



Reclaiming Your
JOY

A Bible Study on Conquering Your Joy-Stealers

LORRAINE HILL



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LEADER'S GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome!

I am so excited that you have decided to lead the *Reclaiming Your Joy* Bible study. The heart of this study is that people will experience the amazing joy that Jesus readily offers us – not a partial joy dependent on circumstances and people, but a full joy based in Him and in His promises.

By choosing to lead this study and help lead Christians deeper into God's Word, you will be given the opportunity by God to change people's lives and impact them for eternity. I can't wait to hear how God's Word grows and changes your group. Thank you for your willingness to be used of God in this way!

This Leader's Guide will equip you to lead this study by providing administrative information and general instructions. These are only suggestions, however, because each of you has the magnificent Holy Spirit in you, and He can equip you far better than I in leading this study. Even more importantly, the Holy Spirit knows the participants of your group and knows their needs so I strongly urge you to follow His guiding hand.

OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE STUDY

The Reclaiming Your Joy study is an eight week in-depth Bible study. Each week contains daily homework for five days. The estimated time to complete the homework is about thirty minutes. The homework includes a variety of questions, like fill-in-the-blank statements, multiple choice questions, yes/no questions, and matching questions. This allows the participant to take the material and personally apply it to his or her life. There are also Challenge questions, which allow a participant to go deeper into the Word.

NOTES

PREPARING FOR YOUR BIBLE STUDY CONTINUED

- Create nametags for individual participants and keep several extras available. In the early stages, nametags are helpful in assisting participants to bond with each other and feel comfortable sharing personal information.
- Have a leadership meeting before you start the study. Go over leadership roles, establish expectations, and discuss the responsibilities of Small Group leaders (see *Facilitating Small Groups* section below).
- Depending on your group, you may want to have a mid-semester and end of year fellowship. This allows all the participants to grow deeper in their relationships with each other. It is also nice to have food on the first night, to kick off the study.

NOTES

CREATING SMALL GROUPS

Small group discussion is an important part of this study because it allows individuals the opportunity to share what God has revealed to them through the study and ask questions of other believers to increase in their own understanding. It also creates community and builds fellowship, which is important within the body of Christ. Participants can listen, encourage and pray for one another. It is amazing how God often places people who need each other in the same groups so that they can minister to one another during the study.

The most effective size for small groups seems to be around 10-12 people. A group of more than twelve people tends to not allow each individual the opportunity to share.

If you have any questions or need help organizing your study, please visit the Leaders Forum at CaptivatedbyGod.org. It will help answer your questions, provide you unique suggestions, and allow you to share your experience with other leaders.

NOTES

WEEK 1 - OUR GREAT CALLING

I am so excited to start this journey with you and cannot wait to hear how God has moved in the hearts of your Ladies!

Theme for the Week ~

As Christians, we should experience abundant, overflowing joy no matter the circumstances or hardships in our lives.

Day 1 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Scripture's resounding theme is that Christians should experience abundant, overflowing joy.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Who are three of the most joyful people that you know? What makes these people so joyful?

Day 2 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Joy remains elusive for some of us because we do not pursue joy—we pursue happiness, that transitory feeling of fulfillment.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Have you sought fulfillment through money and possessions? As you have achieved your financial goals, have you become content or created new financial goals?

Day 3 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** The depth of joy we experience depends on the depth of our relationship with the Lord.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Is anything currently hindering you in your relationship with God?

Day 4 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** A full relationship with the Lord means that we wholeheartedly devote ourselves to him and do not flirt with the world.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What are some things that divide your affection for the Lord? Which ones do you succumb to most?

Day 5 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** No one takes our joy from us. We choose whether we will relinquish it because of a situation, person, or sin or whether we will cultivate and nurture it.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Can you think of some ways that Satan seeks to steal your joy?

WEEK 2 - ABIDING JOY

Theme for the Week ~

We cultivate the fruit of joy by deepening our relationship with God, obeying His commands and submitting to His Word. We wither the fruit of joy by grieving the Holy Spirit, keeping known sin in our lives or disobeying the Lord.

Day 1 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, produced naturally in us as we abide in Christ.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What are three of your greatest challenges for living a *daily* joyous life?

Day 2 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Obedience is the gateway that opens the flood gates of joy to us.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Share an instance in which obedience to God resulted in great joy.

Day 3 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Legalism is death to the Christian walk for it makes the Christian walk harsh and demanding instead of exciting and joyous.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Do you think legalism is a big issue or a small issue for the church today? Can you think of any legalistic rules that plague the church?

Day 4 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Because legalism grows slowly and subtly, it can easily creep into our lives if we do not diligently guard against it.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What challenges you most in your walk of liberty (freedom in Christ)?

Day 5 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Whenever we choose to sin, we are saying yes to a momentary satisfaction and no to lasting joy; we are choosing an earthly pleasure over an eternal fulfillment.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Do you have close friends that will rebuke you when you sin or do they tend to sympathize with you? Explain.

WEEK 3 – WEIGHED DOWN BY WORRY

Theme for the Week ~

Worry steals our joy by diverting our attention away from the Lord and by causing us to doubt God's goodness and faithfulness.

Day 1 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Worry causes us to squander the blessings of today by keeping us focused on the possible problems of tomorrow.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How do your worries hinder you *spiritually* in your Christian walk?

Day 2 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Worry and belief are rivals in our heart, warring against each other for supremacy; when worry wins, belief loses.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Do you ever say you trust the Lord, but then think of a second option just in case the Lord does not come through? Is this really trusting in the Lord?

Day 3 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** One of the main reasons we worry is because we lose our focus, taking our eyes off the prize of Christ and losing ourselves in the problems of this world.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** If you were in the boat, would you have asked Jesus what Peter asked Him? Why or why not?

Day 4 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Through prayer, we release our burdens to the Lord and obtain the perfect peace of God, a peace that surpasses understanding.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Why is it important that we not only pray, but also redirect our worrisome thoughts?

Day 5 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** We need to focus on God-ordained tasks instead of worldly focused activities, eternal pursuits rather than earthly diversions.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Based on the discussion in Day 5, do you think you need to slow down the pace of your life? If so, what changes do you need to make?

WEEK 4 – WEARIED BY PEOPLE

*T*hank you for caring for God's flock and encouraging them in the Word. I know it requires a tremendous amount of time and commitment on your part, but I am so thankful for your willingness. May the Lord continue to bless you, your study, and your participants!

Theme for the Week ~

As we better understand how the Lord wants us to view people, they will not continue to steal our joy.

Day 1 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** God has poured his love into us so that we can shower other people with the love we have received.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Why does the Lord stress the need for us to love others (Romans 13:8-10)?

Day 2 ~

- KEY THOUGHT:** Much of the frustrations and irritations that we experience with people stem from differences in personality, dispositions, and traditions
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How can personality differences cause conflicts within the body of Christ?

Day 3 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Demonstrating compassion often entails sacrifice and inconvenience.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Has practicality ever inhibited you from expressing compassion to someone? Explain.

Day 4 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Loving others deeply is our witness to an unbelieving world.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How can praying for our enemies or for a difficult person help (Matthew 5:44)?

Day 5 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** We must not try to please both man and God, or we may fail to truly please God.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How can seeking to please people hinder our Christian walk?

WEEK 5 – DOWNCAST BY DISAPPOINTMENT

I have to confess that this is one of my favorite chapters, perhaps because I tend to be easily discouraged and so the Lord has to re-direct my focus. Plus, we have the privilege of studying about Joseph, whom I love. I think he may be my favorite Bible character.

Theme for the Week ~

Disappointments often steal our joy because they shift our focus from the Lord to ourselves. During these difficult times, we tend to forget our Lord's great love for us and listen to Satan's deceitful whispers.

Day 1 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Though others may forget us or forsake us, our Lord always remembers us for he has engraved us on the palms of his hands.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What are some of the disappointments that you have faced in your life?

Day 2 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** We must trust the Lord even when the light turns to darkness and when the mountain top becomes a valley bottom.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Which of Satan's lies do you tend to succumb to the most?

Day 3 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** As we stand at the gates of eternity, everything will seem right.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How can maintaining an eternal perspective help us to deal with our disappointments?

Day 4 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** God lavishes his love on us, always seeking our best from an eternal perspective.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Will God withhold something that is in our best interest (Psalm 84:11)? How does this encourage you?

Day 5 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Reflecting on the greatness of God enables us to move past the hurts and disappointments of this life.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How can focusing on the Lord keep you from becoming discouraged and disillusioned?

WEEK 6 – IMPRISONED BY UNFORGIVENESS

Can you believe that we are over half way done with the study? Hopefully, God has enabled your group to better understand the nature of joy and how to overcome some of their joy-stealers. If some of your members seem to fall back into their old habits, you may want to gently remind them that God did not redeem us because we were a perfect people, but because we were a sinful people. We will make mistakes and we will fail at times. Thankfully God's grace carries us!

Theme for the Week ~

We will never experience true abundant joy if we have seeds of bitterness, unforgiveness, or resentment in our hearts.

Day 1 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** With God living in us, we have the power to forgive others just as Christ forgave us.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What do you learn about forgiveness from the Matthew 18 passage?

Day 2 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** The heart of forgiveness rests on our understanding of how much we have been forgiven.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What does it mean to forgive? Why is forgiveness so difficult?

Day 3 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Revenge and retaliation are never the answer—they only create greater problems and more issues.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Have you ever felt betrayed by a family member or a friend? Explain.

Day 4 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Once the seed of bitterness takes root, it produces its sour fruit, imprisoning us by turning our gaze inwards and poisoning our lives with self-pity.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What should we take captive (2 Corinthians 10:5)? Why is this so important? What happens when we do not take our thoughts captive?

Day 5 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** In forgiving others, we allow God, as our protector and avenger, to administer perfect justice and to right our wrongs.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How does it encourage you to know that the Lord has seen every hurt and offense ever committed against you?

WEEK 7 – TROUBLED BY TRIALS

Theme for the Week ~

Remembering that trials prove our character, enable us to know God more fully, and will provide an eternal harvest enable us to rejoice during difficulties and hardships.

Day 1 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** The road to glory is strewn with hardship and suffering, yet God's joy for us is deeper than any situation we face.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Does righteous behavior always receive a positive *earthly* reward? Explain.

Day 2 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** God's primary concern for our life is not our comfort but our character.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How does Paul and Silas's behavior impact those around them in Acts 16:25-34?

Day 3 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** God lovingly allows us to be sifted because there is chaff in our lives that needs to be removed.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Why does Jesus allow Satan to sift Peter? Why does Jesus allow Satan to sift us?

Day 4 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Our suffering becomes sweet as we realize that trials are special times with our Lord, treasured moments of growth.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Share what you learned in the exercise with the personalized scale.

Day 5 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Trials are a divine appointment by God sovereignly orchestrated to help us grow and mature in our faith.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Compare what happened to James to what happened to Peter in Acts 12:1-11. How do you witness God's sovereignty in this situation? How can you apply this to your life?

WEEK 8 – ABOUNDING IN THANKFULNESS

I cannot believe our time has come to an end. Thank you for persevering and encouraging your participants. I know it has not always been easy for you as the Leader, but the harvest is great! Because of you people are able to better know the Lord, His Word and His desires for their lives. Thank you!

Theme for the Week ~

Thankfulness is the jewel of joy because as we reflect on God's goodness to us through creation and salvation, we overflow with joy.

Day 1 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Thankfulness magnifies our joy as we reflect on God's goodness to us.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Have you ever had to lose a blessing in order to realize its value and become thankful for it? Explain.

Day 2 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Complaining and criticizing often stem from a sense of entitlement, in which we feel that we deserve better or are entitled to certain privileges.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** As the people grumble to Moses and Aaron, against whom are they really grumbling (Exodus 16:8b)?

Day 3 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Realizing that God did not have to make us, but willingly chose to do so and that he rejoices over us should create great joy and thankfulness in us.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What are some creative ways in which Christians can curb their complaining?

Day 4 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** Creating memorials in our lives helps us to remember God's gracious provision and goodness to us.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Why do you think it is important to not forget what the Lord has done for us?

Day 5 ~

- **KEY THOUGHT:** If standing at the foot of the cross does not cause us to overflow with thankfulness and joy, then we have not stood there long enough.
- **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How has your salvation changed your life? How can reflecting on your salvation enable you to remain more thankful and joyous?

A FINAL NOTE

Thank you again for your willingness to lead this study. Because of your faithfulness, many people will be able to go deeper in the Word and their relationship with God. What a privilege it is to study God's glorious Word with you and other believers. I pray that God will use you to expand His kingdom and grow his people. I can't wait to hear your stories! And if I don't hear them in this lifetime, then we have all of eternity to catch up!

Lorraine Hill