DISCOVERING THE JOY OF THE JOURNEY
During the next few weeks, we'll explore what it means to discover joy in the journey of life. But we need to know what we’re looking for. What is joy? How will we know when we have discovered it?

Joy is not another word for happiness. A joyful person can be happy but doesn’t have to be happy in order to maintain a joyful outlook. A person in deep grief will probably not be happy but can still choose joy. Happiness can’t be predicted or guaranteed. But joy is there for the choosing.

Joy is not a feeling. Joy is a choice. Happiness, like all feelings, comes and goes. As has often been observed, happiness depends on what happens; and when what happens turns hard or painful, happiness is usually the first victim.

So, if joy isn’t a feeling, like happiness, then what is it? Joy is a settled confidence that is deeper and more resilient than high or low feelings. Joy, as we will discover this month, flows out of a life anchored in unchanging truth. Keep these words of Jesus in mind throughout the weeks to come: “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11). The more we discover Jesus, the more we discover joy.
Most of us realize that there aren’t many sure things in life. The list of what we can lose is much longer than the list of what we know we can keep. People leave; toys break; cars wear out; we lose things; we get old and loved ones die. One of the reasons that change is hard for us is because we expect things, that are bound to change, not to change. Missionary Jim Elliot’s memorable words continue to challenge us: “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose.” Many people spend their entire lives trying to hang onto things they will lose but give little thought to things that will last forever.

One of the primary sources of joy is found in the certainty of salvation in Christ. This is not a certainty that rests on us or our efforts but entirely on Christ’s character, Christ’s cross and God’s grace. What we mean by the word salvation here has to do with the fact that we are rescued from one destiny (hell) and given a new destiny (heaven). We are well on our way to drowning in sin until Jesus makes our rescue possible and gives us life—life that is eternal with Him.

Because we were drowning in sin rather than in the sea, Jesus’ rescue mission involved both sacrifice and substitution. It cost Him His own life to rescue us. As the Bible puts it, “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:13–14).

Certainty of salvation is a great reason for joy. Jesus called His words “the rock” on which to build a life (Matt. 7:24). He also said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Mark 13:31). He was talking about something we cannot lose once we have Him.

After the Resurrection, the disciples were still thinking about things they could keep, like the physical presence of Jesus. Thomas insisted on seeing and touching Him. He wanted certainty based on his senses. Jesus had to teach him that a better certainty is based on faith. (See John 20:29.)

And John, in this lesson’s key verse, reminds us that certainty (and joy) comes from having “life in His name.”

READIT

John 20:24–31

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:31).

This week, rejoice that Jesus won’t change His mind about you.

The Joy of Certain Salvation

Week 1
We need to develop a healthy disregard for our feelings. The certainty of salvation that we have in Christ doesn’t necessarily mean that we always feel certain or secure. Joy begins to take hold when we are willing to remain confident of our salvation in Christ even in the middle of life’s uncertainties and insecurity. Faced with loss, grief, disappointment and failure, we can still turn to Jesus and say, “You are my joy.” In what areas of your life can you say that today?

Are there places in your life where joy is absent because you’d been counting on something that suddenly changed? A job loss, a move, an unexpected change are all experiences that demolish certainty in the wrong things. As you pray today, ask the Lord for increased wisdom to find your joy in Him and the certainty of the salvation you have in Him.
**REMEMBER IT**

1. Which disciple was not present at the first post-resurrection appearance of Jesus?

2. How many days passed until Jesus’ second appearance to the disciples?

3. What were Jesus’ first words upon appearing to the disciples?

4. Jesus did many more what that aren’t recorded in this book?

5. The Book of John was written so that people would believe what?

**SEEK IT**  
Go deeper into your study of this week’s lesson.

**Salvation:**  
Romans 10:9–10  
Ephesians 2:8–9

**Eternal Security:**  
Isaiah 43:25  
John 10:27–29

**READ IT**  
2 Corinthians 3:1–18

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God” (2 Cor. 3:5).

Real joy provokes action. Joyful people serve. Joy energizes us and keeps us going. It was the middle of the night when the shepherds outside Bethlehem were visited by the angels with the announcement of Jesus' birth. They were told the “good tidings of great joy which will be to all people” (Luke 2:10). They didn’t say, “That’s great news. Let’s wait until morning and then check it out!” No, they immediately went to Bethlehem, saw the baby and then passed on the news to everyone they met. Joy motivated them!

The joy that we discussed in the last lesson was based on our certainty of salvation in Christ. That joy, the apostle Paul tells us, moves us into the world. We spread the joy through service and through words. The world may ask, “Who do you think you are?” That’s not the important question. We know that joy isn’t about us;
it’s about Jesus. So, we answer, “It doesn’t matter who I am—who matters is who Christ is!”

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul mentions at least four traits that joy in Christ allows us to practice in the world: trust (v.4), sufficiency (v. 5), hope (v. 12) and boldness (v. 12). We “trust” that Christ will use our efforts. This trust is not in ourselves but in Him. Trusting in ourselves is misplaced; confidence in the Lord enables us to serve effectively.

We recognize our personal insufficiency and find our “sufficiency” (meaning, worth and purpose) in God. He will not only make us sufficient but will help us make others sufficient to serve Him. The joy of serving Jesus is in extending ourselves in others.

“Hope” and joy are inseparable companions. Like every genuine spiritual trait, hope flows out of Christ’s presence in our lives. People who ask about our hope (1 Pet.3:15) are asking to be pointed to Christ. Joy is public hope. Joy is unexpected service and steadfastness. It flows from Christ.

Genuine hope results in “boldness.” The bold believer speaks fearlessly, not hesitantly; publicly, as well as privately; and plainly, not in words difficult to understand. Boldness means we tell people in plain language what Jesus Christ has done for us.

**CONSIDER IT**

In Paul’s terms, whose letter are you? Through whom has God “written” His message on your life?

How does Paul explain his competence or sufficiency?

In what settings has your joy in Christ allowed you to be bold with others?

**AS YOU READ 2 CORINTHIANS 3:1–18, REFLECT ON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

Of the four traits in which Paul encourages us to grow, which one needs the most attention in your life? Why?

**APPLY IT**

Colossians 1:9–12 gives us a helpful outline of a Christian’s development. Spiritual growth was never designed by God to be a roller-coaster ride. It is more like a cycle with the following elements: increased godly knowledge, wisdom, spiritual understanding, worthy living, spiritual fruit, good work and a return to increased godly knowledge to start over. Think of God’s work in you as a life-long set of cycles or seasons of spiritual development. What part of the cycle are you in right now?

**EXPRESS IT**

If we are not exercising the spiritual traits Paul discusses in this chapter, we will not have the impact on the world that Christ wants us to have. As you pray, ask God for greater confidence, sufficiency, hope and boldness in your interaction with people today. Don’t resist Him when He puts you in situations where you need to practice these qualities.
Most of the physical landmarks that we deal with are part of a long-standing but not eternal creation. But the truth of God’s Word stands for time and eternity. The directions God provides (even the painful ones) give us a dependable route and effective rules for living. If we’ve got God’s eternal landmarks in mind, we’ll adopt a pilgrim mindset, never thinking of this world as our permanent home. We will make it a habit to check God’s landmark presence every day for correction and encouragement. And we will live by those instructions we find chiseled in the landmark of God’s Word.

Proverbs is filled with short landmark statements that provide us with food for thought and reflection each day. Choose one of the proverbs from today’s reading, and express it in a prayer. Ask God to keep bringing His words of direction to mind throughout the days of your journey ahead.

REMEMBER IT

1. Paul compares the Corinthians to a letter, written not with ink, but with what?

2. While it’s the Spirit who gives life, what kills?

3. Who put a veil over his face?

4. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is what?

5. With unveiled face, we behold the what of the Lord?

SEEK IT   GO DEEPER INTO YOUR STUDY OF THIS WEEK’S LESSON.

Love:
Romans 13:8–10
1 John 3:11–18

Hope:
Psalm 146:1–10
Romans 5:1–5
When we read through the events leading up to Jesus’ death, we can see why the two disciples walking to Emmaus were distraught and sad. They had only heard rumors of the Resurrection. Death as a certainty still dominated their thoughts. Jesus was about to teach them (and us) that though death appears inevitable, it isn’t quite as final as we might have thought. Death, Jesus’ Resurrection tells us, is not the end of the story. Because of that deeper certainty, we can be joyful.

As we follow Jesus’ journey to the cross and beyond, we can keep in mind a powerful summary of these events penned by the writer of Hebrews: “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Jesus’ journey may have included great suffering, but He maintained joy throughout.

When Jesus was betrayed and arrested, He went along with joy. When He was assaulted, insulted, accused and judged, He expressed joy in His silence and joy when He spoke. His accusers and judges were left dumbfounded. Why? What was it about Jesus, even after the crown of thorns, the whipping and the beating that still drew men’s undivided attention? What would cause a hardened soldier who had just ordered Jesus to be nailed to the cross to shake his head in wonder and say, “Certainly this was a righteous Man!” (Luke 23:47). It could be called calm, dignity, character or absolute confidence. But for the follower of Christ, let’s just call it joy.

After Jesus joined the men on the road to Emmaus, their conversation changed. It became about Him. “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27). What we are learning this month is that discovering joy in the journey has a lot to do with whether or not we are walking with Christ. The more we welcome His presence every step of the way, the more we can choose joy.
CONSIDER IT

› What examples of Jesus’ joy can you find in these verses?

APPLY IT

Ask yourself if there are any immediate situations or recurring situations in your life where you tend to function without joy. Acknowledge that Jesus longs to be pleased with your willingness to choose joy in those times of trial. Make it a point to depend on His help as you exercise and practice joyful responses—as He did in much more trying times.

EXPRESS IT

Since Christ gives us His Holy Spirit when we begin our relationship with Him, and since joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), we have joy if we know Christ our Lord and Savior. Ask Him to remind you when the going gets tough that those who are spiritually tough choose joy!
**REMEMBER IT**

1. While in the courtyard of the high priest’s house, who was the first to ask Peter about his relationship to Jesus?

2. Who said, “I find no guilt [fault] in this man”?

3. How long did the darkness last during Jesus’ Crucifixion?

4. In addition to Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, what other woman visited Jesus’ tomb according to the Gospel of Luke?

5. How far a journey is it from Jerusalem to Emmaus?

**SEEK IT**

**GO DEEPER INTO YOUR STUDY OF THIS WEEK’S LESSON.**

**Joy:**

Psalm 51:11–12

John 15:10–11

---

**READ IT**

**Philippians 1:1–30**

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy” (Phil. 1:3–4).

Paul obviously tried to add the element of joy to everything he did. Later in this letter, he urged us all to “rejoice,” which can mean starting with joy and then repeating that joy until others can see that we are re-joy-cing.

One exercise that seems to have occupied Paul constantly was the practice of joyful prayer. Fortunately, we have examples in his letters of what he meant when he wrote, “making request for you all with joy” (v. 4). This would be a good prayer to pray for others (and request others to pray for you). Start by re-reading verses 3–11, but insert the name of the person you’re praying for everywhere the pronoun “you” or “your” is used. Imagine the impact this letter had on its first readers. But don’t hesitate to apply this prayer to those around you. God would not have included it in His Word if we weren’t meant to experience its power.

Serving others begins with praying for them. That way, we can serve them whether we are together or apart. Distance doesn’t
affect the power of prayer. In fact, distance reminds us who exercises the power in prayer. Prayer covers any distance with His help.

Paul was reminding the Philippians that he could joyfully commit their well-being constantly to God because he was “confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (v. 6). Many things can cause us to turn in prayer for someone else—bad news, good news, parental love, habitual concerns or the mention of their name. But we are not fully serving them if we fail to acknowledge that God is more intimately involved in their circumstances and their future than we could ever be. And when God has begun a good work in someone, we can be as confident as Paul was that God will bring His work to completion. We trust that’s what He’s doing in us!

So, no matter what the issue, Paul started his prayer by thanking God for bringing his Philippian friends to mind. We can do the same. For some of us, God works a small miracle in causing us to think beyond ourselves and focus on someone else’s needs. For that we ought to be thankful! And we can also be thankful that God has laid on our hearts people for whom to pray. He is drawing us into service. God is giving us the same opportunity He gave Paul to practice the joy of praying for others.

APPLY IT

During your time of prayer, give the Lord a chance to bring people to your mind. Sit quietly after you ask Him to do that and practice thanking Him for reminding you of them, and then use Paul’s prayer as a way to thankfully pray for those God allowed you to remember.

EXPRESS IT

Ask a fellow believer to pray for you according to verses 3-11. After you’ve done that, you’ll want to practice the exercise described in Apply It.
REMEMBER IT

1. Who, along with Paul, addresses this letter to the Philippians?

2. Paul prayed that what would abound with knowledge and discernment?

3. Whether in life or death, it was Paul’s desire that Christ be what?

4. Let your what be worthy of the Gospel of Christ?

5. It has been granted both that we should believe in Christ, and what for His sake?

SEEK IT

GO DEEPER INTO YOUR STUDY OF THIS WEEK’S LESSON.

Rejoicing:
Isaiah 25:9
Isaiah 61:10–11
**EVERY FOLLOWER OF CHRIST** will one day stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, the most important event in a Christian’s future. This can be a threatening possibility—unless people understand what it’s really all about and know what to expect.

Dr. Kroll prepares readers for that coming heavenly courtroom and answers questions about eternal rewards, spiritual crowns, salvation (and many others) in his new book *Facing Your Final Job Review*. A unique combination of narrative and Q&A, it’s everything a person ever wondered but was afraid to ask—packaged in an easy-to-read format.

Back to the Bible is a worldwide ministry dedicated to leading people into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. Using radio, the Internet and other media, we share the Gospel message and help Christians grow to spiritual maturity.

With broadcasts in 25 languages and an Internet reach to millions, Back to the Bible teaches the Word and touches the world.

Contact us for more information:

**BACK TO THE BIBLE**
P.O. Box 82808, Lincoln, NE 68501
1-800-759-2425 | www.backtothebible.org

**BACK TO THE BIBLE - CANADA**
P.O. Box 10, Winnipeg, MB R3C 2G2
1-800-663-2425 | www.backtothebible.ca

---

**SEE BELOW FOR ORDERING INFORMATION!**

#1256-0

includes shipping

$15*  
(U.S.)

$18.75*  
(Canada)