

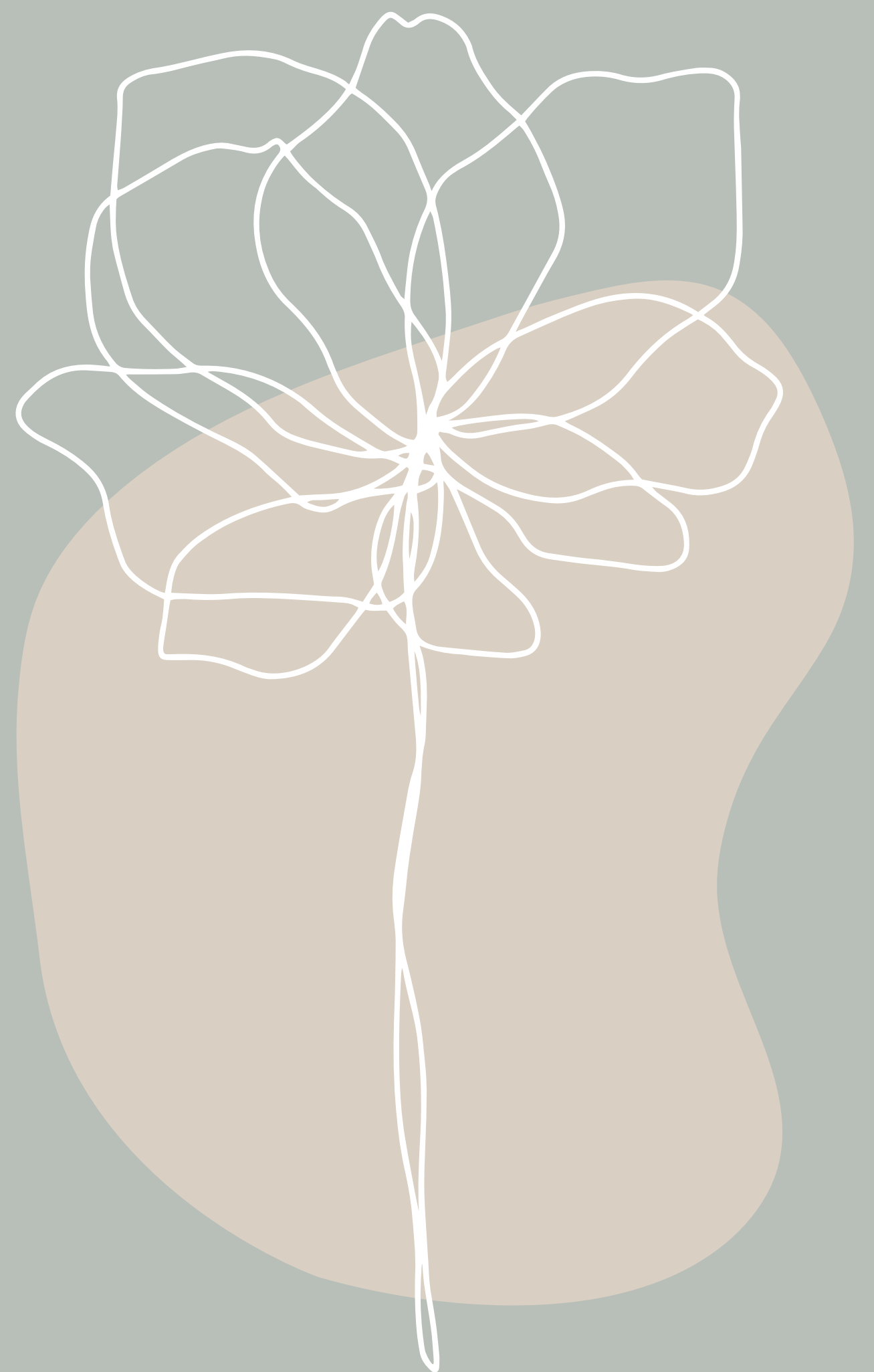
Finding Biblical

joy

in the Midst of Trials

15-Day Guide

BY GINA SMITH



Biblical Joy: The Key to Perseverance

"The (biblical) joy of the Lord is my strength" Nehemiah 8:10

When I was in my 40's, I remember suddenly being struck with the reality that I was no longer considered to be "young"! My children were in their teens, and I watched as many of my peers started to become weighed down and discouraged as they faced different struggles with their children and life got harder. I also observed some older than me as they settled into becoming set in their ways, discouraged, and bitter because of what life had handed them. Some have even walked away from their faith. As the years have gone by, I have seen more and more people my age or older giving in to discouragement. Life has gotten more challenging, and they are no longer the zealous, vibrant believers they once were. I vowed not to allow this to happen as I got older.

Then life took a turn for my family and me, and we began a long journey of very difficult, life-changing circumstances. I found myself battling depression and anxiety, wondering what my purpose in life was. Then, I began to understand why so many of my peers, and those who are older, might struggle and give up. Still, I was determined to fight!

I desperately wanted to know how to persevere in my faith in a way that would shout to those around me that God is faithful and that he is enough, even when life gets harder and harder! It's been over ten years, and I am now approaching my 60th birthday. I have been on a quest to learn, experience, and live out what it means to have biblical joy, regardless of my circumstances. I don't want to be that older person in the church who has become bitter and has given up (even though I have a deeper understanding of why some might end up making that choice.) I want to fulfill the calling that is given to the older generation – to proclaim to the younger generation that God is faithful.

"One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts." (Psalm 145:4)

So what can we do to prevent ourselves from giving up as we get older? What can we do so that we don't give in to discouragement as life gets harder? (and it will!) We must learn to focus on the only stable thing in this life – God-the provider of all things. The enemy of our soul has a full-time job to try to get our focus off the One in whom biblical joy is found.

"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." 1 Peter 5:8

Biblical joy is found when we focus on our God, which needs to be a daily choice we make no matter what season we find ourselves in. We must learn what the Bible says about God, who he is, and His promises. We must learn to do the next thing and persevere even when life is hard. I love how it is worded at gotquestions.org: "James tells us in chapter 1 that the Christian who perseveres in godliness and the spiritual disciplines will be blessed in the very act of persevering. The more we persevere in the Christian life, the more God grants His blessings upon us, thereby enabling us to continue to persevere. The psalmist reminds us that there is great reward in persevering in the Christian life. In keeping God's commandments, there is "great reward" for our souls (psalm 19:11), peace of mind, a clear conscience, and a witness to the world more eloquent than many words." Biblical joy is not something that comes and goes; our circumstances do not dictate it. Biblical joy is something that exists even when we are suffering or going through a heavy trial because it is based on the knowledge that God is present, walking with us in our trials, producing good fruit in us as we go through the hardship, and will use it as a platform for him to be seen by others.

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." (James 1)

Life is good — but life is hard. We are in a battle with the enemy of our souls!

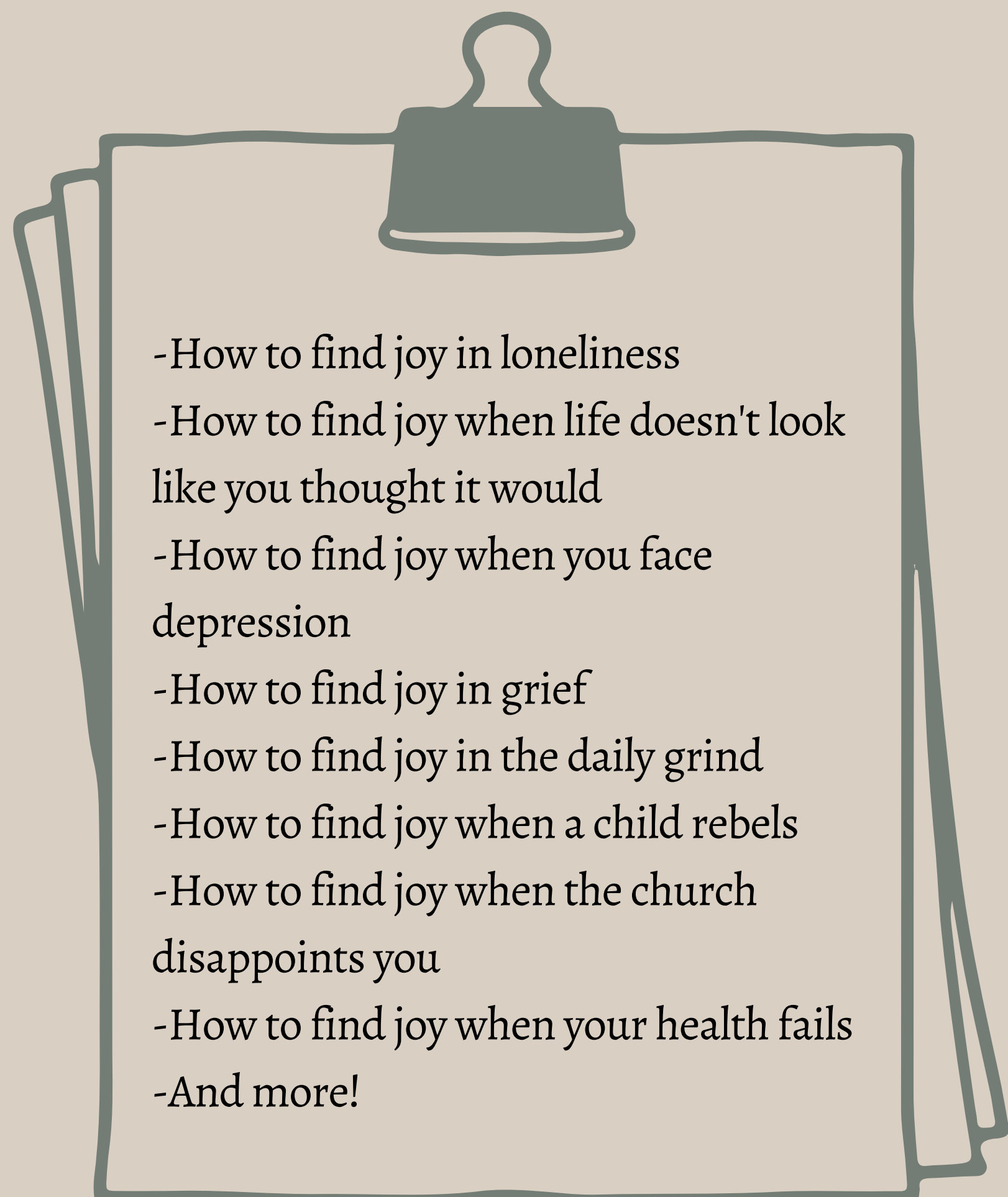
"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." Ephesians 6:12

Learning about and clinging to God's promises is the key to finding biblical joy and is the only way that we will be able to persevere in our faith. *"For your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. You rule throughout all generations. The Lord always keeps his promises; he is gracious in all he does."* Psalms 145:13 This will enable us to become that older saint who can proclaim God's faithfulness to those around them because they have experienced a deep walk with God as he has accompanied them through their heavy trials of life.

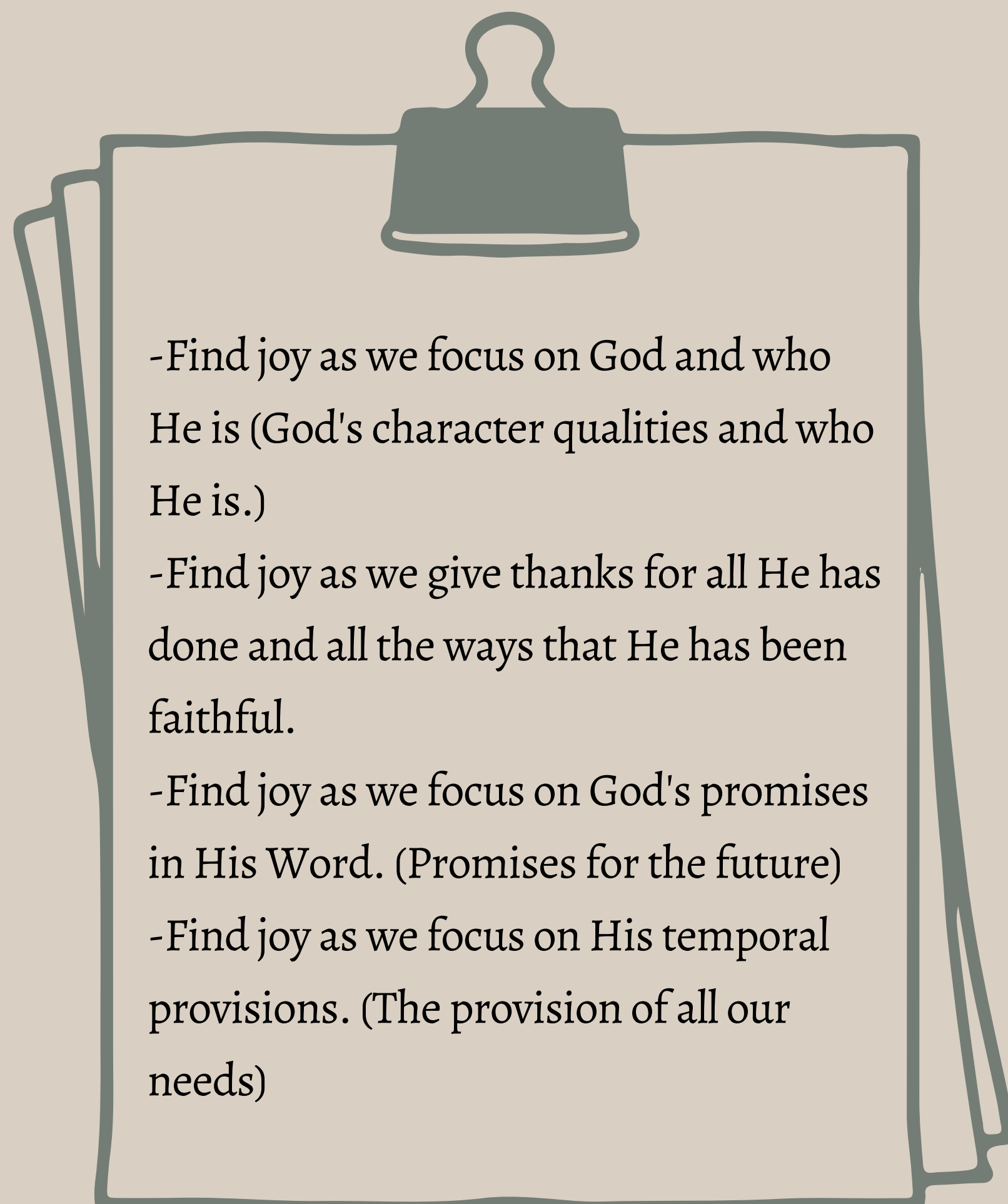
"For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations." Psalm 100:5

This is the introduction to this series of articles on biblical joy. Join me as I look at some of the struggles we all face and how to find biblical joy in these circumstances.

A few of the struggles we will look at:



Together we will learn how to:



I pray that, together we will learn and experience what James 1:2 promises: *"Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."*

And that we will choose biblical joy, one day at a time, so that we can persevere in our faith and *"be a witness to the world more eloquent than many words"*!

How to Find Biblical Joy: When You Have Been Treated Unfairly

“Teach me to treat all that comes to me with peace of soul and with firm conviction that Your will governs all. In unforeseen events, let me not forget that all are sent by You.” — Elisabeth Elliot

It was late one evening when I received a phone call from a friend. She was going through a difficult time and asked if my daughter and I could come over. We quickly got in the car and drove to her home. When she answered the door, she was talking about her circumstances with someone on the phone. She motioned for us to come in and sit down. We sat down in her living room and listened to the conversation. We could hear both sides of the conversation because she had turned on her speakerphone. Suddenly, out of nowhere, the person she was talking with, not knowing that I was sitting in the room, began to talk about my husband and me, putting us in a negative light. My friend, my daughter, and I froze! We were in shock, not believing what we were hearing. My daughter looked at me, we looked at our friend, and she quickly tried to shut down the conversation. She finally hung up, looked at me, and said, “I am so sorry!”

We were stunned at what had just happened and tried to move on as best we could. When I got home, I shared with my husband what had happened, and he suggested I ask this person why they had said what they did. When confronted, they denied they said what three of us had heard them say. There was not much more we could do. In the months following this incident, we heard from other sources that this person had been saying things about my husband and me that were untrue. We were able to correct what had been said to those who came to us with the information. Were we hurt by this? Yes, we were. And although we were not surprised, we were also extremely disappointed. Eventually, we could work through the mix of emotions - hurt, disappointment, anger – and see that God allowed this to happen so we would become aware that the person, who was in a leadership position, could not be trusted. As of today, this person has denied saying what three witnesses heard them say.



Bible Verses



Psalm 37:8 “Refrain from anger and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.”

When we go through situations where we are treated unfairly, it is a good idea to pause and think about the best way to respond. Go to the Word and ask God for wisdom. Bring the situation to him and ask God to help you keep from becoming bitter or angry.

Matthew 18:15 “If your brother sins against you, go, and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.”

I find it easier to handle being treated unfairly when the person at fault is not a believer. Even though it is exceedingly difficult, I do not expect a person who does not know God to act like they do. When the person at fault is a believer, it can be very confusing, hurtful, and disappointing. Matthew 18 guides us in what we are called to do when we are dealing with a believer who has hurt us. In the situation I shared, I did ask the offending person about what they had said. They did not admit to what they had done. Sadly, that allowed distrust and division to enter in.

1 Peter 2:19-20 “For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it, you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God.”

Inevitably, all of us will eventually suffer unjust treatment. We will be treated unfairly, be misunderstood, and our motives will be misinterpreted and questioned. We are responsible for ourselves and the condition of our own hearts before God. We can only do so much to try and make things right; then, we need to leave it in the hands of our loving Father, who allows us to experience unjust treatment for his purposes and our sanctification.

What Good Comes From Being Treated Unfairly?

You have the opportunity to suffer in the same way that Jesus did. Remember that our Savior was treated unfairly and was innocent of anything he could have been accused of. He understands everything you are feeling and is able to sustain and comfort you. He is your defense.

You have an opportunity to lean into God and ask him to help you honor him in the way you respond to the person who has treated you unjustly. You can seek God and allow him to infuse you with his power and way of viewing your difficult circumstances.

You have an opportunity to pray for the person or people who have treated you unfairly. If they are not believers, ask God to help them respond in a way that might be a testimony and an opportunity to share the gospel. If they are a believer, you have an opportunity to pray for them and offer forgiveness, whether they ever see their error.

Find Biblical Joy By Focusing on God

THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being El Roi – the God who sees. You can see how I have been treated unfairly. You heard every word spoken and knew every heart motive that went into each word. You can also see my own heart and how I have responded to the unjust treatment. If I sin in my response, I am no better than the one who has sinned against me. Help me to remember that you see it all.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, thank you for being faithful to strengthen and sustain me during this challenging time. You comfort me, and your spirit prompts me to respond in a way that glorifies you, no matter what anyone else does to me.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for your promises that tell me that, one day, all wrongs will be made right, all evil will be exposed, all unjust treatment will end, and that one day there will be no more tears.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Thank you for your provision of faithful brothers and sisters who come alongside me during tough times, remind me of truth, encourage me to respond correctly, pray with me, and assure me that the way I have been treated is, indeed, unjust, but that one day you will make it all right.

How to Find Biblical Joy:

When You Think You've Failed As a Parent

"A mother is a chalice, the vessel without which no human being has ever been born. What a solemn responsibility. What an unspeakable privilege—a vessel divinely prepared for the Master's use." Elisabeth Elliot

I do not think there is anything in this world that I have poured myself into as much as I poured myself into nurturing and raising my children. I read everything I could get my hands on that might help me be a better mom. I did not let anything get in the way of my being there for them. I worked hard to tune in, encourage them, share the gospel, tell them how much I loved them, and connect with them in any way I could. I was quick to ask for forgiveness when I sinned against them, and I tried to keep the lines of communication open so that they knew they could talk with me about anything whenever they needed to. For over 18 years, I woke up every day with the goal of being the best mom I could be.

My children grew up and married, and we entered a new season. It took a while to adjust and find a new rhythm, but we adjusted. I assumed that we would move right into having a good relationship now that they were adults. I continued to pour into them in new ways, thinking I was doing a decent job as a mom of adult kids and a mom-in-law. After all, I had read all the books, and I studied what I was supposed to do and not do.

As the months went by, some honest, heart-to-heart talks with my children took place. Each of them shared openly about some things from their childhood and about their father and me that had affected them negatively. They wanted to talk about these things so that they could process them and so that we could work on some things together. It was needed. It was a good and healthy thing to do. Yes, I was grateful they could talk with us about these things, but I also grieved. Why? Because I felt like I had failed them. I had failed as a mom.



Bible Verses

Colossians 2:13–14 "When you were dead in your sins...God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross."

As hard as we try, it is impossible to be a perfect parent. We are going to sin against our children in some way. We are continuing to grow and mature as we raise them, and they will see our weaknesses and our sin. We can rest in the fact that God has forgiven our sins, and we humbly ask for forgiveness from our children for the ways we have let them down.

2 Corinthians 12:9 "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may rest on me."

We are called to boast about our weaknesses. God's power takes weak parents and uses them anyway. His grace is there for us when we fail, and it is there for us when we are weak.

Colossians 2:13–14 "When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross."

We are not "enough," and we will never be "enough." No matter how hard I tried, I was not enough. But Christ IS more than enough. He gives me a fresh start each day and will continue to help me grow up until the day I go to be with him. He is the one who strengthens me and enables me to ask for forgiveness from my children. He is the one that picks me up when I see all the ways that I have failed and strengthens me as I continue this parenting journey with adult children.

What Good Comes From When You Think You've Failed as a Parent?

We have the opportunity to humbly admit to our children that we are weak people in the process of growth and learning and to ask for forgiveness for how we have failed them.

We are again reminded that anything good that might be seen in our lives, our children's lives, or our family is only present because God is among us and is using us despite our weakness. He is the one doing the good work that needs to be done.

We have another reason to lean into God and receive his comfort and encouragement. He knew we would not be perfect parents and is there for us when we see our failures.

Find Biblical Joy

THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being Yahweh - "The Lord Who Heals." Please pour out your grace on my children and enable them to process the things they need to process so they can be healed and used powerfully for your purposes – despite who their parents were!

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Thank you for the wisdom you have provided me over the years as I raised my children and for all the ways you provided for them as they grew up. Help them to see clearly how you worked in their lives over the years and how uniquely you provided for them in every season of their lives.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, you are faithful. Thank you for faithfully exposing my failures and reminding me that I will never be enough. Thank you for being more than enough! Thank you for using me in the lives of my children.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for your promises that your strength will empower me where I am weak and that you have chosen me to have the privilege of parenting two gifts from you, my children. Thank you for the promise that you will redeem my failure. Thank You that You have made me to be "a vessel divinely prepared for Your use."



How to Find Biblical Joy: When You've Been Misunderstood

“To be a follower of the Crucified Christ means, sooner or later, a personal encounter with the cross. And the cross always entails loss.” Elisabeth Elliot

We had been looking for a church home for several months when we decided to settle at one particular church temporarily. It seemed like it might be a good fit, and we desperately needed a place to rest and serve. Week after week we made our way to the Sunday morning service, the midweek service, and additional events. We intentionally met up with the pastor to get to know him and hear his heart for the church. We wanted him to know that we were eager to be involved in a church again and that we wanted to serve. Other than two or three people that we already knew before we visited, very few people reached out to us to try and get to know us after attending for about four months; we still felt like visitors. My husband decided to meet the pastor in an effort to encourage him and to offer to serve in any way he might need. The day arrived that they had scheduled, and he eagerly drove to his lunch. After a few hours, he quietly walked through the front door and sat down at our kitchen table. “How’d it go?” I asked. For the next several minutes, he shared a list of issues that the pastor had shared with him. Then he ended the conversation with this statement, “He believes that we came to the church with an agenda....” Confused, shocked, disappointed, and frustrated are just a few words that might begin to describe how we felt that day. Our desire and eagerness to serve in the church had been taken the wrong way. Our motives were in question. Trying to explain or defend ourselves would probably fall on deaf ears. Their minds were made up about us, and there was little we could say. We resumed our church search. What did we do wrong? How did this happen? Why were we so misunderstood? We believe that nothing happens by chance and that we can learn from everything God allows us to go through. As time has passed, we have been able to see that being misunderstood

and judged has been used to make us more like Jesus. God has been equipping us to be able to serve him and the church better. He allowed us to be judged and misunderstood so that we would know how it feels, be careful to assume the best of others, and not judge another member of the body of Christ.



Bible Verses

Zephaniah 3:17 “The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, he will quiet you with His love, he will rejoice over you with singing.”

No matter what others think of you, God rejoices over you with gladness, loves you, and nothing can change that. People will judge you and assume the worst of you. There will be misunderstandings. God will never misunderstand or judge you. Ever.

Psalm 139:4 “For there is not a word on my tongue but behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.”

God knows you. He knows what you are thinking, and the motives of your heart, and you never have to worry about him rejecting you because of what he finds there.

Psalm 27:14 “Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!”

When we are misunderstood, it can be devastating. There can be a temptation to withdraw from spending time with people. When we run to God with our concerns and heartbreak, he will provide us with the strength we need to persevere and learn what he wants us to learn.

What Good Comes When You Have Been Misunderstood?

- It is an opportunity to ask God to help you respond in humility and to seek peace with the one who has misunderstood you. Even if the situation is never cleared up, it is an opportunity to lean into God and allow him to work in you with a heart of humility. One that will show grace to those who have misjudged you.
- It is an opportunity to ask God to show you if there is anything that you are doing that might have contributed to the misunderstanding and to show you if you should do anything to clarify your side of the story.
- It's an opportunity to be reminded that you always want to assume the best of others. You never want to judge or assume the worst of another member of the body of Christ. You don't want to make another person feel the way you have been made to feel!



Find Biblical By Focusing on God

THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being El Roi – The God who sees. You see me – all of me. You know my heart and the motives that lie there. Please make it clear how you want me to deal with being misunderstood. Help me respond humbly and show grace to those who have assumed the worst of me. Help me to love the way you have loved me.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for the promise that you are with me and will never forsake me. Thank you for the promises that tell me that your love is unconditional. And thank you for your promise that we will see everything clearly one day.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, thank you for being faithful even when people who call themselves your children are not. I know I can count on you no matter how inconsistent or unreliable others might be, and even when others assume the worst of me. Please grow within my heart the kind of faithfulness that you possess.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Father, you have supplied all I need to walk in godliness, no matter what happens. Thank you for providing me with the strength to face conflict amidst misunderstanding. Thank you that, whether or not a misunderstanding is cleared up, you know my heart, and nothing can change the unconditional and steadfast love that has been provided through your son.

How to Find Biblical Joy: When You Face Uncertainty

“Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God.” Corrie Ten Boom

We had a plan. We were raising our children, living, and working in a wonderful ministry setting where it seemed like, all our giftings and education were being used. Of course, there were some particularly challenging days, but we loved our life and the ministry we were living. We thought we would "grow old" doing what we were doing. We could not imagine doing anything else or living anywhere else. For us, it was our "dream job"! God had other plans. Within a short period, the ministry we loved had been struggling financially finally crumbled and closed. We were left without a job and had no idea what to do next. Our hopes, dreams, and plans for our future disappeared. The only thing we could see when we tried to look ahead was uncertainty. We processed our grief and sadness for several months as we reflected on all that had been lost. Then we began the process of walking by faith, one step at a time, and asking God to direct us and show us what He wanted us to do and where he wanted us to go. One day at a time, we experienced his grace and provision. One day at a time, he allowed us to grieve and caused us to become conformed more into the image of His Son. Now, years later, even though there is still so much we do not understand, we know that his plan was perfect, and we trust him.



What do we do when our plans fail and we face uncertainty?
How can we find joy in the loss of our dreams?

Bible Verses

Matthew 6:34 "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble." Do not worry! That is easier said than done, but if we take what God says seriously, then that should be our goal.

Psalm 32:8 "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you."

Keep your eyes on God. It is easy to go into panic mode when we face unknowns. We desperately want to know what to do next. But we are called to look to God and allow him to direct our paths.

Matthew 6:31 – 33 "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

Do not be anxious. God knows what we need. He has a plan. Breathe in, calm down, and seek first the kingdom of God!

Isaiah 43:2 "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you."

Grieve. Yes! I said, grieve. It is okay to grieve the loss of your dreams, the loss of a job, or the loss of what you thought would happen. That is a normal human response. We just cannot sit in our grief. We must reach a point where we move forward into trusting the God who says he will be with us through it all.

What Good Comes from Facing Uncertainty?

- It is an opportunity to dig into God's Word to find the promises that we can cling to. God gave us his Word and all the promises found there, so we would have something to cling to and believe in! He says that all we need is found in his book, the Bible.
- It can be used as a gentle reminder that we are not in control and to focus on the God who is in control of everything, even our unknowns. It is so easy to feel like we are in control, isn't it? But we are not! And there is nothing like going through a time of uncertainty to bring us back to that reality!
- It can be used to strengthen our faith as we choose not to become overwhelmed and fearful with our unknowns but choose to focus on God instead. This is where some of what may have been "head knowledge" has an opportunity to move into our hearts and become a reality in our lives. We know we need to focus on God, but trials like this cause us to have to choose to actually do it!
- We can practice faithfulness by committing each day, one day at a time, to God and being faithful with what he gives us to do each day, even if it is not what we had expected or even had in mind for ourselves. This is another opportunity to live out what we are called to, which is day-in and day-out faithfulness, no matter our circumstances.

Find Biblical Joy By Focusing on God



THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being YAHWEH-SHALOM, "The Lord Our Peace." I know I can trust you and that I will find peace in my circumstances only when I focus on you and your promises. Thank you for being there and for being my Lord that gives peace.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for your promises. Please show me the specific promises you want me to see so I can cling to them now. You tell me you will never leave me, you will provide for me, you are in control, and you see me. You promise that your plans and ways are perfect. Thank you that I can count on you and find rest in you.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Father, thank you for providing for all my needs over the years. As I reflect on the ways you have provided for me, I am moved to trust and thank you for all the unique ways you promise to provide for me during this time of uncertainty. Thank you for enabling me to trust you during this time of facing an unknown future. I know I can trust you.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, you have been faithful in the past, and you have never failed me. Ever. I know that you will not fail me now. I know that you are faithful even when I do not understand what is happening and when I cannot see what the outcome will be. Help me trust you with the things I do not understand and the unknowns in my life.

How to Find Biblical Joy: While Caring for Your Newborn

"I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord there..." 1 Samuel 1:27-28

My daughter recently gave birth to a beautiful baby girl. As I walked with her through her pregnancy, and now as she is learning how to take care of a newborn, I am reminded of the days when I first had the privilege of entering the beginning seasons of motherhood. I remember how it felt to stare at my newborn, unable to take my eyes off her. Being in awe of her little fingers and toes. The love that welled up in my heart - - a love I never knew existed -- and thinking to myself, "I can't believe she's MINE!" What a sweet, sweet season it was!

Other things characterize the season of mothering an infant. I remember them clearly as well! I am talking about the harder parts of the season, such as feeling exhausted due to lack of sleep and trying to recover physically from childbirth while caring for a needy newborn. The up and down emotions, adjusting to a new way of life that revolves around the needs of a baby, no longer being able to come and go as you please, the overwhelming feeling of responsibility, and wondering if you are capable of doing what is necessary to be able to care for and parent this new, little, precious human!

Yes, it is a privilege and a gift to be entrusted with a new life, but it is a huge transition and adjustment that comes with a mixed bag of emotions, and there are times when a mom needs to know how to fight for joy.



Verses to Help You When You Are in the Season of Mothering an Infant

Ecclesiastes 3:1,2 "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born...."

This season, like every other season, is temporary. The hard parts of the season are temporary, and so are the sweet parts. This "time to be born" season, is a season of significant, life-changing adjustments. Working to take it one day at a time, remembering that the difficult parts will eventually end, can help you not to become too overwhelmed. Taking things one day at a time and being intentional to relish in the sweet details of the season is also important and can add joy to an otherwise exhausting season.

Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

You are correct if you feel like you cannot do this! What is required of you to care for a little person while exhausted is too much for you to do on your own. The Scriptures tell us that God is happy to provide his strength in the most challenging of circumstances. His grace is there in our times of need. (Hebrews 4:16) Sometimes, that strength comes in a supernatural way as we push through exhaustion to meet the needs of a hungry newborn. Sometimes that strength comes when God sends family members or a friend to help carry the weight of this adjustment with a meal, a visit, or a call to let you know they are there to help you in any way you might need them to. All of this is a gift from God meant to help you when you are weak.

Isaiah 40:11 "He will tend his flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in his arms; He will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young."

Isn't knowing that God wants to lead you gently and carefully encouraging? He cares about you and sees you as you nurture that brand-new life. He is a good Father and has ordained the work you are doing, caring for and loving your precious baby, day in and day out. You can rest in the fact that this season, and the work you are doing, is important. You can rest in the fact that it is okay to slow down and take care of yourself and your baby because that is what is most important in the moment.

What Good Comes From This Season?

- This season provides you with an opportunity to cling to and depend even more on God than ever before. It is an opportunity to be aware of how he provides for your every need and enables you to do what needs to be done.
- This season allows you to understand, a little bit better, how God the Father loves you. The overwhelming love you feel towards your child is just a hint of the love God feels for his own children.
- This season provides an opportunity to learn more deeply what it means to live a life of sacrifice. The moment we have our own children, we are called into a level of self-sacrifice in a way we have never experienced. Even though it can be extremely hard at times, it is being used to conform us into the image of Christ. (Romans 8)

Find Biblical Joy By Focusing on God

THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being EL ROI - "the God of Seeing." It is comforting to know that you see me, even when I am in my home doing the unseen work of caring for an infant. You see me when I am exhausted. You see me when I am overwhelmed. You see me when I am alone. You see me. Thank you!

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for your promises that I can cling to. They give me hope and joy amidst challenging seasons. Thank you for the reminders of your love, that you are present now, and that you will never leave or forsake me.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, you have been faithful in every single season of my life. You have strengthened and enabled me to do the work you have called me to do in the past, and I know that you will continue to enable me to do what you call me to do. Thank you to the people you have sent my way who have helped point me to you and have been there in many practical ways.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Father, thank you for providing me with a precious child to love, care for, raise, and point to you. I am beyond overwhelmed and thankful for this gift you have given me. Thank you for your promise to provide all I need to care for, raise, and point this little one to you. I am so grateful!

How to Find Biblical Joy: When You Are Aging

“If by excessive labor we die before reaching the average age of man, worn out in the Master’s service, then glory be to God. We shall have so much less of earth and so much more of heaven. It is our duty and our privilege to exhaust our lives for Jesus.” Charles Spurgeon

I will be turning 60 years old soon. To some, that will sound old, and to others, it will not, depending on how old you are! To me, it just feels very strange. We never really feel as old as we are, do we? We often see ourselves in a completely different light than others see us. Personally, I have a tough time believing I am almost 60. I do not feel like I should be 60, but then I catch a glimpse of my son with his beautiful wife or my daughter and her sweet husband with their precious little girl, and I am reminded that I have lived enough years to have two married children and one granddaughter! Yep! I am almost 60!

How do you feel about aging? Most of the time, I am okay with it, although it does feel strange. Aging is not popular in our culture, and the pressure is stronger than ever, trying to get us to do whatever we can to stay acting and looking young. There are workout programs, diets, surgeries, and things you can inject into your face to help you look younger. There are makeup tutorials, hair color, and haircuts that will “take ten years off your appearance,” as the advertisement I saw the other day said. We are surrounded by the message that we need to fight the aging process.

Yes, I enjoy using makeup and getting my hair done. I want to be the best 60-year-old that I can be! But more than anything else, I want to have a biblical perspective about the aging process, and I want to have biblical joy as I age. So, how does that happen? We need to focus on the WORD and not the world!



Bible Verses



Isaiah 46:4 “Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you, and I will carry you; I will sustain you, and I will rescue you.”

God is our God, no matter our age. He is not going anywhere! He will sustain us and carry us. There is so much comfort in knowing that no matter how old I am and what I walk through, he will be there carrying me. He has promised us that he will not change even though our bodies are growing older and changing every day.

Job 12:12 ‘Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?’



One of the best things about getting older is the wisdom you have acquired because you have been around for a while! When you have had years of experience and suffering in your life, there is a learning that takes place that cannot be taken away from you. Life changes you as a person, and it can make you more like Jesus if you embrace it all and allow it to.

2 Corinthians 4:16 “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.”

No matter what I do to try and keep my outward appearance looking young, there really is nothing I can do to stop the aging process. One day it will catch up to me. I will eventually look old. I will eventually get sick and die. We cannot escape it. But if I am in the Word every day, walking with God, seeking His face, and nurturing my relationship with him, my inside is being renewed every day. That is something only God can do!



What Good Comes from Aging?

- We have the opportunity to trust and get to know God with each year he gives us. Every new year brings much to be grateful for, but it will also bring more for us to grieve over. Living a life deeply connected to God will enable us to have true joy through it all.
 - When you are given a long life, you have been given countless opportunities to experience God's faithfulness. You can then turn around and tell as many people as you can who are coming up behind you that God is faithful. That is one of the most important things an older person can do to serve a younger person. Remind them that God is faithful and that you have experienced that faithfulness!
 - The longer you live, the more opportunities you will have to share the gospel. This is the most important message we have to offer others – that God sent his very own son to earth to die and carry the weight of our sins so that we can live with him in heaven for eternity.
- 
- 

Find Biblical Joy By Focusing on God

THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being a Sovereign God. One who is the ultimate authority in all things. All things are subject to You. You reign over all. That reality is comforting because I know it means that you are the One who is in control and who numbers my days. You have a purpose for me in each day I am given.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for your promises. Your Word is packed full of promises for me to hold on to and to find hope and joy in. Thank you for leaving us the Bible, your book that tells us what we have to look forward to and who we are to be living for every day. It gives me something to cling to as I see my body aging.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, thank you for your faithfulness over the years of my life. When I sit and remember all the ways you have been faithful in my life, even during the times I did not understand what was going on or what you were doing, I am so encouraged. It empowers me to keep moving forward, one day at a time, into my old age -- or however long you allow me to serve you here on this earth.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Father, thank you for how you have provided for me all my life. From the moment I was born up until now, you have provided for all my needs. I have never been lacking. Please give me opportunities to share all the ways you have provided for me so that others might be encouraged in their daily life as they look to you to provide for them.

How to Find Biblical Joy: When Our World Is in Turmoil

*O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love..." (Prayer of St. Francis)*

My husband's father grew up in the 1930s and '40s when many of the citizens of our country embraced what would be considered more conservative values. Most people in our country would have considered themselves Christian and probably attended church regularly. My father-in-law passed away in 2016. One of the things I remember was how he would often talk about the way things used to be when he was growing up and raising his family and how the world had changed so drastically since then. He often talked about how he was seeing things happen that he never could have imagined he would see in his lifetime.

A few months before he passed, my husband and I traveled to the retirement community where he and my mother-in-law had retired and had been living for several years. My mother-in-law had passed away two years before; he needed round-the-clock nursing care and was connected to a monitor that constantly kept track of his vital signs. That day, when we walked into his little one-room apartment, he was watching the news on TV. We joined him on the couch and began talking about what was being reported. After a few minutes, a nurse walked into the room to check and see how he was doing.



After she checked his vitals, she became alarmed and looked at us with concern. “Mr. Smith,” she said, “I think you should turn off the news. Your heart rate is up because you are stressed.” He adamantly assured her he felt fine, but the monitor revealed another story. He was unaware of how his body responded to the disturbing events he was seeing played out on the news. The nurse walked over to the television, turned it off, and strongly suggested we keep it off for the rest of the day. We are living in a world that has quickly become increasingly more chaotic than ever before.

What would you say if someone asked you how you are affected by what you see being lived out in our society and the world? If you are a Bible-believing Christian, you are in the minority. I now understand how my father-in-law felt when he said he was seeing things going on in our world that he never thought he would see in his lifetime. I can easily find myself getting stressed and tempted toward the faulty thinking that our world is in a hopeless state.



Bible Verses

Psalm 46:1-2 “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth gives way, and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.”

Meditating on verses like Psalm 46:1-2 can calm your anxious heart. It is too easy to focus on the turmoil and forget about God's part in it all. This verse helps shift our focus and puts it right back on the One who is in control of it all. He is our refuge, strength, and help. We do not need to fear.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9 “We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”

There is a comfort to be found in the knowledge that God will only allow things to go so far. He is holding out for just the right time for him to return and rescue us from all the evil that we are observing. Until then, he will sustain us and strengthen us. We can count on him for that!

PSALM 91:2 “I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

It is a normal human response to feel anxious when we see all that is happening around us, and, like my father-in-law, we might not even realize the impact that the chaos in our world is having on us physically and emotionally. We have the privilege of going to God, who is the only One we can fully trust. Our rest, strength, and comfort will only be found in Him. He is our refuge.

What Good Comes When Our World Is in Turmoil?

- When we see everything going on in our world, and so much of it is out of our control, we are given yet another opportunity to lean on and trust the One who is in control and who will give us the comfort and hope we need.
- Inevitably, we will find ourselves in conversations about what we see on the news and how scary it is. When this happens, we are given an opportunity to offer hope to those we are in conversation with. We can share with them the God who is our refuge and strength.
- When we are put in stressful situations that are much bigger than us and that we have no control over, we are given an opportunity to see where our own hope lies and evaluate our hearts. This is an opportunity to ask God to help us look to him alone for what we need and for the strength we need to handle what comes our way each day and to be able to offer that strength to others.

Find Biblical Joy By Focusing on God

THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being Omnipotent – an all-powerful God. You are strong and mighty and can accomplish anything you desire. You have all authority over everything that happens in this world, and we can trust you no matter what we see happening around us. This gives me comfort in chaotic times.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for your Word that offers hope and comfort in unstable times. The world continues to change, and there is more chaos than ever. You and your Word never change. I am so grateful.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, you have been faithful in my life and the world over the years. You hold all things together. Thank you that I can count on you to be faithful even when everything around us seems unstable.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Father, thank you for how you have provided for me all my life. In every way, you have provided what I need. Physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. You have provided all I need to live in this world, and I know you will continue to do so. Thank you!

How to Find Biblical Joy: When You Face Life Changes

“We can endure change when we ponder God’s permanence.” Max Lucado

I have had a tough time adjusting to change for as long as I can remember. Even the good, exciting, or fun changes were often hard for me. I would battle anxiety as I anticipated what was ahead and was often tempted to hold on to what was familiar. As I have been growing older, I have become more in tune and aware of how I tend to react to change, and I have been learning the best ways to prepare myself for what is ahead.

One of the most important things I have learned is that it is so helpful for me to spend time in prayer, asking God for specific things as I walk through life’s changes. I have learned to ask God to give me his peace as I approach the change, for his extra amount of grace as I walk through the change, and then for his perspective, and that he would show me his purpose as I adjust to the change.



I cannot tell you how amazing it has been to walk through some of life’s biggest and hardest changes this way. Looking ahead and preparing myself mentally and spiritually has been so helpful.

Yes, there have been tears and hard days. That is a normal emotion we will experience as we leave a season behind. But ultimately, God has walked me through some of life's biggest changes: The weddings of both of my children and coming home to an empty house, having to make the difficult decision to leave a church that we'd been in for years, and then having to find a new church, and walking through the experience of sitting by my dad's bedside while he slowly slipped away and learning what life is like after one of your parents passes away. God has walked me through these changes in a way I never imagined was possible.

I know that there are many more changes ahead. Some will be exciting, and some will be hard, but I know that if I remember how faithful God has been in each change I have faced so far, I will be okay in the future.

So, how can we find biblical joy when we face life changes?



Bible Verses

Deuteronomy 31:6 “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

When we face life changes, the only thing that will help us have some stability is knowing what God's Word says and choosing to cling to his truths. Deuteronomy 31 reminds us that the Lord our God never leaves us and is always with us. There is comfort in knowing that the God who has allowed and ordained the change is walking you through the change as well.

Ecclesiastes 3:1 “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens....”

Our life is often described by what “season” we are in. There are some seasons that we might be happy to have end, but most of the time, at least for me, there are mixed emotions when a season ends because it often means that relationships or people we have become familiar with might change. But the Word of God reminds us that there is a time for everything. Seasons end. Relationships change. People move on and grow up. That is the way life is, and it is how God planned it to be. God is the only thing in our life that will never leave or change.

Hebrews 13:8 “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

We serve a Savior who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is the one and only familiar and stable thing in our lives. That means that when our loved one dies, God is the same, and he is there to comfort and walk you through your grief. When our children leave the nest, God is the same, and he is there to comfort you and give you purpose. When you move from one city to another or from one job to another, God is the same and is there to walk you through the changes. He is also happy to introduce you to what he has called you to do and your purpose in this new season.

What Good Comes When You Face Life Changes?

Change provides us with an opportunity to rely on God and experience his grace in times of need. It also allows us to experience and see God's faithfulness as he meets our needs spiritually, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Change allows us to learn how to walk with God and trust him in unknown territory. It gives us an opportunity to know and experience him in a new way as we lean on him during what can be a time of uncertainty.

Change can be used to launch us into unfamiliar territory and new and exciting ministry opportunities. When we turn to God and ask him what he wants us to do in a new season, we have the opportunity to watch him work in ways we never imagined. There are new people to serve, share the gospel with, and new people to show the love of Christ to.

Find Biblical Joy

THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being an immutable God that never changes. You never change who you are; your attributes are the same from before the beginning of time into eternity, your character never changes, your plans never change, and your promises never change. That gives me such comfort as I live in a constantly changing world and face so many seasons of change.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for your promises that tell me you will never ever change, that you are always with me, that you know what is best for me, and that you are a good, good Father. Please help me always cling to those promises, especially in the hardest of life's changes.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Father, thank you for providing me with all that I need for life and godliness. Thank you that, even in uncertain times and when change is hard, you provide the strength and grace that I need to walk through it all in a way that glorifies and honors you and that your Word is a guidebook on how to walk through this life and experience biblical joy.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, thank you for your faithfulness in my life through every change that I have walked through. You have calmed my fears, comforted my heart, and gently ushered me into each season, giving me peace, purpose, and joy.

How to Find Biblical Joy: When You Are in a Time of Waiting

“I do know that waiting on God requires the willingness to bear uncertainty, to carry within oneself the unanswered question, lifting the heart to God about it whenever it intrudes upon one's thoughts. It is easy to talk oneself into a decision that has no permanence – easier sometimes than to wait patiently.” Elisabeth Elliot

Waiting for something that has been your deepest heart longing and desire can be exceedingly difficult, can't it? Especially when it is a “blind” waiting – a time when you really have no idea what to expect or if you will ever see your desire fulfilled. You have made your desires known to God, and there is no answer given, so all you can do is wait and trust the only One that has the power to provide you with what you have asked him for.

Can a person have joy when something they desperately want has been withheld? Can a single person have joy while they wait for God to provide a spouse? Can a young woman be joyful when waiting for God to provide her with a child? Can you have joy when you are waiting for the right job to come your way? Can you have joy when you are waiting to buy your first home, wondering why you are in a job you do not like that much, or waiting for God to bring healing to someone you love? How can you have joy in these tough times of waiting or when your request has been denied, either temporarily or permanently?

Bible Verses



Psalm 27:14 "Wait for the Lord; be strong and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!"

If you take time to remind yourself of Who it is that you are waiting on to do whatever it is that only he can do, there can be a sense of encouragement as you choose to focus on what His Word says. You will be reminded that he is God and knows what is best for you.

Psalm 130:5-6 "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word, I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning."

We must long for, eagerly anticipate an answer, and put our hope in God alone. Our rest and relief can only be found in him. Wait for the Lord and hope in his Word.

Isaiah 40:31 "But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."

Waiting on God does not mean we impatiently wait for what we want God to do with our arms folded in front of us, our eyes rolling, and breathing a heavy sigh. Waiting on God in a way that honors him is done with an actual sense of rest that can only be experienced when we focus on God and who he is, confidently acknowledging that he is the One who is in charge.

Isaiah 55:8,9 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

This is such a straightforward verse that puts all of life into perspective! God's thoughts and ways are higher than anything we can comprehend with our human mind. He always knows what is best. We can trust him even when we do not understand his ways.

What Good Comes When You Are in a Time of Waiting?

- You are given an opportunity to learn to trust in God in a new and much deeper way when you are waiting and do not know if or when your desires are going to be met. This time will grow you in a way that no other time can grow you.
- You are given an opportunity to willingly relinquish what you might want or think is best and get your heart aligned with his. This will eventually lead you to a place of peace and being content with whatever the outcome might be.
- You have an opportunity to practice living one day at a time and being faithful to the moments you have been given rather than living with your eyes on the future and what it is that you want God to provide for you or for him to make happen.



Find Biblical Joy By Focusing on God

THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being an omniscient God – You are the One who has perfect knowledge of all things and knows the future and how all things are going to play out. Because of that reality, I know I can trust you with all my wants and desires, big and small. Thank you.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for your promises that tell me you work all things for my good, know what is best, and that your ways are perfect. I may not understand, but I trust your heart and your perfect plan.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, thank you for being a faithful Father. One who has never failed me even one time in my lifetime and one who has never, ever forgotten me. I know you will be faithful in the future in the same way you have been faithful in the past. I trust you.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Father, thank you for how you have provided for me in every way for all my life. Thank you for this waiting time and that you are preparing me for all that is ahead. Thank you for reminding me and assuring me that you always have a much better plan than I could ever imagine.

How to Find Biblical Joy: When You Don't Feel Like Fighting for Joy

"God does not mean for us to be passive. He means for us to fight the fight of faith, --the fight for joy. This is war. If we remain passive, we surrender the field to him." — John Piper

I was going through one of the hardest seasons I had ever faced. There was not one part of my life that had not been affected, and it felt like I was quickly losing the battle. My marriage, health, family life, place of ministry, church life, and mental state were all under attack, and I did not think I even wanted to fight to have biblical joy in each of these areas anymore. I was tired. I felt like I was finished.

Thankfully, the Holy Spirit would not leave me alone. I had to somehow figure out a way to persevere in my callings. I had to do what it took to take care of my physical and mental health. But how could I do that? How could I persevere when I had absolutely no strength left and no desire to? Frightened by the place I found myself and by how I was feeling, there was only one thing I could think of to do. I began to pray a simple prayer: "Lord, please change my heart!"

In the quiet of sleepless nights and monotonous tasks that left me exhausted, I began to pray this prayer. "Lord, please change my heart. Lord, please change my heart. Please help me to want to persevere."

I would get up each morning and choose to put one foot in front of another and do the next thing, but my heart was not in any of it -- until suddenly it WAS! Over time my heart began to soften. The desire to persevere slowly began to bubble up inside of me with fresh strength! The mental choice to walk in obedience one step at a time, even when I did not want to, turned into a heart's desire that empowered each step to do all for the glory of God once again. I was finally able to experience biblical joy once again. God had answered my desperate prayer. I am so thankful!

Bible Verses

"Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice!" Psalm 130:1

"All my longings lie open before you, Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you. My heart pounds, my strength fails me; even the light has gone from my eyes." Psalm 38:9-11

"You will find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" Jeremiah 29:13

"I will give you a new heart, put a new spirit in you. I will remove the stone heart from your body and replace it with a heart that is God-willed, not self-willed. I will put my Spirit in you and make it possible for you to do what I tell you and live by my commands" Ezekiel 36:26-27

During the difficult season I describe, I was introduced to the Prayer of Lament and began learning how to pray this type of prayer. I learned that it is okay to "complain" to God and tell him all that I was feeling and why I felt the way I did. There was something about this that was very freeing. I did not have to feel weighed down with guilt for how I was feeling anymore, and I could actually tell God about it. He was strong enough to carry it all! This kind of praying began the process of my heart changing. After pouring out my heart to him, I asked him to change my heart! He reminded me of all the times he had been faithful in my life, and he began to bring to mind all his precious promises that are found in his Word. This filled me with the joy and strength that I needed to persevere.

What Good Comes When You Don't Feel Like Fighting for Joy?

We reach a point of helplessness and vulnerability that can be laid before God, and the following prayers are heartfelt, honest prayers of desperation. When we can see and acknowledge that we are desperate and have lost our desire to persevere, we have begun the process of allowing God to do work to revive us.

A job that only he can do.

We have the opportunity to experience how much we need God in order for our hearts to change. This is the only way we can experience his life and joy. These are things that only he can provide.

We have the privilege of going through such a life-changing and life-giving experience with God so that we can, in turn, help others look to God and experience the same when they go through similar seasons.

Find Biblical Joy By Focusing on God

THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being Yahweh-Nissi - "The Lord Our Banner". In the same way that you were a banner or rallying place in Exodus 17, giving victory over the Amalekites, you are my banner and rallying place! You are helping me fight this intense battle, and you are the One who gives me victory! I am so grateful!

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for your promises that you have provided all that we need to fight the battles that take place every single day and for the promises that you are always there to empower us as we fight. You will never leave us.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, thank you for all the victories you have enabled me to have over the years and the battles you have won. Thank you for being a rallying place! You have been so faithful.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Father, thank you for allowing me to be honest with you in prayer and for providing the strength I need when I need it. Thank you for your Word, the Holy Spirit, and for the body of Christ, all gifts from you and provisions that help me to persevere and experience biblical joy.



How to Find Biblical Joy: When You Are in Mom Survival Mode

“Moms must be strengthened by grace to make the necessary sacrifices and to do the mundane, routine things that move the gospel forward.... We want Christ’s power to be made perfect through us weak moms. So, we will boast all the more gladly of our weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon us.”

-Missional Motherhood

Being a mom has been the most incredible and difficult thing I have ever done. I love being a mom and would not trade it for anything, but there have been days when I have wanted to escape or forget about it for just a few hours so I could give my brain a rest from the all-consuming thoughts of how to be a mom in the best way humanely possible!

Mom survival mode can begin when you bring your newborn home, but now that my children are both grown and married, I see that there is still an element of survival mode that stays with you in the empty nest years. In this time you look back at all that you have done, and you see the good and the bad, the success and the failure. You can see the things you could have done better and the things you really did not need to do. Your children are now able to sift through their childhood and evaluate how they were affected – for the good and the not-so-good. As parents, we are left with many memories, a few regrets, and an evident awareness that we had our one shot, and now we must live with the outcome of all that we did. We can walk in discouragement and defeat (survival mode), allowing it to steal our joy, or we can walk in humility and openly admit to our grown children that we know we made some mistakes and are continuing to grow and learn. We need God to enable us to see how important our calling of being a mom really is, and we need him to help us learn how to best love our children, regardless of our season, so we might be able to point them to God and love them the way that God loves us.

Bible Verses



Deuteronomy 6:6-7 *“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up.”*

When our children are little, we can pray for the strength to be available to them when they need us to be and that we will not miss the opportunities to teach them God’s truths and promises throughout the day. Being in the Word and sharing it with your children will help you keep your mind on Christ and lift you out of survival mode and into motherhood with purpose and joy. When our children are grown, we can pray that the truths we taught them will continue to guide who they are today and that we will be guided by those truths as well. This will lift us out of the condemnation or discouragement and into motherhood filled with the joy that is found in the truths and promises found in God’s Word.

Matthew 25:21 *“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’*

Whether you are a mom of littles, teens, or have grown children, you can pray that God would help you to see your calling to be a mom, in every season of motherhood, as a joyous task. You can offer your efforts up to God, bathing each task in prayer that you will catch His vision of keeping a home, and nurturing those who are in it, for the glory of God, remembering that if you are faithful, you will be considered to be *“...worth far more than rubies,”* and you will one day hear the words, *“Well done, good and faithful servant!”* Matt. 25:21).

What Good Can Come From Being in Survival Mode?

You have the opportunity to lean on God and ask him for his perspective as you go throughout your day, accomplishing whatever tasks your season of motherhood requires of you. If you have been given the privilege of having children, you have a significant role in the lives of my children, regardless of their age.

You have an opportunity to choose to step out of survival mode when you choose to fight for biblical joy. This can be accomplished when you ask God to help you to truly see, from your heart, that your children are a precious gift. You can tell them every day, for all their lives, that they are a gift from God's hand. Telling my children this repeatedly, even as adults, keeps my heart soft towards them and stirs up gratefulness and joy because I have had the privilege of being their mom.

Find Biblical Joy By Focusing on God

THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being Yahweh M'Kaddesh. You are the Lord who sanctifies me and makes me holy. Thank you for using the calling of being a mom to show me how weak I am and how much I need you. In all the hard days, the days when I feel like I am just surviving, or when I am discouraged because of my failures as a mom, you are there to help me and are using the hard stuff to sanctify me and make me holy.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for your promises that give me so much joy. Promises that You are with me will never leave me and that You are using all things for my good, my children are good, and for Your glory.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, thank you for your faithfulness in every season of motherhood. Thank you that in every hard moment and with every challenge, I can do more than just survive. I can thrive and have joy in motherhood because I know that you are faithful to accomplish what you have promised to accomplish – in me and my children.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Father, thank you for providing for all my needs and my children's needs in every season. You have provided what we need physically, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally. You have surrounded us with your grace and strength. You have filled us with joy that is found in you alone.

How to Find Biblical Joy: When You Enter the Empty Nest Season

"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:19)

A couple of years before my children moved out of our home, I began praying for God to prepare my heart for what I knew would be a difficult transition. In the summer of 2018, my daughter got married and my son moved out for work.

When the excitement of that summer settled down, and we went back to normal life, the reality of both of my kids moving out and what that meant moving forward hit me like a ton of bricks! I missed them. I had devoted myself to being their mom every day for over 20 years, and overnight, life changed. Things would never be the same again.

During those challenging days, I reached out to a few moms who had already transitioned into the empty nest season. They assured me that the way that I was feeling was normal. That comforted me, but I knew that I needed to be able to do more than just make it through each day. I needed to face each day with hope and joy so that I could see God's purpose for me in this new season. So, again, I began to pray. Daily I would reflect on all the ways that God had been faithful in my life as I was raising my kids; I would thank him for all he had done and how he provided for me. I would spend time in prayer for my kids and thank God for how he had worked with them over the years. Then I would ask him to enable me to move into the new season with joy in him, despite my aching heart.

As always, God was faithful! No, the ache did not go away right away, but I was able to experience joy amidst the feelings that come when your children leave the nest!

Bible Verses

"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." (Isaiah 43:19)

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted." Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, and forever." Hebrews 13:8

This is not the end, even though it feels like it is! We have spent every waking hour pouring ourselves out for our children and making sure they are cared for and loved. When they move out of the home, it can feel like our purpose has moved out with them, and you miss connecting with them daily. Of course, you will go through a time of grieving! How can you NOT grieve? They are our most precious gifts from God! Let me assure you, God has more for you to do for him. It might take time to figure out and adjust to what life looks like now, but it will come. Be patient with yourself. Allow yourself to grieve.

God has designated a season for everything we experience in life, and growing and raising a family is one of those things. We know this, but it can be very difficult when the seasons change. Especially the empty nest season. Change is hard. It means the familiar fades, leaving us to build a new normal. Sometimes that is a welcome and exciting thing. Sometimes it will include a time of grieving. You are allowed to grieve in this change – but be sure to focus on God in the grieving.

What Good Can Come When You Enter the Empty Nest Season?

- You have an opportunity to press in closer to God, the One who can comfort you and remind you that he is faithful, even in this difficult change.
- You have an opportunity to ask God to show you what new things he has for you to do in a new season. You may have released your children into the world, but you are now released to do new and different things!
- You can learn how to be the best mom of adult children you can be. You can seek God and ask him to teach you how to glorify him and how to be a blessing to your adult children in this new season. It is a learning curve, but God will guide you if you ask him to.



Find Biblical Joy By Focusing on God

THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being Jehovah-Rapha - "The Lord Who Heals"! My children leaving our home is something that You have planned all along. It is a good thing. But I am feeling so sad right now. You are the God who heals, and I trust that you will heal my heart and guide me into a new way of living.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for the promises that tell me you never change, will never leave me, and will carry and guide me even when life is constantly changing.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, thank you for being faithful in my life and in the life of my children all these years. You have faithfully guided us through every season of parenting, and we have done the best we can do. I relinquish my grown children to you today, knowing that you will continue to be faithful in their lives and in mine.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Father, thank you for how you have provided for my family over all the years that we have been living under one roof. I am so grateful. I trust you to continue to provide all that we need physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

How to Find Biblical Joy: When Difficult Circumstances Do Not Change

“Biblical joy is not something that comes and goes; it is not dictated by our circumstances. Biblical joy is something that exists even when we are suffering or going through a heavy trial, because it is based on the knowledge that God is present, walking with us in our trials, producing good fruit in us as we go through the trial, and will use it as a platform for him to be seen by others.” (Excerpt taken from "Everyday Prayers for Joy" by Gina L. Smith)

A few years ago, the word "Joy" became my word after God had ushered my family and me into a season of some exceedingly difficult circumstances. This season lasted for several years. It was the longest amount of time that I had ever personally experienced where nothing made sense, and I had to trust God, one day at a time, not knowing if or when the season would end.

One night, when I could not sleep, I quietly tiptoed to our living room, and sat on the couch. The only light in the room came from 3 letters on a shelf: "J-O-Y." As I sat there, I began to ask God how I could begin to experience his kind of joy – a joy that was present despite my circumstances. A joy that was found in Him.

That night I knew God wanted me to learn His definition of joy. Not merely an intellectual knowledge of the definition. He wanted it to be my heart and soul, a deep experience. He wanted me to experience the joy that can only be found in him. I came to the end of every resource I had been clinging to and was forced to sit alone before the Lord. He opened my eyes to the fact that I have often found joy in all the wonderful things He has provided for me and allowed me to be a part of.

I was not regularly finding my joy in the One who had provided all those wonderful blessings. It became evident that I needed to begin learning what it meant to find joy in Christ alone. A joy that did not fade when my circumstances changed or became difficult.

Bible Verses

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

James 1:2-4

This verse, the "joy verse," sums up what happens when we choose biblical joy. When we choose to view our circumstances through the eyes of our Creator, we will experience growth and maturity that can only come when we go through tough times. God wants what is best for us, and he knows what it will take for us to accomplish his best. He produces in us an ability to persevere in our faith, and he perfects us, making us more like him when we "count it all joy"!

"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Colossians 3:2

When you choose to focus your thoughts on things that cannot be taken away, things that are not on this earth, then our circumstances will not be able to be used by the enemy to steal the joy we have found that is only found by focusing on God and his promises.

"So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:18

Again, we are instructed to focus on the things that are eternal. Those things that cannot be taken away and that will last forever. Will the sadness we feel because of the hard things we are facing go away? Not always. But we can have biblical joy amid difficult circumstances. We can find encouragement when we remember that the longest this trial (or any trial) can last is a lifetime. Eternity is forever, and there will be no more pain, tears, or suffering!



What Good Comes When Difficult Circumstances Don't Change?

When you find yourself in long-term difficult circumstances, you are given an opportunity to choose to trust God. Those things that burden you or break your heart are not too heavy for God's shoulders to bear for us.

You have an opportunity to learn to choose to focus on eternity by being in the Word and being reminded of all the things that God promises are to come when this life is over. Focusing on the eternal helps us to take our eyes off the temporal.

You have the opportunity to choose to shift your focus and place your hope in God and not in your circumstance or the things and people around you.

Find Biblical Joy By Focusing on God

THANK HIM FOR WHO HE IS:

Father, thank you for being El Simchah Giyli – God, My Exceeding Joy. You are in the center of these difficult circumstances. What is happening in my life did not surprise you. Joy that is found in You is not dependent on my circumstances or feelings. Thank you for loving me enough to make that kind of joy available. You are truly My Exceeding Joy.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROMISES:

Father, thank you for your promises that tell me that there is more to life than the temporary life we experience here on this earth.

Thank you for the hope you give when I read your countless promises that tell me that one day there will be no more pain, tears, or suffering.

THANK HIM FOR HIS FAITHFULNESS:

Father, you are faithful. Help me to remember all the ways that you have been faithful over my entire lifetime, and please use those memories to encourage my heart during this difficult season. Please use them to lift me out of this hard place and put me in a place of hope and joy.

THANK HIM FOR HIS PROVISIONS:

Father, thank you for providing me with Your Word and its promises.

Thank you for the Holy Spirit, who empowers me to persevere in tough times. And thank you for the people you have placed in my life, in this moment, that can give me counsel and help bear my burdens.

You are so merciful. You are so good.

How to Find Biblical Joy: When Difficult Circumstances Do Not Change

“It is not wrong to say, “We were made for God.” It is not wrong to say, “We were made for joy.” It is not wrong to say, “We were made to praise.” But it is more fully true to say, “We were made to enjoy God with overflowing praise.” This is the ultimate goal of life.” -John Piper

This is the last article in this series on biblical joy. In each article written, I have taken the reader through some steps that can be taken when you find yourself experiencing difficult circumstances and want to fight for joy. These are the steps that God has been teaching me and that I use personally on a regular basis. Steps that, if followed, can help you to experience joy no matter your circumstances.

What is biblical joy? Simply stated, it is a joy that comes from focusing on God, who he is, His faithfulness, and His promises. It is a joy that comes from taking our focus off of the things in this temporary, always-changing world and focusing on a faithful, unchanging God who has given us many promises in his Word that tell us that there is so much waiting for us in eternity and that he is using all that we go through in this life to prepare us for eternity. Those promises can be used to lift us above the daily hard things and fill us with joy that cannot be taken from us.

True Joy Can Be Found in God Alone

One of the names of God is El Simchah Giyli, and it means “God My Exceeding Joy.” The (Hebrew) words “simchah” and “giyl” mean “gladness,” “pleasure,” and “great joy.” When used, it is the same as calling God “your ecstatic joy”! Don’t you love that? We see this name used in Psalm 43.

The 43rd Psalm shows us a man going through some heart-wrenching difficulty. He prays, “Why have you rejected me? Vindicate me! Rescue me! Why do I have to go around mourning & oppressed by my enemy?” But then he quickly turns his focus to the One who is his exceeding joy! Right in the middle of his difficult circumstances, he fights for joy by focusing on God (his exceeding joy) and putting his hope in Him, not his circumstances!

“Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God. Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior, and my God.” Psalm 43:4,5
To experience biblical joy is to experience a joyful relationship with El Simchah Giyli – God, My Exceeding Joy. He is joy. Joy is found in him! Joy is found in who he is! Joy is found in his promises!

The Steps to Experiencing Biblical Joy

1. Read the Bible

The best way to get to know God (My Exceeding Joy) is by spending time in his Word, the Bible. The Bible is the book He gave us that tells us who He is, about His character, about His relationship with his people, how He has worked in the past and how He is working now, how He wants us to live, what He has done for us, and what the future holds for those who follow Him. It tells us how He sent His son, Jesus, and how we can be guaranteed an eternity spent with Him. Only when we get to know God and how he uses difficulty in our lives will we be able to experience true biblical joy.

2. Spend Time in Prayer, Focusing on God

In order to truly experience biblical joy, we need to choose what we will focus on. Will we focus on our difficult circumstances and become anxious, stressed, hopeless, depressed, and find ourselves in despair? Or will we lift our gaze up to God, Our Exceeding Joy, and experience peace, joy, and hope? Will we choose to experience, as described in the meaning of his name, “El Simchah Giyli”- “gladness,” “pleasure,” and “great joy”?



3. Pray! (Four Prayers to Pray):

1. Thank God for Who He is:

Find Bible verses describing God and discussing his character. Pray through these verses and thank him specifically for who he is. You can also find documents online that have the names of God and what they mean. Take time to read and pray through the names of God and thank him for who he is, according to the meaning of each name.

2. Thank God for His Faithfulness:

Take time to reflect on all God has done in your life up until now. Thank him for all the ways that he has been faithful. Then, look in his Word and look for the ways he shows his faithfulness in the lives of people there or the verses that tell how he is faithful. Pray through these verses or passages and thank him for his faithfulness.

3. Thank God for His Promises:

Spend time reading God's Word and find the promises there. Promises about the future, about eternity, about what he is doing in you during tough times, and how he promises to help and strengthen you. Pray these verses back to him and thank him for all his promises.



4. Thank God for His Provision:

Take time to reflect on your life and notice all the ways God has provided for you. List the things that come to mind and spend time thanking him. Then, go to the Word and find verses telling you about things he has provided for you and promises to provide for you. Pray through these verses and spend time thanking him.

If you follow these steps (or you can come up with something similar that works better for you and focuses you on God), you will come away with a heart filled with strength and joy, even if your circumstances have not changed. You will be focused on the only One who can be Your Exceeding Joy. I have found that when I pray in this way (or even if I just go through one step of the four prayers), I am filled with the joy and strength I need to be faithful and persevere in my walk with God. Nehemiah 8 speaks of this strength in verse 10: “The joy of the Lord is my strength!”

Yes! The joy of the Lord – the joy of in El Simchah Giyli (God My Exceeding Joy) is your strength! I pray that this 15-day series has helped you in your fight to experience biblical joy amidst the difficult circumstances in your life!



Gina Smith is a writer and author. She has been married for 34 years to Brian, a college professor, and athletic trainer. For 25+ years she and her husband served on a Christian college campus as the on-campus parents, where Brian was a professor and dean of students. They reside right outside of Washington DC and are the parents of two grown children, one daughter-in-law, and one son-in-law. She recently authored her first traditionally published book *Everyday Prayers for Joy*, available everywhere books are sold. You can find Gina at the following: [Website:ginasmith.com](http://ginasmith.com), [Instagram](#), and at [Million Praying Moms](#), where she is a writer.