo tanto, debemos ser muy cuidadosos acerca de nuestro dar. Si vemos de nuevo a la historia del Ejército de Salvación, podemos entender como los salvacionistas y los no salvacionistas dedicaron sus vidas y ofrecieron a Dios su tiempo, talentos y dones. Como resultado, vemos personas en el mundo que han sido vestidas, alimentadas, y educadas y pueden escuchar la palabra de Dios y llegar a ser sus hijos. El Ejército ha tratado de tal manera de redimir a todo el mundo. Por ejemplo, en India el dar gozosamente ha tenido un impacto remarcable en la vida de las personas y les ha permitido dar un servicio sacrificado en muchas partes del país. Por lo tanto, ha mejorado la vida de muchas personas, se ha desvanecido la ignorancia, y han sido removidos muchas prácticas y rituales. Se ofrece buena educación, junto a servicios médicos, alimento espiritual, amor y compasión. Continúa este servicio gozoso.

Preguntas para la Discusión

1. ¿Cómo estamos dando gozosamente hoy?
2. ¿Estamos viviendo a la altura y los principios de ofrendar?
3. ¿Esta nuestra ofrenda enviando gozo a Dios y las personas a nuestro alrededor?

Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios

¡Cómo dar gozosamente a Dios! Las mujeres deben conocer los principios de dar y los resultados de dar al Señor. Es nuestra responsabilidad enseñar a nuestros niños y alentar a nuestros cuerpos para dar. Es importante recordar que dar no se trata solamente de dinero, se trata también de dar nuestro tiempo, talentos y de nosotros mismos.

Sería muy difícil incluso después de cien años, mejorar la canción de Barbara Stoddart (Canción 920, versión en inglés) “Traigan íntegro el diezmo para los fondos del templo”. Es una cita de Malaquías 3:10 que termina con la promesa: “Derramare sobre ustedes bendición hasta que sobreabunde que no habrá espacio suficiente para almacenar (recíbanlo)”.

Evangeline Muthukumar – Cuerpo de Lewisham RU, del territorio de India Este, cuerpo de Karayankushy, división Kanyakumari

Como enfermera de quirófano, estoy sirviendo y compartiendo el gozo del Señor con mis colegas y con pacientes con los que me encuentro diariamente. Me siento orgullosa de decir que soy una enfermera diplomada en el Hospital Catherine Booth, del Ejército de Salvación en Nagercoil, en el sur de la India. Yo disfruto de mi trabajo, ofreciendo mi tiempo y habilidades para salvar vidas, y apoyar con el proceso de sanación

Estudio Bíblico 6

Gozándome en mi Dios en el Camino

Doy gracias a mi Dios cada vez que me acuerdo de ustedes.

En todas mis oraciones por todos ustedes, siempre oro con alegría, porque han participado en el evangelio desde el primer día hasta ahora. Estoy convencido de esto: el que comenzó tan buena obra en ustedes la irá perfeccionando hasta el día de Cristo Jesús

Lectura bíblica – Filipenses 1:3-6

Qué dice la Biblia

Pablo, en su introducción de la carta a los Filipenses modela breve pero muy bien las relaciones que debemos buscar con los hermanos en la fe e ilustra la relación que debemos buscar tener con el Señor.

Primero, Pablo demuestra cuatro cosas que él hace – cosas que nosotros, como cristianos siempre deberíamos hacer: da gracias a Dios; recordar a los demás; orar con gozo y permanecer confiados de que Dios va a continuar obrando en nosotros.

Pablo relata como da gracias a Dios por la iglesia en Filipos, enfatizando la importancia de acercarse al Padre con gratitud, ante y por sobre todo. Lo que es más, lo hace toda vez que recuerda a los filipenses – sus hermanos y hermanas en Cristo. No sólo les recuerda a ellos, pero también ora por ellos, y lo hace con gozo. Pablo enfatiza la consistencia y profundidad con la que lo hace. El habla de todos en sus oraciones, no solamente ora por algunos de los filipenses, pero por todos los que han sido sus compañeros “en el evangelio desde el primer día hasta ahora” (v. 5).

Pablo continua para afirmar lo que Dios ha hecho y lo que hará en la vida de los filipenses: El “que comenzó tan buena obra en ustedes la irá perfeccionando” (v. 6).

Pablo está confiado que Dios ¡lo hará! El no sugiere que sucederá instantáneamente o incluso en su vida, pero mejor, en el día del Cristo Jesús. De esta manera Pablo alienta a los filipenses a estar confiados en el trayecto, a confiar en el Señor. Y con esa confianza viene la paz y el gozo.

Nuestras vidas hoy en día

Si consideramos los principios claves del pasaje, hallamos que tan difícil debe haber sido para los filipenses y que tan desafiantes deben aun ser para nosotros. Puede ser difícil ser agradecido (agradecer), ser conscientes de (recordar) los que nos rodean, y de encomendar en oración a ellos y sus vidas. Puede ser difícil orar, hallar tiempo para orar, y orar con gozo. Puede también ser difícil ser confiados en nuestro caminar con el Señor ya que vivimos en un mundo que cambia y es incierto.

Sin embargo, el camino debe ser tomado paso a paso. En nuestra lectura bíblica, Pablo enfatiza el paso del tiempo para aclarar que la jornada no es corta ni rápida. El escribe de las relaciones de los filipenses con el evangelio “desde el primer día hasta ahora,” y de como Dios llevara a cabo el trabajo que ha iniciado “la ira perfeccionando hasta el día de Cristo Jesús”.

Dios no ha terminado su trabajo en nosotros ni se dará por vencido trabajando en nosotros., a través de nosotros, su creación amada, hasta que nos llame a su presencia o Cristo venga de nuevo. Así que deleitémonos en Él, sabiendo que Él hará nuestros pasos firmes (Salmo 37:23); gocémonos en Dios en nuestro camino.

Preguntas para la Discusión

1. ¿Cómo has experimentado el gozo en tu camino con el Señor?
2. ¿Cuándo es más difícil para ti ser gozoso? Es cuando el camino no va como lo planificaste? ¿Cómo puedes sobrepasar esta dificultad, y buscar y hallara gozo en el Señor?
3. ¿Comenzarías desde hoy a seguir el ejemplo de Pablo de ser agradecido, consciente, gozoso en oración, y confiado?

Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios

Reflexiona con el Salmo 23 y recuerda que Dios está a tu lado, apoyándote, amándote, guiándote. Ciertamente, nuestro caminar con el Señor es uno en el cual siempre debemos estar gozosos.

El SEÑOR es mi pastor, nada me falta;
en verdes pastos me hace descansar. Junto a tranquilas aguas me conduce [...]
Me guía por sendas de justicia por amor a su nombre.
Aun si voy por valles tenebrosos, no temo peligro alguno porque tú estás a mi lado [...]
La bondad y el amor me seguirán todos los días de mi vida;
y en la casa del habitaré para siempre.

Kelly Zvobgo – CGI, del territorio Oeste de EE. UU.

He compartido el gozo del Señor como soldada en Zimbabue, EE.UU., Francia, y el Reino Unido. Actualmente estoy en el CGI ayudando y apoyando en la preparación del congreso internacional, Sin Limite – Todo el Mundo Redimido. A medida que avanzo para seguir mi doctorado en la Universidad del Sur de California, buscare continuar gozosamente con mi Dios.

Estudio Bíblico 7

Gozándome en mi Dios Obedeciéndole

*En esto consiste el amor: en que pongamos en práctica sus mandamientos.
Y éste es el mandamiento: que vivan en este amor, tal como ustedes lo han escuchado desde el principio*

(v 6)

Lectura bíblica – 2 Juan 1:1-12

Qué dice la Biblia

El texto que vamos a ver en este estudio bíblico está enclavado en medio de lo que conocemos como los escritos joánicos hallados en el Nuevo Testamento. No estamos muy seguros sobre quien las escribió, pero tradicionalmente están atribuidas al Apóstol Juan. Están dirigidas a tres diferentes entidades: la comunidad como un todo (1 Juan); un grupo selecto de personas (2 Juan) y un individuo (3 Juan). Nuestro texto está específicamente dirigido a “a la señora elegida y a sus hijos” (v. 1). La carta está escrita en un formato estándar con un saludo inicial formal, sigue el cuerpo de la carta, y un final saludo personal. El saludo inicial recuerda al lector que “Jesucristo estará con nosotros en verdad y en amor” (v. 3) y establece la escena para el resto de la carta.

Estos versículos pintan una imagen de lo que significa andar en la verdad. ¿Qué es la verdad? La verdad es Jesucristo, el Hijo de Dios. Juan 14:6 dice “Yo soy el camino, la verdad y la vida” y esta segunda carta de Juan nos recuerda que existen profetas falsos quienes no hablan con la verdad y quienes están entre nosotros tratando de desviarnos. En contraste, Jesús es la verdad, vive en nosotros, y a través de nosotros, podemos ir obedientemente por nuestro camino de cristianos, manteniendo nuestra mirada en la cruz.

Juan nos recuerda que no solamente debemos “caminar obedeciendo sus mandamientos” pero también “caminar con amor”. “Caminar” indica una acción. Somos participantes activos de este viaje de obediencia y amor. “Caminar” es un viaje a través de las colinas y los valles dando un paso a la vez. 1 Juan 4:8, nos dice que Dios el Padre es amor. El mandamiento para cada una de nosotros como mujeres e hijas de Dios es el caminar con amor. Cuando caminamos con amor (Dios) y con la verdad (Jesús), entonces nuestro gozo será completo (2 Juan 1:12).

Nuestras vidas hoy en día

En el siglo 21, la obediencia es una palabra que muchas personas no quieren escuchar. Ciertamente, esta palabra nunca ha sido popular porque habla de sumisión y control. Obedecer a alguien, significa que nos tenemos que someter y renunciar al control, algo que es muy difícil para nuestra naturaleza humana. Frecuentemente, cuando pensamos en el acto de obedecer, pensamos en un niño obedeciendo a sus padres. Que interesante, que en 2 Juan escrito está “a la señora elegida y a sus hijos”. Soy madre de cuatro hijos, he tenido muchas oportunidades de enseñar a mis hijos acerca de la obediencia. He tenido que disciplinarlos, con frecuencia, cuando han desobedecido. Esta no fue una tarea que me agradaba, pero era algo que tenía que hacer para que ellos aprendan sus límites y a respetar.

La Escritura nos dice que “caminemos obedeciendo sus mandamientos”. Es fácil cuando está escrito en una hoja de papel, pero a medida que nos enfrentamos con las realidades de la vida diaria, hallamos que el acto de obedecer es un desafío. Ser obedientes significa que estamos activamente de acuerdo a obedecer lo que alguien más nos está pidiendo hacer, pero frecuentemente queremos hacer las cosas a nuestra manera y a nuestro tiempo. La Escritura nos dice que no sólo debemos ser obedientes, pero que hallaremos gozo al obedecer. Ciertamente, esto va contra todo lo que el mundo enseña. Hoy en día escuchamos con frecuencia la frase “si algo hace que te sientas bien, hazlo”. Nuestra cultura nos enseña que hallaremos nuestra felicidad en soluciones rápidas y haciendo nuestras propias cosas. Todavía no he escuchado a los medios de comunicación retratar el gozo como una expresión de obediencia. La Escritura que hemos leído es contra-cultural. El mensaje de Cristo es contra-cultural, y somos llamados a vivir y caminar en el ejemplo que Cristo nos ha dado.

Son muchas las cosas en el mundo que puede llevar nuestra atención lejos de Jesucristo y de una vida de santidad. Más adelante, en su carta, Juan trata de esto. Necesitamos recordar que Cristo vive en nosotros, y que a través del Espíritu nos da fortaleza para resistir la tentación y las falsas enseñanzas. Solamente en Él hallaremos la verdad. Recordemos que quien quiera “continuar en la enseñanza tiene al Padre ya al Hijo” (v. 9). La razón por la que estamos llamadas a obedecer es para que nuestro “gozo sea completo”. Nuestra esperanza y nuestra fortaleza proceden de la certeza de que gozosamente le pertenecemos a Él.

Preguntas para la Discusión

1. ¿Por qué piensas que el autor eligió a las mujeres y niños como su audiencia para describir el tema de la obediencia?
2. ¿Por qué piensas que el escritor de la carta no menciona el nombre de “la señora” a quien se dirigía?
3. La Escritura nos llama a “caminar obedeciendo sus mandamientos”. ¿Qué está mandándote Dios hacer hoy? ¿Estás dispuesta a ser obediente? ¿Cuál será el costo de tu obediencia?

Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios

Durante cada día de este mes dediquemos un tiempo para alentar intencionalmente la una a la otra “cara a cara” a vivir gozosamente en obediencia.

Mayora Brenda Murray – CGI (del territorio de Canadá y Bermudas)

He compartido el gozo del Señor en varios ministerios, incluyendo hospicios, relaciones con el gobierno, viviendas de emergencia para mujeres y niños, ministerios de campamentos y como Subsecretaria Asistente del Departamento de Administración en el CGI. Actualmente soy la Directora Asociada para Misiones en el Mundo.

Estudio Bíblico 8

Gozándome en mi Dios en tiempos de pruebas

Simón, Simón, mira que Satanás ha pedido zarandearlos a ustedes como si fueran trigo.

Pero yo he orado por ti, para que no falle tu fe.

Y tú, cuando te hayas vuelto a mí, fortalece a tus hermano

(vv 31, 32)

Lectura bíblica – Lucas 22:31-32; Juan 17:20

Qué dice la Biblia

Antes de afrontar la cruz, durante la última cena con sus discípulos, Jesús advirtió a Pedro que su fe sería probada y que en realidad él le negaría tres veces. Ese Pedro apasionado enfáticamente refuto esto, pero tristemente fueron ciertas las palabras de Jesús. Más tarde esa misma noche, cuando el gallo canto, Pedro se dio cuenta de lo que había hecho y se sintió inundado por la culpa y la vergüenza. Para Pedro este incidente fue tan desbastador ya que había estado tan confiado de su amor y entrega al Mesías prometido.

No obstante, aun antes de que fuera expuesto el fracaso de Pedro, Jesús ya lo había previsto y alentó a Pedro al decirle que ya estaba encomendado en oración. Pedro no pudo entender en ese momento porque estaba tan seguro de sí mismo. Pero más tarde al recordar esa conversación, se habría sentido confortado al darse cuenta que Jesús lo sabía y había orado por él.

Jesús no solamente consoló a Pedro, pero también restauró el sentido de misión de Pedro al darle la tarea de “fortalecer a sus hermanos”. Cuando se hallaba atormentado por su fracaso, saber que Jesús tenía fe en él debió haber levantado el alma de Pedro, porque el volvería a Jesús.

Satán trató de influenciar a Pedro, para que deje de seguir a Jesús. Aun cuando ese tiempo de prueba fue tan amargo, Jesús hizo de ese una oportunidad para Pedro. Al darse completa cuenta de su insuficiencia, Pedro aprendió que verdaderamente sólo la gracia de Dios le podía sostener y el amor de Dios nunca le abandonaría.

Nuestras vidas hoy en día

Cuando llegamos a conocer al Señor por primera vez, nos sentimos tan entusiasmadas por la nueva forma de vida que está por delante. Cubiertas con las promesas de bendiciones, nos sentimos asombradas, inspiradas – ¡estamos llenas de gozo! Pero, tarde o temprano viene un tiempo de prueba. Debido a que vivimos en un mundo roto, el ser hijas de Dios no nos libra de accidentes, problemas financieros, relaciones rotas, enfermedades físicas, abuso, asaltos, inesperados.

Cuando nuestras oraciones desesperadas no parecen resolver el problema, puede surgir el desengaño; luego las decepciones; luego las dudas. ¿Está Dios realmente cuidándonos? ¿Puedo creer que Dios tiene cuidado? Esos momentos oscuros revelan la naturaleza de nuestras relaciones con nuestro

Señor, alcanzando directamente las profundidades de nuestros corazones que de otra manera siguen sin ser tocadas cuando las cosas marchan bien y suaves.

La Biblia no nos dice por qué tenemos que sufrir o por qué Dios no interviene inmediatamente, pero nos asegura que el Señor está al tanto de las dificultades con las que nos enfrentamos, y así como Jesús oro por Pedro, y sus otros discípulos, también está orando por nosotros (Juan 17:20).

No es indiferente a nuestras luchas. Conoce nuestra fragilidad, por lo que no tenemos que pretender que somos fuertes, o tratar de luchar por medio de nuestras propias fuerzas. Es bueno derramar un clamor honesto y de corazón. Solamente cuando abrimos nuestros corazones de tal manera, podemos recibir consuelo de Dios. Los Salmos están llenos de estos ejemplos.

Frecuentemente, no tiene sentido para nosotras el contraste entre el amor de Dios y nuestro propio sufrimiento. Pero cuando genuinamente buscamos su rostro en medio de nuestro dolor, Dios viene y toca los lugares más profundos de nuestras vidas. Entonces nuestra relación con el Señor nunca más es la misma. No por intelecto, pero por experiencia, llegamos a conocer su misericordia y compasión. Nuestra fe es renovada, y llegamos a una realización profunda de que realmente somos tuyas, y que Él no nos va abandonar. Esa certeza nos llena de gozo, mucho más profundo y mucho más puro que cualquiera que hemos conocido.

Preguntas para la Discusión

1. ¿Puedes considerar como gozo puro cuando enfrentas diversas pruebas, como esta sugerido en Santiago 1:2?
2. ¿Cuál es la reacción de tu corazón cuando surge una situación difícil? ¿Negación? ¿Furia? ¿Frustración? ¿Has sido capaz de compartir con el Señor tu clamor profundo y honesto? Si no ha sido así, ¿cuál es la razón?
3. Jesús le dijo a Pedro “cuando te hayas vuelto a mí, fortalece a tus hermanos.” ¿Has tenido a un Pedro en tu vida, alguien que te ha alentado? ¿Cómo te ha ayudado esa persona?

Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios

No tienes que ir muy lejos para hallar decepción o a una persona desalentada. ¿Conoces a alguien a quien puedes “fortalecer” con una sonrisa, un oído atento, o con palabras de esperanza? Todo este mes, pide al Señor que te muestre tales oportunidades, y cómo puedes abordarlas.

Capitana Miwa Nakajima – CGI, del territorio de Japón

Gozándome en mi Dios, he servido en Japón y en el departamento del Pacífico Sur ya Asia Este del CGI compartiendo con los demás esta gracia maravillosa. Actualmente soy la oficiala directiva del cuerpo de Kyobashi y Asistente en el Departamento para la Juventud Territorial.

Estudio Bíblico 9

Gozándome en mi Dios en servicio

Alaben al SEÑOR, todos sus ejércitos, siervos suyos que cumplen su voluntad
(v 21)

Lectura bíblica – Salmo 103

Qué dice la Biblia

La mayoría de los Salmos fueron escritos por el rey David y forman una colección de adoración a Dios. Vemos a David como un hombre joven con fervor y compromiso a Dios. Una vez que llega al trono vemos sus fallas como padre y como hombre. Pero, a pesar de todo eso David fue nombrado como un hombre conforme al corazón de Dios. Ese hombre que aprendió muchas lecciones y la necesidad de confesión nos dice en el Salmo 103:21, “Alaben al Señor.” ¿A quién debemos alabar? ¡Al Señor! ¿Quién es el Señor? La definición de “señor” en el diccionario dice que es “alguien o algo que tiene poder, autoridad, o influencia; un maestro o gobernante.”

La alabanza comienza con el reconocimiento de que Dios es Señor de tu vida. Él tiene poder, autoridad e influencia sobre tu vida. Él es maestro y gobernante. David, quien fue rey y tuvo autoridad y poder e influencia, afirmó que Dios es el único que merece ese título y reconocimiento. En los primeros versos de este Salmo, David habla a sí mismo, amonestando a sí mismo a alabar al Señor desde lo más recóndito de su ser. No solamente está pasando a través de las mociones pero todo lo que él es alabara a Dios. Al alabar a Dios se recuerda a si mismo que no debe olvidar lo que Dios ha hecho. Dios perdona, Dios sana, Dios redime, Dios satisface. Dios no se ha escondido de nosotros pero nos da generosamente su amor. Regocíjate, alaba al Señor.

Fuera de ese manantial de gozo procede el el recuerdo de que somos sus siervas. Servimos al Rey que nos dice que si somos sus discípulos haremos lo que nos pide. Seguiremos su ejemplo. Haremos su voluntad. Serviremos a un mundo que sufre, ese mundo que vino a salvar.

Nuestras vidas hoy en día

“No soy tu sierva” eran palabras que frecuentemente escuchaba decir a mi madre cuando estaba creciendo y venía a mi habitación y veía la ropa que necesitaba ser lavada o planchada. Tiempo después, yo usaría las mismas palabras con mi hermana menor para hacer que cumpla con su tarea de limpieza en la habitación que compartíamos. En la cultura en la que vivimos no muchas personas aspiran ser siervas. Ellas prefieren ser servidas o atendidas. Muchas personas están esperando su gran oportunidad, para ser descubiertas, para ser famosas, para tener sus 15 minutos de fama para ser admiradas y servidas. Ser una sierva es contrario a la intuición de lo que muchas de nosotras aspiramos ser, pero la Escritura y Jesús mismo nos llaman al servicio.

En el evangelio de Juan (4:4-29) somos introducidos a una mujer que salía fuera de su camino para evitar a los demás de la comunidad. No parece que ella tuviera amigos o personas que eran atentas con ella. Jesús hizo su objetivo buscarla para que ella pueda ver que Dios perdona, Dios sana, Dios redime y Dios satisface. Él no está lejos de nosotros y está al tanto de nuestras pruebas. Al final del relato vemos que esa misma mujer llegó a ser una evangelista. Ella se dirigió a las mismas personas que trataba de evitar y se acopla a ellas y comparte lo que Dios ha hecho por ella y lo que puede hacer por ellas.

Servir no es rebajarse. Muchas personas creen que son menos importantes porque están en una posición de servicio. Pero la Escritura (Romanos 12:2) nos recuerda que no debemos seguir el modelo de este mundo pero permitir que nuestras mentes sean renovadas para poder conocer la voluntad de Dios.

Jesús ha establecido el modelo para nosotros (Marcos 10:45). El no vino para ser servido pero para servir.

Preguntas para la Discusión

1. David experimento el gozo de tener una relación con Dios. Al reflexionar sobre tu relación con Dios, ¿cómo expresas tu aprobación, gratitud y admiración (alabanza) a Dios?
2. ¿Hay áreas en tu vida en las que Dios no es Señor?
3. ¿Qué piensas tú del servicio? ¿Lo ves como degradante o como una vocación?
4. ¿Cómo estas sirviendo a Dios en dónde estás?

Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios

Dios el Espíritu Santo nos habla diariamente. ¿A quién ha colocado en tu corazón para servir?

Puede ser solamente compartir una taza de té con alguien o realmente “ver” a las personas con las que te encuentras cada día. Así como la mujer en el evangelio de Juan, un encuentro con Jesús cambia la manera que vemos nuestra situación. Permite que sea tu motivación cada día cuando te despiertas.

Romanos 6:16-18 nos ayuda a ponerlo en perspectiva. Ya no somos siervos (Pablo dice esclavos) del pecado, pero de la justicia.

Mayora Ana Frazer – CGI del territorio de EE.UU. Este

He compartido el gozo del Señor como oficiala de cuerpo y oficiala de personal. He servido en las Islas Vírgenes, Pensilvania y Nueva York, y actualmente como la Sub-Secretaria Asistente para la zona de las Américas y el Caribe del CGI. Tengo el privilegio de servir al Señor y otros en cada nombramiento que me da. ¡Alaben al Señor!

Estudio Bíblico 10

Gozándome en mi Dios confiando

*Que el Dios de la esperanza los llene de toda alegría y paz a ustedes que creen en él,
para que rebosen de esperanza por el poder del Espíritu Santo.*

(v 13)

Lectura bíblica – Romanos 15:12-13

Qué dice la Biblia

Romanos 15:13 relata la maravillosa oración que Pablo quiere que cada creyente experimente.

Cuando Pablo hablaba a la iglesia en Roma, no concentraba sus pensamientos en el objeto de su fe, pero en el hecho de la confianza. El enfatizaba que era esencial una actitud de confianza si ellos querían que Dios les llene de gozo, paz y esperanza.

Desde luego, eso no significaba que siempre todo funcionaría de acuerdo a sus expectativas. Pero al igual que Pablo, al pasar por tiempos difíciles, ellos sabrían que Dios nunca les abandona o desampara (Deuteronomio 31:6). La maravillosa verdad es que como hijos de Dios podemos tener fe en Él como la única fuente verdadera de nuestra esperanza – Él nos va ayudar a través de cualquier cosa que encontremos a lo largo de nuestro camino.

¿Qué está diciendo Pablo en Romanos 15:12-13? En esencia, él está diciendo que quienquiera que confíe en Cristo, quienquiera que confíe en Él, ha hallado el camino al gozo y la paz – un gozo y paz completo y profundo que produce un sentido cada vez más profundo de la esperanza.

Curiosamente, los tres miembros (personas) de la Deidad son mencionados en estos versos:

- Dios la fuente, Dios y Padre como un pacto, es el Dios de la esperanza quien llena con gozo y paz a quien confía en Él.
- Cristo, “de la raíz de Jesé”, descendiente de David, es el objeto o significado de nuestra esperanza como el Hijo de Dios – su persona, justicia y salvación.
- Y el Espíritu Santo, el habilitador, quien libera esperanza desbordante.

La Deidad trabajando unida para dar al creyente gozo, paz y esperanza a medida que confían en Él.

Nuestras vidas hoy en día

¿Alguna vez se ha hecho añicos tu confianza?

Durante nuestro servicio en Papúa Nueva Guinea, mi esposo y yo viajábamos a una de las remotas villas para conducir los servicios de fin de semana. Durante nuestra discusión de la tarde con algunos del personal del cuerpo, me hicieron pasar para sentarme en una silla blanca plástica. En el momento en que me senté se derrumbó debajo de mí y termine de forma poco femenina en el piso. Una vez que me pare, sacudí el polvo y la sonroja desapareció de mi rostro. Pronto me di cuenta que quizás no era la primera persona caída al suelo cuando se sentaba en esa silla en particular, porque estaba

amarrada con un hilo delgado. Desde entonces, me siento en una silla plástica solo tentativamente y después de una cercana inspección. ¡Es una cosa de confianza!

Cuando leo Romanos 15:13, me tengo que preguntar a mí misma si verdaderamente este versículo me describe a mí. ¿Estoy rebozando de esperanza al poner mi confianza diaria en Él? A pesar de lo que está sucediendo dentro de mi vida, ¿está esa esperanza dentro de mí brotando e influenciando a los que están a mí alrededor? ¿Está mi vida llena de gozo y paz al confiar en Cristo?

Esta descripción del creyente hallada en Romanos 15:13 procede de conocer a Dios. Cuanto más pongo mi confianza en Él y camino con Él diariamente, rebozara más la esperanza de mi vida a la vida de los de mí alrededor. Esta esperanza no es solamente un futuro en el cielo, pero también es una realidad presente a través de la fe en el Señor Jesucristo.

Pero ¿cómo obtenemos esta clase de fe que nos ayuda a rebosar esperanza, aun en medio de las pruebas? Quizás hay muchas cosas que se unen y que traen esa abundante esperanza, pero una manera esencial es conocer a Dios y sus enseñanzas a través de su Palabra. La Palabra de Dios demuestra que Él es fiel a su pueblo en todo tipo de pruebas – Él es totalmente confiable. Y es el poder del Espíritu Santo dentro de la vida de un creyente que produce su santidad en nosotros, al confiar en Él en nuestro diario camino espiritual. Entonces, Pablo dice aquí, es el poder del Espíritu Santo el que produce frutos de gozo y paz. Al confiar en Él y experimentarlo por fe, así rebosamos en esperanza.

Preguntas para la Discusión

1. ¿Confías en Dios en tu vida diaria para que te ayude a través de cada situación? ¿Pueden las palabras gozo, paz y esperanza describirte a ti?
2. ¿Hubo un tiempo cuando tuviste consciencia de la influencia del camino de algún otro cristiano sobre tu vida cuando ellos pusieron su confianza en Cristo? ¿Estas al tanto de un tiempo cuando tú caminar cristiano tuvo una influencia sobre la vida de alguien más?
3. ¿Has tenido un tiempo cuando al enfrentarte a obstáculos o desafíos has sentido en tu vida la presencia segura de Dios porque has puesto tu confianza en Él? Trata de explicar esa experiencia al grupo.

Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios

Durante el mes que sigue ora diariamente para que el Dios de esperanza te llene de gozo, paz y esperanza, a medida que confías en Él.

Mayora Deslea Maxwell – CGI, del territorio de Australia Este.

En mi vida diaria, Dios me ha llamado a compartir su gozo y paz con los de mí alrededor a medida que pongo mi confianza diaria en Él y en su Palabra. He servido en mi territorio de origen y en Papúa Nueva Guinea. Actualmente soy la editora de ‘El Libro Anual’ y ‘Revive’, una revista para mujeres en el ministerio y en la misión.

Estudio Bíblico I I

Gozándome en mi Dios con agradecimiento

Como resultado del ministerio de ustedes, ellos darán la gloria a Dios. Pues la generosidad de ustedes tanto hacia ellos como a todos los creyentes demostrará que son obedientes a la Buena Noticia de Cristo. Y ellos orarán por ustedes con un profundo cariño debido a la desbordante gracia que Dios les ha dado a ustedes. ¡Gracias a Dios por este don que es tan maravilloso que no puede describirse con palabras! (NTV

¡Gracias a Dios por su don inefable! (v. 15 NVI)

Lectura bíblica – 2 Corintios 9:13-15

Qué dice la Biblia

¡Qué versículo! El versículo 15 nos urge a dar gracias a Dios por su indescriptible don, o como dice la Biblia, NVI, su don “inefable”. ¿Cuál es ese don? Es el don de la gracia. “Pero la gracia de nuestro Señor se derramó sobre mí con abundancia, junto con la fe y el amor que hay en Cristo Jesús” (1 Timoteo 1:14).

Tenemos muchas razones por las que agradecer a Dios Todopoderoso, pero hay una que todavía no entendemos completamente, pero que impacta nuestras vidas de manera inmensurable.

Recuerdo el coro de una canción del cancionero del Ejército de Salvación que nos recuerda del amor sin límite que nos perdona y la maravilla de su gracia.

*Más alto que las estrellas que llegan a la eternidad,
Más amplio que los límites del espacio sin fin,
¿Es el amor infinito de Dios que me ha perdonado;
O la maravilla de su gracia!*

(Canción 876 en el cancionero en inglés [edición 1986, canción 52])

Particularmente en el Nuevo Testamento, leemos mucho acerca de la gracia. Jesús contó historias/parábolas acerca de la gracia, ej., en Mateo 20:1-16 acerca de los trabajadores de la viña. Leer esta parábola y conversar juntos sobre cómo puede esta historia definir la gracia de Dios preguntando ¿Puede ser la gracia de igual medida para todos? ¿Cuál es el misterio de la gracia?

El Apóstol Pablo particularmente escribió en sus cartas, acerca de la gracia. Haremos bien estudiar sobre la palabra gracia en la Biblia, en especial en el Nuevo Testamento. Eso no significa que la gracia está ausente del Antiguo Testamento. ¿Cómo podemos leer la historia de Oseas y Gomer sin darnos cuenta de la gracia que mostro Oseas? Esta historia es también un ejemplo de cómo Dios mismo muestra gracia con su pueblo. Les aliento a leer la historia de Oseas y Gomer en el Libro de Oseas. Dar gracias a Dios por su don de gracia. Debemos estar bien agradecidos a nuestro Padre Dios por su don de gracia a través de su Hijo Jesucristo. Jesús fue voluntariamente a la cruz. Tomo nuestro lugar. Cargo con los pecados del mundo - ¡eso es realmente gracia! “Pues la ley fue dada por medio de Moisés, mientras que la gracia y la verdad nos han llegado por medio de Jesucristo” (Juan 1:17).

Nuestras vidas hoy en día

Necesitamos gracia en nuestro mundo de hoy. Es posible que veamos la falta de la gracia que existe en el mundo, pero como mujeres cristianas necesitamos demostrar la gracia de Dios – mostrada primero a nosotras como individuos, a nuestras familias y luego a los demás con los que nos encontramos.

La gracia es increíble – La gracia significa que no hay nada que podemos hacer para que Dios nos ame más o nos ame menos.

La gracia es liberadora – La gracia es en donde se inicia nuestra historia personal de salvación. O como ha dicho Eugene O’Neill “El hombre está roto. Él vive remendado. La gracia de Dios es el pegamento.”

La gracia es excesiva/extravagante – la gracia es abundante, infinita, copiosa, ilimitada, sin límite...

Preguntas para la Discusión

1. ¿Cómo sería un mundo sin la gracia de Dios?
2. ¿Cómo puedo mostrar la gracia de Dios a este mundo oscuro y necesitado?
3. A través del agradecimiento, ¿cómo puedo demostrar la gracia de Dios en mi vida?

Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios

Durante este mes, hacer un verdadero esfuerzo para mostrar con una vida agradecida la gracia demostrada a ti y luego compartir esa gracia con los que te rodean, en tu casa, con tu familia, en el trabajo con tus colegas y en tu cuerpo / iglesia, con tus hermanos y hermanas en Cristo. Les animo a demostrar siempre la gracia de Dios en su vida.

“Que el mensaje de Cristo habite entre vosotros en abundancia, enseñando y exhortando unos a otros con toda sabiduría a través de salmos, himnos y canciones espirituales, cantando a Dios con gracia en vuestros corazones” (Colosenses 3:16).

Comisionada Denise Swansbury – CGI, del territorio del Reino Unido.

He servido en el Reino Unido, Zimbabue, Liberia y Ghana. Actualmente soy la Secretaria Zonal para el Ministerio Femenino de la Zona del Pacífico Sur y el Asia Este. Viajo alrededor de la Zona compartiendo el gozo y la gracia del Señor con todo el mundo que conozco. Estoy agradecida a Dios por esta oportunidad y privilegio

Estudio Bíblico 12

Gozándome en mi Dios con la esperanza de vida eterna

A quien amáis sin haberle visto, en quien creyendo, aunque ahora no lo veáis, os alegráis con gozo inefable y glorioso; obteniendo el fin de vuestra fe, que es la salvación de vuestras almas
(vv 8-9)

Lectura bíblica – I Pedro 1:3-9

Qué dice la Biblia

Pedro escribió con autoridad a los cristianos perseguidos que vivían en Asia Menor y como quien tenía credibilidad y una convicción apasionada de la certeza de la esperanza de que era suya y también la de ellos en Jesús.

Como un líder que había aprendido de sus fracasos, escribió para animar a ellos a través de las dificultades y la persecución que estaban experimentando a manos del Imperio Romano. Muchos de ellos eran jóvenes cristianos en su fe, que necesitaban orientación para su camino.

En lugar de mirar a la inmediatez de su situación actual, él les recuerda su herencia celestial. Les dirige a la certeza de la esperanza que sólo se encuentra en Jesús. No podría ser arrebatado de ellos. Hizo impactó sobre su realidad actual y su futuro. La esperanza que tenían en Cristo les ayudaría a través de cualquier cosa.

En este pasaje Pedro está, básicamente, instruyendo a estos nuevos cristianos a “¡ser lo que eres!” “Si tu fe no sirve para algo – debe servir ahora!”

“Estos han venido para que la autenticidad probada de vuestra fe - más preciosa que el oro, el cual aunque perecedero por el fuego - puede resultar en alabanza, gloria y honra cuando sea manifestado Jesucristo” (I Pedro 1: 7).

Esta fue la razón para que ellos se alegren; incluso en su situación penosa y difícil, su fe genuina, y aferrándose a lo que sabían que era cierto, era mucho más preciosa que el oro mismo. Esta fe, basada en el amor, da como resultado una alegría incomparable inexpresable, no sólo en el presente sino también eternamente.

Nuestras vidas hoy en día

Nuestras historias personales son diferentes, sin embargo, también experimentamos muchas similitudes. Somos mujeres, en un viaje, tratando de dar sentido al mundo en que vivimos, por la gracia de Dios y con lo mejor de nuestra capacidad.

Al participar en este estudio, asumimos que usted tiene un anhelo y el deseo de saber más de lo que es Dios y lo que eso significa para usted. Para experimentar esta alegría inexpresable del que habla Pedro, se nos anima a recordar quiénes somos en Cristo. Nuestra motivación no debe basarse en

la recompensa, tan maravilloso como eso será, sino como una respuesta a la profundidad del amor demostrado para nosotros “, no que nosotros hayamos amado a Dios, sino en que él nos amó a nosotros” (I Juan 4:10).

Dios tiene la capacidad de entrar en el texto de nuestras vidas y cambiar nuestra historia y hacerla su historia. Eugene Peterson, en su parafraseo de la versión el Mensaje del Salmo 18:24 dice: “Dios reescribió el texto de mi vida cuando abrí el libro de mi corazón a sus ojos.” Los cristianos en Asia Menor necesitaban recordar que sus vidas eran parte de una historia mayor que la propia.

¿Necesitas también ese recordatorio? Estos cristianos perseguidos estaban en peligro de perder la fe, pero Pedro les recuerda de “Quiénes son en Jesús”. Él les recuerda la esperanza que tienen en Cristo. Les dirige más allá de su situación actual a una comprensión más profunda de quién es Cristo y lo que él ha hecho por ellos. Tal vez tú también necesitas que se te recuerde hoy. Eres gozosamente suya (tiempo presente) con la esperanza de la vida eterna (tiempo futuro). ¡Llega a ser lo que eres!

Preguntas para la Discusión

1. ¿Cuándo y cómo te diste cuenta de que había una historia más grande y más inmensa que la tuya? ¿Cómo ha reescrito Dios el texto (guion) de tu vida? ¿Qué diferencia ha ehcho en tu vida y que cambios a producido?
2. ¿Has experimentado el gozo del que habla Pedro? (por ejemplo, tiempo de conversión, en tu camino de fe, a través de ensayos.) ¿Cómo ha impactado a la forma en que vives tu vida?
3. En tu propia historia / viaje ¿qué lecciones difíciles has tenido que aprender para confiar en Dios para en el presente y en el futuro?

Cómo vivir gozosamente para Dios

Durante el próximo mes, por lo menos una vez al día, has lo siguiente:

Elige tu taza favorita. Toma un momento para mirar a la taza y considera su forma, color y condición. Considera su capacidad tanto para el llenado y vaciado. Mientras que haces esto recita y reflexiona sobre uno de los siguientes versículos.

Salmo 16:5 Señor, sólo tú eres mi porción y mi copa; usted hace mi suerte seguro.

Salmo 23:5 a preparar una mesa delante de mí en presencia de mis enemigos.

Usted ungiste mi cabeza con aceite; mi copa rebosa.

Salmo 116:13 voy a levantar la copa de la salvación e invocar el nombre del Señor.

Preguntarse: ¿Qué significa este versículo para mí en mi manera de vivir hoy en día?
¿Qué significa este versículo para mí en el contexto de la eternidad?

Mayora Rosslyn Casey – CGI, del territorio de Australia Sur.

He compartido el gozo del Señor respondiendo a su llamado al ministerio en Australia, el Reino Unido y actualmente como capellana en el CGI



Gozándome en mi Dios
MINISTERIOS FEMENINOS 2016



Alegremente Sua
MINISTÉRIO FEMININO 2016

Alegremente Sua!

O tema do Ministério Feminino em todo o mundo ao longo de 2016 é Alegremente Sua.

Em Gálatas 5:22-25 lemos:

Mas o fruto do Espírito é amor, alegria, paz, paciência, amabilidade, bondade, fidelidade, mansidão e domínio próprio. Contra essas coisas não há lei. Os que pertencem a Cristo Jesus crucificaram a carne, com as suas paixões e os seus desejos. Se vivemos pelo Espírito, andemos também pelo Espírito.

É ótimo saber que uma das características do Reino de Deus é a alegria; alegria no Espírito Santo em todos os momentos. Uma alegria que permanece mesmo em tempos difíceis, porque sua fonte é encontrada em Deus.

Os estudos bíblicos deste ano ajudam a compreender como é possível encontrar e manter uma atitude de alegria. Eles são planejados para serem flexíveis e permitem materiais adicionais que são relevantes para a sua cultura e contexto.

Cada estudo inclui quatro seções que podem ser exploradas com o seu grupo, como segue:

1. O que a Bíblia diz – onde você explora “O que o texto realmente diz?”

É importante que você leia a Bíblia com cuidado e deixe - a falar com você e oriente o conteúdo do seu estudo.

2. Nossas vidas hoje – considera questões como:

- O que a leitura bíblica fala sobre sua vida?
- Quais problemas da sociedade o texto destaca?
- Como ela desafia a maneira como você vive sua vida?

3. Perguntas para discussão – dependendo de onde estiver usando os estudos, você pode optar por selecionar uma ou duas que em sua opinião sejam mais adequadas ou pode pedir a diferentes grupos que discutam outros aspectos e, possivelmente, se você tiver tempo, compartilhar o que tem sido falando.

4. Como viver alegremente para Deus – este é projetado para lhe proporcionar algo para levar e fazer antes da próxima reunião. Se julgar apropriado, da próxima vez que se encontrarem poderão compartilhar sobre como viveram alegremente para Ele.

Que as bênçãos de Deus se tornem evidentes à medida em que você encontrar alegria, a alegria de Deus, ao estudarem juntas Sua Palavra.

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Estudo Bíblico I

Alegremente Sua

Tenho lhes dito estas palavras para que a minha alegria esteja em vocês e a alegria de vocês seja completa.

Leitura bíblica – João 15:11

O que a Bíblia diz

Durante a última ceia, sabendo que o tempo era curto e o Calvário era iminente, Jesus aproveitou a oportunidade para prever Sua morte e inculcar muitas verdades importantes nas mentes e corações de Seus discípulos. Ele demonstrou liderança servil lavando os seus pés; encorajou-os a manter sua confiança em Deus; revelou mais sobre a trindade, explicando que “estou no Pai e o Pai está em mim” (João 14:11), ao mesmo tempo em que prometeu poder e paz com o derramamento do Espírito Santo, que seria o consolador, ajudador, advogado, intercessor e professor deles. Ele também insistiu que o amor era a chave para uma vida frutífera e que “permanecer no seu amor” era vital (João 15:9-17). Ele ilustrou isto lindamente com uma imagem de uma videira, seu Pai sendo o agricultor, Jesus a “videira verdadeira” e os discípulos como ramos que dão fruto.

Jesus continuou a explicar que ele tinha compartilhado todas essas verdades importantes com eles “para que a minha alegria esteja em vocês e a alegria de vocês seja completa” (João 15:11). Ele estava dolorosamente ciente de que os discípulos ficaram perplexos, e reconheceu que inicialmente eles iriam sofrer com a Sua morte. Mas Ele fez questão de assegurar-lhes de que a tristeza deles iria “se transformar em alegria” (João 16:20).

À medida em que a refeição chegava ao fim, Jesus ofereceu uma oração poderosa e sincera ao Pai, inicialmente orando por Ele e, em seguida, por Seus discípulos, pedindo que Deus “os proteja do Maligno” (João 17:15). Ele disse ao seu Pai: “Agora vou para ti, mas digo estas coisas enquanto ainda estou no mundo, para que eles tenham a plenitude da minha alegria” (João 17:13). Mais tarde (v 20), Ele ampliou o escopo de Sua oração com as palavras: “Minha oração não é apenas por eles. Rogo também por aqueles que crerão em mim, por meio da mensagem deles”.

Nossas vidas hoje

Como discípulos no mundo de hoje, podemos ter consolo! Nós estamos incluídos na oração de Jesus na Última Ceia. Ele quer que sejamos alegres; que tenhamos a plena medida de Sua alegria em nós! Esta não é uma alegria superficial e de curta duração; não é uma máscara que colocamos no rosto, fingindo que está tudo bem! É uma alegria profunda que vem do Senhor. É uma alegria que pode ser nossa, sejam quais forem nossas circunstâncias. É uma experiência libertadora! Não dependemos que as coisas deste mundo nos forneçam alegria.

Somos encorajados e habilitados a sermos felizes, rirmos e nos alegrarmos!

Infelizmente, alguns cristãos acreditam que é ímpio ser alegre e podem citar as palavras de Marcos 8:34, “Se alguém quiser acompanhar-me, negue-se a si mesmo, tome a sua cruz e siga-me”, sugerindo que um assunto tão sério não é algo com que possam se alegrar. Outros acham que deveriam adotar uma expressão facial séria.

Fui criada em uma família cristã, ouvi falar de Jesus a partir de uma idade muito tenra e pedi perdão a Deus quando criança. No entanto, foi como uma adolescente, cheia de dúvidas e medos, que pedi a Deus para vir e viver dentro de mim. Foi só então que entendi que o meu pecado havia sido tratado. Eu estava perdoada e poderia tê-lo dentro de mim. Isso me encheu de alegria! Eu fiquei cantando durante a semana seguinte. Eu estava tão feliz. Se eu tivesse apenas uma palavra para descrever essa experiência, esta seria alegria! Posso também testemunhar que durante toda a minha vida a alegria do Senhor tem permanecido em mim.

Jesus deseja que nós, seus discípulos, ao longo das gerações, experimentemos o fruto do Seu Espírito em nossas vidas - fruto que inclui ALEGRIA! Veja Gálatas 5.22. Esse desejo era tão importante para Ele que, assim como Ele enfrentou o Calvário, expressamente orou para que os discípulos tivessem alegria, a alegria de ter os pecados perdoados, a alegria de saber que eram filhos de Deus, a alegria de saber que eram amados! Sua oração nos inclui! O fato é que podemos ser “Alegremente Dele”!

Questões para discussão

1. Há um coro que diz “Alegre, sirvo a Cristo de coração!” Como você explicaria essas palavras a alguém que não é cristão?
2. Você concorda com Agostinho de Hipona que disse: “Um cristão deveria ser um aleluia da cabeça aos pés”?
3. Por que você acha importante ter a alegria do Senhor em nós? Isso é realmente possível?

Como viver alegremente para Deus

Durante este mês, oremos com Samuel Logan Brengle: “Ó Deus, inunda o mundo com Tua poderosa alegria!” (O segredo do ganhador de almas, capítulo 1)

Comissária Silvia Cox – QGI, do Território da Suíça, Áustria e Hungria (tendo servido na Suíça, Zimbábue, Finlândia, África do Sul e Reino Unido com a República da Irlanda))

Como Presidente Mundial do Ministério Feminino, eu viajo ao redor do mundo compartilhando a alegria do Senhor com aqueles que encontro.

Estudo Bíblico 2

Alegremente Sua através da salvação

Contudo, alegrem-se, não porque os espíritos se submetem a vocês, mas porque seus nomes estão escritos nos céus

(v 20)

Leitura bíblica – Lucas 10:1-20

O que a Bíblia diz

A salvação, que custou tanto a Jesus, nos oferece uma infinidade de presentes, o maior dos quais é que teremos nossos nomes escritos no livro da vida e um dia viveremos na eternidade com Deus. Temos um futuro além da nossa morte terrena! Deus tem dado a todos os crentes uma herança protegida que é eterna, imortal, imaculada e imarcescível (I Pedro 1:4). Esta salvação repousa unicamente na bondade de Deus.

A salvação traz consigo o perdão pelos pecados cometidos e uma oportunidade de mudar as nossas vidas. Para isso temos pleno motivo para nos alegrarmos no Senhor com palavras semelhantes às de Isaías: “É grande o meu prazer no Senhor! Regozija-se a minha alma em meu Deus! Pois ele me vestiu com as vestes da salvação e sobre mim pôs o manto da justiça, qual noivo que adorna a cabeça como um sacerdote, qual noiva que se enfeita com joias” (Isaías 61:10-13).

Nos dias de Jesus, os cidadãos tinham seus nomes escritos num registro público, para que fossem conhecidos e sua herança devidamente preservada. Ordenava-se que, toda criança, ao nascer fosse registrada em uma sinagoga ou outro local público de segurança (e ainda hoje é assim em muitos lugares). Após a morte ou como consequência de mau comportamento seus nomes seriam removidos. Eles conheciam bem essa lei e, por isso, ficariam felizes - cheios de alegria - ao saberem que seus nomes estavam escritos no céu (o livro da vida) e não poderia ou não seria removido quando suas vidas na terra houvessem terminado. Em vez disso, viveriam eternamente com o Senhor.

A salvação é fornecida a toda a humanidade através da morte e ressurreição de Cristo para todos os que crêem (João 3:16). Nós somos “cidadãos do céu”, amigos de Deus, e “aprovados” por Ele. Um dia vamos morar com Ele.

Os versículos anteriores de Lucas 10 falam de Jesus enviando os 72 discípulos, dois a dois, para compartilhar a mensagem de Deus e fazer milagres em Seu nome. Jesus sabe como os seres humanos são bons em dar tapinhas nas costas uns dos outros e pensar como são importantes ou levar todo o crédito por aquilo que realizam; então, Ele lhes lembra que suas vitórias aconteceram devido à presença de Deus vivendo e trabalhando através deles. Portanto, é Deus que deve ser exaltado e em quem deveriam se alegrar. Deus tinha realizado Sua vontade através deles, à medida em que faziam o Seu trabalho.

Nossas vidas hoje

Isso se torna um lembrete para todos os cristãos hoje de que nossas vidas, através da salvação que Ele nos oferece, pertencem a Deus, e que as vitórias que obtemos são vitórias pelas quais Ele nos tem conduzido. Regozijar-nos no Senhor vai nos manter perto dEle e sensível à direção do Seu Espírito. Com os nossos olhos e nossos corações voltados para Ele, vamos ser menos propensos a nos afastarmos dEle e ir em direção ao pecado. Regozijar nos liberta e nos faz ser totalmente dEle, para sermos liderados e usados por Ele. A alegria é resultado da nossa salvação.

Quando o Rei Davi caiu em pecado, ele descobriu que a sua alegria de viver e amar o Senhor tinha desaparecido. Ele orou: “Devolve-me a alegria da tua salvação” (Salmo 51:12). Uma vez que tenhamos experimentado a alegria que é encontrada na e através da salvação oferecida a nós, devemos nos proteger para não perdê-la. Regozijar diariamente em tudo o que Deus nos tem dado e feito torna-se um lembrete do Seu amor e mantém a alegria viva.

Questões para discussão

1. Leia as passagens a seguir e discuta como se relacionam a ou o que falam sobre se regozijar na sua salvação: I Pedro 1:3-12; Filipenses 4:4-7; I Tessalonicenses 5:16.
2. Como os seus pensamentos sobre regozijar na Sua salvação têm mudado ou expandido? Compartilhe, caso se sinta confortável em fazê-lo.

Como viver alegremente para Deus

Comece e termine cada dia com louvores pelo amor, cuidado e salvação que o Senhor lhe tem dado.

Nossa maior alegria é saber que a autoridade de Deus está sobre nós e que a Sua presença está sempre conosco. Nossa salvação não se resume naquilo que podemos fazer para Deus, mas sobre o que Ele tem feito por nós.

Comissária Nancy Roberts – QGI, do território Central dos Estados Unidos (tendo servido nos EUA, Leste da América do Sul, Quênia, QGI, EUA Nacional)

“O Senhor é a minha luz e a minha salvação; de quem terei temor? O Senhor é o meu forte refúgio; de quem terei medo?” (Salmo 27:1 KJV). Como Secretária Mundial do Ministério Feminino, encontro alegria em servi-Lo e ao compartilhar as boas novas da salvação ao redor do mundo. Minha alegria nEle me traz força a cada dia.

Estudo Bíblico 3

Alegremente Sua, em Sua presença

Fizeste dele uma grande bênção para sempre e lhe deste a alegria da tua presença

(v 6)

Leitura bíblica – Salmo 21:1-6

O que a Bíblia diz

No Antigo Testamento, somente o sumo sacerdote tinha permissão para entrar na presença de Deus. Uma vez por ano o sumo sacerdote entrava no Santo dos Santos e chegava diante da presença de Deus. Não é de surpreender, então, que o desejo de estar na presença de Deus é expresso algumas vezes nos Salmos.

“A minha alma anela, e até desfalece, pelos átrios do Senhor; o meu coração e o meu corpo cantam de alegria ao Deus vivo.” (Salmo 84:2); “Ó Deus, tu és o meu Deus, eu te busco intensamente; a minha alma tem sede de ti! Todo o meu ser anseia por ti, numa terra seca, exausta e sem água” (Salmo 63:1); e “Como a corça anseia por águas correntes, a minha alma anseia por ti, ó Deus” (Salmo 42:1).

No Salmo 20, o rei está se preparando para ir para a batalha, e orações são oferecidas para a sua proteção e retorno vitorioso. No versículo 5, o salmista imagina as celebrações quando o rei retorna invicto: “Pelas vitórias que lhe deste, grande é a sua glória; de esplendor e majestade o cobriste”! O Salmo 21:1-6 expressa louvor exuberante para o retorno seguro do rei e por tudo o que Deus fez por ele. É importante ressaltar que não é o rei que está sendo elogiado aqui, mas, com toda a razão, o louvor está sendo dado a Deus. Ele respondeu às orações.

Há uma linguagem tão extravagante usada aqui para dar graças a um Deus generoso: “Tu lhe concedeste o desejo do seu coração e não lhe rejeitaste o pedido dos seus lábios. Tu o recebeste dando-lhe ricas bênçãos, e em sua cabeça puseste uma coroa de ouro puro” (vv. 2-3). O ponto culminante deste relato da bondade de Deus está no versículo 6: “Fizeste dele uma grande bênção para sempre e lhe deste a alegria da tua presença”. O que muitos desejam foi concedido ao rei (Salmo 20:6). Por quê? Porque (o Rei) confia no nome do Senhor, o nosso Deus (Salmo 20:7).

Nossas vidas hoje

Susannah Wesley, a mãe de dez crianças que sobreviveram à infância, incluindo Charles e John, sabia o que era estar ocupada. Além de cuidar de sua casa e família, ela também tomou sobre si a educação formal de todos os seus filhos. Ela estava bem ciente de sua própria necessidade de procurar regularmente a presença de Deus e, porque o espaço era limitado, ela se sentava em uma cadeira no meio da cozinha e puxava seu avental sobre a cabeça e passava tempo na presença de Deus. Todas as crianças sabiam que não tinham autorização para perturbar a mãe quando ela estava conversando com o Senhor. Para Susannah, passar tempo com o Senhor era verdadeiramente algo pelo qual ansiava.

Posso recordar aquela época em que nossos filhos ainda eram pequenos e nossa casa se enchia de atividade e ruído. Muitas vezes eu sentia, como tantas outras mulheres, que a vida era um ato de malabarismo, tentando manter as exigências de ser esposa, mãe e oficial em algum tipo de equilíbrio, mesmo que eu amasse cada uma dessas áreas da minha vida - e ainda amo. Eu sabia que a força e a sabedoria necessárias para cada dia só poderia ser encontrada na presença de Deus, mas que muito frequentemente essa era a área que ficava negligenciada: o tempo com Deus era curto.

No entanto, naquele momento, eu ouvi uma canção intitulada *Eu sinto falta do meu tempo Contigo*. Esta canção deixa claro que Deus está nos esperando para passar tempo com Ele, que Ele quer que tiremos um tempo da nossa vida agitada de serviço a Ele, apenas para passar tempo em Sua presença. Precisamos aprender a nos tornarmos confortáveis com o sossego, aprender a ouvi-Lo falar a nós, ao invés de nós fazermos toda a conversação. Quanto mais tempo passamos em Sua presença, mais sensíveis nos tornamos a Ele.

A parte maravilhosa é que a alegria que recebemos por estar na presença de Deus é assegurada: “Tu me farás conhecer a vereda da vida, a alegria plena da tua presença, eterno prazer à tua direita” (Salmo 16:11). É a promessa de Deus para nós.

Questões para discussão

1. Você já sentiu, como o salmista, um impulso irresistível de entrar na presença de Deus? Houve certas circunstâncias que levaram a esse desejo?
2. Quão fácil é ouvir Deus falar hoje? O que você pode fazer para reduzir as distrações que podem lhe impedir de ouvir a Sua voz?
3. Como você descreveria a um não-crente a diferença entre a felicidade e a alegria que vem de estar na presença de Deus?

Como viver alegremente para Deus

Durante o próximo mês, faça um encontro com Deus para passar tempo em Sua presença, sem distrações. Aprecie o silêncio sem sentir que você tem que preenchê-lo com a fala. Permita que Deus fale com você e compartilhe Seu coração com você.

Tenente-Coronel Debbie Cachelin – QGI, do Território da Suíça, Áustria e Hungria

Tive o privilégio de compartilhar a alegria do Senhor ao servi-Lo em vários ministérios na Suíça, Austrália e Reino Unido e agora com colegas oficiais no Colégio Internacional para Oficiais.

Estudo Bíblico 4

Alegremente Sua em adoração

Alegrem-se nessa festa com os seus filhos e as suas filhas, os seus servos e as suas servas, os levitas, os estrangeiros, os órfãos e as viúvas que vivem na sua cidade. Durante sete dias celebrem a festa, dedicada ao Senhor, o seu Deus, no local que o Senhor escolher. Pois o Senhor, o seu Deus, os abençoará em toda a sua colheita e em todo o trabalho de suas mãos, e a sua alegria será completa

Leitura bíblica – Deuteronômio 16:14-15

O que a Bíblia diz

Na Bíblia, adoração transmite a idéia de “se curvar”, “tratar com reverência” e outras expressões. A adoração fortalece o relacionamento entre Deus e a humanidade. O Salmo 100 diz que existem ações visíveis claras durante o culto. Elas incluem exclamações de alegria, adorar com alegria, entoar canções alegres, sabendo que Ele é Deus. Entramos pelas Suas portas com ações de graça.

No Antigo Testamento, o ato de adoração era claro - significava dar. Para o propósito deste estudo, vamos olhar para a adoração em Deuteronômio. Nestes versículos uma pessoa viria para o Tabernáculo (ou, mais tarde, o Templo) trazendo sua oferta nas mãos. No Novo Testamento, Jesus tornou-Se a oferta e deu a Sua vida em sacrifício por todos. Por esta razão os cristãos O adoram e O confessam como Senhor.

O Salmo 100 mostra que somos convidados a nos reunir em torno do Senhor e adorá-Lo. Salmo 89:15 descreve a bênção de estar próximo e andar na luz do Senhor. Os seres humanos são criados como adoradores; por exemplo, durante o tempo de libertação dos israelitas, Deus deu a Moisés uma palavra para o faraó. Era para ele dizer ao rei que deixasse os israelitas irem e adorarem seu Deus. Jesus ordenou que, em adoração a Deus, as pessoas deveriam amar outros e cuidar da criação de Deus. A adoração é a resposta de agradecimento ao dom divino da vida do ser humano.

Nós nos alegramos em ver outros apreciarem o que é bom. Deus quer que estejamos em comunidade e até certo ponto a nossa alegria não é completa até que tenhamos compartilhado com o outro. Muitos cristãos hoje frequentam a igreja para falar de Deus e adorá-Lo, sem desfrutar, em sua maioria, da presença dos outros. No entanto, alguns simplesmente se reúnem e trocam gentilezas e compartilham como foi a semana. Quer seja num prédio, ou numa tenda ou ao ar livre, um período de adoração verdadeira deveria ser um tempo para nos submetermos, nos humilharmos e nos esvaziarmos perante o Criador. Temos que admitir que a adoração deve nos motivar para ir além da nossa zona de conforto. Ela exige total submissão que vai além da música e das atividades. Adoração alegre começa no coração do crente. O mesmo acontece quando entramos em adoração como uma comunidade ou congregação.

Nossas vidas hoje

Os cristãos são chamados e convidados a adorar a Deus durante toda a semana. A adoração alegre significa muito para os crentes. Deve ser diferenciada da salvação. É um meio de transformação de si mesmo. Os cristãos precisam esquecer o passado e abraçar o hoje como um dom precioso de Deus, o velho se foi e tudo se fez novo. Assim como Paulo enfatizou em Filipenses 3:13 temos de esquecer o passado e avançar para o que está à frente.

Em nossas vidas diárias, vivendo no momento presente, como cristãos, o nosso mais profundo desejo deve ser o de nos alegrarmos na presença do nosso glorioso Deus. No culto de hoje, costumamos expressar a nossa alegria de muitas maneiras como proclamar em voz alta, cantar e dançar; contudo, essas coisas não são a razão da nossa alegria, mas simplesmente uma forma de expressar a nossa alegria. A música é um grande instrumento que estimula o culto alegre, mas não nos faz feliz. Nossa alegria na adoração não é encontrada nas coisas que fazemos, mas, sim, no Deus que adoramos. Tome um momento e pense em como nós respiramos; não tentamos mudar nosso ritmo respiratório, mas notamos que cada respiração que entra e sai dá glória a Deus.

Questões para discussão

1. Quando foi a última vez que você adorou a Deus como família? O que levou você a ter aquele momento?
2. Qual é a sua percepção sobre a adoração no mundo de hoje?
3. No texto, percebemos que Deus abençoa a colheita e o trabalho das nossas mãos para que a nossa alegria possa ser completa. Compartilhe como Deus a tem abençoado e qual é a sua resposta a essa bênção.

Como viver alegremente para Deus

Deus quer que respondamos a Ele sinceramente, precisamos refletir e tomar tempo para recontar as nossas bênçãos de culto alegre e lembrar como Deus é grande. Passe alguns minutos refletindo sobre o cuidado de Deus com a vida, e adore-O alegremente.

Commissária Florence Malabi – QGI, do Território Oeste do Quênia

Tenho compartilhado da alegria do Senhor na Tanzânia, Ruanda e África do Sul. Como secretária zonal do Ministério Feminino, tenho o privilégio de viajar pela África. Através das visitas eu sempre vivencio grande alegria em adoração nos diferentes países da zona, e tenho sempre sentido Sua ternura, amor e bênçãos, sabendo que pertencemos a Ele através da adoração.

Estudo Bíblico 5

Alegremente Sua ao dar

*Cada um dê conforme determinou em seu coração, não com pesar ou por obrigação,
pois Deus ama quem dá com alegria*

(2 Coríntios 9:7)

Leitura bíblica – 2 Coríntios 8–9

O que a Bíblia diz

Nesta carta, Paulo aponta o exemplo da doação liberal dos macedônios aos irmãos necessitados em Jerusalém (8:1-6) e exorta os cristãos de Corinto para cumprirem sua promessa de fazer o mesmo. Isso mostraria preocupação tanto para cristãos judeus quanto gentios na Judéia, e tornaria evidente a unidade dos cristãos no corpo de Cristo.

Também encontramos uma revelação do plano de Deus para o ato de dar: o propósito da doação (8:13-15), as políticas a serem seguidas na doação (8:16-9:5), os princípios da doação (9:6-7), e as promessas decorrentes da doação (9:8-15). Essa passagem também lida com a atitude que se deve ter ao dar. Deve ser alegre e generosa. O principal interesse de Deus não é com o tamanho da dádiva, mas com a motivação que está por trás dela.

A Bíblia diz: “Diga aos israelitas que me tragam uma oferta. Receba-a de todo aquele cujo coração o compeliu a dar” (Êxodo 25:2). Atos 20:35 diz: “Em tudo o que fiz, mostrei-lhes que mediante trabalho árduo devemos ajudar os fracos, lembrando as palavras do próprio Senhor Jesus, que disse: “Há maior felicidade em dar do que em receber”.

Jesus apreciou a oferta da viúva pobre, pois ela ofereceu tudo o que tinha (Marcos 12:41-42). Em contraste, Deus pensou muito diferente sobre os motivos por trás da doação de Caim e Abel (Gênesis 4:2-10). Nossa oferta deve se dar a partir da gratidão e da adoração. Espera-se que doemos para a glória de Deus e para o crescimento do reino de Deus. E, ao dar, devemos oferecer aos nossos corpos como sacrifício vivo a Deus (Romanos 12:1).

Nossas vidas hoje

Atualmente em muitas circunstâncias, há uma forte ênfase no ato de dar. Um senso de competitividade move as pessoas a verem o quanto podem dar e podem até se vangloriar a respeito. Algumas igrejas são persuadidas pelo falso ensinamento e por pastores inescrupulosos que tentam forçar as pessoas a darem mais. Nós mesmos podemos nos lamentar ou nos sentir insatisfeitos em dar. Além disso, neste mundo corrido, algumas pessoas não se preocupam com nada, não têm tempo para pensar ou considerar nada e, frequentemente, desconfiam de indivíduos e organizações.

No entanto, a Bíblia diz que o ato de dar deve vir do coração e do verdadeiro desejo de ir ao encontro de necessidades, e não para ganhar reputação dentro da igreja ou em público. A Bíblia diz que cada um deve dar conforme determinou, sem remorso ou motivado por um sentimento de obrigação.

Além disso, a nossa generosidade alegrará a Deus. De graça recebemos, então, precisamos também dar de graça. Devemos ser observadores atentos das oportunidades para dar que aumentarão a alegria do nosso coração. Deus deu Seu próprio Filho como um presente gratuito a nós. Isso deveria nos estimular a ir ao encontro das necessidades do mundo. Os israelitas tinham que dizimar, o Novo Testamento não repete esse mandamento; contudo, como temos visto, ensina sobre os princípios de dar.

A responsabilidade é nossa de manejar o nosso dinheiro apropriadamente, pois ele nos é dado como um legado de Deus. Se olharmos para a história do Exército de Salvação, podemos entender como salvacionistas e não salvacionistas dedicaram suas vidas bem como seu tempo, talentos e dons a Deus. Como resultado, vemos que pessoas no mundo inteiro estão sendo vestidas, alimentadas e educadas e podem ouvir a mensagem de Deus e se tornarem Seus filhos. De tais formas o Exército de Salvação tem tentado redimir o mundo inteiro. Na Índia, por exemplo, o ato de dar alegremente tem impactado a vida das pessoas e tem permitido que se dediquem ao serviço sacrificial em muitas partes do país. Com isso, as vidas de muitos têm melhorado, a ignorância tem desaparecido e muitas práticas ruins e rituais têm sido removidos. Uma boa educação tem sido oferecida, juntamente com serviços médicos, nutrição espiritual, amor e compaixão. Esse serviço alegre continua.

Questões para discussão

1. Estamos dando alegremente hoje?
2. Estamos vivendo de acordo com as normas e os princípios de dar?
3. A nossa doação está trazendo alegria a Deus e às pessoas à nossa volta?

Como viver alegremente para Deus

As mulheres deveriam conhecer os princípios da doação e o resultado de dar ao Senhor. É a nossa responsabilidade ensinar às nossas crianças e encorajar o nosso Corpo a dar. É importante lembrar que dar não se trata apenas de dinheiro, mas também em dar o nosso tempo, os nossos talentos e a nós mesmos.

Seria difícil, mesmo após 100 anos, melhorar a letra do cântico de Barbara Stoddart “Tragam o dízimo todo ao depósito do templo”. Essa é parte da citação de Malaquias 3:10 que termina com “. . . e vejam se não vou abrir as comportas dos céus e derramar sobre vocês tantas bênçãos que nem terão onde guardá-las”.

Evangeline Muthukumar – Corpo de Lewisham, Reino Unido e do Território Sudeste da Índia, Corpo de Karayankuzhy, Divisão de Kanyakumari

Como enfermeira de centro cirúrgico, estou servindo e compartilhando a alegria de Deus com os meus colegas e com os pacientes com os quais me encontro todos os dias. Tenho orgulho em dizer que fui treinada no Hospital Catherine Booth do Exército de Salvação em Nagercoil, sul da Índia. Eu gosto do meu trabalho e ofereço meu tempo e talentos para salvar vidas e dar apoio ao processo de cura.

Estudo Bíblico 6

Alegremente Sua na jornada

Agradeço a meu Deus toda vez que me lembro de vocês. Em todas as minhas orações em favor de vocês, sempre oro com alegria por causa da cooperação que vocês têm dado ao evangelho, desde o primeiro dia até agora. Estou convencido de que aquele que começou boa obra em vocês, vai completá-la até o dia de Cristo Jesus

Leitura bíblica – Filipenses 1:3-6

O que a Bíblia diz

Na abertura de sua carta aos filipenses, Paulo apresenta de forma breve, mas bonita, o relacionamento que devemos buscar com os nossos irmãos em Cristo e ilustra a relação que devemos buscar com o Senhor.

Primeiramente, Paulo demonstra quatro coisas que ele faz - coisas que nós, como cristãos, devemos sempre buscar fazer; agradecer a Deus; lembrar-nos dos outros; orar com alegria e permanecer confiantes de que Deus continuará a trabalhar em nós.

Paulo relata como ele agradece a Deus pela igreja em Filipos, destacando a importância de chegar ao Pai com gratidão, antes e acima de tudo. Além do mais, ele faz isso toda vez que se lembra dos Filipenses - seus irmãos e irmãs em Cristo. Ele não só se lembra deles, mas também ora por eles, fazendo isso com alegria. Paulo enfatiza como ele faz isso de forma consistente e cuidadosamente. Ele fala de todos em suas orações, não apenas orando por alguns dos filipenses, mas por todos os que têm sido parceiros “no evangelho desde o primeiro dia até agora” (v. 5). Paulo então passa a afirmar o que Deus tem feito e o que Ele vai fazer na vida dos filipenses: “Ele começou a boa obra (em vocês) e vai completá-la até o dia de Cristo Jesus” (v. 6).

Paul está confiante de que Deus vai fazer isso! Ele não sugere que isso vai acontecer instantaneamente ou até mesmo em sua vida, mas, sim, no dia de Cristo Jesus. Desta forma, Paulo encoraja os filipenses a permanecerem confiantes na jornada e confiantes no Senhor. E com essa confiança vem a paz e a alegria.

Nossas vidas hoje

Se considerarmos os princípios-chave da passagem, descobrimos quão desafiador deve ter sido para os filipenses e quão desafiador ainda pode ser para nós. Pode ser difícil ser grato (agradecer), estar atento (lembrar) àqueles que nos rodeiam e interceder por eles em oração. Pode ser difícil orar, encontrar tempo para orar e orar com alegria. Também pode ser difícil sermos confiantes em nossa jornada com o Senhor ao vivermos num mundo de constantes mudanças e incertezas.

No entanto, a viagem é para ser feita dando-se um passo de cada vez. Em nossa leitura das escrituras, Paulo enfatiza a passagem do tempo para deixar claro que a viagem não é nem curta nem rápida. Ele escreve da “parceria no evangelho” dos Filipenses “desde o primeiro dia até agora”, e como Deus vai continuar o bom trabalho que Ele começou “até o dia de Jesus Cristo”.

Deus não terminou de trabalhar em nós e nem terminará de trabalhar em nós, através de nós, Suas criaturas amadas, até que Ele nos chame para casa ou até Cristo retornar. Portanto, vamos nos deleitar nEle, sabendo que Ele firmará nossos passos (Salmo 37:23); sejamos alegremente Suas na jornada.

Questões para discussão

1. Como você tem experimentado alegria na sua jornada com o Senhor?
2. Quando se torna mais difícil para você se alegrar? É quando a jornada não acontece conforme combinado? Como você pode superar essa dificuldade e buscar e encontrar alegria no Senhor?
3. Você seguirá o exemplo de Paulo de ser grato, consciente, alegre em oração e confiante hoje?

Como viver alegremente para Deus

Reflita no Salmo 23 e relembre que Deus está ao seu lado, lhe apoiando, amando e guiando. Nossa jornada com o Senhor é de fato uma na qual podemos nos alegrar sempre.

O SENHOR é o meu pastor; de nada terei falta.

Em verdes pastagens me faz repousar e me conduz a águas tranquilas; restaura-me o vigor.

Guia-me nas veredas da justiça por amor do seu nome.

Mesmo quando eu andar por um vale de trevas e morte,

não temerei perigo algum, pois tu estás comigo;

a tua vara e o teu cajado me protegem.

Preparas um banquete para mim à vista dos meus inimigos.

Tu me honras, unguendo a minha cabeça com óleo e fazendo transbordar o meu cálice.

Sei que a bondade e a fidelidade me acompanharão todos os dias da minha vida,

e voltarei à casa do SENHOR enquanto eu viver.

Kelly Zvobgo – QGI, do Território Oeste dos EUA

Tenho compartilhado da alegria do Senhor como soldada no Zimbábue, nos Estados Unidos, na França e no Reino Unido. Aqui, no Quartel Internacional, tenho ajudado a preparar o Congresso de aniversário dos 150 anos do Exército de Salvação, Sem Limites – O Mundo Redimindo. Ao regressar para casa, começando meu PhD na Universidade do sul da Califórnia, continuarei a ser alegremente Sua.

Estudo Bíblico 7

Alegremente Sua em obediência

E este é o amor: que andemos em obediência aos seus mandamentos. Como vocês já têm ouvido desde o princípio, o mandamento é este: Que vocês andem em amor

(v 6)

Leitura bíblica – 2 João 1:1-12

O que a Bíblia diz

O texto que nós olharemos neste estudo bíblico encontra-se entre aqueles que são conhecidos como as cartas Joanas encontradas no Novo Testamento. Não estamos completamente certos de quem as escreveu, mas tradicionalmente são atribuídas ao apóstolo João. São dirigidas a três grupos distintos: à comunidade como um todo (1 João); um seletivo grupo de pessoas (2 João) e um indivíduo (3 João). Nosso texto é dirigido especificamente à “senhora eleita por Deus e aos seus filhos” (v 1). A carta está escrita num formato padrão, com uma saudação inicial formal, em seguida vem o corpo da carta e uma saudação pessoal final. A saudação inicial lembra ao leitor que “Jesus Cristo, seu Filho, estará conosco em verdade e em amor” (v 3) e define o cenário para o resto da carta.

Esses versículos pintam um retrato do que significa andar na verdade. Quem é a verdade? Jesus Cristo, o Filho de Deus. João 14:6 diz “Eu sou o caminho a verdade e a vida” e esta segunda carta de João lembra-nos que existem falsos profetas que não falam a verdade e que estão entre nós tentando nos desviar do caminho. Jesus, em contraste, é a verdade e, como Jesus vive em nós, e através de nós, podemos andar obedientemente em nossa jornada cristã, mantendo nossos olhos na cruz.

João nos lembra que não só devemos “andar em obediência aos seus mandamentos”, mas também “andar em amor”. “Caminhar” indica uma ação. Somos participantes ativos nesta jornada de obediência e amor. “Andar” significa viajar através das colinas e vales um passo de cada vez. Em 1 João 4:8, somos informados de que Deus, o Pai, é amor. O comando para cada um de nós como mulheres e filhos de Deus é andar em amor. Quando andamos em amor (Deus) e em verdade (Jesus), então nossa alegria será completa (2 João 1:12).

Nossas vidas hoje

Obediência não é uma palavra que a maioria das pessoas gosta de ouvir no século 21. Na verdade, eu sugiro que esta palavra nunca foi tão popular porque fala de submissão e controle. Para obedecer a alguém significa que temos de nos submeter e abrir mão do controle, algo que é difícil para a nossa natureza humana. Muitas vezes, quando pensamos no ato de obediência, pensamos numa criança obedecendo a seus pais. Que interessante que João 2 foi escrito para “uma senhora e seus filhos”. Como mãe de quatro filhos, tenho tido muitas oportunidades para lhes ensinar sobre a obediência. Muitas vezes tive de discipliná-los quando eram desobedientes. Essa não era uma tarefa da qual eu gostava, mas era algo que eu tinha que fazer para que eles aprendessem limites e respeito.

A Escritura nos diz para “andar em obediência aos Seus mandamentos”. No papel, isso é fácil, mas, ao enfrentarmos as realidades da vida diária, encontramos o ato de obediência desafiadora. Ser obediente significa que concordamos ativamente com aquilo que alguém nos pede, mas muitas vezes queremos fazer as coisas no nosso próprio tempo e do nosso próprio jeito. As Escrituras nos dizem que não só devemos ser obedientes, mas que em nossa obediência vamos encontrar alegria. Isso certamente vai contra tudo o que o mundo ensina. Muitas vezes hoje ouvimos a frase “se isso faz você sentir-se bem, faça-o”.

Nossa cultura nos ensina que encontraremos a felicidade em soluções rápidas e fazendo aquilo que nos interessa. Será que eu ainda irei ouvir a mídia retratar a alegria como uma expressão de obediência? As Escrituras que lemos são contracultura. A mensagem de Cristo é contracultural, e somos chamados a viver e andar no exemplo que Cristo nos deu.

Tantas coisas no mundo podem atrair a nossa atenção para longe de Jesus Cristo e um viver santo. João aborda isso mais tarde em sua carta. Precisamos lembrar que Cristo vive em nós e que, por meio do Espírito, dá-nos força para resistir à tentação e ao falso ensino. É somente nEle que vamos encontrar a verdade. Lembremo-nos que quem “permanece no ensino tem o Pai e também o Filho” (v 9). A razão pela qual somos chamados à obediência é para que a nossa “alegria seja completa”. A nossa esperança e a nossa força vêm da certeza de que somos alegremente Sua.

Questões para discussão

1. Por que você acha que o autor escolheu mulheres e crianças como seu público para abordar o tópico da obediência?
2. Por que você acha que o escritor da carta não mencionou o nome da “mulher” a quem estava se dirigindo?
3. As Escrituras nos chamam a “andar em obediência aos Seus mandamentos”. O que Deus está pedindo para você fazer hoje? Você está disposto a ser obediente? Qual será o custo da sua obediência?

Como viver alegremente para Deus

Neste mês, vamos tirar tempo a cada dia para intencionalmente encorajar uma à outra “face a face” a viver alegremente em obediência.

Major Brenda Murray – Território do Canadá e Bermuda

Tenho compartilhado a alegria do Senhor em diversos ministérios, incluindo casa para pessoas em estado terminal, relacionamento com o governo, casas de emergência para mulheres e crianças, acampamentos e agora como Diretora Assistente de Missões Mundiais. Também tenho servido em Londres como Secretária Assistente de Administração no Quartel Internacional.

Estudo Bíblico 8

Alegremente Sua em tempos de prova

Simão, Simão, Satanás pediu vocês para peneirá-los como trigo. Mas eu orei por você, para que a sua fé não desfaleça. E quando você se converter, fortaleça os seus irmãos

(v 32)

Leitura bíblica – Lucas 22:31-32; João 17:20

O que a Bíblia diz

Na última ceia com os discípulos, antes de enfrentar a cruz, Jesus advertiu Pedro que a sua fé seria testada e que ele realmente negaria o Senhor três vezes. Pedro refuta isso enfaticamente, mas infelizmente as palavras de Jesus são verdadeiras. Quando o galo cantou mais tarde, na mesma noite, Pedro percebeu o que tinha feito e foi vencido pela culpa e vergonha. Esse incidente foi tão esmagador para Pedro, que tinha estado tão confiante do seu amor e compromisso para com o Messias prometido.

No entanto, mesmo antes da falha de Pedro ser exposta, Jesus tinha previsto isso e encorajou Pedro, dizendo-lhe que ele já estava coberto em oração. Pedro não conseguia entender na época, pois estava muito seguro de si. Mas recordando essa conversa mais tarde, deve tê-lo confortado perceber que Jesus o conhecia e estava orando por ele.

Jesus não consolou apenas Pedro, mas também restaurou o sentido da missão de Pedro, dando-lhe a tarefa de “fortalecer os irmãos”. Quando atormentado por seu fracasso, Pedro deve ter se sentido revigorado ao saber que Jesus acreditava que ele iria retornar.

Satanás tentou influenciar Pedro, para que ele caísse em Sua caminhada com Jesus. Embora o momento do teste foi extremamente amarga para Pedro, Jesus transformou-o numa oportunidade para Pedro. Percebendo profundamente sua inadequação, Pedro realmente aprendeu que somente a graça de Deus podia sustentá-lo e que o amor de Deus nunca o abandonaria.

Nossas vidas hoje

Quando primeiro conhecemos o Senhor, ficamos animados com o novo estilo de vida que está diante de nós. Regado com promessas de bênçãos, ficamos maravilhados, somos inspirados - estamos cheios de alegria! Mas, mais cedo ou mais tarde chega um momento de teste. Por vivermos num mundo quebrado, sendo filhos do Deus Todo-Poderoso, não estamos isentos de acidentes inesperados, dificuldades financeiras, avarias de relacionamento, doença física, abuso e agressões.

Quando nossas orações desesperadas parecem não resolver o problema, o desânimo pode começar a se infiltrar; em seguida, decepções; então dúvida. Será que Deus realmente Se importa? Posso acreditar que Deus Se importa? Esses tempos sombrios revelam a natureza da nossa relação com

o Senhor, que atinge diretamente os lugares mais profundos do nosso coração que de outra forma passariam intocados quando as coisas estão agradáveis e tranquilas.

A Bíblia não nos diz por que temos de sofrer ou porque Deus não interfere imediatamente, mas nos garante que o Senhor está ciente das dificuldades que estamos enfrentando, e como Jesus orou por Pedro, e Seus outros discípulos, Ele está orando também por nós (João 17:20). Ele não é indiferente às nossas lutas. Ele conhece a nossa fragilidade, por isso, não temos que fingir que somos fortes, ou tentar lutar contra isso com nossa própria força. É bom dar um grito honesto da profundidade do nosso coração. Só quando abrimos o nosso coração de tal forma, somos capazes de receber o conforto de Deus. Os Salmos estão cheios desses exemplos.

O contraste entre o amor de Deus e o nosso próprio sofrimento muitas vezes não faz sentido para nós. Mas quando nós realmente buscamos o Seu rosto, no meio da nossa dor, Deus virá tocar as profundezas de nossas vidas. Então, o nosso relacionamento com nosso Senhor nunca mais será o mesmo. Não pelo intelecto, mas pela experiência, chegamos a conhecer Sua compaixão e misericórdia. Nossa fé é renovada e chegamos à percepção profunda de que somos verdadeiramente dEle, e que Ele não nos abandonará. Essa garantia nos encherá de uma alegria muito mais profunda e muito mais pura do que qualquer outra que jamais conheceremos.

Questões para discussão

1. Você pode considerar que é pura alegria, quando você enfrenta dificuldades de muitos tipos, como sugerido em Tiago 1:2? Compartilhe seus pensamentos com os outros.
2. Quando uma situação difícil surge, qual é a reação do seu coração? Negação? Raiva? Frustração? Você foi capaz de compartilhar seu grito honesto profundo com o Senhor? Se não, qual poderia ser a razão?
3. Jesus disse a Pedro para “fortalecer seus irmãos quando se convertesse”. Já houve um Pedro na sua vida - alguém que lhe tem incentivado? Como essa pessoa foi de ajuda?

Como viver alegremente para Deus

Você não tem que olhar muito longe para encontrar uma pessoa decepcionada ou desanimada. Existe alguém que você pode “fortalecer” com um sorriso, um ouvido atento, ou com palavras de esperança? Ao longo deste mês, peça ao Senhor para lhe mostrar tais oportunidades, e como você poderá abordá-las.

Capitã Miwa Nakajima – Território do Japão

Com a alegria de ser Sua, tenho servido no Japão e no Departamento do Pacífico Sul e Leste da Ásia do QGI, compartilhando Sua graça maravilhosa a outros. Atualmente sou oficial dirigente o corpo de Kyobashi e Assistente no Departamento Territorial de Juventude.

Estudo Bíblico 9

Alegremente Sua no serviço

Bendigam o Senhor todos os seus exércitos, vocês, seus servos, que cumprem a sua vontade
(v 21)

Leitura bíblica – Salmo 103

O que a Bíblia diz

Muitos dos Salmos foram escritos pelo Rei Davi e formam uma coleção de louvor a Deus. Vemos um jovem zeloso e comprometido com Deus. Uma vez que ele chega ao trono também vemos as falhas de Davi como pai e homem. No entanto, apesar de tudo isso, Davi foi nomeado como um homem segundo o coração de Deus. Esse homem que aprendeu muitas lições difíceis e a necessidade de confessar nos diz no Salmo 103:21, “Bendito seja o Senhor.” Quem somos nós para louvar o Senhor? Quem é o Senhor? A definição do dicionário de “senhor” é “alguém ou alguma coisa que tem poder, autoridade ou influência; um mestre ou governante”.

O louvor começa com o reconhecimento de que Deus é o Senhor da sua vida. Ele tem poder, autoridade e influência sobre sua vida. Ele é o mestre e governante. Davi, que era Rei e teve autoridade e poder e influência, reconhece que Deus é o único que merece esse título e reconhecimento. Nos versículos de abertura deste Salmo, Davi fala a si mesmo, advertindo-se a louvar o Senhor desde o mais íntimo de seu ser. Ele não está apenas vivendo, mas tudo o que ele é louvará a Deus. Ao louvar a Deus, ele se lembra de não esquecer o que Deus tem feito. Deus perdoa, Deus cura, Deus redime, Deus satisfaz. Deus não Se esconde de nós, mas derrama abundantemente Seu amor sobre nós. Alegre-se, bendiga ao Senhor.

O que emana dessa fonte de alegria é o lembrete de que somos os Seus servos. Nós servimos a um Rei que nos diz que, se formos Seus discípulos, faremos o que Ele diz. Vamos seguir Seu exemplo e fazer a Sua vontade. Vamos servir um mundo sofredor, o mundo que Ele veio para salvar.

Nossas vidas hoje

“Eu não sou sua empregada” eram as palavras que eu muitas vezes ouvi de minha mãe quando eu estava crescendo, se ela entrava no meu quarto e via roupas que precisavam ser lavadas ou passadas. Mais tarde, eu usaria essas mesmas palavras com a minha irmã mais nova para fazer com que ela fizesse a sua parte na limpeza do quarto que dividíamos. Na cultura em que vivemos, poucas pessoas desejam ser servos. Elas preferem ser servidas. Assim, muitas pessoas estão à procura da sua grande oportunidade para serem descobertas, tornarem-se famosas, terem seus 15 minutos de fama, para que possam ser admiradas e servidas. Ser um servo é contrário ao que muitos de nós aspiramos ser, contudo, as Escrituras e o próprio Jesus nos chamam ao serviço.

No evangelho de João (4:4-29), somos apresentados a uma mulher que saiu do seu caminho para evitar os outros em sua comunidade. Não parece que ela tinha amigos ou pessoas que eram atenciosas com ela. Jesus fez questão de procurá-la, para que ela pudesse ver que Deus perdoa, Deus cura, Deus redime e Deus satisfaz. Ele não está longe de nós e está ciente de nossas provações. No final do relato, vemos que essa mesma mulher torna-se uma evangelista. Ela sai de encontro das mesmas pessoas que tentara evitar, envolve-se com elas e compartilha o que Deus tem feito por ela e o que Ele pode fazer por elas.

Servir não é humilhante. Muitas pessoas pensam que, se elas estão em uma posição de serviço, então, são menos importantes. Mas somos lembrados nas Escrituras (Romanos 12:2) que não devemos assumir o padrão deste mundo, mas permitir que nossas mentes sejam renovadas para que possamos conhecer a vontade de Deus. Jesus estabeleceu o padrão para nós (Marcos 10:45). Ele não veio para ser servido, mas para servir.

Questões para discussão

1. Davi experimentou a alegria de estar num relacionamento com Deus. Ao refletir sobre o seu relacionamento com Deus, como você expressa sua aprovação, gratidão e admiração (louvor) a Deus?
2. Existem áreas em sua vida onde Deus não é Senhor?
3. Qual é seu pensamento sobre o serviço? Você o vê como humilhante ou como um chamado?
4. Como você está servindo a Deus onde você está?

Como viver alegremente para Deus

Deus, o Espírito Santo, nos fala diariamente. Quem Ele tem colocado no seu coração para servir?

Pode ser apenas para tomar uma xícara de chá com alguém ou para realmente “ver” as pessoas que você encontra todos os dias. Tal como aconteceu com a mulher no evangelho de João, um encontro com Jesus muda a forma que vemos a nossa situação. Deixe que essa seja a sua motivação a cada dia quando você acordar.

Romanos 6:16-18 ajuda a colocar isso em perspectiva para nós. Não somos mais servos (Paulo diz escravos) para o pecado, mas para a retidão.

Major Ana Frazer – QGI, do Território Leste dos EUA

Eu compartilhei da alegria do Senhor como Oficial Dirigente e oficial de pessoal. Tenho servido nas Ilhas Virgens dos EUA, Pensilvânia e Nova Iorque e agora como Sub-Secretária Assistente para a zona das Américas e Caribe no QGI. Tenho o privilégio de servir o Senhor e os outros em cada nomeação que Ele me dá. Louvado seja o Senhor!

Estudo Bíblico 10

Alegremente Sua ao confiar

Que o Deus da esperança os encha de toda alegria e paz, por sua confiança nele, para que vocês transbordem de esperança, pelo poder do Espírito Santo

(v 13)

Leitura bíblica – Romanos 15:12-13

O que a Bíblia diz

Romanos 15:13 registra a maravilhosa oração que Paulo quer que cada cristão experimente. Ao falar à igreja em Roma, Paulo concentra seus pensamentos não no objeto da sua fé, mas no ato de confiar. Ele enfatiza que a atitude de confiar é essencial se querem que Deus os encha de alegria, paz e esperança.

Claro, isso não significa que tudo iria funcionar sempre de acordo com as suas expectativas. Mas, assim como Paulo, ao passar por tempos difíceis, eles sabiam que Deus nunca iria deixá-los ou abandoná-los (Deuteronômio 31:6). A verdade maravilhosa é que, como filhos de Deus, podemos ter fé nEle como a única e verdadeira fonte da nossa esperança - Ele nos ajudará a vencer tudo o que encontrarmos ao longo da jornada.

O que Paulo está dizendo em Romanos 15:12-13? Em essência, Ele está dizendo que quem confia em Cristo, quem nEle crê, tem encontrado o caminho para a alegria e a paz - alegria e paz espiritual tão profundas e completas que produzem um sentimento de esperança cada vez mais profundo.

Curiosamente, os três membros (pessoas?) da Trindade são mencionados aqui nestes versos:

- Deus a fonte, como um Deus e Pai de aliança, é o Deus da esperança que enche o homem que confia nEle com alegria e paz.
- Cristo, “a raiz de Jessé”, descendente de Davi, é o objeto ou o significado da nossa esperança como o Filho de Deus - Sua pessoa, justiça e salvação.
- E o Espírito Santo, o capacitador, que desbloqueia esta esperança transbordante.

A Divindade trabalhando junta para dar ao cristão alegria, paz e esperança ao confiarem nEle

Nossas vidas hoje

Você já teve sua confiança abalada? Durante o nosso serviço em Papua Nova Guiné, meu esposo e eu viajamos para uma das vilas remotas para realizar reuniões de fim de semana. Durante nossa conversa, à tarde, com algumas das pessoas do Corpo, fui convidada a sentar numa cadeira branca de plástico. No momento em que me sentei, ela cedeu e eu acabei caindo, de forma pouco feminina, no chão. Uma vez que eu me levantei, tirei a terra da roupa e o rubor do meu rosto desapareceu, logo percebi que talvez eu não era a primeira pessoa a acabar no chão ao sentar naquela cadeira especial, pois foi amarrada com uma fina linha de costura. Daquele dia em diante, eu hesito e só após um exame rápido, sento em cadeiras de plástico. É uma questão de confiança!

Quando leio Romanos 15:13, tenho que me perguntar se este versículo realmente me descreve. Eu “transbordo de esperança”, e coloco a minha confiança nEle diariamente? Apesar do que está acontecendo na minha vida, essa esperança dentro de mim brota e influencia os que me rodeiam? A minha vida se enche de alegria e paz ao confiar em Cristo?

Esta descrição do cristão encontrada em Romanos 15:13 vem de conhecer a Deus. Quanto mais eu coloco minha confiança nEle e ando com Ele diariamente, mais esta esperança vai transbordar da minha vida para a vida das pessoas ao meu redor. Esta esperança não é apenas um futuro no céu, mas é também uma realidade presente através da fé no Senhor Jesus Cristo.

Mas como podemos obter esse tipo de fé que nos ajuda a transbordar de esperança, mesmo em meio às provações? Há talvez um monte de coisas ligadas entre si que provocam esta esperança que transborda, mas uma forma essencial é conhecer a Deus e Seus caminhos através da Sua Palavra. A Palavra de Deus mostra que Ele é fiel ao Seu povo em todos os tipos de provações - Ele é completamente confiável. E é o poder do Espírito Santo na vida do cristão que produz Sua santidade em nós, ao confiarmos nEle na nossa caminhada espiritual diária. E assim Paulo diz aqui que é o poder do Espírito Santo que produz em nós o fruto da alegria e da paz. Ao confiarmos nEle e O experimentarmos pela fé, transbordamos de esperança.

Questões para discussão

1. Em sua vida cotidiana você confia em Deus para guiá-la através de cada situação? As palavras alegria, paz e esperança lhe descrevem?
2. Houve um momento no qual você se tornou consciente da influência de alguém na sua caminhada cristã? Você está ciente de um momento em que sua caminhada cristã teve influência sobre a vida de outra pessoa?
3. Houve um tempo quando, confrontada por obstáculos ou desafios, você sentiu a presença de Deus em sua vida ao colocar sua confiança nEle? Tente descrever essa experiência para o grupo.

Como viver alegremente para Deus

Ao longo do próximo mês, ore diariamente para que o Deus da esperança lhe encha com toda a alegria, paz e esperança ao confiar nEle.

Major Deslea Maxwell – QGI, do Território Leste da Austrália

No meu viver diário, Deus tem me chamado a compartilhar Sua alegria e paz com aqueles à minha volta ao depositar a minha confiança diariamente nEle e em Sua palavra. Tenho servido no meu Território de origem e em Papua Nova Guiné. Atualmente sou editora de Revive, uma revista para mulheres em ministério e missão.

Estudo Bíblico I I

Alegremente Sua em gratidão

Por meio dessa prova de serviço ministerial, outros louvarão a Deus pela obediência que acompanha a confissão que vocês fazem do evangelho de Cristo e pela generosidade de vocês em compartilhar seus bens com eles e com todos os outros. E nas orações que fazem por vocês, eles estarão cheios de amor por vocês, por causa da insuperável graça que Deus tem dado a vocês

*Agradeçamos a Deus o presente que ele nos dá, um presente que palavras não podem descrever
(v.15 Tradução na Linguagem de Hoje)*

Leitura bíblica – 2 Coríntios 9:13-15

O que a Bíblia diz

Que versículo! O versículo 15 nos impele a agradecer a Deus pelo seu dom “indescritível”, ou, como a Tradução na Linguagem de Hoje coloca, Seu presente “que palavras não podem descrever”.

O que é este presente? É o dom da graça. “A graça que nosso Senhor transbordou sobre mim, com a fé e o amor que estão em Cristo Jesus” (1 Timóteo 1:14).

Há muitos motivos para dar graças ao nosso Deus Todo-Poderoso, mas aqui está um que nós não entendemos completamente ainda, mas que impacta a na nossa vida imensamente.

No Novo Testamento lemos muito sobre a graça. Jesus contou histórias/parábolas sobre a graça, por exemplo, Mateus 20:1-16, sobre os trabalhadores na vinha. Leia esta parábola e conversem sobre como essa história pode definir a graça de Deus:

*A graça é dada igualmente a todos?
Qual é o mistério da graça?*

O apóstolo Paulo, em particular, escreveu muito sobre a graça em suas cartas. Fariamos bem em fazer um estudo da palavra graça na Bíblia e em particular no Novo Testamento. Isso não significa que a graça está ausente do Antigo Testamento. Como podemos ler a história de Oséias e Gomer sem perceber a graça que Oséias mostrou? Essa história é também um exemplo de como o próprio Deus mostra a graça ao Seu povo. Eu lhes encorajo a ler a história de Oséias e Gomer no livro de Oséias.

Dê graças a Deus pelo dom da graça. Devemos ser muito gratos ao nosso Pai pelo Seu dom da graça através de seu Filho Jesus Cristo. Jesus foi de boa vontade para a cruz, Ele tomou o nosso lugar. Ele levou os pecados do mundo – isso é graça de fato!

“Pois a Lei foi dada por intermédio de Moisés; a graça e a verdade vieram por intermédio de Jesus Cristo” (João 1:17).

Nossas vidas hoje

Em nosso mundo de hoje precisamos da graça. É possível ver o quanto falta graça no mundo, mas, como mulheres cristãs, precisamos demonstrar a graça de Deus – mostrada, em primeiro lugar a nós como indivíduos, para as nossas famílias e, em seguida, para outros com quem entramos em contato.

A graça é surpreendente – Graça significa que não há nada que possamos fazer para que Deus nos ame mais ou menos.

A graça é libertadora – Graça é onde nossa história de salvação pessoal começa, ou como Eugene O'Neill coloca; “O homem está quebrado. Ele vive por causa do conserto. A Graça de Deus é a cola”.

A graça é Excedente/Extravagante – A graça é abundante, infinita, farta, sem limites...

Questões para discussão

1. Como seria um mundo sem a graça de Deus?
2. Como posso mostrar a graça de Deus a este mundo escuro e necessitado?
3. Através de gratidão, como posso demonstrar a graça de Deus em minha vida?

Como viver alegremente para Deus

Durante este mês, faça um esforço real para mostrar, através da sua vida, a graça mostrada a você e, em seguida, compartilhe essa graça com aqueles ao seu redor, em sua casa, com sua família, no trabalho, com seus colegas e em seu Corpo/igreja, com seus irmãos e irmãs em Cristo. Eu lhes encorajo a demonstrar sempre a graça de Deus em sua vida.

“Habite ricamente em vocês a palavra de Cristo; ensinem e aconselhem-se uns aos outros com toda a sabedoria, e cantem salmos, hinos e cânticos espirituais com gratidão a Deus em seu coração.” (Colossenses 3:16).

Comissária Denise Swansbury - QGI, do Território do Reino Unido

Tenho servido no Reino Unido, Zimbabué, Libéria e Gana. Atualmente sou Secretária Zonal do Ministério Feminino da Zona do Pacífico Sul e Leste da Ásia. Eu viajo ao redor da zona compartilhando a alegria e a graça do Senhor com todos com quem encontro. Como sou grata a Deus por esta oportunidade e privilégio!

Estudo Bíblico 12

Alegremente Sua na esperança da vida eterna

Mesmo não o tendo visto, vocês o amam; e apesar de não o verem agora, creem nele e exultam com alegria indizível e gloriosa, pois vocês estão alcançando o alvo da sua fé, a salvação das suas almas

(vv 8-9)

Leitura bíblica – I Pedro 1:3-9

O que a Bíblia diz

Pedro escreveu aos cristãos perseguidos vivendo na Ásia Menor com autoridade e como quem tem credibilidade e uma convicção apaixonada da certeza da esperança que era a sua, e também deles, em Jesus.

Como um líder que tinha aprendido com seus fracassos, ele escreveu para incentivá-los, através das dificuldades e perseguições, que eles estavam enfrentando nas mãos do Império Romano. Muitos deles eram jovens cristãos em sua fé, que precisavam de orientação na caminhada. Ao invés de olhar para o imediatismo da sua situação atual, ele os lembra da sua herança celestial. Ele lhes direciona à certeza da esperança encontrada somente em Jesus. Isso não poderia ser tirado deles. Impactava o seu futuro e a realidade presente. A esperança que tinham em Cristo iria ajudá-los a atravessar qualquer coisa.

Nesta passagem, Pedro basicamente instrui esses novos cristãos: “Torne-se quem você é!” Se sua fé conta para nada - ela precisa contar agora!

“Assim acontece para que fique comprovado que a fé que vocês têm, muito mais valiosa do que o ouro que perece, mesmo que refinado pelo fogo, é genuína e resultará em louvor, glória e honra, quando Jesus Cristo for revelado” (I Pedro 1:7).

Essa era a razão para se alegrarem; mesmo em sua atual situação penosa e difícil, sua fé genuína e a firmeza naquilo que sabiam ser certo, era mais precioso do que o próprio ouro. Esta fé, baseada no amor, resulta numa alegria incomparável e inexprimível, não só no presente, mas também eternamente.

Nossas vidas hoje

Nossas histórias pessoais são diferentes, mas também experimentamos muitas semelhanças. Nós somos todas mulheres, numa jornada, tentando dar sentido ao mundo em que vivemos, pela graça de Deus e com o melhor da nossa capacidade.

Ao participar deste estudo, entende-se que você tem um anseio e desejo de saber mais sobre quem é Deus e o que isso significa para você. Para experimentar esta alegria indizível que Pedro fala, somos encorajados a nos lembrar quem somos em Cristo! Nossa motivação não deve basear-se na recompensa, por mais maravilhosa que será, mas como uma resposta à profundidade do amor demonstrado para nós “não que nós tenhamos amado a Deus, mas ele nos amou” (I João 4:10) .

Deus tem a capacidade de entrar no texto das nossas vidas e mudá-lo de nossa história para a Sua história. Eugene Peterson, em sua paráfrase do Salmo 18:24, na Mensagem, diz: “O Eterno reescreveu o roteiro da minha vida quando abri o livro do meu coração diante dele.” Os cristãos da Ásia Menor precisavam ser lembrados de que suas vidas eram parte de uma história maior.

Você também precisa desse lembrete? Esses cristãos perseguidos estavam em perigo de perder a fé, mas Pedro os lembra “Quem eles são em Cristo”. Ele os lembra da esperança que temos em Cristo. Ele lhes aponta para além de sua situação atual para uma compreensão mais profunda de quem Cristo é e o que Ele tem feito por eles. Talvez você também precisa ser lembrado disso hoje. Você é alegremente dEle (no tempo presente) na esperança da vida eterna (tempo futuro).

Torne-se quem você é!

Questões para discussão

1. Quando e como você se tornou ciente de que havia uma história maior do que a sua? Como Deus tem reescrito o texto (roteiro) da sua vida? Que diferença fez e que mudanças provocou?
2. Você já experimentou a alegria da qual Pedro fala? (por exemplo, momento de conversão; seu caminho de fé ; provações.) Como é que isso impactou a maneira como você vive sua vida?
3. Em sua própria história/jornada quais foram as lições difíceis de aprender sobre confiar em Deus para o presente e para o futuro?

Como viver alegremente para Deus

Pelo menos uma vez por dia, durante o próximo mês, faça o seguinte:

Escolha o seu copo favorito. Tome um momento para olhar para o copo e ponderar a sua forma, cor e condição. Considere a sua capacidade tanto para enchimento e esvaziamento. Enquanto você faz isso, recite e reflita sobre um dos seguintes versículos:

Salmo 16:5 “Senhor, tu és a minha porção e o meu cálice; és tu que garantes o meu futuro.”

Salmo 23:5 “Preparas um banquete para mim à vista dos meus inimigos. Tu me honras, unguendo a minha cabeça com óleo e fazendo transbordar o meu cálice.”

Salmo 116:13 “Erguerei o cálice da salvação e invocarei o nome do Senhor.”

Pergunte a si mesmo:

- que esse versículo significa para mim do jeito que eu vivo hoje?
- que esse versículo significa para mim no contexto da eternidade?

Major Rosslyn Casey - QGI, Território Sul da Austrália

Tenho compartilhado da alegria do Senhor em resposta ao seu chamado para o ministério na Austrália, no Reino Unido e agora como capelã no Quartel Internacional.



Alegremente Sua
MINISTÉRIO FEMININO 2016



Joyeux en Jésus

LES MINISTÈRES FÉMININS 2016

Joyeux en Jésus

Le thème qui sera celui des Ministères Féminins dans le monde entier en 2016 est Joyeux en Jésus.

Dans Galates 5:22-25 nous lisons :

« Mais le fruit de l'Esprit, c'est l'amour, la joie, la paix, la patience, la bonté, la bénignité, la fidélité, la douceur, la tempérance ; la loi n'est pas contre ces choses. Ceux qui sont à Jésus Christ ont crucifié la chair avec ses passions et ses désirs. Si nous vivons par l'Esprit, marchons aussi selon l'Esprit ». *

C'est formidable de savoir que l'une des caractéristiques du Royaume de Dieu est la joie ; la joie dans le Saint-Esprit en tous temps. Une joie qui demeure même dans les moments difficiles, parce que sa source se trouve en Dieu.

Les études bibliques de cette année permettront de comprendre comment il est possible de trouver et de garder une attitude de joie. Elles ne sont pas figées, et vous pourrez ajouter des documents qui conviennent à votre culture et à votre contexte.

Chaque étude comprend quatre parties que vous pouvez explorer avec votre groupe, il s'agit de :

1. Ce que dit la Bible – dans cette partie vous cherchez « Que dit le texte ? ». Il est important de lire la Bible avec soin et de lui permettre de vous parler et de diriger cette étude.

2. Nos vies aujourd'hui – examinez des questions telles que :

- Que vous dit la lecture biblique sur votre vie ?
- Est-ce qu'elle met l'accent sur des problèmes de société ?
- Quels sont les défis lancés à votre manière de vivre ?

3. Sujets de discussion – en fonction du lieu où vous menez les études, vous pouvez choisir d'en sélectionner une ou deux qui vous conviennent le mieux, ou demander à des groupes différents de discuter d'autres aspects, et peut-être, si vous en avez le temps, partager sur ce qu'ils ont dit.

4. Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu – le but est d'avoir quelque chose à emporter et à faire jusqu'à la réunion suivante. Si c'est opportun, lors de la prochaine rencontre vous pourriez partager la façon dont vous avez vécu « joyeusement pour Jésus ».

Que les bénédictions divines soient évidentes dans la joie que vous trouverez, sa joie, en étudiant sa Parole ensemble.

*Sauf indication contraire la version biblique utilisée est la Bible Segond

Étude Biblique I

Joyeux en Jésus

Je vous ai dit ces choses afin que ma joie soit en vous et que votre joie soit parfaite.

Lecture biblique – Jean 15:11

Ce que dit la Bible

Pendant le dernier souper, et sachant qu'il lui restait peu de temps et que le Calvaire était proche, Jésus saisit l'occasion d'annoncer sa mort et d'instiller des vérités très importantes dans l'esprit et le cœur de ses disciples. Il montra ce qu'était un leader serviteur en leur lavant les pieds ; il les encouragea à garder leur confiance en Dieu ; il dévoila un peu de la Trinité en expliquant que « Je suis dans le Père et le Père est en moi » (Jean 14:11) tout en promettant la puissance et la paix avec l'arrivée du Saint-Esprit qui serait leur consolateur, leur aide, leur avocat, leur intercesseur et leur professeur. Il insista aussi sur le fait que l'amour est la clé d'une vie fertile et que « demeurer dans son amour était vital » (Jean 15:10). Il illustra cela de belle manière avec l'image de la vigne, son Père étant le vigneron, Jésus « le vrai cep » et les disciples des sarments qui portent du fruit.

Jésus continua en expliquant qu'il avait partagé toutes ces vérités importantes avec eux « afin que ma joie soit en vous et que votre joie soit parfaite » (Jean 15:11). Il avait douloureusement conscience que les disciples étaient perplexes et savait qu'ils commenceraient par pleurer sa mort. Mais il tenait à les rassurer en leur disant que leur chagrin « se changera en joie » (Jean 16:20).

Vers la fin du repas, Jésus fit une prière puissante et fervente à son Père, priant d'abord pour lui-même puis pour ses disciples, demandant à Dieu « de les préserver du mal » (Jean 17:15). Il dit à son Père, « Et maintenant je vais à toi, et je dis ces choses dans le monde, afin qu'ils aient en eux ma joie parfaite » (Jean 17:13). Plus loin (v. 20), il élargit la portée de sa prière avec ces mots, « Ce n'est pas pour eux seulement que je prie, mais encore pour ceux qui croiront en moi par leur parole. »

Nos vies aujourd'hui

En tant que disciples dans le monde d'aujourd'hui nous pouvons prendre courage ! Nous sommes compris dans la prière de Jésus lors de la Cène. Il veut que nous soyons joyeux ; que nous ayons la pleine mesure de sa joie en nous ! Ce n'est pas une joie superficielle de courte durée ; ce n'est pas un masque que nous mettons sur notre visage en prétendant que tout va bien ! C'est une joie profonde qui vient du Seigneur. C'est une joie qui peut être la notre en toute circonstance. C'est une expérience qui libère ! Nous ne dépendons pas des choses de ce monde pour avoir la joie.

Nous sommes encouragés et rendus capables d'être heureux, de rire, de nous réjouir !

Malheureusement quelques chrétiens croient qu'il est impie d'être joyeux et peuvent citer les paroles de Marc 8:34, « Si quelqu'un veut venir après moi, qu'il renonce à lui-même, qu'il se charge de sa croix, et qu'il me suive » suggérant qu'il n'y a pas de raison d'être joyeux pour une chose aussi sérieuse. D'autres ont le sentiment qu'ils doivent avoir un visage grave et sérieux.

J'ai été élevée dans une famille chrétienne, on m'a parlé de Jésus dès mon plus jeune âge et j'ai demandé pardon à Dieu quand j'étais enfant. Cependant, c'est alors que j'étais une adolescente pleine de doutes et de craintes que j'ai demandé à Dieu de venir vivre en moi. Ce n'est qu'alors que j'ai compris que le problème de mon péché était réglé. J'étais pardonnée, et je pouvais avoir sa puissance en moi. Cela m'a remplie de joie ! Je n'ai pas arrêté de chanter de toute la semaine. J'étais si heureuse. Si je devais décrire cette expérience d'un seul mot ce serait joyeuse ! Je peux aussi témoigner que tout au long de ma vie la JOIE DU SEIGNEUR est demeurée en moi.

Jésus désire que nous, ses disciples, fassions l'expérience du fruit de son esprit dans nos vies de génération en génération, ce fruit qui comprend la JOIE ! Voyez Galates 5:22. C'était un désir si important pour lui que même alors que le Calvaire l'attendait, il a prié expressément pour que ses disciples aient sa joie en eux, la joie de savoir leurs péchés pardonnés, la joie de se savoir enfants de Dieu, la joie de savoir qu'ils étaient aimés ! Sa prière nous inclut ! C'est un fait que nous pouvons vraiment être « Joyeux en Jésus » !

Sujets de discussion

1. Le chant 898 du livre de chants de l'Armée du Salut anglais [2015] (1986, refrain 206) nous rappelle qu'il y a de la joie à suivre Jésus chaque jour jusqu'au bout ! Comment expliqueriez-vous cela à un non croyant ?
2. Êtes-vous d'accord avec Augustin d'Hippone qui a dit qu'un Chrétien « devrait être un alléluia de la tête aux pieds ! » ?
3. Pourquoi pensez-vous qu'il est important d'avoir la joie du Seigneur en nous ? Et est-ce réellement possible ?

Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu

Durant ce mois, prions avec Samuel Logan Brengle : « Oh Seigneur, inonde-moi de ta joie Puissante ! » (*Le secret du gagnant d'âmes*, chapitre 1).

Commissaire Silvia Cox – QGI, du territoire de Suisse, Autriche et Hongrie (ayant servi en Suisse, au Zimbabwe, en Finlande, en Afrique du Sud et au Royaume Uni avec la République d'Irlande)

En tant que Présidente Mondiale des Ministères Féminins je voyage à présent dans le monde entier partageant la joie du Seigneur avec tous ceux que je rencontre.

Étude Biblique 2

Joyeux en Jésus par la Grâce du Salut

Jésus dit, « Ne vous réjouissez pas de ce que les esprits vous sont soumis, mais réjouissez-vous de ce que vos noms sont écrits dans le ciel ».

(v 20)

Lecture biblique – Luc 10:1-20

Ce que dit la Bible

Le salut, qui a tant coûté à Jésus, nous offre une multitude de cadeaux, dont le plus grand est que nos noms sont écrits dans le livre de vie et qu'un jour nous vivrons avec Dieu pour l'éternité. Nous avons un avenir au-delà de notre mort terrestre ! Dieu a donné à tous les croyants un héritage protégé qui est éternel, impérissable, pur et ineffaçable (I Pierre 1). Ce salut repose uniquement sur la bonté de Dieu.

Le salut apporte le pardon des péchés et la possibilité de changer nos vies. Pour cela nous avons de bonnes raisons de nous réjouir en notre Seigneur avec des mots semblables à ceux d'Isaïe, « Je me réjouirai en l'Éternel, mon âme sera ravie d'allégresse en mon Dieu ; car il m'a revêtu des vêtements du salut, il m'a couvert du manteau de la délivrance, comme le fiancé s'orne d'un diadème, comme la fiancée se pare de ses bijoux » (Esaïe 61:10).

Au temps de Jésus les noms des citoyens étaient écrits dans un registre public afin qu'on puisse les connaître et que leur héritage soit bien préservé. Chaque enfant qui naissait (c'est encore ainsi de nos jours en beaucoup d'endroits) devait être enregistré dans une synagogue ou un autre lieu public de sécurité. A leur mort, ou à la suite d'un méfait, son nom serait effacé. Ils connaissaient bien cette loi et donc ils étaient heureux, comblés de joie, de savoir que leur nom était à présent écrit dans le ciel (le livre de vie) et qu'il ne pourrait pas et ne serait pas effacé quand leur vie sur terre se terminerait. Ils allaient vivre éternellement avec Dieu.

Le salut est offert à toute l'humanité par la mort et la résurrection du Christ pour tous ceux qui croient (Jean 3:16). Nous sommes « Citoyens du Ciel », amis de Dieu et « approuvés » par lui. Un jour nous serons avec lui.

Les premiers versets de Luc 10 nous disent comment Jésus a envoyé ses 72 disciples, deux par deux, pour partager le message de Dieu et accomplir des miracles en son nom. Jésus sait bien comment les humains se congratulent eux-mêmes et se croient importants, ou s'attribuent tout le mérite de ce qu'ils font, aussi il leur rappelle que leurs victoires ne sont dues qu'au fait que Dieu vit en eux et œuvre à travers eux. C'est donc Dieu qui devrait être loué et en qui ils devraient se réjouir. Dieu avait accompli sa volonté à travers eux tandis qu'ils œuvraient pour lui.

Nos vies aujourd'hui

Ceci doit rappeler à tous les chrétiens aujourd'hui que nos vies, par le salut qu'il nous accorde, lui appartiennent et que les victoires que nous remportons sont en réalité des victoires qu'il nous a fait remporter. Nous réjouir souvent dans le Seigneur nous gardera proches de lui et sensibles à la direction de son Esprit. Avec les yeux et les cœurs tournés vers lui nous risquerons moins de nous éloigner et de pécher. Nous réjouir nous libère et nous garde totalement à lui, pour qu'il nous conduise et nous utilise. La joie est un résultat de notre salut.

Quand le Roi David a péché, il a vu que sa joie de vivre et son amour du Seigneur avaient disparu. Il a prié, « Rends-moi la joie de ton salut » (Psaume 51:12). Une fois que nous avons connu la joie qu'on trouve par et dans le salut qui nous est offert, nous devons nous garder de la perdre. Se réjouir chaque jour de tout ce que Dieu a donné et fait devient un rappel de son amour et garde la joie vivante.

Sujets de discussion

1. Lisez les passages suivants et dites en quoi ils se rapportent à, ou ce qu'ils disent sur la joie du salut :
I Pierre 1:3-12
Philippiens 4:4-7
I Thessaloniens 5:16
2. Comment vos pensées sur la joie du salut ont-elles changé ou se sont-elles développées ? Si vous vous sentez à l'aise, partagez.

Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu

Notre plus grande joie est de savoir que nous sommes sous l'autorité de Dieu et que sa présence est toujours avec nous. Le sujet de notre salut n'est pas ce que nous pouvons faire pour Dieu mais ce qu'il a fait pour nous.

Commencez et terminez chaque jour avec des louanges de joie pour l'amour de Dieu et le salut qu'il vous a donné.

Commissaire Nancy Roberts – QGI, du Territoire Central des USA (ayant servi au QGN des USA, en Amérique du Sud Est et au Kenya Ouest)

« L'Éternel est ma lumière et mon salut ; de qui aurais-je crainte ? L'Éternel est le soutien de ma vie ; de qui aurais-je peur ? » (Psaume 27:1) En tant que Secrétaire Mondiale des Ministères Féminins, je trouve de la joie à le servir et à partager la Bonne Nouvelle du Salut dans le monde entier. Ma joie en lui m'apporte de la force pour chaque jour.

Étude Biblique 3

Joyeux en Jésus, en sa Présence

Tu le rends à jamais un objet de bénédictions, Tu le combles de joie devant ta face.

(v 6)

Lecture biblique – Psaume 21:1-6

Ce que dit la Bible

Dans l'Ancien Testament, seul le grand-prêtre était autorisé à être dans la présence de Dieu. Une fois par an le grand-prêtre pénétrait dans le Saint des Saints et se trouvait en présence de Dieu. Il n'est pas surprenant que le désir d'être dans la présence de Dieu soit exprimé plusieurs fois dans les psaumes.

« Mon âme soupire et languit après les parvis de l'Éternel, mon cœur et ma chair poussent des cris vers le Dieu vivant. » (Psaume 84:2) ; « O Dieu ! tu es mon Dieu, je te cherche, mon âme a soif de toi, mon corps soupire après toi, dans une terre aride, desséchée, sans eau » (Psaume 63:1). La version, *The Voice* utilise cette phrase : « Je te cherche avec chaque fibre de mon être ». « Comme une biche soupire après des courants d'eau, ainsi mon âme soupire après toi, ô Dieu ! » (Psaume 42:1).

Dans le psaume 20 le roi se prépare à partir au combat, des prières sont offertes pour sa protection et son retour victorieux. Au verset 5 le psalmiste imagine les fêtes quand le roi reviendra vaincu : « Nous nous réjouissons de ton salut, nous lèverons l'étendard au nom de notre Dieu, l'Éternel exaucera tous vœux ». Le psaume 21:1-6 est une louange exubérante pour le retour du roi sain et sauf et pour tout ce que Dieu a fait pour lui. Il est important de noter que ce n'est pas le roi qui reçoit ici les louanges, mais, très justement, la louange est pour Dieu. Il a répondu à leurs prières. Le langage utilisé pour remercier un Dieu généreux est extravagant : « Tu lui as donné ce que désirait son cœur, et tu n'as pas refusé ce que demandaient ses lèvres. Car tu l'as prévenu par des bénédictions de ta grâce, tu a mis sur sa tête une couronne d'or pur » (vv 2-3). Le point culminant de ce compte-rendu de la bonté de Dieu arrive au verset 6 : « Tu le rends à jamais un objet de bénédictions, tu le combles de joie devant ta face ». Ce que beaucoup désirent a été accordé au roi (Psaume 20:6). Pourquoi ? Parce que le roi fait confiance au nom de Dieu notre Seigneur (Psaume 20:7).

Nos vies aujourd'hui

Susannah Wesley, mère de dix enfants qui vécurent au-delà de la petite enfance, dont Charles et John, savait ce que c'était que d'être occupée. En plus de s'occuper de sa maison et de sa famille, elle s'était chargée de l'éducation de tous ses enfants. Elle avait pleinement conscience d'avoir besoin de rechercher régulièrement la présence de Dieu, et comme la place était limitée, elle s'asseyait sur une chaise au milieu de sa cuisine et mettait son tablier sur sa tête pour passer du temps dans la présence de Dieu. Les enfants savaient tous qu'ils ne devaient pas déranger maman quand elle parlait au Seigneur. Pour Susannah, passer du temps avec le Seigneur était une chose qu'il fallait désirer.

Je me souviens de l'époque où nos enfants étaient encore jeunes et où notre maison était remplie d'activité et de bruit. Souvent, j'avais l'impression, comme beaucoup de femmes, que la vie consistait à jongler, en essayant de maintenir un certain équilibre entre ma vie d'épouse, de mère et d'officière, même si j'aimais chaque aspect de ma vie, et cela encore aujourd'hui. Je savais que la force et la sagesse nécessaires à chaque jour ne pouvaient se trouver que dans la présence de Dieu, mais c'était trop souvent cet aspect-là qui était négligé : le temps avec Dieu était réduit.

Cependant, à cette époque, j'entendis une chanson qui s'appelait « Le temps passé avec toi me manque ». Elle faisait voir clairement que Dieu attend que nous passions du temps avec lui, qu'il veut que nous prenions du temps pour être en sa présence, sur le temps que nous passons à le servir. Nous devons apprendre à nous sentir bien dans le calme, à l'écouter nous parler plutôt que de toujours parler. Plus nous passons de temps en sa présence, plus nous y devenons sensibles.

Ce qui est merveilleux, c'est que la joie que nous recevons en étant dans la présence de Dieu est certaine : « Tu me feras connaître le sentier de la vie ; il y a d'abondantes joies devant ta face, des délices éternelles à ta droite » (Psaume 16:11). C'est la promesse que Dieu nous fait.

Sujets de discussion

1. Avez-vous jamais ressenti, comme le psalmiste, un besoin irrésistible de vous trouver dans la présence de Dieu ? Est-ce que ce désir a été provoqué par des circonstances particulières ?
2. Est-il facile d'entendre Dieu parler aujourd'hui ? Que pouvez-vous faire pour limiter les distractions qui pourraient vous empêcher d'entendre sa voix ?
3. Comment décririez-vous à un non-croyant la différence entre le bonheur et la joie que l'on trouve en étant dans la présence de Dieu ?

Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu

Dans le mois à venir, prenez rendez-vous avec Dieu pour passer du temps en sa présence, sans aucune distraction. Appréciez le silence sans vous sentir obligé de remplir la quiétude en parlant. Laissez Dieu vous parler et vous ouvrir son cœur.

Lieut-Colonelle Debbie Cachelin – QGI, du Territoire de Suisse, Autriche et Hongrie

J'ai eu le privilège de partager la joie du Seigneur dans mes nombreux ministères en Suisse, Australie et au Royaume-Uni, et à présent avec les collègues officiers au Collège International pour Officiers et dans ma fonction de Secrétaire pour le Développement de la Vie Spirituelle.

Étude Biblique 4

Joyeux en Jésus dans la Louange

Tu te réjouiras à cette fête, toi, ton fils et ta fille, ton serviteur et ta servante, et le Lévite, l'étranger, l'orphelin et la veuve qui seront dans tes portes. Tu célébreras la fête pendant sept jours en l'honneur de l'Éternel, ton Dieu, dans le lieu que choisira l'Éternel ; car l'Éternel, ton Dieu, te bénira dans toutes tes récoltes et dans tout le travail de tes mains, et tu te livreras entièrement à la joie.

Lecture biblique – Deutéronome 16:14-15

Ce que dit la Bible

Dans la Bible la louange évoque l'idée de « s'incliner », de « traiter avec respect » et d'autres expressions. La louange renforce la relation entre Dieu et l'humanité. Le psaume 100 dit qu'il y a des actes précis que l'on peut remarquer dans la louange. Il s'agit des cris joyeux, de la louange remplie de gaieté, de chants joyeux, sachant qu'il est Dieu. Nous entrons dans ses portes avec reconnaissance.

Dans l'Ancien Testament l'acte de louange était clair : il signifiait donner. Pour cette étude nous étudierons la louange dans le Deutéronome. Selon ces versets, une personne devait venir au tabernacle (ou plus tard au temple) avec ses offrandes dans les mains. Dans le Nouveau Testament Jésus est devenu l'offrande et il a donné sa vie en sacrifice pour tous. Pour cette raison les chrétiens le louent et confessent qu'il est Seigneur.

Le psaume 100 montre que nous sommes invités à nous rassembler autour du Seigneur et à le louer. Le psaume 89:15 décrit la bénédiction qu'est le fait d'être proche et de marcher dans la lumière du Seigneur. Les humains sont créés pour louer ; par exemple à l'époque de la libération des Israélites, Dieu a donné un message pour le Pharaon à Moïse. Il devait dire au roi de permettre aux Israélites d'aller louer leur Dieu. Jésus a ordonné qu'en louant Dieu, les gens s'aiment les uns les autres et s'occupent de la création de Dieu. La louange est la façon pour les humains de remercier Dieu du don de la vie.

Nous recevons de la joie en voyant les autres apprécier ce qui est bon. Dieu désire que nous fassions partie d'une communauté, et il se trouve que notre joie n'est pas complète tant que nous ne l'avons pas partagée avec d'autres. Beaucoup de chrétiens aujourd'hui ont besoin des cultes à l'église pour parler de Dieu et le louer, plutôt que se sentir bien en présence des autres. Cependant, certains se contentent de se rassembler et d'échanger des amabilités et de raconter leur semaine. Que ce soit dans un bâtiment en dur ou sous une tente, ou en plein air, un véritable culte de louange devrait être un moment intense pour se soumettre à Dieu, faire preuve d'humilité et faire le vide en nous devant le créateur. Nous devons admettre que la louange devrait nous pousser hors de notre zone de confort. Elle demande une soumission totale, en plus de la musique et des activités. La louange joyeuse commence dans le cœur du croyant. La même chose est vraie quand nous commençons à louer en communauté ou dans une assemblée.

Nos vies aujourd'hui

Les chrétiens sont appelés et invités à louer Dieu toute la semaine. La louange joyeuse signifie beaucoup pour les croyants. On devrait faire la différence avec le salut. Elle est en elle-même un moyen de changement. Les chrétiens doivent oublier hier et recevoir aujourd'hui comme un don précieux de Dieu, ce qui est ancien est passé et le nouveau est arrivé. Comme Paul l'a souligné dans Philippiens 3:13 nous devons oublier le passé et continuer à aller vers ce qui est en avant.

Dans nos vies quotidiennes, vivant le moment présent comme croyants, notre désir le plus profond doit être de nous réjouir en la présence de notre Dieu glorieux. Dans la louange aujourd'hui nous exprimons habituellement notre joie de multiples façons comme les cris, les chants et les danses, mais ces choses ne sont pas les raisons de notre joie mais simplement une manière d'exprimer notre joie. La musique est un formidable instrument qui stimule la louange joyeuse mais ne nous rend pas joyeux. Notre joie dans la louange ne se trouve pas dans les choses que nous faisons, mais plutôt dans le Dieu que nous louons. Prenons un moment pour penser à la respiration ; nous n'essayons pas de changer notre rythme respiratoire mais nous remarquons que chaque inspiration et chaque expiration rendent gloire à Dieu.

Sujets de discussion

1. Quand avez-vous loué Dieu en famille pour la dernière fois ? Qu'est-ce qui vous a conduit à le faire ?
2. Quelle est votre idée de la louange dans le monde aujourd'hui ?
3. Dans le texte, nous avons compris que Dieu bénit la moisson et tout le travail de nos mains pour que notre joie soit complète. Dites comment Dieu vous a béni et comment vous avez répondu à cette bénédiction.

Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu

Dieu veut que nous lui répondions avec ferveur, nous devons réfléchir et prendre du temps pour dire combien nous sommes bénis dans la louange joyeuse et nous rappeler combien Dieu est grand. Prenons quelques minutes pour voir combien Dieu prend soin de nous dans notre vie et le louer joyeusement.

Commissaire Florence Malabi – QGI, du Territoire du Kenya Ouest

J'ai partagé la joie du Seigneur en Tanzanie, au Rwanda et en Afrique du Sud. En tant que secrétaire des Ministères Féminins pour la zone Afrique, j'ai le privilège de voyager. Dans mes visites je ressens toujours une grande joie à louer le Seigneur dans les différents pays de la zone, et j'ai toujours senti sa chaleur, son amour et ses bénédictions, sachant que je lui appartiens quand je le loue.

Étude Biblique 5

Joyeux en Jésus en Donnant

*Que chacun donne comme il l'a résolu en son cœur, sans tristesse
ni contrainte ; car Dieu aime celui qui donne avec joie.*

(2 Corinthiens 9:7)

Lecture biblique – 2 Corinthiens chapitres 8–9

Ce que dit la Bible

Dans cette lettre, Paul cite l'exemple des Macédoniens qui ont donné librement pour les frères dans le besoin à Jérusalem (8:1-6) et incite les chrétiens de Corinthe à tenir leur promesse de faire de même. Cela montrerait qu'ils se soucient des chrétiens Juifs et Païens en Judée, et prouverait l'unité des chrétiens dans le corps du Christ. Nous y trouvons aussi une révélation du plan de Dieu en ce qui concerne le don : pourquoi donner (8:13-15), quelles règles à suivre pour donner (8:16-9:5), les principes du don (9:6-7) et les promesses liées au don (9:8-15).

Ce passage traite aussi de l'attitude que devrait adopter celui qui donne. Le don devrait être joyeux et généreux. Ce qui intéresse d'abord Dieu n'est pas la taille du don, mais les motifs qui poussent à le faire.

La Bible dit « Parle aux enfants d'Israël. Qu'ils m'apportent une offrande ; vous la recevrez pour moi de tout homme qui la fera de bon cœur » (Exode 25:2). Dans Actes 20:35 il est dit, « il faut soutenir les faibles, et se rappeler les paroles du Seigneur, qui a dit lui-même : *Il y a plus de bonheur à donner qu'à recevoir* ». Jésus a apprécié l'offrande de la pauvre veuve qui donnait tout ce qu'elle avait (Marc 12:41-44). En revanche, Dieu pensait très différemment à propos des dons de Caïn et d'Abel (Genèse 4:2-10). Le motif de notre don devrait être la reconnaissance et la louange. Nous devrions donner pour la gloire de Dieu et pour l'accroissement du royaume de Dieu. Et en donnant, nous devrions offrir nos corps en sacrifice vivant à Dieu (Romains 12:1).

Nos vies aujourd'hui

De nos jours, en de nombreuses circonstances, on accorde une énorme importance au don. Les gens semblent être dans une sorte de compétition pour voir combien ils peuvent donner, et ils peuvent même s'en vanter. Certaines églises sont convaincues par de faux enseignements et des pasteurs sans scrupules peuvent essayer d'obliger les gens à donner plus. Nous-mêmes pouvons pleurer, nous sentir insatisfaits et poussés à donner. De plus, dans ce monde agité, certains ne se soucient de rien, ils n'ont pas le temps de penser ou de se préoccuper de rien et souvent ils n'ont confiance en aucun individu ou organisation.

Cependant, la Bible dit que le don doit venir du cœur, d'un vrai désir de répondre aux besoins, pas pour se faire une réputation dans les églises ou le public. La Bible dit que chacun doit donner comme il l'a décidé, non avec des regrets ou par devoir.

De plus, notre générosité doit plaire à Dieu. Nous avons reçu gratuitement, aussi donnons gratuitement. Nous devrions être attentifs, avisés, cherchant des occasions de donner qui augmenteront la joie et le délice de nos cœurs. Dieu nous a donné en cadeau son fils unique. Cela devrait nous encourager à répondre aux besoins du monde. Les Israélites devaient donner la dîme, le Nouveau Testament ne répète pas ce commandement, bien que, comme nous l'avons vu, il nous enseigne les principes du don.

Nous avons le devoir d'utiliser notre argent avec sagesse, car il nous a été confié par Dieu. C'est pourquoi nous devons donner avec soin. Si nous regardons l'histoire de l'Armée du Salut, nous voyons comment les salutistes et les non salutistes consacraient leur vie ainsi que leur temps, leurs talents et leurs dons à Dieu. Le résultat est que nous voyons que dans le monde entier des gens sont vêtus, nourris et éduqués et peuvent entendre la parole de Dieu et devenir ses enfants.

C'est de cette façon que l'Armée du Salut a essayé de racheter le monde entier. En Inde, par exemple, le don joyeux a eu un impact considérable sur la vie des gens et leur a permis d'offrir un service en sacrifice dans de nombreux endroits du pays. Ainsi, la vie de nombreuses personnes a été améliorée, l'ignorance a diminué, et beaucoup de mauvaises pratiques et de rites néfastes ont disparu. Une bonne éducation, ainsi que des services médicaux, une nourriture spirituelle, l'amour et la compassion sont offerts. Ce joyeux service continue.

Sujets de discussion

1. Comment donnons-nous joyeusement aujourd'hui ?
2. Est-ce que nous sommes à la hauteur des principes du don ?
3. Est-ce que notre don apporte de la joie à Dieu et à ceux qui nous entourent ?

Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu

Comment donner joyeusement à Dieu ! Les femmes devraient connaître les principes du don et les résultats de dons au Seigneur. C'est notre devoir d'enseigner à nos enfants et d'encourager notre poste à donner. Il est important de se rappeler que le don ne concerne pas seulement l'argent, c'est aussi donner notre temps, nos talents et nous-mêmes.

Malachie 3:10 termine par cette promesse : « Je répandrai ... tant de bénédictions qu'il n'y aura pas assez de place pour les contenir ».

Evangeline Muthukumar - Poste de Lewisham au Royaume Uni et du territoire Sud-Est de l'Inde, poste de Karayankuzhy, Division de Kanyakumari

En tant qu'infirmière en salle d'opération, je sers et partage la joie du Seigneur avec mes collègues et les patients que je rencontre chaque jour. Je suis très fière de dire que j'ai été formée comme infirmière à l'Hôpital Catherine Booth de l'Armée du Salut de Nagercoil en Inde du Sud. J'aime mon travail, je donne mon temps et mes dons pour sauver des vies, et aider dans le processus de guérison.

Étude Biblique 6

Joyeux en Jésus pendant le Voyage

Je rends grâce à mon Dieu de tout le souvenir que je garde de vous ; ne cessant, dans toutes mes prières pour vous tous, de manifester ma joie au sujet de la part que vous prenez à l'Évangile depuis le premier jour jusqu'à maintenant. Je suis persuadé que celui qui a commencé en vous cette bonne œuvre la rendra parfaite pour le jour du Christ-Jésus.

Lecture biblique – Philippiens 1:3-6

Ce que dit la Bible

Au début de sa lettre aux Philippiens, Paul décrit brièvement et de belle manière les relations que nous devrions avoir avec nos frères croyants, et illustre la relation que nous devrions rechercher à avoir avec le Seigneur.

D'abord, Paul parle de quatre choses qu'il fait, des choses que nous, les chrétiens, devrions toujours faire : remercier Dieu, nous souvenir des autres, prier avec joie et rester assurés que Dieu continuera à travailler en nous.

Paul raconte comment il remercie Dieu pour l'église de Philippi, soulignant l'importance de s'approcher du Père avec gratitude, avant et par-dessus toute chose. Qui plus est, il le fait chaque fois qu'il pense aux Philippiens, ses frères et sœurs en Christ. Il ne fait pas que penser à eux, il prie aussi pour eux, et il le fait avec joie. Paul insiste pour dire qu'il le fait régulièrement et complètement. Il parle de tous dans ses prières, il ne prie pas seulement pour quelques Philippiens, mais pour tous ceux qui ont pris part « à l'Évangile depuis le premier jour jusqu'à maintenant » (v 5). Puis il continue à affirmer ce que Dieu a fait et ce qu'il fera dans la vie des Philippiens : Il « a commencé en vous cette bonne œuvre » (v 6) qu'il poursuivra jusqu'à l'achèvement.

Paul croit que Dieu le fera ! Il ne suggère pas que cela se produira instantanément ou même de leur vivant, mais plutôt au jour de Jésus-Christ. De cette façon Paul encourage les Philippiens à être confiants pendant leur voyage, à faire confiance au Seigneur. Et avec cette confiance viennent la paix et la joie.

Nos vies aujourd'hui

Si nous regardons les principes clés de ce passage, nous voyons quel défi ils devaient représenter pour les Philippiens, et quel défi ils peuvent encore être pour nous. Il peut être difficile d'être reconnaissant (de remercier), d'être attentif (penser) à ceux qui nous entourent, et de les remettre eux et leur vie dans la prière. Il peut être difficile de prier, de trouver le temps de prier, et de prier avec joie. Il peut aussi être difficile d'être confiants dans notre voyage avec le Seigneur alors que nous vivons dans un monde incertain toujours en changement.

Cependant, le voyage doit se faire un pas à la fois. Dans notre lecture biblique, Paul insiste sur le passage du temps pour montrer clairement que le voyage n'est pas court ni rapide. Il parle dans sa lettre de la participation des Philippiens à l'Évangile « depuis le premier jour jusqu'à maintenant », et de ce que Dieu continuera l'œuvre bonne qu'il a commencée à son terme « jusqu'au jour de Jésus-Christ ».

Dieu n'a pas fini d'œuvrer en nous, et il ne cessera pas d'œuvrer en nous, à travers nous, sa création bien aimée, tant qu'il ne nous aura pas rappelés à lui ou que le Christ ne sera pas revenu. Aussi, trouvons notre délice en lui, sachant qu'il affermira nos pas (Psaume 37:23) ; soyons joyeux en Jésus pendant le voyage.

Sujets de discussion

1. Comment avez-vous fait l'expérience de la joie dans votre voyage avec le Seigneur ?
2. Quand est-ce plus difficile pour vous d'être joyeux ? Est-ce lorsque le voyage ne se passe pas comme prévu ? Comment pouvez-vous surmonter cette difficulté, et chercher et trouver la joie dans le Seigneur ?
3. Allez-vous suivre l'exemple de Paul en étant reconnaissant, attentif, joyeux dans la prière et confiant à partir d'aujourd'hui ?

Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu

Méditez le psaume 23 et rappelez-vous que Dieu est juste à côté de vous, vous soutenant, vous aimant, vous guidant. Notre voyage avec le Seigneur est vraiment un voyage qui devrait être toujours joyeux.

L'Éternel est mon berger : je ne manquerai de rien.
Il me fait reposer dans de verts pâturages, Il me dirige près des eaux paisibles.
Il restaure mon âme, Il me conduit dans les sentiers de la justice, A cause de son nom.
Quand je marche dans la vallée de l'ombre de la mort, Je ne crains aucun mal, car tu es avec moi : Ta houlette et ton bâton me rassurent.
Tu dresses devant moi une table, En face de mes adversaires ; Tu oins d'huile ma tête, Et ma coupe déborde.
Oui, le bonheur et la grâce m'accompagneront Tous les jours de ma vie, Et j'habiterai dans la maison de l'Éternel Jusqu'à la fin de mes jours.

Kelly Zvobgo – QGI, du territoire Ouest des USA

J'ai partagé la joie du Seigneur en étant soldat au Zimbabwe, aux États-Unis, en France et au Royaume-Uni. Au QGI à Londres je participe actuellement à la préparation du Congrès du 150ème anniversaire, *Boundless – The Whole World Redeeming*. Lorsque j'irai continuer mes études à l'Université de Californie du Sud, je chercherai à rester joyeuse en Jésus.

Étude Biblique 7

Joyeux en Jésus dans l'Obéissance

Et l'amour consiste à marcher selon ses commandements.

C'est là le commandement dans lequel vous devez marcher, comme vous l'avez appris dès le commencement.

(v 6)

Lecture biblique – 2 Jean 1:1-12

Ce que dit la Bible

Le texte que nous allons voir dans cette étude biblique est niché au milieu de ce que l'on appelle les lettres Johanniques dans le Nouveau Testament. Nous ne savons pas avec certitude qui les a écrites mais la tradition les attribue à l'apôtre Jean. Elles sont adressées à trois destinataires distincts : la communauté dans son ensemble (1 Jean), un groupe de personnes choisies (2 Jean) et un individu (3 Jean). Notre texte s'adresse particulièrement à « l'élue et à ses enfants » (v 1). La lettre est écrite dans une forme classique avec une salutation initiale formelle, puis le corps de la lettre et finalement une salutation personnelle. La salutation initiale rappelle au lecteur que Jésus-Christ sera avec nous dans la vérité et l'amour (v 3) et plante le décor pour le reste de la lettre.

Ces versets dressent un tableau de ce que signifie marcher dans la vérité. Qui est la vérité ? Jésus-Christ, le Fils de Dieu. Jean 14:6 dit « Je suis le chemin, la vérité et la vie » et cette seconde lettre de Jean nous rappelle qu'il existe de faux prophètes qui ne disent pas la vérité et qui sont au milieu de nous pour nous détourner du droit chemin. Jésus en revanche, est la vérité et comme Jésus vit en nous, et à travers nous, nous pouvons marcher avec obéissance dans notre voyage de chrétien, les yeux fixés sur la croix.

Jean nous rappelle que nous ne devons pas seulement « marcher selon ses commandements » mais nous devons aussi marcher dans l'amour. « Marcher » est une action. Nous sommes des participants actifs dans ce voyage d'obéissance et d'amour. « Marcher » c'est voyager par monts et par vaux un pas à la foi. Dans 1 Jean 4:8 il nous est dit que Dieu est amour. Comme femmes et enfants de Dieu il nous est ordonné de marcher dans l'amour. Quand nous marchons dans l'amour (Dieu) et dans la vérité (Jésus), alors notre joie est parfaite (2 Jean 1:12).

Nos vies aujourd'hui

L'obéissance n'est pas un mot que la plupart des gens du 21^{ème} siècle aiment entendre. En fait, je pense que ce mot n'a jamais été populaire parce qu'il parle de soumission et de contrôle. Obéir à quelqu'un signifie que nous devons nous soumettre et abandonner tout contrôle, quelque chose qui est difficile pour notre nature humaine. Souvent, quand nous pensons au fait d'obéir, nous pensons à un enfant qui obéit à ses parents. Comme il est intéressant que dans 2 Jean on parle de « l'élue et ses enfants ». En tant que mère de quatre fils, j'ai eu de nombreuses occasions d'enseigner l'obéissance

à mes enfants. Souvent j'ai dû les punir quand ils désobéissaient. Ce n'était pas quelque chose que j'aimais faire, mais c'était quelque chose que je devais faire pour qu'ils apprennent les limites et le respect.

L'Écriture nous dit de « marcher selon ses commandements ». Sur le papier, c'est facile, mais quand nous sommes confrontés aux réalités de la vie quotidienne, nous trouvons qu'obéir est un défi. Être obéissant signifie que nous acceptons de faire ce que quelqu'un d'autre nous demande, mais souvent nous voulons faire les choses quand cela nous convient et à notre façon. L'Écriture nous dit que non seulement nous devrions être obéissants, mais que par notre obéissance nous trouverons la joie. Cela va certainement à l'encontre de ce qu'enseigne le monde. Souvent aujourd'hui on entend dire « si cela semble bon faites-le ». Notre culture enseigne que nous trouverons le bonheur dans des rencontres rapides et en faisant ce que nous voulons. J'attends encore de voir les médias parler de la joie comme d'une expression de l'obéissance. Le texte que nous lisons est anti-culturel. Le message du Christ est anti-culturel, et nous sommes appelés à vivre et à marcher en suivant l'exemple que le Christ nous a donné.

Tant de choses dans le monde peuvent détourner notre attention de Jésus-Christ et de la vie sainte. Jean en parle plus loin dans sa lettre. Nous devons nous rappeler que le Christ vit en nous, et par son Esprit il nous donne la force de résister à la tentation et aux fausses doctrines. C'est seulement en lui que nous trouverons la vérité. Rappelons-nous que quiconque « demeure dans la doctrine a le Père et le Fils » (v 9). La raison pour laquelle nous sommes appelés à obéir est afin que notre « joie soit parfaite ». Notre espérance et notre force viennent de l'assurance que nous sommes joyeux en Jésus.

Sujets de discussion

1. Pourquoi pensez-vous que l'auteur a choisi de s'adresser à des femmes et des enfants pour parler de l'obéissance ?
2. L'Écriture nous appelle à « marcher dans l'obéissance à ses commandements ». Qu'est-ce que Dieu nous ordonne de faire aujourd'hui ? Voulez-vous être obéissant. Que vous coûtera votre obéissance ?

Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu

Ce mois-ci, prenons du temps chaque jour pour nous encourager « face à face » à vivre joyeusement dans l'obéissance.

Major Brenda Murray – QGI (Territoire du Canada et des Bermudes)

J'ai partagé la joie du Seigneur dans des ministères divers dont des établissements de soin, des relations avec le gouvernement, l'accueil d'urgence de femmes et d'enfants, les ministères itinérants et maintenant comme assistante sous-secrétaire pour l'administration au Quartier Général International.

Étude Biblique 8

Joyeux en Jésus dans l'Épreuve

Simon, Simon, Satan vous a réclamés pour vous passer au crible comme le froment. Mais j'ai prié pour toi, afin que ta foi ne défaille point ; et toi, quand tu seras converti, affermis tes frères.

(vv 31, 32)

Lecture biblique – Luc 22:31-32 ; Jean 17:20

Ce que dit la Bible

Au dernier repas avec les disciples avant d'affronter la croix, Jésus prévint Pierre que sa foi serait mise à l'épreuve et qu'il allait renier le Seigneur trois fois. Pierre le passionné le nia avec emphase, mais malheureusement Jésus disait vrai. Quand le coq chanta plus tard cette nuit-là, Pierre comprit ce qu'il avait fait et fut accablé de culpabilité et de honte. Cet incident était vraiment terrible pour Pierre, qui avait été si sûr de son amour et de son engagement envers le Messie annoncé.

Cependant, même avant que l'échec de Pierre soit révélé, Jésus l'avait prévu et avait encouragé Pierre en lui disant qu'il était déjà porté dans la prière. Pierre ne pouvait pas le comprendre à ce moment-là parce qu'il était trop sûr de lui. Mais plus tard, en se rappelant cette conversation, il a dû être réconforté en comprenant que Jésus savait et priait pour lui.

Non seulement Jésus console Pierre, il restaure son sens de la mission en lui donnant pour tâche d'affermir ses frères. Lorsque son échec le tourmentait, cela a certainement fait du bien à l'âme de Pierre de savoir que Jésus avait foi en lui, qu'il ne lui tournerait pas le dos.

Satan essayait d'influencer Pierre pour qu'il échoue à la suite de Jésus. Bien que cette période d'épreuve ait été très amère pour Pierre, Jésus l'a transformée en une chance pour lui. En comprenant à quel point il n'était pas à la hauteur, Pierre a vraiment appris que seule la grâce de Dieu pouvait le soutenir et que l'amour de Dieu ne l'abandonnerait jamais.

Nos vies aujourd'hui

Quand nous commençons à connaître le Seigneur, nous sommes si excités par la nouvelle manière de vivre qui s'offre à nous. Inondés de promesses de bénédictions, nous sommes stupéfaits, nous sommes inspirés, nous sommes remplis de joie ! Mais tôt ou tard arrive le temps de l'épreuve. Parce que nous vivons dans un monde brisé, être les enfants du Dieu tout-puissant ne nous dispense pas des accidents inattendus, des difficultés financières, des relations brisées, de la maladie, de la maltraitance et des attaques.

Quand nos prières désespérées ne semblent pas résoudre le problème, le découragement peut commencer à s'installer ; puis la déception ; puis les doutes. Est-ce vraiment important pour Dieu ?

Ces heures sombres révèlent la nature de notre relation avec Dieu, en allant au plus profond de notre cœur qui ne serait pas touché si les choses allaient bien.

La Bible ne nous dit pas pourquoi nous devons souffrir, ni pourquoi Dieu n'intervient pas immédiatement, mais elle nous assure que Dieu connaît les difficultés que nous rencontrons, et de même que Jésus a prié pour Pierre et pour ses autres disciples, il prie aussi pour nous (Jean 17:20).

Il n'est pas indifférent à nos luttes. Il connaît notre fragilité, aussi nous n'avons pas besoin de faire semblant d'être fort, ou d'essayer de nous battre avec nos propres forces. C'est bon de crier à Dieu honnêtement du fond du cœur. Ce n'est que lorsque nous ouvrons ainsi notre cœur que nous pouvons recevoir le réconfort de Dieu. De tels exemples abondent dans les psaumes.

Souvent le contraste entre l'amour de Dieu et notre propre souffrance semble n'avoir pas de sens. Mais lorsque nous cherchons réellement sa face au milieu de notre douleur, Dieu vient toucher les profondeurs de notre vie. Alors notre relation avec Dieu n'est plus jamais la même. Ce n'est pas par l'intelligence, mais par l'expérience que nous arrivons à connaître sa compassion et sa miséricorde. Notre foi est renouvelée, et nous comprenons que nous sommes profondément, réellement à lui, et qu'il ne nous abandonnera pas. Cette assurance nous remplira de joie, une joie bien plus profonde et bien plus pure que toutes celles que nous avons éprouvées avant.

Sujets de discussion

1. Pouvez-vous considérer que c'est une pure joie, quand vous affrontez des épreuves de différentes sortes, comme il est dit dans Jacques 1:2 ? Partagez votre avis.
2. Quand une situation difficile surgit, quelle est la réaction de votre cœur ? Déni ? Colère ? Frustration ? Avez-vous pu crier au Seigneur honnêtement et du fond du cœur ? Si non, pourquoi ?
3. Jésus a dit à Pierre de fortifier ses frères quand il reviendra. Y a-t-il eu un Pierre dans votre vie, quelqu'un qui vous a encouragé ? En quoi cette personne vous a-t-elle aidé ?

Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu

Il ne faut pas chercher loin pour trouver quelqu'un de déçu et de découragé. Y a-t-il quelqu'un que vous pouvez fortifier par un sourire, une oreille attentive, ou des paroles d'espoir ? Ce mois-ci, demandez au Seigneur de vous montrer de telles occasions, et comment les saisir.

Capitaine Miwa Nakajima – QGI, du Territoire du Japon

Avec la joie de lui appartenir, j'ai servi au Japon et dans la zone Pacifique Sud et Asie de l'Est au QGI pour partager cette grâce étonnante avec d'autres.

Étude Biblique 9

Joyeux en Jésus dans le Service

*Remerciez le Seigneur, vous, l'armée de ses serviteurs, qui faites ce qu'il désire !
(v 21 Version Parole de Vie)*

Lecture biblique – Psaume 103

Ce que dit la Bible

Beaucoup de psaumes ont été écrits par le Roi David, et ils forment un recueil de louange à Dieu. Nous voyons le zèle et l'engagement du jeune homme David. Une fois sur le trône, nous voyons ses manquements en tant que père et en tant qu'homme. Cependant, en dépit de ces choses on est dit de David qu'il était un homme selon le cœur de Dieu. Cet homme qui a appris beaucoup de leçons difficiles et la nécessité de confesser ses fautes nous dit dans le Psaume 103:21 « Remerciez le Seigneur ». Qui devons-nous remercier ? Le Seigneur ! Qui est le Seigneur ? La définition de « seigneur » dans un dictionnaire est « quelqu'un ou quelque chose qui a du pouvoir, de l'autorité ou de l'influence ; un maître ou un souverain ».

La louange commence en reconnaissant que Dieu est le seigneur de votre vie. Il a le pouvoir, l'autorité et l'influence sur votre vie. Il est maître et souverain. David, qui était Roi et qui avait autorité, pouvoir et influence, reconnaît que Dieu est celui qui mérite ce titre et cette reconnaissance. Dans les premiers versets du psaume, David se parle à lui-même, s'exhortant à louer le Seigneur de tout son être. Il ne le fait pas machinalement, mais tout son être doit louer le Seigneur. En louant le Seigneur il se recommande de ne pas oublier ce que Dieu a fait. Dieu pardonne, Dieu guérit, Dieu rachète, Dieu contente. Dieu ne se cache pas de nous mais il répand son amour sur nous. Réjouissez-vous, remerciez et louez le Seigneur.

Dans cette source de joie il nous est rappelé que nous sommes ses serviteurs. Nous servons un Dieu qui nous dit que si nous sommes ses disciples nous ferons ce qu'il nous dit. Nous suivrons son exemple. Nous ferons sa volonté. Nous servirons un monde qui souffre, le monde qu'il est venu sauver.

Nos vies aujourd'hui

J'ai souvent entendu ma mère me dire « Je ne suis pas à ton service » quand je grandissais et qu'elle venait dans ma chambre et voyait le linge à laver et à repasser. Plus tard j'ai dit les mêmes mots à ma soeur cadette pour qu'elle fasse sa part du ménage dans la chambre que nous partagions. Dans notre culture actuelle, peu de gens souhaitent devenir serviteurs. Ils préféreraient être servis. Tant de gens attendent leur grande chance d'être découverts, d'être célèbres, d'avoir leur quart d'heure de célébrité pour qu'on les admire et qu'on les serve. Être serviteur va à l'encontre de ce à quoi beaucoup d'entre nous aspirent, et pourtant l'Écriture et Jésus lui-même nous appellent à servir.

Dans l'évangile de Jean (4:4-29) on nous présente une femme qui faisait des efforts pour éviter les membres de sa communauté. Il semble qu'elle n'avait pas d'amis ou de gens qui faisaient attention à elle. Jésus est allé volontairement à sa rencontre, afin qu'elle puisse voir que Dieu pardonne, Dieu guérit, Dieu rachète et Dieu contente. Il n'est pas loin de nous et il connaît nos épreuves. A la fin du récit nous voyons la même femme devenir évangéliste. Elle va vers ces gens qu'elle cherchait à éviter, leur parle et partage avec eux ce que Dieu a fait pour elle et ce qu'il peut faire pour eux.

Il n'est pas dégradant de servir. Beaucoup de gens pensent que s'ils sont en service ils sont moins importants. Mais l'écriture nous rappelle (Romains 12:2) que nous ne devons pas suivre les habitudes de ce monde mais laisser nos esprits être renouvelés afin que nous connaissions la volonté de Dieu.

Jésus nous a montré l'exemple (Marc 10:45). Il n'est pas venu pour être servi mais pour servir.

Sujets de discussion

1. David a connu la joie d'avoir une relation avec Dieu. En pensant à votre relation avec Dieu, comment exprimez-vous votre approbation, votre gratitude et votre admiration (louange) à Dieu ?
2. Y a-t-il des zones de votre vie où Dieu n'est pas Seigneur ?
3. Que pensez-vous du service ? Trouvez-vous que c'est dégradant ou que c'est une vocation ?
4. Comment servez-vous Dieu là où vous êtes ?

Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu

Dieu le Saint Esprit nous parle tous les jours. Qui vous a-t-il mis à cœur de servir ?

Cela pourrait être simplement de prendre une tasse de thé/café avec quelqu'un ou de vraiment aller à la rencontre des gens que vous voyez chaque jour. De même que pour la femme dans l'évangile de Jean, une rencontre avec Jésus change la façon dont nous voyons notre situation. Que ce soit votre motivation chaque jour quand vous vous réveillez. Romains 6:16-18 nous aide à mettre cela en perspective. Nous ne sommes plus serviteurs (Paul dit esclaves) du péché, mais de la droiture.

Major Ana Frazer – QGI, du Territoire Est des USA

J'ai partagé la joie du Seigneur comme officière de poste et comme officière d'état-major. J'ai servi dans les Iles Vierges, en Pennsylvanie et à New York, et je suis à présent assistante sous-secrétaire pour la zone Amériques et Caraïbes au QGI. J'ai le privilège de servir le Seigneur et les autres dans chaque poste qu'il me confie. Je louerai le Seigneur !

Étude Biblique 10

Joyeux en Jésus dans la Confiance

*Que le Dieu de l'espérance vous remplisse de toute joie et de toute paix dans la foi,
pour que vous abondiez en espérance, par la puissance du Saint-Esprit !*

(v 13)

Lecture biblique – Romains 15:12-13

Ce que dit la Bible

Romains 15:13 rapporte la merveilleuse prière que Paul désire que chaque croyant puisse vivre. En s'adressant à l'église de Rome, Paul concentre ses pensées non pas sur l'objet de leur foi, mais sur l'acte de confiance. Il souligne que l'attitude de confiance est essentielle s'ils veulent que Dieu les remplisse de joie, de paix et d'espérance.

Bien sûr, il ne voulait pas dire que tout marcherait comme ils l'espéraient. Mais comme Paul, pendant les temps difficiles qu'ils traverseraient, ils sauraient que Dieu ne les abandonnerait jamais et ne les laisserait pas (Deutéronome 31:6). La merveilleuse vérité est que, comme enfants de Dieu, nous pouvons avoir foi en lui car il est la seule source véritable d'espérance, il nous aidera à affronter tout ce que nous aurons à vivre dans notre voyage.

Que dit Paul dans Romains 15:12-13 ? Il dit essentiellement que quiconque a confiance en Christ, quiconque croit en lui, a trouvé la voie de la joie et de la paix, une joie et une paix spirituelle totale qui produit un sentiment d'espoir toujours plus fort.

Il est intéressant de remarquer que les trois membres (personnes ?) de la Divinité sont mentionnés dans ces versets :

- Dieu la source, comme une alliance entre Dieu et le Père, est le Dieu de l'espérance qui remplit de joie et de paix celui qui se confie en lui.
- Le Christ, « la Racine d'Isaïe », descendant de David, est l'objet ou le sens de notre espérance comme Fils de Dieu, sa personne, justice et salut.
- Et le Saint-Esprit, qui encourage et libère cette espérance débordante.

La Divinité travaillant ensemble pour donner au croyant la joie, la paix et l'espérance quand il lui fait confiance.

Nos vies aujourd'hui

Vous est-il arrivé de voir votre confiance voler en éclats ?

Quand nous servions en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée, mon mari et moi voyagions vers l'un des villages éloignés pour y tenir les cultes du week-end. Pendant que nous discutons l'après-midi avec quelques personnes du poste, on me guida vers une chaise en plastique blanc. Au moment où je m'asseyai, elle céda sous moi et je me retrouvai pas terre de manière peu distinguée. Une fois debout, après avoir secoué la poussière de mes vêtements et retrouvé une couleur normale, je compris vite que

je n'étais pas la première personne à terminer par terre après s'être assise sur cette chaise, car elle était renforcée de fil à coudre fin. A partir de ce jour-là, je me suis toujours assise avec hésitation, et après un examen rapide, sur des chaises en plastique. C'est une question de confiance !

Quand je lis Romains 15:13, je suis obligée de me demander si ce verset me décrit vraiment. Suis-je « débordante d'espoir » quand je mets ma confiance en lui chaque jour ? En dépit de ce qui se passe dans ma vie, est-ce que cette espérance qui est en moi jaillit et influence ceux qui m'entourent ? Ma vie est-elle remplie de toute joie et de paix alors que je mets ma confiance dans le Christ ?

Cette description du croyant que l'on trouve dans Romains 15:13 vient de ce que l'on connaît Dieu. Plus je lui fais confiance et marche avec lui chaque jour, plus cette espérance débordera de ma vie pour atteindre ceux qui m'entourent. Ce n'est pas juste l'espoir d'un futur dans le Ciel, mais c'est aussi une réalité actuelle par la foi au Seigneur Jésus-Christ.

Mais comment obtenir cette sorte de foi qui nous aide à déborder d'espoir, même au milieu des épreuves ? Il y a peut-être beaucoup de choses liées ensemble qui apportent cet espoir débordant, une des choses essentielles est de connaître Dieu et ses voies par la Parole. La Parole de Dieu montre qu'il est fidèle à son peuple dans toutes sortes d'épreuves, il est entièrement digne de confiance. Et c'est la puissance du Saint-Esprit dans la vie du croyant qui produit cette sainteté en nous, alors que nous lui faisons confiance chaque jour dans notre marche spirituelle. Et c'est pourquoi Paul dit ici que c'est la puissance du Saint-Esprit qui produit en nous son fruit de joie et de paix. Quand nous lui faisons confiance et le ressentons par la foi, nous sommes inondés d'espérance.

Sujets de discussion

1. Dans votre vie quotidienne faites-vous confiance à Dieu pour vous aider dans toutes les circonstances ? Est-ce que les mots joie, paix et espérance vous décrivent ?
2. Y a-t-il eu un moment où vous avez pris conscience de l'influence dans votre vie de la démarche d'un autre chrétien qui mettait sa foi dans le Christ ? Avez-vous connaissance d'un moment où votre marche chrétienne a eu une influence sur la vie de quelqu'un d'autre ?
3. Y a-t-il eu un moment où, face à des obstacles ou des défis vous avez senti la présence apaisante de Dieu dans votre vie quand vous lui avez fait confiance ? Essayez de décrire cette expérience au groupe.

Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu

Pendant le mois à venir priez chaque jour que le Dieu de l'espérance vous remplisse de joie, de paix et d'espérance, alors que vous vous confiez en lui.

Major Deslea Maxwell – QGI, du Territoire Est de l'Australie

Dans ma vie quotidienne, Dieu m'a appelée à partager sa joie et sa paix avec ceux qui m'entourent alors que je mets chaque jour ma confiance en lui et en sa parole. Je l'ai servi dans mon territoire d'origine et en Papouasie Nouvelle-Guinée. Actuellement je suis rédactrice du magazine *Revive*, une revue qui fournit des ressources pour les ministères féminins.

Étude Biblique I I

Joyeux en Jésus dans la Reconnaissance

*Vu la valeur de ce service, ils glorifient Dieu au sujet de votre obéissance à confesser l'Évangile du Christ et de la libéralité de votre communion envers eux et envers tous. Ils prient pour vous avec tendresse à cause de la grâce surabondante que Dieu vous a faite.
Grâces soient rendues à Dieu pour son don ineffable !*

Lecture biblique – 2 Corinthiens 9:13-15

Ce que dit la Bible

Quel verset ! Le verset 15 nous engage à remercier Dieu pour son don « ineffable » ou, comme le dit la traduction *Good News*, son don « inestimable ». Quel est ce don ? C'est le don de la grâce. « La grâce de notre Seigneur a surabondé, avec la foi et la charité qui est en Jésus Christ » (1 Timothée 1:14).

Il y a de nombreuses raisons de remercier le Dieu Tout-Puissant, mais en voilà une que nous ne comprenons pas encore complètement, mais qui agit sur nos vies d'une manière incommensurable.

Je me souviens du refrain d'un chant de l'Armée du Salut qui nous rappelle l'amour infini qui nous pardonne et le miracle de sa Grâce (*Cantique Unisson 188*).

*Plus haut que les étoiles qui touchent l'éternité,
Plus vaste que l'espace infini,
Est l'amour infini de Dieu qui m'a pardonné ;
O merveilleuse Grâce ! (Traduit de l'anglais)*

Surtout dans le Nouveau Testament nous lisons beaucoup de choses sur la grâce. Jésus a dit des paraboles sur la grâce, par exemple Matthieu 20:1-16 sur les ouvriers dans la vigne. Lisez cette parabole et discutez pour voir comment cette histoire peut définir la grâce de Dieu :

La grâce est-elle donnée également à tous ?
Quel est le mystère de la grâce ?

L'apôtre Paul en particulier a beaucoup écrit sur la grâce dans ses lettres. Nous ferions bien de faire une étude du mot grâce dans la Bible et spécialement dans le Nouveau Testament. Cela ne veut pas dire que la grâce est absente de l'Ancien Testament. Comment pouvons-nous lire l'histoire d'Osée et Gomer sans voir la grâce qu'a manifestée Osée ? Cette histoire est aussi un exemple de la façon dont Dieu lui-même fait grâce envers son peuple. Je vous encourage à lire l'histoire d'Osée et Gomer dans le livre d'Osée.

Remerciez Dieu pour le don de sa grâce. Nous devrions être si reconnaissants envers Dieu notre Père pour le don de sa grâce en son Fils Jésus-Christ. Jésus est allé à la croix volontairement, Il a pris notre place. Il a pris les péchés du monde, c'est vraiment une grâce !

« Car la loi a été donnée par Moïse, la grâce et la vérité sont venues par Jésus-Christ » (Jean 1:17).

Nos vies aujourd'hui

Dans le monde d'aujourd'hui nous avons besoin de la grâce. Il est possible de voir combien notre monde manque de grâce, mais en tant que femmes chrétiennes nous devrions montrer la grâce de Dieu qui nous a d'abord été accordée personnellement, à nos familles et à ceux avec qui nous sommes en contact.

La grâce est étonnante – la grâce signifie qu'il n'y a rien que nous puissions faire qui fasse que Dieu nous aime plus ou moins.

La grâce est libératrice – c'est par la grâce que commence l'histoire de notre salut personnel. Ou comme Eugene O'Neill a dit « L'homme est brisé. Il vit par réparation. La grâce de Dieu est la colle ».

La grâce de Dieu est excessive/extravagante – la grâce est abondante, infinie, copieuse, sans limites ...

Sujets de discussion

1. A quoi ressemblerait un monde sans la grâce de Dieu ?
2. Comment puis-je montrer la grâce de Dieu à ce monde sombre et indigent ?
3. Par la reconnaissance, comment puis-je faire la preuve de la grâce de Dieu dans ma vie ?

Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu

Pendant ce mois, faites un réel effort pour montrer par votre vie reconnaissante la grâce que Dieu vous a offert puis partagez cette grâce avec ceux qui vous entourent, dans votre foyer, avec votre famille, au travail, avec vos collègues et dans votre poste/église, avec vos frères et soeurs en Christ. Je vous encourage à toujours montrer la grâce de Dieu dans votre vie.

« Que la parole du Christ habite en vous avec sa richesse, instruisez-vous et avertissez-vous réciproquement, en toute sagesse, par des psaumes, des hymnes, des cantiques spirituels ; sous (l'inspiration de) la grâce, chantez à Dieu de tout votre cœur. » (Colossiens 3:16)

Commissaire Denise Swansbury – QGI, du Territoire du Royaume Uni avec la République d'Irlande

J'ai servi au Royaume Uni, au Zimbabwe, au Libéria et au Ghana. Actuellement je suis secrétaire des Ministères Féminins pour la zone Pacifique Sud et Asie de l'Est. Je voyage dans la zone en partageant la joie et la grâce du Seigneur avec tous ceux que je rencontre. Comme je suis reconnaissante à Dieu pour cette occasion et ce privilège !

Étude Biblique 12

Joyeux en Jésus dans l'Espérance de la Vie Éternelle

Lorsque Jésus Christ apparaîtra, lui que vous aimez sans l'avoir vu, en qui vous croyez sans le voir encore, vous réjouissant d'une joie ineffable et glorieuse, parce que vous obtiendrez le salut de vos âmes pour prix de votre foi.
(vv 7b-9)

Lecture biblique – I Pierre 1:3-9

Ce que dit la Bible

Pierre a écrit aux chrétiens persécutés qui vivaient en Asie Mineure avec autorité et comme quelqu'un de crédible et de passionnément convaincu de l'espérance qui était la sienne et la leur en Jésus. Comme un chef qui avait appris de ses échecs, il écrivait pour les encourager dans les difficultés et la persécution qu'ils subissaient de la part de l'Empire Romain. Beaucoup d'entre eux étaient de jeunes chrétiens dans leur foi, qui avaient besoin d'être guidés dans le voyage.

Au lieu de s'arrêter à l'immédiateté de leur situation, il leur rappelle leur héritage céleste. Il les oriente vers la certitude de leur espérance qui ne se trouve qu'en Jésus. Cela ne pouvait pas leur être pris. Cela touchait leur futur et leur réalité présente. L'espérance qu'ils avaient en Christ allait les aider à traverser toutes les épreuves.

Au fond, dans ce passage Pierre apprend à ces nouveaux chrétiens à « devenir qui vous êtes ! » Si votre foi compte pour quelque chose, elle doit compter maintenant ! « afin que l'épreuve de votre foi, plus précieuse que l'or périssable (qui cependant est éprouvé par le feu), ait pour résultat la louange, la gloire et l'honneur, lorsque Jésus-Christ apparaîtra » (I Pierre 1:7).

C'était leur raison de se réjouir ; mais dans leur situation actuelle difficile et pénible, leur foi véritable et le fait qu'ils s'accrochent à ce qu'ils savaient être certain était bien plus précieux que l'or. Cette foi, basée sur l'amour, résulte en une joie inexprimable, incomparable, pas seulement au moment présent mais aussi dans l'éternité.

Nos vies aujourd'hui

Nos histoires personnelles sont différentes, cependant nous partageons aussi des choses semblables. Nous sommes toutes des femmes, en voyage, essayant de comprendre le monde dans lequel nous vivons, par la grâce de Dieu et du mieux que nous pouvons.

En participant à cette étude, on suppose que vous avez l'envie et le désir de mieux savoir qui est Dieu et ce que cela signifie pour vous. Pour éprouver la joie inexprimable dont parle Pierre, nous sommes encouragées à nous rappeler qui nous sommes en Christ ! Notre motivation ne devrait pas se fonder sur la récompense, aussi merveilleuse soit-elle, mais sur notre réponse à la profondeur de l'amour qui nous est donné, « non en ce que nous avons aimé Dieu, mais en ce qu'il nous a aimés » (I Jean 4:10)

Dieu a le pouvoir d'entrer dans le texte de notre vie et de transformer notre histoire en son histoire. Eugene Peterson, paraphrasant le Psaume 18:24 écrit « Dieu a réécrit le texte de ma vie quand j'ai ouvert le livre de mon cœur à son regard ». Les chrétiens d'Asie Mineure devaient se rappeler que leurs vies faisaient partie d'une histoire plus grande que la leur. Avez-vous aussi besoin de vous le rappeler ? Ces chrétiens persécutés risquaient de perdre la foi, mais Pierre leur rappelle « Qui ils sont en Jésus ». Il leur rappelle l'espérance qu'ils ont en Christ. Il leur fait voir au-delà de leur situation du moment pour qu'ils comprennent mieux qui est le Christ et ce qu'il a fait pour eux. Peut-être avez-vous besoin de vous le rappeler aujourd'hui.

Vous êtes joyeux en Jésus (présent) dans l'espérance de la vie éternelle (futur).
Devenez qui vous êtes !

Sujets de discussion

1. Quand et comment avez-vous eu conscience qu'il y avait une histoire plus importante et plus grande que la votre ? Comment Dieu a-t-il réécrit le texte (le script) de votre vie ? Quelle différence cela a-t-il fait et quels changements en ont résulté ?
2. Avez-vous fait l'expérience de la joie dont parle Pierre ? (par exemple au moment de la conversion ; dans votre cheminement dans la foi ; dans les épreuves). Comment cela a-t-il influencé votre façon de vivre ?
3. Dans votre propre histoire/voyage quelles ont été les leçons difficiles à apprendre quant au fait de faire confiance à Dieu pour le présent et l'avenir ?

Comment vivre joyeusement pour Dieu

Au moins une fois par jour, pendant le mois à venir, faites ceci : Choisissez votre tasse préférée. Prenez un moment pour la regarder et voir sa forme, sa couleur et son état. Étudiez son contenant une fois pleine ou vide. En faisant cela récitez l'un des versets suivants et réfléchissez-y.

Psaume 16:5 L'Éternel est mon partage et ma coupe ; C'est toi qui assures mon lot.

Psaume 23:5 Tu dresses devant moi une table, En face de mes adversaires ; Tu oins d'huile ma tête, et ma coupe déborde. »

Psaume 116:13 J'élèverai la coupe des délivrances Et j'invoquerai le nom de l'Éternel ;

Demandez vous :

Que signifie ce verset pour moi dans ma façon de vivre aujourd'hui ?

Que signifie ce verset pour moi dans le cadre de l'éternité ?

Major Rosslyn Casey – QGI, Territoire Sud de l'Australie

J'ai partagé la joie du Seigneur en réponse à son appel à le servir en Australie, au Royaume Uni et maintenant comme aumônière au QGI.





Joyfully His

WOMEN'S MINISTRIES **2016**

Joyfully His

The shared theme of Women's Ministries throughout the world during 2016 is *Joyfully His*.

In Galatians 5:22-25 we read:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

It's great to know that one of the characteristics of the Kingdom of God is joy; joy in the Holy Spirit at all times. A joy which remains even in difficult times, because its source is found in God.

This year's Bible studies help build an understanding of how it is possible to find and maintain an attitude of joy. They are designed to be flexible and allow additional materials that are relevant to your culture and context.

Each study includes four sections which can be explored with your group, as follows:

1. What the Bible says – where you explore 'What does the text actually say?'

It is important that you read the Bible carefully and allow it to speak to you and guide the content of your study.

2. Our lives today – considers such questions as:

- What does the Bible reading tell you about your lives?
- Does it highlight any problems in society?
- What challenges are there for the way you live your life?

3. Discussion questions – depending upon where you are using the studies, you may choose to select one or two that seem most suitable for you, or ask different groups to discuss other aspects and possibly, if you have time, share what they have been speaking about.

4. How to live joyfully for God – this is designed to give you something to take away and do before you next meet. If appropriate, the next time you meet, you could share on how you have lived 'joyfully for him'.

May God's blessings be evident as you find joy, his joy, as you study his word together.

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Bible Study I

Joyfully His

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete

Bible reading – John 15:11

What the Bible says

During the last supper, and knowing that time was short and Calvary was looming, Jesus took the opportunity to foretell his death and instil many important truths in the minds and hearts of his disciples. He demonstrated servant leadership by washing their feet; encouraged them to maintain their trust in God; unpacked something of the Trinity by explaining that 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me' (John 14:11) whilst also promising power and peace with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit who would be their comforter, helper, advocate, intercessor and teacher. He also insisted that love was the key to a fruitful life and to 'remain in His love' was vital (John 15:10). He illustrated this beautifully with an image of a vineyard, his Father the vine dresser, Jesus the 'true vine' and the disciples as fruit-bearing branches.

Jesus went on to explain that he had shared all these important truths with them 'so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete' (John 15:11). He was painfully aware that the disciples were perplexed and acknowledged that initially they would grieve over his death. But he was keen to reassure them that their sorrow would 'turn to joy' (John 16:20).

As the meal drew to a close, Jesus offered a powerful and heartfelt prayer to his Father, initially praying for himself and then for his disciples, requesting that God 'protect them from the evil one' (John 17:15). He said to his Father, 'I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them' (John 17:13). Later (v 20), he broadened the scope of his prayer with the words, 'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.'

Our lives today

As disciples in today's world we may take heart! We are included in Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper. He wants us to be joyful; to have the full measure of his joy in us! This is not a superficial, short-lived joy; it is not a mask we put on our face while pretending all is well! It is a deep joy that comes from the Lord. It is a joy that can be ours whatever our circumstances. It is a liberating experience! We are not dependant on the things of this world to furnish us with joy.

We are encouraged and enabled to be happy, to laugh, to rejoice!

Unfortunately some Christians believe it is ungodly to be joyful and may quote the words from Mark 8:34, 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' suggesting that such a serious matter is not one to be joyful about. Others feel that they should adopt a seriously grave face.

I was raised in a Christian family, heard about Jesus from a very tender age and asked God for forgiveness as a child. However, it was as a teenager filled with doubts and fears that I asked God to come and live within me. It was only then that I understood my sin was dealt with. I was forgiven, and I could have his power within me. This filled me with joy! I kept singing during the following week. I was so happy. If I had only one word to describe that experience it would be joyful! I can also testify that throughout my life the JOY OF THE LORD has remained in me.

Jesus desires that we, his disciples, throughout the generations, experience the fruit of his spirit in our lives – fruit which includes JOY! See Galatians 5:22. This desire was so important to him that, even as he faced Calvary, he expressly prayed that the disciples would have his joy in them, the joy of knowing sins forgiven, the joy of knowing that they were children of God, the joy of knowing they were loved! His prayer includes us! The fact is we can truly be Joyfully His!

Discussion questions

1. Number 898 in the new English *Songbook of The Salvation Army* [Chorus 206 in the 1986 edition] reminds us that there's joy in following Jesus every day and all the way! How would you explain this to a non-believer?
2. Do you agree with Augustine of Hippo who said that 'a Christian should be an alleluia from head to foot!'
3. Why do you think it is important to have the joy of the Lord within us? And is it really possible?

How to live joyfully for God

During this month, let us pray with Samuel Logan Brengle: 'Oh Lord, flood the world with your mighty joy!' (*The Soul Winner's Secret* Chapter 1).

Commissioner Silvia Cox – IHQ, from Switzerland, Austria and Hungary Territory (having served in Switzerland, Zimbabwe, Finland, South Africa and the United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland)

As World President of Women's Ministries, I now travel around the world sharing the joy of the Lord with everyone I meet.

Bible Study 2

Joyfully His through Salvation

*Jesus said, 'Do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you,
but rejoice that your names are written in heaven'*

(v 20)

Bible reading – Luke 10:1-20

What the Bible says

Salvation, which cost Jesus so much, provides for us a multitude of gifts, the greatest of which is that we will have our names written in the book of life and one day we will live in eternity with God. We have a future beyond our earthly death! God has given to all believers a protected inheritance which is eternal, imperishable, undefiled, and unfading (1 Peter 1:4). This Salvation rests solely on the goodness of God.

Salvation brings with it forgiveness for sins committed and an opportunity to turn our lives around. For this we have full reason to rejoice in our Lord with words similar to those of Isaiah, 'I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God, for he has dressed me in the clothing of Salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom dressed for his wedding or a bride with her jewels' (Isaiah 61:10, *New Living Translation*).

Citizens in Jesus' day had their names written in a public register so they would be known and their inheritance properly preserved. Every child born was ordered to be registered at a synagogue or other public place of safety. Upon death or as a consequence of misbehaviour their names would be removed. They knew this law well and thus they would be happy – overjoyed – to know that their names were now written in heaven (the book of life) and could not or would not be removed when their lives on earth were over. Instead they will live on eternally with the Lord. Salvation is provided for all mankind through the death and resurrection of Christ for all who believe (John 3:16). We are 'Citizens of heaven', friends of God, and approved by him. One day we will dwell with him.

The earlier verses of Luke 10 tell of Jesus sending out 72 disciples, two by two, to share the message of God and to work miracles in his name. Jesus knows how humans quickly pat themselves on the back and think they are important, or take all the credit for what they accomplish, so he reminded them that their victories were due to God living in and working through them. Therefore, it is God who should be praised and in whom they should rejoice. God had worked his will through them as they went about his work.

Our lives today

This becomes a reminder to all Christians today that our lives, through the salvation he provides for us, belong to him and the victories we win are really victories which he has carried us through.

Rejoicing often in the Lord will keep us close to him and sensitive to his Spirit's leading. With our eyes and our hearts directed to him we will be less likely to move away and into sin. Rejoicing frees us and keeps us totally his, to be led by him, and to be used by him. Joy is an outcome of our Salvation.

When King David fell into sin, he found that his joy in living and loving the Lord had disappeared. He prayed, 'Restore to me the joy of your salvation' (Psalm 51:12). Once we have experienced the joy that is found in and through the salvation offered to us we must protect ourselves from losing it. Daily rejoicing in all that God has given and done becomes a reminder of his love and keeps the joy alive.

Discussion questions

1. Read the following portions of Scripture and discuss how they relate to or what they say about rejoicing in your salvation: 1 Peter 1:3-12; Philippians 4:4-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:16.
2. How have your thoughts about rejoicing in his salvation changed or been expanded? If you feel comfortable please share.

How to live joyfully for God

Begin and end each day with praises of joy for God's love, care, and the salvation he has given to you.

Our greatest joy is knowing that God's authority is over us and his presence is always with us – and remember that our salvation is not about what we can do for God but about what he has done for us.

Commissioner Nancy Roberts – IHQ, from USA Central Territory (having served in South America East, Kenya, IHQ and USA National Headquarters)

'The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?' (Psalm 27:1 *King James Version*). As World Secretary for Women's Ministries, I have found joy in serving him and in sharing the good news of salvation around the world. My joy in him does bring me strength each day.

Bible Study 3

Joyfully His in his Presence

Surely you have granted him unending blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence
(v 6)

Bible reading – Psalm 21:1-6

What the Bible says

In the Old Testament, only the high priest was allowed into the presence of God. Once a year the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies and come before the presence of God. It is not surprising then that the desire to be in God's presence is expressed a few times in the Psalms. 'My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God' (Psalm 84:2); 'You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water' (Psalm 63:1). *The Voice* version uses this phrase 'I seek You with every fibre of my being'. 'As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God' (Psalm 42:1).

In Psalm 20 the king is preparing to go into battle, prayers are offered for his protection and victorious return. In verse 5 the psalmist imagines the celebrations when the king returns undefeated: 'May there be shouts of joy when we hear the news of your victory, flags flying with praise to God for all that he has done for you. May he answer all your prayers!' (*The Living Bible*). Psalm 21:1-6 expresses exuberant praise for the king's safe return and for all that God has done for him. Importantly it is not the king who is being praised here, but, quite rightly, praise is being given to God. He has answered their prayers.

There is such extravagant language used here to give thanks to a bountiful God: 'You have granted him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips. You came to greet him with rich blessings and placed a crown of pure gold on his head' (vv 2-3). The culmination of this account of God's goodness comes in verse 6: 'Surely you have granted him unending blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence'. What so many desire has been granted to the king (Psalm 20:6). Why? Because the king and his people trust in the name of the Lord God (Psalm 20:7).

Our lives today

Susannah Wesley, the mother of ten children who survived infancy, including Charles and John, knew what it was to be busy. As well as looking after her home and family she also took upon herself the formal education of all her children. She was well aware of her own need to regularly seek God's presence and, because space was limited, she would sit on a chair in the middle of the kitchen and pull her pinafore over her head and spend time in God's presence. The children all knew that they were not allowed to disturb mother when she was talking to the Lord. For Susannah, spending time with the Lord was truly something to be desired.

I can remember those times when our children were still young and our home was filled with activity and noise. Often I felt, as so many other women do, that life was a juggling act, trying to keep the demands of being a wife, mother and officer in some kind of balance, even though I loved each of those areas of my life – and still do. I knew that the strength and wisdom needed for each day could only be found in God's presence, yet that was too often the area that was neglected: the time with God was cut short.

However, at that time I heard a song entitled *I miss my time with you*. This song makes clear that God is waiting to spend time with us, that he wants us to take time out from being busy serving him, to just spend time in his presence. We need to learn to become comfortable with quietness, to learn to listen to him speaking to us rather than doing all the talking ourselves. The more time we spend in his presence, the more sensitive we become to him.

The marvellous part is that the joy we receive through being in God's presence is assured: 'You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand' (Psalm 16:11). It is God's promise to us.

Discussion questions

1. Have you ever felt, as the Psalmist did, an overwhelming urge to come into God's presence? Were there certain circumstances that brought about this longing?
2. How easy is it to hear God speaking today? What can you do to reduce the distractions that may hinder you from hearing his voice?
3. How would you describe to a non-believer the difference between happiness and the joy that comes from being in God's presence?

How to live joyfully for God

Over the next month, make a date with God to spend time in his presence, without any distractions. Enjoy the silence without feeling you have to fill the quietness with talking. Allow God to talk to you and share his heart with you.

Lieut-Colonel Debbie Cachelin – IHQ, from Switzerland, Austria and Hungary Territory

I have had the privilege of sharing the joy of the Lord as I have served in various ministries in Switzerland, Australia and the United Kingdom and now with colleague officers at the International College for Officers.

Bible Study 4

Joyfully His in Worship

Be joyful at your festival – you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites, the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. For seven days celebrate the festival to the Lord your God at the place the Lord will choose. For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete

Bible reading – Deuteronomy 16:14-15

What the Bible says

In the Bible, worship conveys the idea of ‘bowing’ ‘to treat with reverence’ and other expressions. Worship strengthens the relationship between God and humankind. Psalm 100 says that there are clear actions noticeable during worship. They include shouting joyfully, worshipping with gladness, coming with joyful songs, knowing that he is God. We enter his gates with thanksgiving.

In the Old Testament the act of worship was clear – it meant giving. For the purpose of this study we shall look at worship in Deuteronomy. In these verses a person would come to the Tabernacle (or later the Temple) with their offering in their hands. In the New Testament Jesus became the offering and gave his life as a sacrifice for all. For this reason Christians worship him and confess his name as Lord.

Psalm 100 shows that we are invited to gather around the Lord and worship him. Psalm 89:15 depicts the blessing of being near and walking in the light of the Lord. Human beings are created as worshippers; for example during the time of deliverance of the Israelites, God gave Moses a word for Pharaoh. He was to tell the king to allow the Israelites to go and worship their God. Jesus commanded that in worship of God, people should love others and care for God’s creation. Worship is the human being’s response of thanks to God’s gift of life.

We gain joy from seeing others enjoy what is good. God intends us to be in community and there is a sense in which our joy is not complete until we have shared it with one another. Many Christians today need to use church services to talk about God and worship him rather than mostly enjoy the comfort of each other. However, some simply meet together and exchange pleasantries and share how their week has been.

Whether it is in a building or a tent, or out in the open air a real worship service should be an intense time to submit, to show humility and empty oneself to the Creator. We have to admit that worship should push us beyond our comfort zone. It requires total submission beyond the music and activities. Joyful worship starts in the heart of the believer. The same is true when we enter into worship as a community or congregation.

Our lives today

Christians are called and invited to worship God throughout the week. Joyful worship means a lot to believers. It should be differentiated from salvation. It is a means of transformation of oneself. Christians need to forget yesterday and embrace today as a precious gift from God, the old has gone and the new has come. Just as Paul emphasised in Philippians 3:13 we must forget the past and press on to what lies ahead.

In our daily lives, living in the present moment as believers, our deepest desire must be to rejoice in the presence of our glorious God. In today’s worship we usually express our joy in many ways such as shouting, singing and dancing but these things are not the reason for our joy but simply a way to express our joy.

Music is a great instrument that stimulates joyful worship but it does not make us joyful. Our joy in worship is not found in the things we do, but rather in the God we worship. Take a moment and think of how we breathe; we do not try to change our breathing rhythm but we notice that each breath that comes in and out gives glory to God.

Discussion questions

1. When did you last worship God as a family? What led you in that moment?
2. What is your perception about worship in the world today?
3. In the text, we saw that God blesses the harvest and all the work of our hands so that our joy may be complete. Share how God has blessed you; and what your response is to that blessing.

How to live joyfully for God

God wants us to respond to him earnestly, we need to reflect and make time to recount our blessings of joyful worship and remember how great God is. Spend some minutes to reflect on God’s care in life and joyfully worship him.

Commissioner Florence Malabi – IHQ, from Kenya West Territory

I have shared the joy of the Lord in Tanzania, Rwanda and Southern Africa. As Zonal Secretary for Women’s Ministries, I am privileged to travel in Africa. Through the visits I always experience great joy in worship in different countries in the zone, and have always felt his warmth, love and blessings, knowing I belong to him in my worship.

Bible Study 5

Joyfully His in Giving

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver
(2 Corinthians 9:7)

Bible reading – 2 Corinthians Chapters 8-9

What the Bible says

In this letter, Paul points out the example of the Macedonians' liberal giving to the needy brethren in Jerusalem (8:1-6) and urges the Christians in Corinth to fulfil their promise to do the same. This would show concern for both Gentile and Jewish Christians in Judea, and display the unity of Christians in the body of Christ.

We also find a revelation of God's plan for giving: the purpose for giving (8:13-15) the policies to follow in giving (8:16-9:5) the principles of giving (9:6-7) and the promises in giving (9:8-15).

This passage also deals with the attitude one should have in giving. It should be cheerful and generous. God is not primarily occupied with the size of the gift, but with the motive that lies behind it.

The Bible says, 'Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from every one whose heart prompts them to give' (Exodus 25:2). Acts 20:35 says, 'We must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive"'.

Jesus appreciated the poor widow's offering as she offered all she had (Mark 12:41-44). In contrast, God thought very differently about the motives behind Cain and Abel's giving (Genesis 4:2-10). Our offering should be out of thankfulness and worship. We are expected to give for God's glory and for the growth of God's Kingdom. And in giving, we should offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1).

Our lives today

At present, in many circumstances, tremendous emphasis is placed on giving. A sense of competitiveness drives people as to how much they can give and they may even boast about it. Some churches are persuaded by false teaching and unscrupulous pastors may try to force people to give more. We ourselves may mourn or feel dissatisfied and feel compelled to give. In addition, in this busy world, some people do not care about anything, have no time to think or consider anything and often have no trust towards any individual or organisation.

However, the Bible says giving must come from the heart, and a true desire to meet needs, not to gain a reputation in the church or in public. The Bible says each must give as they have decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty.

In addition, our generosity will please God. We have freely received, so let us give freely. We should be observant, aware, looking for opportunities to give which will increase the joy and delight in our hearts. God gave his own begotten son as a free gift to us. This should stimulate us to meet the needs of the world. The Israelites were commanded to tithe. The New Testament does not repeat this command, although as we have seen, it does teach us the principles of giving.

It is our responsibility to handle our money appropriately, as it is given to us as a trust from God. Therefore, we need to be very careful about our giving. If we look back on Salvation Army history, we can understand how Salvationists and non-Salvationists dedicated their lives as well as offering their time, talents and gifts to God.

As a result, we see people around the world are being clothed, fed, and educated and can hear God's word and become his children. In such ways has the Army tried to redeem the whole world. In India, for example joyful giving has made a remarkable impact on people's lives and enabled them to render sacrificial service in many parts of the country.

Hence, many peoples' lives have been improved, ignorance has faded, and many bad practices and rituals have been removed. Good education is offered, along with medical services, spiritual nourishment, love and compassion. This joyful service goes on.

Discussion questions

1. How are we joyfully giving today?
2. Are we living up to the standards and principles of giving?
3. In what ways is our giving bringing joy to God and people around us?

How to live joyfully for God

And how to give joyfully to God! Women should know the principles of giving and the outcome of giving to the Lord. It is our responsibility to teach our children and encourage our corps people towards giving. It is important to remember that giving is not only about money, it is also about giving our time, talents and ourselves.

It would be difficult, even after one hundred years, to improve on Barbara Stoddart's song (English Song Book of The Salvation Army 995 [1986 edn 920]) 'Bring your tithes into the storehouse'. That was the quotation from Malachi 3:10 which ends with the promise: 'I will . . . pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store (receive) it'.

Evangeline Muthukumar – Lewisham Corps UK, from India South Eastern Territory, Karayankuzhy Corps, Kanyakumari Division

As an operating theatre nurse, I am serving and sharing the joy of the Lord with my colleagues and with the patients whom I meet every day. I am very proud to say that I am a trained nurse from the Salvation Army Catherine Booth Hospital, Nagercoil in South India. I do enjoy my work, offering my time and skills in saving lives, and giving support to the healing process.

Bible Study 6

Joyfully His on the Journey

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus

Bible reading – Philippians 1:3-6

What the Bible says

In the opening of his letter to the Philippians, Paul briefly but beautifully models the relationship we should pursue with fellow believers and he illustrates the relationship we should seek with the Lord.

First, Paul demonstrates four things that he does – things that we, as Christians, should always do: thank God; remember others; pray joyfully and remain confident that God will continue to work in us.

Paul recounts how he thanks God for the church at Philippi, highlighting the importance of approaching the Father with gratitude, before and above all else. What's more, he does it every time he remembers the Philippians – his brothers and sisters in Christ. He doesn't only remember them, but he also prays for them, and he does so with joy. Paul emphasises how consistently and thoroughly he does this. He speaks of all in his prayers, not just praying for some of the Philippians, but for all who have been partners 'in the gospel from the first day until now' (v 5).

Paul then goes on to affirm what God has done and what he will do in the lives of the Philippians, saying to them, 'he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion' (v 6). And that applies to us, too!

Paul is confident that God will do it! He does not suggest that this will happen instantaneously or even in their lifetime, but rather, on the day of Christ Jesus. In this way Paul encourages the Philippians to be confident in the journey, to be confident in the Lord. And with this confidence comes peace and joy.

Our lives today

If we consider the passage's key principles, we find how challenging they must have been for the Philippians and how challenging they can still be for us. It can be difficult to be grateful (to thank), to be mindful of (to remember) those around us, and to commit them and their lives to prayer. It can be difficult to pray, to find time to pray, and to pray with joy. It can also be hard to be confident in our journey with the Lord as we live in an ever-changing and uncertain world.

However, the journey is to be taken one step at a time. In our scripture reading, Paul emphasises the passing of time to make clear that the journey is neither short nor swift. He writes of the Philippians' partnership in the gospel 'from the first day until now,' and how God will carry the good work he began 'on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus'.

God has not finished working on us nor will he be done working on us, in us, through us, his beloved creation, until he calls us home or Christ comes again. So, let us delight in him, knowing that he will make our steps firm (Psalm 37:23). Let us be Joyfully His on the journey.

Discussion questions

1. How have you experienced joy in your journey with the Lord?
2. When is it most difficult for you to be joyful? Is it when the journey does not go as planned? How can you overcome this difficulty, and seek and find joy in the Lord?
3. Will you follow Paul's example of being grateful, mindful, joyful in prayer, and confident, starting today?

How to live joyfully for God

Reflect on Psalm 23 and remember that God is right beside you, supporting you, loving you, guiding you. Our journey with the Lord is, indeed, one in which we should always be joyful.

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside
quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for
you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Kelly Zvobgo – IHQ, from USA Western Territory

I have shared the joy of the Lord in my soldiership in Zimbabwe, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom. At IHQ in London, I am currently helping to prepare for and support delivery of the 150th anniversary International Congress, *Boundless – The Whole World Redeeming*. As I go on to pursue my PhD at the University of Southern California, I will seek to remain Joyfully His.

Bible Study 7

Joyfully His in Obedience

*And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands.
As you have heard from the beginning, his command is that you walk in love*
(v 6)

Bible reading – 2 John 1:1-12

What the Bible says

The text that we will look at in this Bible Study is nestled in the middle of what are known as the Johannine letters found in the New Testament. We are not quite sure who wrote them but traditionally they are attributed to the Apostle John. They are addressed to three distinct bodies: the community as a whole (1 John); a select group of people (2 John) and an individual (3 John). Our text is addressed specifically to ‘the lady chosen by God and to her children’ (v 1). The letter is written in a standard format with a formal initial greeting, then the body of the letter and a final, personal greeting. The initial greeting reminds the reader that ‘Jesus Christ will be with us in truth and love’ (v 3) and sets the scene for the rest of the letter.

These verses paint a picture of what it means to walk in truth. Who is truth? Jesus Christ, the Son of God. John 14:6 states ‘I am the way the truth and the life’ and this second letter of John reminds us that false prophets exist who do not speak truth and who are amongst us trying to lead us astray. Jesus in contrast, is the truth and as Jesus lives in us, and through us, we can walk obediently on our Christian journey, keeping our eyes on the cross.

John reminds us that not only are we to ‘walk in obedience to his commands’ but also to ‘walk in love’. To ‘walk’ indicates an action. We are active participants on this journey of obedience and love. To ‘walk’ is to journey through the hills and valleys one step at a time. In 1 John 4:8, we are told that God the Father is love. The command for each of us as women and children of God is to walk in love. When we walk in love (God) and in truth (Jesus), then our joy will be complete (2 John 1:12).

Our lives today

Obedience is not a word most people like to hear in the 21st century. Indeed, I suggest that this word has never been popular because it speaks of submission and control. To obey someone, means we have to submit and relinquish control, something that is difficult for our human nature. Often when we think of the act of obeying, we think of a child obeying their parent. How interesting, that 2 John is written to ‘a lady and her children’.

As a mother of four sons, I have had many opportunities to teach my children about obedience. Often times, I would have to discipline them when they disobeyed. This was not a task I liked, but it was something I had to do in order for them to learn boundaries and respect.

Scripture tells us to ‘walk in obedience to his commands’. On paper, this is easy, but as we face the realities of daily life, we find the act of obedience challenging. To be obedient means we actively agree to what someone else is asking of us, but we often want to do things in our own time and in our own way. Scripture tells us that not only should we be obedient, but that in our obedience we will find joy.

This certainly goes against all that the world teaches. Often today we hear the phrase ‘if it feels good do it’. Our culture teaches us that we will find happiness in quick fixes and doing our own thing. I have yet to hear the media portray joy as an expression of obedience. The scripture we read is counter-cultural. Christ’s message is counter-cultural, and we are called to live and walk in the example that Christ has given us.

So many things in the world can pull our attention away from Jesus Christ and holy living. John addresses this later in his letter. We need to remember that Christ lives in us, and through the Spirit, gives us strength to resist temptation and false teaching. In him alone will we find truth. Let us remember that whoever ‘continues in the teaching has both Father and the Son’ (v 9). The reason we are called to obedience is so that our ‘joy may be complete’. Our hope and our strength come from the assurance that we are Joyfully His.

Discussion questions

1. Why do you think the author chose women and children as his audience to address the topic of obedience?
2. Why do you think that the writer of the letter did not name ‘the lady’ he was addressing?
3. The Scripture calls us to ‘walk in obedience to his commands’. What is God commanding you to do today? Are you willing to be obedient? What will be the cost of your obedience?

How to live joyfully for God

This month, let us take time each day to intentionally encourage one another ‘face to face’ to live joyfully in obedience.

Major Brenda Murray – Canada and Bermuda Territory

I have shared the joy of the Lord in various ministries including hospice, government relations, emergency housing for women and children, camping ministries and now as Associate Director of World Missions. I have also served in London, UK, as Assistant Under Secretary for Administration at International Headquarters.

Bible Study 8

Joyfully His in Times of Testing

Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers
(v 32)

Bible reading – Luke 22:31-32; John 17:20

What the Bible says

At the last supper with the disciples before facing the cross, Jesus warned Peter that his faith would be tested and that he will indeed deny the Lord three times. Passionate Peter emphatically refutes this, but sadly Jesus' words were true. When the rooster crowed later the same night, Peter realised what he had done and was overcome by guilt and shame. This incident was so crushing for Peter, as he had been so confident of his love and commitment to the promised Messiah.

However, even before Peter's failure was exposed, Jesus had foreseen it and encouraged Peter by telling him that he is already covered with prayer. Peter could not understand at the time as he was too sure of himself. But recalling this conversation later on, it must have comforted him to realise that Jesus knew and was praying for him.

Not only did Jesus console Peter, he also restored Peter's sense of mission by giving the task of 'strengthening the brothers'. When tormented by his failure, it must have lifted Peter's soul to know that Jesus had faith in him, that he would turn back.

Satan tried to influence Peter, so that he would fall away from following Jesus. Though the time of testing was extremely bitter for Peter, Jesus turned it into an opportunity for Peter. By thoroughly realising his inadequacy, Peter truly learned that only the grace of God could sustain him and that God's love would never forsake him.

Our lives today

When we first come to know the Lord, we are so excited by the new way of living that is before us. Showered with promises of blessings, we are amazed, we are inspired – we are full of joy! But sooner or later comes a time of testing. Because we live in a broken world, being children of Almighty God does not exempt us from unexpected accidents, financial struggles, relationship breakdowns, physical illness, abuse and assaults.

When our desperate prayers do not seem to resolve the issue, discouragement may start to creep in; then disappointments; then doubts. Does God really care? Can I believe God cares? These dark

times reveal the nature of our relationship with our Lord, reaching right into the deeper places of our heart that otherwise go untouched when things are nice and smooth.

The Bible does not tell us why we have to suffer or why God does not intervene immediately, but it does assure us that the Lord is aware of the difficulties we are facing, and as Jesus prayed for Peter, and his other disciples, he is praying for us too (John 17:20 and Hebrews 7:25).

He is not indifferent to our struggles. He knows our frailty, so we don't have to pretend that we are strong, or try to fight it through with our own strength. It is good to pour out an honest cry from the heart. Only when we open our heart in such a way, are we able to receive comfort from God. The Psalms are full of these examples.

The contrast between God's love and our own suffering often do not make sense to us. But when we genuinely seek his face in the midst of our pain, God will come and touch the deep places of our lives. Then our relationship with our Lord is never the same. Not by intellect, but by experience, we come to know his compassion and mercy. Our faith is renewed, and we come to the deep realisation that we are truly his, and he will not forsake us. That assurance will fill us with joy, much deeper and much purer than any we have known.

Discussion questions

1. How can you consider it pure joy, when you face trials of many kinds, as suggested in James 1:2? Share your thoughts with others.
2. When a difficult situation arises, what is your heart's reaction? Denial? Anger? Frustration? Have you been able to share your deep, honest cry with the Lord? If not, what could be the reason?
3. Jesus told Peter to 'strengthen your brothers when you turn back.' Has there been a 'Peter' in your life – someone who has encouraged you? How has this person been helpful?

How to live joyfully for God

You don't have to look too hard to find a disappointed or a discouraged person. Is there someone that you can 'strengthen' by a smile, a listening ear, or with words of hope? Throughout this month, ask the Lord to show you such opportunities, and how you could approach them.

Captain Miwa Nakajima – Japan Territory

With the joy of being his, I have served in the South Pacific and East Asia Department at IHQ sharing this amazing grace with others. I am currently appointed corps officer, Kyobashi Corps, and Assistant, Territorial Youth Department.

Bible Study 9

Joyfully His in Service

Praise the LORD all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will

(v 21)

Bible reading – Psalm 103

What the Bible says

Many of the Psalms were written by King David and they form a collection of praise to God. As a young man we see David's zeal and commitment to God. Once he comes to the throne we see his failings as a father and a man. Yet, despite all those things David was named as a man after God's heart. This man who learned many hard lessons and the need for confession says to us in Psalm 103:21, 'Praise the Lord.' Who are we to give praise to? The Lord! Who is the Lord? A dictionary definition of 'lord' is 'someone or something having power, authority, or influence; a master or ruler.'

Praise begins with acknowledging that God is lord of your life. He has power, authority and influence over your life. He is master and ruler. David, who was King and had authority and power and influence, acknowledges that God is the one who deserves that title and recognition. In the opening verses of this Psalm, David speaks to himself, admonishing himself to praise the Lord from his inmost being. He is not just going through the motions but all that he is will praise God. As he praises God he reminds himself not to forget what God has done. God forgives, God heals, God redeems, God satisfies. God has not hidden himself from us but lavishes his love on us. Rejoice, praise the Lord.

Out of that wellspring of joy there is the reminder that we are his servants. We serve a King who says to us that if we are his disciples we will do what he says. We will follow his example. We will do his will. We will serve a suffering world, the world he came to save.

Our lives today

'I am not your servant' were words I often heard from my mother when I was growing up if she came into my room and saw laundry or ironing that needed doing. Later on, I would use those words on my younger sister to get her to do her share of the cleaning up in the room that we shared. In the culture that we live in not many people aspire to be servants. They would rather be served or waited on. So many people are looking for their big break, to be discovered, to be famous, to have their 15 minutes of fame so that they can be admired and served. Being a servant is counter-intuitive to what many of us aspire to be and yet the Scriptures and Jesus himself call us into service.

In the Gospel of John (4:4-29) we are introduced to a woman who went out of her way to avoid the others in her community. It does not appear that she had any friends or people that were considerate to her. Jesus made a point of searching her out, so that she could see that God forgives, God heals, God redeems and God satisfies. He is not far from us and is aware of our trials. At the end of the account we see that same woman becoming an evangelist. She goes out to the same people she tried to avoid and engages with them and shares with them what God has done for her and what he can do for them.

To serve is not demeaning. Many people think that if they are in a position of service then they are less important. But we are reminded in scripture (Romans 12:2) that we must not take on the pattern of this world but allow our minds to be renewed so that we will know God's will. Jesus has established the pattern for us (Mark 10:45). He did not come to be served but to serve.

Discussion questions

1. David experienced the joy of being in a relationship with God. As you reflect on your relationship with God, how do you express your approval, gratitude and admiration (praise) to God?
2. Are there areas in your life where God is not Lord?
3. What is your thinking on service? Do you see it as demeaning or a calling?

How to live joyfully for God

God the Holy Spirit speaks to us daily. Who has he been placing on your heart to serve?

It might be just to have a cup of tea with someone or to really 'see' the people that you encounter every day. As with the woman in the gospel of John, an encounter with Jesus changes the way that we see our situation. Let that be your motivation each day when you wake up.

Romans 6:16-18 helps to put it in perspective for us. We are no longer servants (Paul says slaves) to sin, but to righteousness.

Major Ana Frazer – IHQ, from USA Eastern Territory

I have shared the joy of the Lord as a corps officer and staff officer. I have served in the US Virgin Islands, Pennsylvania and New York, and now as Assistant Under Secretary for the Americas and Caribbean Zone at IHQ. I am privileged to serve the Lord and others in each appointment that he gives me. I will praise the Lord!

Bible Study 10

Joyfully His in Trusting

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*

(v 13)

Bible reading – Romans 15:12-13

What the Bible says

Romans 15:13 records the wonderful prayer that Paul wants every believer to experience. When speaking to the church in Rome, Paul focuses his thoughts not on the object of their faith, but on the act of trust. He emphasises that the attitude of trust is essential if they want God to fill them with joy, peace and hope.

Of course, that did not mean that everything would always work out according to their expectations. But like Paul, when going through difficult times, they would know that God would never leave them or forsake them (Deuteronomy 31:6). The wonderful truth is, as God's children we can have faith in him as the one true source of our hope – he will see us through whatever is encountered along the journey.

What is Paul saying in Romans 15:12-13? In essence he is saying that whoever trusts in Christ, whoever believes in him, has found the road to joy and peace – a deep and complete spiritual joy and peace which produces an ever deepening sense of hope.

Interestingly, the three members (persons) of the Godhead are mentioned here in these verses: -

- God the source, as a covenant God and Father, is the God of hope who fills the one who trusts in him with joy and peace.
- Christ, 'the Root of Jesse,' descended from David, is the object or meaning of our hope as the Son of God – his person, righteousness and salvation.
- And the Holy Spirit, the enabler, who unlocks this overflowing hope.

The Godhead working together to give the believer joy, peace and hope as they trust in him.

Our lives today

Have you ever had your trust shattered? During our service in Papua New Guinea, my husband and I journeyed to one of the remote villages to conduct weekend services. During our afternoon discussions with some of the corps personnel, I was ushered toward a white plastic chair.

The moment I sat down, it gave way from underneath me and I ended up, unladylike, on the ground. Once I got up, dusted myself off and the flushed colour in my face disappeared, I soon came to realise

that perhaps I was not the first person to end up on the ground when sitting in that particular chair, for it was tied together with thin sewing thread. From that day to this, I tentatively, and only after quick examination, sit on plastic chairs. It's a trust thing!

When I read Romans 15:13, I have to ask myself if this verse actually describes me. Do I 'overflow with hope' as I put my trust in him daily? Despite what is happening within my life, is this hope within me welling up and influencing those around me? Is my life filled with all joy and peace as I trust in Christ?

This description of the believer found in Romans 15:13 comes from knowing God. The more I put my trust in him and walk with him daily, the more this hope will overflow from my life to the lives of those around me. This hope is not only a future in Heaven, but is also a present reality through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But how do we obtain this kind of faith that helps us overflow in hope, even in the midst of trials? There are perhaps a lot of things bound together that bring about this overflowing hope, but one essential way is to know God and his ways through his Word. God's Word shows him to be faithful to his people in all kinds of trials – he is completely trustworthy. And it is the Holy Spirit's power within the life of the believer that produces his holiness in us, as we trust in him in our daily spiritual walk. And so Paul says here, it's the power of the Holy Spirit which produces in us his fruit of joy and peace. As we trust in him and experience him by faith, so we overflow with hope.

Discussion questions

1. In your everyday living do you trust God to see you through every situation? Do the words joy, peace and hope describe you?
2. Is there a time when you became conscious of the influence of someone else's Christian walk over your life as they placed their trust in Christ? Are you aware of a time when your Christian walk had an influence over someone else's life?
3. Has there been a time when confronted by obstacles or challenges you have sensed the settling presence of God in your life as you've placed your trust in him? Try to describe that experience to the group.

How to live joyfully for God

Over the next month pray daily, that the God of hope will fill you with all joy, peace and hope, as you trust in him.

Major Deslea Maxwell – IHQ, from Australia Eastern Territory

In my everyday living, God has called me to share his joy and peace with those around me as I daily place my trust in him and his word. I have served in my home territory and in Papua New Guinea. I am currently editor of *The Salvation Army Year Book*, and of *Revive*, a resource magazine for women in ministry and mission.

Bible Study 11

Joyfully His in Thankfulness

Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Let us thank God for his priceless gift (v 15, Good News Translation)

Bible reading – 2 Corinthians 9:13-15

What the Bible says

What a verse! Verse 15 urges us to thank God for his ‘indescribable’ gift, or, as the *Good News Translation* puts it, his ‘priceless’ gift. What is this gift? It is the gift of grace. ‘The grace of the Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus’ (1 Timothy 1:14).

There are many reasons to give thanks to Almighty God, but here is one that we don’t fully understand yet, but which impacts our lives immeasurably.

I recall the chorus of a song from the *Salvation Army Song Book* which reminds us of the boundless love that pardons us and the wonder of his Grace.

*Higher than the stars that reach eternity,
Broader than the boundaries of endless space,
Is the boundless love of God that pardoned me;
O the wonder of his grace!*

(English Song Book of The Salvation Army 876 [1986 edn 52])

Particularly in the New Testament we read a lot about grace. Jesus told stories/parables about grace, e.g. Matthew 20:1-16 about the workers in the vineyard. Read this parable and discuss together how this story can define God’s grace, asking ‘Is grace measured out equally to all?’ and ‘What is the mystery about grace?’

The apostle Paul, particularly, wrote much about grace in his letters. We would do well to make a study of the word grace in the Bible and in particular in the New Testament. That does not mean that grace is absent from the Old Testament. How can we read the story of Hosea and Gomer without realising the grace that Hosea showed? This story is also an example of how God himself shows grace to his people. I encourage you to read the story of Hosea and Gomer in the book of Hosea. Give thanks to God for his gift of grace. We should be so thankful to our Father God for his gift of grace through his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus went willingly to the cross, He took our place. He took on the sins of the world – this is grace indeed! ‘For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ’ (John 1:17).

Our lives today

In our world today we need grace. It is possible to see how much lack of grace there is in the world but as Christian women we need to demonstrate the grace of God – shown firstly to us as individuals, to our families and then to others with whom we come into contact.

Grace is Amazing – Grace means that there is nothing we can do to make God love us more or love us less.

Grace is Liberating - Grace is where our personal salvation story begins or as Eugene O’Neill has said, ‘Man is broken. He lives by mending. The Grace of God is the glue.’

Grace is Exceeding/Extravagant – Grace is abundant, infinite, plenteous, unlimited, boundless ...

Discussion questions

1. What would a world without God’s grace look like?
2. How can I show God’s grace to this dark and needy world?
3. Through thankfulness, how can I demonstrate God’s grace in my life

How to live joyfully for God

During this month, make a real effort to show by your thankful life the grace shown to you and then share that grace with those around you, in your home, with your family, at work, with your colleagues and at your corps/church, with your brothers and sisters in Christ. I encourage you to always demonstrate the grace of God in your life.

‘Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts’ (Colossians 3:16).

Commissioner Denise Swansbury – IHQ, from United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland

I have served in the United Kingdom, Zimbabwe, Liberia and Ghana. Currently as the Zonal Secretary for Women’s Ministries, South Pacific and East Asia Zone, I travel around the Zone sharing the joy and grace of the Lord with everyone I meet. How thankful I am to God for this opportunity and privilege!

Bible Study 12

Joyfully His in the Hope of Eternal Life

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 end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls

(vv 8-9)

Bible reading – 1 Peter 1:3-9

What the Bible says

Peter wrote to the persecuted Christians living in Asia Minor with authority and as one who had credibility and a passionate conviction of the certainty of the hope that was both his and also theirs in Jesus.

As a leader who had learnt from his failures, he wrote to encourage them through the difficulties and persecution they were experiencing at the hands of the Roman Empire. Many of them were young Christians in their faith, who needed guidance on their journey.

Instead of looking to the immediacy of their current situation, he reminds them of their Heavenly inheritance. He directs them to the certainty of their hope found only in Jesus. It couldn't be taken from them. It impacted their future and their present reality. The hope they had in Christ would help them through anything.

In this passage Peter is basically instructing these new Christians to 'Become who you are!' If your faith counts for anything – it needs to count now!

'These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed' (1 Peter 1:7).

This was the reason for them to rejoice; even in their present trying and difficult situation, their genuine faith and holding on to what they know to be certain, was much more precious than gold itself. This faith, based on love, results in an inexpressible, incomparable joy, not only in the present but also eternally.

Our lives today

Our personal stories are different, yet we also experience many similarities. We are all women, on a journey, trying to make sense of the world we live in, by the grace of God and to the best of our ability. By participating in this study, it's assumed you have a longing and desire to know more of who God is and what that means for you. To experience this inexpressible joy that Peter speaks of, we are encouraged to remember who we are in Christ! Our motivation should not be based on the

reward, as wonderful as that will be, but as a response to the depth of love shown for us, 'not that we loved God, but that he loved us' (1 John 4:10). God has the ability to step into the text of our lives and change it from our story to his story. Eugene Peterson, in his *Message* paraphrase of Psalm 18:24 says 'God rewrote the text of my life when I opened the book of my heart to his eyes.' The Christians in Asia Minor needed to be reminded their lives were part of a greater story than their own. Do you also need that reminder?

These persecuted Christians were in danger of losing faith, but Peter reminds them of 'Who they are in Jesus'. He reminds them of the hope they have in Christ. He points them from beyond their current situation to a deeper understanding of who Christ is and what he has done for them. Perhaps you too need to be reminded today. You are Joyfully His (in the present tense) in the hope of eternal life (future tense).

Become who you are!

Discussion questions

1. When and how did you become aware there was a bigger and greater story than your own? How has God rewritten the text (script) of your life? What difference did it make and what changes did it bring about?
2. Have you experienced the joy which Peter speaks of? (eg time of conversion; on your journey of faith; through trials.) How did this impact the way you live your life?
3. In your own story/journey what have been the difficult lessons to learn about trusting God for the present and the future?

How to live joyfully for God

At least once a day, during the next month, do the following: Choose your favourite cup. Take a moment to look at the cup and consider its shape, colour and condition. Consider its capacity for both filling and emptying. Whilst doing this recite and reflect on one of the following verses.

- Psalm 16:5 'Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure.'
Psalm 23:5 'You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.'
Psalm 116:13 'I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.'

Ask yourself:

- What does this verse mean for me in the way I live today?
What does this verse mean for me in the context of eternity?

Major Rosslyn Casey – IHQ, from Australia Southern Territory

I have shared the joy of the Lord in response to his call to ministry in Australia, in the United Kingdom Territory with the Republic of Ireland and now as Chaplain at International Headquarters.



Joyfully His
WOMEN'S MINISTRIES 2016

在主裏的喜樂
婦女事工 2016

在主裏的喜樂

2016年全球婦女事工的主題是「在主裏的喜樂」。

加拉太書5:22-25：

*聖靈所結的果子，就是仁愛、喜樂、和平、忍耐、恩慈、良善、信實、溫柔、節制。
這樣的事沒有律法禁止。凡屬基督耶穌的人，是已經把肉體連肉體的邪情私慾同釘在
十字架上。我們若是靠聖靈得生，就當靠聖靈行事。*

在神的國度裏，其中一個特徵就是在聖靈裏常常喜樂。神是喜樂的源頭，所以即使遇上困難，這喜樂也不會動搖。

今年的聖經研讀系列旨在幫助大家認識獲取與維持喜樂的方法和態度。研經資料的設計具有彈性，你可以靈活地加入一些與你文化環境有關的資料。

每一個單元都涵蓋以下四個部分，小組可循此方向探研：

1. 聖經怎麼說 —

仔細閱讀並查考經文，讓經節對你說話及引導你探索經文的真意。

2. 今日的生活 —

試思考以下的問題：

- 經文對你的生活有什麼啟示？
- 有否指出一些社會問題？
- 有否對你生活方式作出挑戰？

3. 問題討論 —

因應你的查經場合，選擇一至兩個合適的問題作討論，或要求不同組別討論不同部分的問題；若時間許可，大家可匯報討論結果，彼此交流。

4. 怎樣為神活出喜樂 —

部分的設計，是要讓你在出席下次聚會前先有所得着和作出行。各人在分組時亦可分享大家活出「主裏的喜樂」的經驗。

願神的祝福在你們身上彰顯，因你們一起研讀祂的話語，從而得着祂的喜樂。

*所有聖經引文均出自新標點和合本（除非另有註明）。

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聖經研讀 1

在主裏的喜樂

這些事我已經對你們說了，是要叫我的喜樂存在你們心裏，並叫你們的喜樂可以滿足。

聖經閱讀 — 約 15:11

聖經怎麼說

在最後的晚餐中，大家都知道時間緊迫。各各他迫在眉睫，耶穌把握機會向門徒預告自己的死亡，灌輸許多重要的真理，要他們銘記於心。祂藉着為門徒洗腳，展示了僕人領導的樣式；又鼓勵他們在神裏持守信心；以「我在父裏面，父在我裏面」來解說三位一體（約14:11），隨即應許那作為他們的安慰者、幫助者、引導者、中保和導師的聖靈，將能力與和平澆灌他們。祂還強調愛是邁向豐盛生命的鑰匙，「常在祂的愛裏」是最為重要的（約15:10）。祂用葡萄園的美麗圖像給我們說明：天父是栽培的人，耶穌就是「真葡萄樹」，門徒就是結果子的枝子。

耶穌接着向他們解釋，說明這些重要的真理的原因「是要叫我的喜樂存在你們心裏，並叫你們的喜樂可以滿足。」（約15:11）祂痛苦地意識到眾門徒的困惑茫然，並知道他們起初會為祂的死亡感到傷痛，但祂向他們極力保證，他們的憂愁將「變為喜樂」（約16:20）。

晚餐接近尾聲，耶穌帶着權柄，懇切地向父禱告。首先為祂自己祈禱，然後為祂的門徒，請求神「保守他們脫離那惡者」（約17:15）。祂跟父說：「現在我往祢那裏去，我還在世上說這話，是叫他們心裏充滿我的喜樂。」（約 17:13），然後在第20節，祂擴闊了禱告的對象範圍：「我不但為這些人祈求，也為那些因他們的話信我的人祈求」。

今日的生活

現代的門徒都當振奮起來啊！耶穌在最後晚餐的禱告裏也記念着我們，祂想我們得着從祂而來的全然喜樂！這既不是表面和短暫的喜樂，也不是我們臉上假裝安好的面具，反之是一份來自神的、任何境況都不會動搖的喜樂。這真是一個釋放的經驗！我們不再用依賴世上的物質來獲取快樂了。

我們可以得着鼓舞，可以喜笑，可以歡欣快樂！

可惜，一些基督徒認為喜樂是不敬虔的，他們或會引用可8:34的話：「若有人要跟從我，就當捨己，背起他的十字架來跟從我」。這意味着沒有人應該喜樂，反要一臉嚴肅才是。

我在一個基督教家庭長大，自小聽聞耶穌和祈求神寬恕。在充滿了懷疑和恐懼的少年時期，我會懇請神來住在我裏面。這時我才明白自己的罪已得到處理，神赦免了我，我裏面可以有着祂的力量。接著的一星期，心中的喜悅從我口中的詩歌裏湧流出來。這種經歷用「喜樂」來形容就最貼切不過了。我的一生會有主的喜樂伴隨。

耶穌期盼我們（即祂的門徒）世世代代都要在生活中結出聖靈的果子 — 包括喜樂的果子！（參加5:22）祂十分重視這個期盼，所以即使祂要面對釘身十架之苦，仍特意为眾門徒禱求喜樂，就是那因知罪得赦免、成為神的兒女、得蒙主愛而得的喜樂！祂的禱告裏也包括了我們的名字！我們定可以靠主喜樂！

問題討論

1. 《救世軍詩歌》第501首（新英文軍歌第898首，「1986年版，短歌 206」）提醒我們不管何時何地，只要跟從耶穌，便有喜樂！你會怎樣向未信的人解釋當中的意思呢？
2. 奧古斯丁說：「基督徒應該從頭到腳讚美主。」你同意嗎？
3. 你為何認為在我們裏面有神的喜樂是重要的呢？這到底有可能嗎？

怎樣為神活出喜樂

在今個月裏，讓我們學做班克魯的禱告：「主啊！願這世界滿載你的喜樂！」
(*The Soul Winner's Secret Chapter 1*) .

郭胡秀慧中將 — 國際總部，來自瑞士、奧地利及匈牙利地域（曾於瑞士、津巴布韋、芬蘭、南非及英國及愛爾蘭地域事奉）

作為全球婦女事工會長，我會到世界各地遊歷，將主的喜樂與我相遇的人分享。

聖經研讀 2

得救的喜樂

(耶穌說：)「然而，不要因鬼服了你們就歡喜，要因你們的名記錄在天上歡喜。」

(第20節)

聖經閱讀 — 路10:1-20

聖經怎麼說

為了成就救恩，耶穌付上了高昂的代價。在耶穌給我們的眾多禮物中，「名字記在生命冊，永遠與神同住」就是最佳的禮物了。我們死後會有將來的！神給所有信徒一種永恆的、不能朽壞、不能玷污和不能衰殘的基業（彼前1:4）。這救恩完全出於神的恩慈。

救恩令罪得寬恕，又給我們回轉的機會，故此我們能滿有主裏的喜樂，就如以賽亞的話：「我因耶和華大大歡喜；我的心靠神快樂。因祂以拯救為衣給我穿上，以公義為袍給我披上，好像新郎戴上華冠，又像新婦佩戴妝飾。」（賽 61:10）

在耶穌時代，公民的名字都寫在公共登記冊上，他們成為了繼承者，財產可妥善保存。每名嬰孩出生依例在會堂或安全的公共地方進行登記，一旦離世或行為失當，他們的名字便被刪除。這法例是人所共知的。故此現在當知道你的名字已被記錄在天上的生命冊內，在世的生命完結後，這名字既不會也不能被刪除，他們便歡欣若狂。他們將與主同在，永遠存活。藉着基督的死亡與復活，為那些信祂的人帶來救恩（約3:16）。我們是「屬天的子民」、神的朋友，是神所接納的，有一天我們要與祂同住。

路加福音10章的前部分，講述耶穌差遣72位門徒兩個兩個出去，奉祂的名傳揚神道，施行神蹟。耶穌知道人們很快便歸功於己和只想着自己有多重要，所以祂提醒他們：「得勝之道」實靠與神同在同工，所以神是應當受讚美的。他們亦應以此為樂，當他們為神作工，神便藉他們來行出祂的旨意。

今日的生活

這成為今日基督徒的提醒：藉着祂所賜的救恩，我們的生命都屬乎祂了。生活的得勝實靠賴神領我們度過種種難關。

在主裏常常喜樂能使我們更親近祂，對聖靈引領的觸覺也更敏銳。只要我們的眼睛和心靈對準祂，我們便不致跌入罪中，反可遠離罪惡。喜樂能釋放我們，使我們完全屬乎祂，為祂帥領使用，可見喜樂是因救恩而來的。

當大衛王在罪中跌倒時，他發現生活中的喜樂和愛主的心消失了，他禱告說：「求你使我仍得救恩之樂」（詩 51:12）。我們嚐過這救恩的喜樂，就必須好好看守它，免它失落。神每天的賜與和作為，都可叫我們常常想起主的愛和喜樂呢。

問題討論

1. 閱讀以下三段經文，討論三者與這喜樂的相關之處，或討論三者怎樣講述「得救的喜樂」：

彼前 1:3-12; 腓 4:4-7; 帖前 5:16

2. 對於「得救的喜樂」，你的想法有哪些轉變，或它增進了哪些認識？請分享一下。

怎樣為神活出喜樂

為着神賜與慈愛、關顧和救恩，在每天的開始與終結時都以「喜樂的讚美」來回應。我們最大的喜樂是知悉神在我們生命中掌權和時刻同在 — 我們要謹記救恩並不關乎我們能為神作甚麼，而是祂已經為我們成就了甚麼。

羅赦念慈中將 — 國際總部（來自美國中部地域，曾於南美洲東部、肯尼亞、國際總部和美國國家總部事奉）

「耶和華是我的亮光，是我的拯救，我還怕誰呢？耶和華是我性命的保障，我還懼誰呢？」（詩 27:1）。作為全球婦女事工秘書長，我在世界各地事奉祂和分享救恩的好信息時找到了喜樂。我的喜樂每天給我帶來力量。

聖經研讀 3

神同在的喜樂

祢使他有洪福，直到永遠，又使他在祢面前歡喜快樂。

(第6節)

聖經閱讀 — 詩 21:1-6

聖經怎麼說

在舊約聖經裏，只有大祭司可以到神的面前。大祭司每年都會進入至聖所面見神，無怪乎詩篇中多次流露出詩人對面見神的渴望：「我羨慕渴想耶和華的院宇；我的心腸，我的肉體向永生神呼籲」(詩84:2)；「神啊，你是我的神，我要切切地尋求祢，在乾旱疲乏無水之地，我渴想祢；我的心切慕祢」(詩63:1)。「聲音版」《聖經》(The Voice version)則寫成：「我全心全意地尋求祢」(I seek You with every fibre of my being.)和「神啊，我的心切慕祢，如鹿切慕溪水」(詩42:1)。

在詩篇20篇，君王準備爭戰，他會為求得保護和能戰勝歸來而禱告。詩人在第5節想像君王凱旋而歸的盛典：「我們要因你的救恩誇勝，要奉我們神的名豎立旌旗。願耶和華成就你一切所求的」。詩21:1-6寫出君王為能安全回歸、神在他身上所作的奇事而歌頌，最重要的是，這不是歌頌君王，而是準確地將讚美歸於神，歌頌神應允他們的禱告。

這裏運用了鋪張的語言來稱謝豐富供應的神：「他心裏所願的，祢已經賜給他；他嘴唇所求的，祢未嘗不應允。祢以美福迎接他，把精金的冠冕戴在他頭上」(2-3節)。神的良善盡顯於第6節：「祢使他有洪福，直到永遠，又使他在祢面前歡喜快樂」。那麼多的期望，神都賜給君王了(詩20:6)。為甚麼呢？因為君王和他的子民信靠主耶和華的名(詩20:7)。

今日的生活

蘇珊娜·衛斯理是十位孩子的母親。她的孩子包括查理和約翰，都熬過了童年階段而存活下來。這位母親知道甚麼叫做忙碌。她一邊照顧家庭，一邊負責所有孩子的正規教育。她省察自己需要定時的尋求神的同在。由於空間有限，她會坐在廚房中間的椅子，將圍裙拉起，然後花時間親近神。孩子們知道當她與主對談時，是不可打擾母親的。對蘇珊娜來說，花時間與主相交確實是她所渴求的。

記得孩子們年紀還小時，家中滿是嘈雜聲和活動，我就像許多婦女一樣，常常感到生活有如玩雜耍般。從昔日至今，我都愛我生命的每一個範疇，但我還是要努力在妻子、母親和軍官三個角色之間保持平衡。我知道每一天只能從神面前支取力量和智慧，然而這經常被我忽略了：與神相交的時間縮短了。

但是，那時候我聽到一首英文歌：*I miss my time with you*（我記掛與你一起的時間），這首歌清楚道出神正等候與我們一起，祂希望我們從繁忙的事奉中抽出時間，到祂的面前。我們需要學習安於寧靜，學習聆聽祂所說的，多於自己說話。在神面前的時間越長，我們越能體會祂的心意。

在神的面前，我們得到的喜樂是確實的：「祢必將生命的道路指示我。在祢面前有滿足的喜樂，在祢右手中有永遠的福樂」（詩16:11）。這是神對我們的應許。

問題討論

1. 你曾否如詩人那樣，有一股強烈的感覺，催促你要到神的面前？在甚麼境況下產生這渴慕的感覺呢？
2. 今天你能輕易聽到神的聲音嗎？怎樣做才可減少你聽主聲音的干擾和障礙？
3. 你會怎樣向非信徒描述「一般的快樂」與「神同在的喜樂」兩者的分別？

怎樣為神活出喜樂

在未來一個月，請心無旁騖地來到祂的面前，好好享受與祂親密相交的寧靜時刻，不需用「說話」來填補「靜默」，反要在靜默中讓神對你說話和與你分享祂的心意。

祁瞿佩拉上校 (*Lieut-Colonel Debbie Cachelin*) — 國際總部 (來自瑞士、奧地利及匈牙利地域)

我有幸在瑞士、澳洲和英國作不同的事奉，現在與國際軍官深造學院和各位軍官同仁一同事奉，分享主的喜樂。

聖經研讀 4

敬拜神的喜樂

守節的時候，你和你兒女、僕婢，並住在你城裏的利未人，以及寄居的與孤兒寡婦，都要歡樂。在耶和華所選擇的地方，你當向耶和華 — 你的神守節七日；因為耶和華 — 你神在你一切的土產上和你手裏所辦的事上要賜福與你，你就非常地歡樂。

聖經閱讀 — 申 16:14-15

聖經怎麼說

聖經中「崇拜」一詞表達了俯伏及敬畏等含意。崇拜使神和人之間的關係更緊密。詩篇100篇清晰提及崇拜中的行為，包括向神歡呼、樂意的事奉、向祂歌唱、曉得祂就是神，並以稱謝的心進入祂的門。

舊約中的崇拜行為是清楚可見的 — 獻祭。因着這課題，讓我們來看看《申命記》裏的「崇拜」。這兩節經文記述有人把祭物帶來會幕（後稱「聖殿」）。在新約中，耶穌為世人犧牲，捨身為祭，因此祂成為基督徒敬拜的對象 — 生命之主。

詩篇100篇寫出我們被邀請聚集在神面前敬拜祂。詩篇89:15描繪在耶和華的光裏行走的人，都是有福的。人類受造，是要成為敬拜者，就像昔日以色列人得釋放的日子，摩西被神差遣跟法老說話，要求王容許以色列人離開埃及並敬拜事奉祂。耶穌命令敬拜神的人，要關愛他人和神所創造的萬物。敬拜是當人類感謝神賜下生命的回應。

看到別人享受美好的事情，我們便獲得喜樂。神刻意將我們放入社區之中，這意味着我們要與別人分享，否則我們的喜樂便不完整。今天眾多的基督徒需要在教會崇拜講論神、敬拜祂多於享受彼此的安慰。但是，有些人卻只借崇拜相聚，寒暄交流和分享他們過去一星期所經歷的事情。

不管崇拜是在一幢建築物或帳篷內，又或是在露天的環境進行，那崇拜也應是向創造者表示徹底順服，展現謙卑和倒空自己的時刻。我們必須認同崇拜是要推動我們離開安舒的環境，並超越音樂或其他活動，去向神表達完全的順服。不管是個人或是群體，喜樂的敬拜皆來自敬拜者的心。

今日的生活

基督徒被神召喚和邀請在日常生活中持續敬拜祂。喜樂的敬拜對信徒饒富意義。這與救恩有所分別，是一個轉化人的工具。基督徒需要忘記「昨天」，珍惜「今天」，並視之為神寶貴的禮物。舊的要過去，新的要來臨，就如保羅在腓立比書3:13所記，我們要忘記背後，努力面前。

今日的信徒活在當下，我們最深切的渴望必然是在榮耀的神面前得喜樂。現代人的崇拜中，我們通常以歡呼、歌頌和舞蹈表達喜樂，但這些都不是我們喜樂的原因，而只是我們表現喜樂的方式。

音樂確是一個能在敬拜中激發喜樂的工具，但它本身卻不能使我們喜樂。敬拜中的喜樂並非來自我們所作的事，而是來自我們敬拜的神。試想想我們是怎樣呼吸的：不用改變呼吸的節奏，但我們注意到每一次的吸入呼出都要歸榮耀給神。

問題討論

1. 上次以家庭式敬拜神是甚麼時候？是甚麼促使你這樣做？
2. 你對當今世界的崇拜有甚麼看法？
3. 在文中，我們看到收成和我們手所工的都蒙神賜福，這使我們的喜樂得以滿足。試分享神如何祝福你，以及你如何回應神的祝福。

怎樣為神活出喜樂

神要我們認真地回應祂，我們需要反思和騰出時間來數算喜樂敬拜的恩典，牢記神是多麼的偉大。花幾分鐘來思考神在生活裏的眷顧，並以喜樂敬拜祂。

馬繆芳倫中將 (Commissioner Florence Malabi) — 國際總部 (來自肯尼亞西部地域)

我在坦桑尼亞、盧旺達和南非分享到主裏的喜樂。身為區域婦女事工秘書長，我有幸在非洲遊歷，到訪區域中不同的國家，我經驗到在崇拜中極大的喜樂。在我的敬拜裏，我時常感到祂的溫暖、愛以及祝福，我知道我是屬祂的。

聖經研讀 5

捐獻的喜樂

各人要隨本心所酌定的，不要作難，不要勉強，
因為捐得樂意的人是神所喜愛的。

(林後 9:7)

聖經閱讀 — 林後 8-9章

聖經怎麼說

在這信中，保羅以馬其頓教會給耶路撒冷有需要的弟兄自由奉獻作為例子（8:1-6），勸勉哥林多教會的基督徒要同樣地履行自己的承諾。這不但展示出對猶太境內的外邦基督徒及猶太基督徒的關懷，更顯明信徒在基督身體裏的合一。

我們還找到神對捐獻計劃的啟示：捐獻目的（8:13-15），有可跟隨的捐獻政策（8:16—9:5），捐獻原則（9:6-7）與捐獻的應許（9:8-15）。

這段話也談及在捐獻上應有的態度，就是要快樂與慷慨的。神根本不在乎禮物的大小，但卻在乎背後的動機。

聖經說：「你告訴以色列人當為我送禮物來；凡甘心樂意的，你們就可以收下歸我」（出25:2）。徒20:35說：「叫你們知道應當這樣勞苦，扶助軟弱的人，又當記念主耶穌的話，說：『施比受更為有福。』」

耶穌讚賞窮寡婦的捐獻，因她獻上一生所有（可12:41-44）。相反，神對於該隱和亞伯的奉獻動機，想法大有不同（創4:2-10）。我們應該存着感恩和崇敬的態度奉獻，也為歸榮耀與神和擴展神的國度作出奉獻，在奉獻中，我們應當將身體呈獻予神，當作活祭（羅12:1）。

今日的生活

現今許多情況下，「奉獻」成為了強調的重點。競爭的意識驅使人們以捐獻數目為可誇耀的事情。有些教會用錯誤的教導來說服人；不擇手段的牧者會試圖迫使人們捐獻更多。我們可能會感到傷心、不滿，覺得自己是被迫作捐獻的。此外，在繁忙的世界中，有些人對任何事情都顯得漠不關心，更沒有時間去想或深思熟慮，且常對任何人和機構組織缺乏信任。

但聖經說捐獻必須發乎內心，且真心渴望能滿足需要，而不是在教會或公眾面前得到稱譽。聖經說，各人要隨本心所酌定的，不要作難，也不要勉強。

此外，我們甘心樂意的態度將討神喜悅。我們既是白白得來，也就讓我們白白捐出。我們應該細察自省，抓緊捐助的機會，這樣便可加增我們心裏的喜悅。神既將祂的獨生子當作免費的禮物賜給我們，這豈不激勵我們要回應世界的需要嗎？以色列人受命作十分之一捐獻，雖然新約聖經並沒有重複申述這個命令，然而這命令已教導我們捐獻的原則。

適當管理金錢是神給我們的責任，這是神所委托的。因此，我們對捐獻必須加倍謹慎。回顧救世軍的歷史，我們便明白救世軍人與非救世軍人如何委身，把他們的時間、才能和恩賜奉獻給神。

因着他們的付出，我們最終看到世界各地的人有衣服穿、有溫飽、有接受教育的機會，又能聽到神的話語，成為祂的兒女。救世軍嘗試以這些方式來拯救世界。在印度，甘心樂意的捐獻便為人們的生活帶來顯著的影響，使他們能夠在該國許多的地區甘心作出犧牲的服事。

因此，許多人的生活得到改善，愚昧無知的人逐漸減少，許多不良的風俗習慣已除去，人們受到良好的教育，還得到醫療服務、屬靈的餵養、愛心與憐憫。願喜樂的服侍延續下去。

問題討論

1. 我們今天如何喜樂地捐獻？
2. 我們是否符合捐獻的標準與原則？
3. 我們的捐獻如何為神和我們周遭的人帶來喜樂？

怎樣為神活出喜樂

如何喜樂地奉獻給神？姊妹們都應該知道捐獻的原則和奉獻給主的果效。教導我們的孩子和鼓勵部隊的人奉獻是我們的責任。要謹記捐獻不僅是指金錢，也指我們的時間、才能和奉獻我們自己。

即使一百年後的今天，也難以把Barbara Stoddart的歌曲改寫得更好（英文軍歌995首 [1986版軍歌 920首]）：「將你的十分之一送入倉庫」，引用瑪3:10作結的應許：「我……傾福與你們，甚至無處可容。」

穆愛蓮 (Evangeline Muthukumar) — 英國路易士翰隊 (來自南印度東部地域肯亞庫馬利分區 Karayankuzhy隊)

作為手術室的護士，我每日會與遇上的同事和病人分享主的喜樂。我很自豪地說，我是受訓於南印度納蓋科伊爾的救世軍卜凱賽琳醫院，我很享受我的工作。我獻出時間和技能來拯救生命，並在治療的過程中提供支援。

聖經研讀 6

與主同行的喜樂

我每逢想念你們，就感謝我的神；每逢為你們眾人祈求的時候，常是歡歡喜喜地祈求。因為從頭一天直到如今，你們是同心合意地興旺福音。我深信那在你們心裏動了善工的，必成全這工，直到耶穌基督的日子。

聖經閱讀 — 腓 1:3-6

聖經怎麼說

在腓立比書的開首，保羅簡潔有致地塑造出信徒間應該追求的關係，以及說明我們與神應有的關係。

首先，保羅親自示範了四件事 — 即我們基督徒應該作的事：感謝神、想念別人、歡喜地祈求和相信神會持續在我們心裏工作。

保羅講述他如何在腓立比教會感謝神，突出了以感恩的心來親近天父比一切來得重要。不但如此，他每時每刻都想念腓立比的人 — 他在主內的弟兄姊妹。他不單記掛他們，更為他們代禱，也因此而喜樂。保羅強調他如何持續和貫徹地去作這些事。在他的禱告中，不但為一些腓立比人祈求，也為那些「從頭一天直到如今興旺福音」（第5節）的夥伴祈求。

保羅繼而確認神所作的，以及祂將為腓立比所做的，對他們說：「那在你們心裏動了善工的，必成全這工」（第6節）。這也適用於我們呢！

保羅相信神一定會做得到！他並不是說這事會在瞬間發生，或是在他們生命中發生，而是直到基督耶穌所定的日子。保羅鼓勵腓立比教會在這旅程裏要有信心，在主內有信心，有了信心便帶來平安和喜樂。

今日的生活

如果深思該段的關鍵原則，我們會發現這對腓立比教會是多具挑戰性，對於我們也具挑戰。感激（感謝），顧念（想念）我們周遭的人，為他們和他們的生活祈禱，或許並不容易。祈禱、騰出時間禱告和以喜樂的心祈求，也許是困難的。我們生活在一個變幻無常和不穩妥的世界，要能有信心地在人生旅程上與主同行，也是不容易的。

無論如何，旅程應該是一步一步走出來的。在我們所閱讀的經文裏，保羅強調時間的流逝，表明旅程既不短也不快的道理。他寫與腓立比「從頭一天直到如今」的福音夥伴關係，與及神如何動了「直到耶穌基督的日子，必要成全」的善工。

在神召喚我們歸家，又或在基督再來前，祂會不斷地在我們這群蒙愛的群體的生命中作成祂美好的工。因此讓我們在祂裏面歡樂，知悉祂立定我們的腳步（詩37:23），讓我們在旅程上有喜樂。

問題討論

1. 你經歷過與主同行的喜樂嗎？那是怎樣的？
2. 你在甚麼時候最難感到喜樂？是否在旅程不按原定的計劃進行的時候？
你怎樣克服困難，在神裏面尋到和找着喜樂？
3. 你會從今天開始學習保羅的榜樣，帶著感謝、顧念、喜樂的心禱告和信靠神嗎？

怎樣為神活出喜樂

反思詩篇23篇，謹記神就在你旁邊，支持你、愛護你、引導你。與主同行的旅程確能令我們常常喜樂。

*耶和華是我的牧者，我必不致缺乏。祂使我躺臥在青草地上，
領我在可安歇的水邊。祂使我的靈魂甦醒，為自己的名引導我走義路。
我雖然行過死蔭的幽谷，也不怕遭害，因為祢與我同在；
祢的杖，祢的竿，都安慰我。在我敵人面前，祢你為我擺設筵席；
祢用油膏了我的頭，使我的福杯滿溢。我一生一世必有恩惠慈愛隨着我；
我且要住在耶和華的殿中，直到永遠。*

施嘉莉 (Kelly Zvobgo) — 國際總部 (來自美國西部地域)

我在津巴布韋、美國、法國和英國的軍兵行列中分享神的喜樂。在倫敦的國際總部，我協助籌備和支援無界限 — 全地得救贖150周年國際大會。正當我在南加州大學攻讀哲學博士學位，我將力求生命滿載主裏的喜樂。

聖經研讀 7 在順服中喜樂

*我們若照祂的命令行，這就是愛。
你們從起初所聽見當行的，就是這命令。*

(第6節)

聖經閱讀 — 約二 1:1-12

聖經怎麼說

今次的聖經研讀文本，置於新約的約翰書信中。我們不能確定這些書信由誰所寫，但一般都認為是使徒約翰所寫的。這些書信是向三個不同的羣體發出的：社會的整體（約一）、特選的羣組（約二）和個別人士（約三）。本文是特別發給「蒙揀選的太太和她的兒女」（第1節），此信是按照標準形式所寫的。開首有正規的問候語，之後便是書信的本體和結語、個人的問候。開首的問候提醒讀者「耶穌基督在真理和愛心上必常與我們同在」（第3節），為書信餘下部分先作背景介紹。

這些經節描繪出「行在真理中」的意義。誰是真理？就是耶穌基督，神的兒子。約14:6記載：「我就是道路、真理、生命」，約翰第二封書信提醒我們有假先知，他們並不講授真理，而是要在我們當中誤導我們。反之，耶穌是真理，住在我們裏面，貫乎我們之中。我們在信徒的旅程上要定睛仰望十架，順服地走下去。

約翰提醒我們不要只是「遵行祂的命令」，更要「行於愛中」。「行」是指向一個動作。我們是服從與愛的旅程上的積極參與者，「行」代表着旅程中要一步步的跨山越谷。約一 4:8 告訴我們，父神就是愛，祂給婦女和孩子們的命令，就是要行於愛中。當我們行在愛（神）和真理（耶穌）之中，我們的喜樂便得以滿足（約二 1:12）。

今日的生活

在21世紀，大多數人都不愛聽到「順服」一詞。誠然，這個詞語從來就沒有流行過，因為它有委身和控制的含意。要服從別人，意味着我們必須服從和放棄控制權，對人類來說是不容易的。一想到順服，我們便會想到子女服從父母。有趣的是，約翰二書是寫給「太太和她的兒女」的。

作為四位兒子的母親，我有很多機會教導孩子們順服的功課。許多時候，他們不聽話，我會加以責罰。我不喜歡這個任務，但有時我必須這樣做，才能令他們學會尊重和界限的意思。

經文告訴我們要「遵行祂的命令」。寫來容易，但當要面對現實生活時，我們便會發現順服的實踐是具挑戰性的。我們處事往往有自己的一套方法和時間，但順服卻意味着要積極地同意別人對我們的要求。經文告訴我們要順服，在其中也定可找到喜樂。

這肯定與世界所教導的背道而馳。今天我們常常聽到：「想做就去做」。我們的文化教導我們尋快樂是有捷徑的，做自己想做的事便可找到快樂。我從未聽過有媒體報道喜樂是一種順服的表現。我們讀到的經文是反傳統文化的，基督的信息是反傳統文化的。我們是被基督所感召，行事為人也當學效祂的榜樣。

世上許多的事情，都可使我們不能專注於耶穌基督和聖潔生活上。約翰在書信的較後部份傳講我們要記得耶穌在我們裏面活着，藉着聖靈賜我們抵擋試探和虛假教導的能力，祂是唯一的真理，讓我們謹記「常守這教訓的，就有父又有子」（第9節）。我們被召去順服的原因是為了讓我們的「喜樂滿足」，我們的盼望和力量都是從喜樂的確據而來的。

問題討論

1. 你認為作者為甚麼選擇太太和孩童成為他講論順服課題的聽眾？
2. 你認為作者為甚麼在他講論時，不提「姊妹」的名字？
3. 聖經呼籲我們「遵行祂的命令」。今天神給你哪些命令？你願意順服嗎？
順服會帶來甚麼代價？

怎樣為神活出喜樂

在這個月，讓我們每天抽出時間，「面對面」互相鼓勵，叫喜樂充滿在我們順服的生活中。

莫鮑白蘭少校 (Major Brenda Murray) — 來自加拿大及百慕達地域

我在各項事工上分享了主的喜樂，其中包括臨終關懷、政府關係部、婦女與兒童緊急住宿、營舍事工等。現在我是世界宣教部副總監，我也在英國倫敦的國際總部擔任行政部助理部長次官。

聖經研讀 8

在試煉中喜樂

*西門！西門！撒但想要得着你們，好篩你們像篩麥子一樣；但我已經為你祈求，
叫你不至於失了信心。你回頭以後，要堅固你的弟兄。*

(第32節)

聖經閱讀 — 路加福音22:31-32；約翰福音17:20

聖經怎麼說

耶穌面對十字架前，與門徒的最後晚餐中，祂對彼得發出信心將被試驗的警示，並說彼得將要三次不認主。熱心的彼得強烈否定，但可惜耶穌的話應驗了。當夜雞啼之後，彼得為自己所作的感到內疚和羞恥。這事件使彼得大受打擊，因為他曾經充滿信心地對彌賽亞承諾愛與委身。

但是彼得跌倒，耶穌早已知曉，且已鼓勵彼得，告訴他禱告已經遮掩了過犯。此刻彼得不明所以，自己也不太肯定；不過後來憶起這次談話，知道耶穌明白他並為他祈禱，彼得必定感到安慰。

耶穌不但安撫彼得，祂也給他「堅固弟兄」的任務，以恢復彼得的使命感。當他被失敗所折騰時，知悉耶穌對他有信心，相信他會回頭，彼得的靈魂必重新振作起來。

撒但試圖影響彼得，使他在跟隨耶穌的路上跌倒。雖然彼得在試煉時非常痛苦，耶穌卻把彼得的苦楚轉化為機會。使彼得認識到自己的不足，真正學習到自己蒙受神的恩典，神的愛永遠不會離開他。

今日的生活

當我們第一次認識主時，我們對前所未有的新生活方向感到興奮。祝福的應許澆灌我們，使我們感到驚嘆，得到啟發 — 我們滿有喜樂！但試驗的時間終會來臨。因為我們居於一個破損的世界，成為全能神的兒女並不使我們倖免於意外、財務緊拙、關係破碎、身體患病、被虐待和侵犯。

絕望的禱告並不能解決問題，我們也許漸漸生出沮喪，繼而是失望、疑惑。神真的會關心嗎？我能相信神關心嗎？這些黑暗時刻正好揭示了我們與主的關係的本質，直達我們內心深處 — 即凡事順暢便不會觸及的那個地方。

聖經沒有告訴我們為甚麼要受苦，又或為甚麼神不立即作出干預，但卻向我們保證：神知道我們所面對的困難，就像耶穌為彼得和祂的門徒祈禱那樣，祂也為我們祈禱（約17:20及來7:25）。

祂對我們的掙扎並不是漠不關心的，祂知我們的軟弱，所以我們不必假裝堅強，又或試圖以自己的力量去作戰。從心傾倒誠實的呼喊是一件好事，唯有打開心扉，我們才能承接從神而來的撫慰。詩篇就充滿着這些例子。

在苦難前面思考神的愛，往往使我們感到困惑。但在傷痛中真正地尋求祂的面時，神便會前來觸摸我們生命的深處。那麼，我們與主的關係便不再一樣了，我們不是靠理性去明瞭祂的憐憫和慈悲，而是憑經驗。我們的信心被更新，我們深刻的認識到真正的祂，祂不會拋棄我們，且保證以喜樂充滿我們，甚至比我們所知道的更深入和更完全。

問題討論

1. 面對百般的試煉，你如何想像到雅各書1:2的大喜樂呢？與其他人分享你的想法。
2. 出現困難的情況時，你的內心有何反應？否認？憤怒？無奈？你能與主分享你深處誠實的呼喊嗎？如果不能，請說出原因。
3. 耶穌告訴彼得：「你回頭以後，要堅固你的弟兄」。你生命裏有沒有遇過能這樣鼓勵你的「彼得」呢？這人如何給你幫助？

怎樣為神活出喜樂

要找一個失望或沮喪的人並不困難。你曾否以微笑、聆聽的耳朵，又或盼望的詞句「堅固」別人嗎？在這個月裏，求告主給你這樣的機會，並指示你怎樣接近他們。

中島美和上尉 (Captain Miwa Nakajima) — 日本軍區

因着主裏的喜樂，我在國際總部的南太平洋及東亞洲區事奉，與別人分享奇異的恩典，現在我被任命為京橋隊部隊軍官及地域青年部助理。

聖經研讀 9

在事奉中喜樂

你們作祂的諸軍，作祂的僕役，行祂所喜悅的，都要稱頌耶和華！

(第21節)

聖經閱讀 — 詩 103

聖經怎麼說

很多詩篇是由大衛王所寫的，它們可組合成為呈獻給神的讚美集。我們可在詩文中看到年輕的大衛對神的熱忱與委身。他登上王位後，我們看到他作為父親和成年男士的弱點。儘管如此，大衛仍被譽為合乎神心意的人。他汲取了不少沉痛的教訓，並需要悔改。他在詩篇103:21說：「稱頌耶和華」。我們讚美的是哪一位？主！主是誰？「主」在字典的定義是「權力或財物的所有者；對事物有決定權力；主人和統治者」。

讚美始於承認神是你生命之主，祂在你生命有着權力、威嚴和影響力，祂是主人和統治者。大衛是君王，有權力、威嚴和影響力，他也承認神配得這稱號和讚譽。在這詩篇開首的幾節裏，大衛對自己說話、告誡自己要從內心深處讚美耶和華。他不是敷衍了事，而是全心全意的讚美神。當他讚美神時，他提醒自己不要忘記神所成就的 — 神寬恕、醫治、拯救、使人心滿足。神沒有在我們面前隱藏自己，祂將愛完全傾倒在我們身上。讚美主！

這喜樂泉源也提醒我們「僕人」的角色。君王告訴我們，作門徒的，就要遵行祂的話。故此我們當學效祂的榜樣，行祂的旨意，服侍一個祂要來拯救的、受苦的世界。

今日的生活

今我長大成人，如果母親走進我的房間，看到需要洗燙的衣物時，許多時候都會聽到她說：「我不是你的工人！」其後，我會用對同房的妹妹說相同的話，使她分擔清潔房間的工作。在我們的生活文化中，很少人願意成為僕人，他們情願成為被服侍和要人等候的那位。他們尋找着機會，讓自己有大突破、被發掘、一舉成名、擁有15分鐘的名望。這樣，他們便能被人賞識和服侍。可是我們的志願卻是要成為僕人，這也是聖經和耶穌對我們的呼召。

約翰福音(4:4-29)介紹了一位婦人，她為避開社會的人，獨自外出。她似乎沒有朋友或關心她的人。耶穌特意尋找她，她因而得着神的赦免、醫治、拯救和滿足。祂離我們不遠，知道我們的試煉。這位婦人最後成為一位佈道者，她去找那些自己以往試圖避開的人，給他們分享神在她身上所成就的事，以及祂能為他們所作的事。

服侍不是「貶低自己的身份」。不少人會想，如果他們站在一個服侍的位置上，他們便顯得不再重要。聖經提醒我們(羅12:2)不要效法這個世界，只要心意更新而變化，就能察驗神的旨意。耶穌給我們樹立了榜樣，(可10:45)祂不是要受人的服侍，乃是要服侍人。

問題討論

1. 大衛因與神建立關係而經驗到喜樂。當你反省與神的關係時，你如何向神表達你的稱許、感謝和讚頌呢？
2. 在你生命中，有哪些地方是你不容神作主的？
3. 你認為服侍是甚麼？你視之為「貶低自己的身份」，抑或是一個「呼召」？

怎樣為神活出喜樂

願聖靈每天向我們說話。祂要我們服侍誰呢？

與別人一起喝茶，又或真正地「看看」你每天遇上的人，就如約翰福音裏的婦人遇見耶穌，我們對各種處境的看法就會有轉變。每天當你起床時，就讓這成為你的服侍人的動力吧。

羅 6:16-18 能幫助我們將這實踐出來。我們不再是罪的僕人(保羅說的是奴僕)，卻要成為義的僕人。

費安娜少校 (Major Ana Frazer) — 國際總部 (來自美國東部地域)

我曾在部隊和非部隊崗位上事奉，與人分享耶和華的喜樂。我曾於美屬維京羣島、賓夕凡尼亞州和紐約事奉，現在任命為國際總部美洲及加勒比國際部長助理部長次官。有幸在神所給我的每一個任命服侍祂和別人，我要讚美神！

聖經研讀 10

在信靠中喜樂

但願使人有盼望的神，因信將諸般的喜樂、平安充滿你們的心，
使你們藉着聖靈的能力大有盼望。

(第13節)

聖經閱讀 — 羅 15:12-13

聖經怎麼說

羅 15:13 記載着保羅有力的禱告，他希望每一位信徒都有禱文中所述的體驗。當保羅向羅馬的教會講說時，他把焦點放在信心的行動上，而非他們所信奉的對象上。他強調如果人希望被神的喜樂、平安和盼望充滿，那麼「信靠」就十分重要的了。

當然，不是每一件事都按着他們的期望而成就，正如保羅，當經歷困難時刻，神永遠不會離開和丟棄他們(申 31:6)。奇妙的真道是：作為神的兒女，我們可以認定祂為盼望的唯一源頭——無論人生旅程上有任何遭遇，祂會看顧我們。

保羅在15:12-13說了甚麼？他主要說明任何人只要信靠基督，就能找到喜樂與平安的路徑——一種有深度的、完全的屬靈喜樂與平安，產生日益深厚的盼望。

有趣的是，這些經節都記述了神的三個格位：

- 源泉的神 - 是盟約的神和父，是盼望的神，祂將喜樂與和平充滿凡信靠祂的人。
- 耶西的根 - 基督，是大衛的後裔；神的兒子是盼望的對象和意義——祂的位格、公義和救恩。
- 成就者 - 聖靈，祂傾出滿溢的盼望。

三位一體共同運作，將喜樂、和平與盼望賜與那信靠祂的人。

今日的生活

你經歷過信心的崩潰嗎？我在巴布亞新畿內亞事奉時，我和丈夫到一條偏遠的鄉村帶領週末的崇拜，下午我們與部隊各人員商討時，有人招呼我到一張白色膠椅坐下。我一坐下便向下跌墮，結果我儀態盡失地坐在地上。我站起來，拂去自己身上的灰塵，面上通紅的顏色消失了。看到椅子上綁上幼幼的繩子，我頓時明白到自己大概不是第一個從這張椅子掉到地上的人；從那天開始，我每次坐膠椅子前都會快速的測試一下才坐上去，這是關乎信任的事情！

每當我讀到羅15:13，我都會問自己這節經文是否在描述我自己。我會因每天信靠祂而「大有盼望」嗎？儘管在我生命發生各樣的事情，這盼望是否仍在我心中湧溢，並能影響我身邊的人？我一生信靠基督，生命中又是否充滿着喜樂與平安呢？

羅 15:13 中對信徒的描述是來自認識神。每天我越是信靠我主、與祂同行，便越能在我生命中活出滿溢的盼望。這盼望不僅指將來的天堂，更是指藉着信靠主而得之於在現實生活當中。

但是，我們如何在試煉中仍得着這份信心，仍能充滿盼望？也許要很多事情結合在一起，才可帶來滿溢的盼望，但重要的方法是藉着神的話語來認識祂和祂的道。神的話語表明祂對處於各種試煉中的子民是信實的 — 祂是完全可以信賴的。聖靈的能力在每天與神同行的信徒生命中發揮影響力，使他們內裏生出神的聖潔。正如保羅所說，藉着聖靈的能力，得着諸般的喜樂與平安的果子，以信心來信靠和經歷祂，我們便充滿盼望。

問題討論

1. 你相信神在日常生活的任何境況都會看顧你嗎？你擁有喜樂、平安與盼望嗎？
2. 你曾否意識到其他基督徒的生命歷程影響着你的生命？你自己的信仰歷程又能影響到其他人的生命嗎？
3. 你曾否在面對障礙或挑戰時，將信心交託給神，並有過神同在的深刻體驗？試與組員分享你的經歷。

怎樣為神活出喜樂

在接着的一個月裏，每天禱告，願賜與盼望的神在你信靠祂時，使你充滿喜樂、平安與盼望。

麥德莉少校 (Major Deslea Maxwell) — 國際總部 (來自澳洲東部地域)

在我每天的生活中，我信靠神和祂的話語，祂呼召我與我身邊的人分享祂的喜樂和平安。我曾在家鄉和巴布亞新畿內亞事奉，現在是《救世軍年報》和婦女事工及宣教刊物 *Revive* 的主編。

聖經研讀 11

在感恩中喜樂

他們從這供給的事上得了憑據，知道你們承認基督順服祂的福音，多多地捐錢給他們和眾人，便將榮耀歸與神。他們也因神極大的恩賜顯在你們心裏，就切切地想念你們，為你們祈禱。感謝神，因祂有說不盡的恩賜！

我們要感謝神！祂有無法形容的恩典！（第15節，現代中文譯本）

聖經閱讀 — 林後 9:13-15

聖經怎麼說

何等美好的經文啊！第15節勸勉我們為那「無法形容」的恩典感謝神，英文Good News Translation則譯為「無價的」恩賜。這恩賜是甚麼？就是恩典的禮物：「並且我主的恩是格外豐盛，使我在基督耶穌裏有信心和愛心」（提前1:14）。

我們有很多原因要感謝全能的神，但這裏所述的，我們未能完全明白，卻又深深地影響着我們的生命。

我想起《救世軍詩歌》中的一節副歌，它提醒我們神的恩典是奇妙的，祂以無盡的愛來寬恕我們。

高過永恆天際最高的星星，
闊過無窮無盡宇宙的境界，
是神無窮盡的大愛救贖我，
啊！神奇妙的恩典！

（新英文軍歌 876 [1986年版 52]（港澳軍區版軍歌4）

聖經中有很多關於恩典的經文，新約聖經尤為明顯，我們也讀過不少。耶穌講述有關恩典的故事／比喻，如太 20:1-16 講及葡萄園的工人。我們可閱讀這比喻，然後一同討論這故事如何為「神的恩典」下定義，並且探討一下兩問題：「恩典都是平均分給所有人的嗎？」以及「恩典的奧秘是甚麼？」

使徒保羅的書信中有不少篇幅談及恩典。我們可以仔細研究聖經中（特別是新約裏）「恩典」一詞。這並不表示恩典不存在於舊約之中。閱讀何西亞和歌篾的故事，我們怎能不體會到何西亞所展示的恩典呢？這故事是神賜恩給祂子民的例子。我鼓勵你閱讀何西亞的故事和何西亞書裏歌篾的故事。讓我們都感謝神的恩賜，衷心感謝祂把兒子耶穌基督作了恩典的禮物。耶穌願意走上十架，代替我們，擔起了世界的罪 — 就是恩典！「律法本是藉着摩西傳的；恩典和真理都是由耶穌基督來的。」（約1:17）

今日的生活

今天的世界裏需要神的恩典。我們可以看到世界是多麼的缺乏恩典，但作為基督徒婦女，我們卻要展示神的恩典 — 首先向我們自己，然後是向我們的家庭和我們所接觸的人。

奇妙的恩典 — 我們不能靠着作甚麼來使神多愛我們一些或少愛我們一些。

釋放的恩典 — 恩典是我們個人救贖故事的開始，或如尤金·奧尼爾 (Eugene O' Neill) 所說：「人是破碎的，祂的工作是修補。神的恩典就是膠水」。

豐盛的恩典 — 恩典是豐富的，無窮的，豐盛的，無限的，無邊無際.....

問題討論

1. 沒有神的恩典，世界將會變成怎樣？
2. 在這黑暗與貧窮的世界，我如何將神的恩典展現出來？
3. 我可以怎樣能顯明神在我生命中的恩典呢？

怎樣為神活出喜樂

在這個月中，努力活出富有恩典的生命，然後與你身邊的人和家人、工作上的同事和部隊／教會內的弟兄姊妹，分享你所得的恩賜。我鼓勵你在生命中時刻展現神的恩典。

「當用各樣的智慧，把基督的道理豐豐富富地存在心裏，用詩章、頌詞、靈歌，彼此教導，互相勸戒，心被恩感，歌頌神。」(西 3:16)

施倪丹妮中將 (Commissioner Denise Swansbury) — 國際總部 (來自英國及愛爾蘭地域)

我曾在英國、津巴布韋、利比里亞和加納事奉，現在我是南太平洋及東亞洲區域婦女事工秘書長。我在到訪區域，與我相遇的人分享神的喜樂和恩典。感謝神給我這樣的機會與榮幸！

聖經研讀 12

在永生的盼望中喜樂

你們雖然沒有見過他，卻是愛他；如今雖不得看見，
卻因信他就有說不出來、滿有榮光的大喜樂；
並且得著你們信心的果效，就是靈魂的救恩

(第8-9節)

聖經閱讀 — 彼前 1:3-9

聖經怎麼說

彼得有公信力，又熱切相信自己和小亞細亞受逼迫的基督徒都已得着從耶穌而來的盼望確據，因此他仰仗神的權柄，寫信給他們。

從失敗中學習的領袖，寫信鼓勵在羅馬帝國管轄下經歷迫害和遭遇困難的人。他們在信仰上都是年輕的基督徒，在信仰旅途上需要指引。

保羅沒有看他們現況的迫切，反而提醒他們要着眼於天上的基業，引導他們明白只有在耶穌裏得着的盼望，才不會被奪去的。它影響着他們的現在及未來，在基督裏的盼望能幫助他們經歷一切。

在這段經文，彼得基本上是指導那些新的基督徒，要「活出你自己」！

若信心能在你生命發揮作用，那就讓它現在發揮作用吧！

「叫你們的信心既被試驗，就比那被火試驗仍然能壞的金子更顯寶貴，可以在耶穌基督顯現的時候得着稱讚、榮耀、尊貴。」(彼前1:7)

這就是他們喜樂的理由：即使面對當前的考驗和困境，他們若能持守自己所認識的和持守真正的信心，那就比金子更為寶貴。這信心是基於愛，可以帶來難以言喻和無與倫比的喜樂，不僅是現在的，且是永遠的喜樂。

今日的生活

每個人雖有不同的故事，但卻會有相近的經驗。我們這一群婦女，要藉神的恩典，並盡我們所能，在這個世界的旅程上活得有意義。參與是次研經，已顯示你渴望和期望認識神，以及祂對你的意義。要經驗保羅所說的那份難以形容的喜樂，我們便要記住自己在基督裏的身份！我們的動機不應該來自回報。

有回報當然是好的，但我們更應該為回應神的厚愛而作：「不是我們愛神，乃是神愛我們」（約一 4:10）。神有能力介入我們的生活，並將我們的故事改寫為祂的故事。尤金·畢德生(Eugene Peterson) 在他的信息版聖經中，如此意譯了詩篇18:24：「當我為神打開心窗的書本，祂改寫了我生命的內容」。小亞細亞的基督徒需要被提醒：他們的生命乃是更偉大的故事的一部份。你需要被提醒嗎？

這些被迫害的基督徒在危難中失掉信心，但彼得提醒他們認清自己在耶穌裏的身份、在基督裏的盼望。他指出他們跨過現況後，便可進深明白基督是誰和基督為他們所作的是什麼。也許你今天也需要被提醒吧！願你在永生的盼望中（將來式）有着主裏喜樂（現在式）。

活出自己吧！

問題討論

1. 你在甚麼時候開始察覺有另一個生命較自己的生命更重要和更偉大？你是怎樣知道的呢？神如何改寫你生命的劇本？這帶來甚麼改變？有何不同？
2. 你曾否經歷過彼得所說的喜樂呢？（例如：悔改的時候、在信仰旅程上、遭遇試煉時）這些經驗怎樣影響你的生活方式？
3. 在你自己的故事/旅程中，有甚麼艱難境遇，使你學會在現在和將來信靠神？

怎樣為神活出喜樂

下一個月最少找一天做到以下的事情：

選擇你最喜歡的杯子，花些時間注視它，思想它的外型、顏色和狀態。想想杯子在盛滿和空着的情景。做這個練習時，背誦及思想以下其中一節經文：

詩 16:5 「耶和華是我的產業，是我杯中的分；我所得的，祢為我持守。」

詩 23:5 「在我敵人面前，祢為我擺設筵席；祢用油膏了我的頭，使我的福杯滿溢。」

詩116:13 「我要舉起救恩的杯，稱揚耶和華的名。」

自我反思：

這經文對於我今天的生活方向有甚麼意義？

這經文在永恆生命的層面對我有甚麼意義？

祁露蓮少校 (Major Rosslyn Casey) — 國際總部 (來自澳洲南部地域)

我在澳洲、英國及愛爾蘭地域回應主的呼召，分享主裏的喜樂。現在，我在國際總部擔任院牧。