



JOY; THE STRENGTH TO STAND

Fruit that Fights Back | Galatians 5:22–23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Strength is Found in Joy | Nehemiah 8:10

Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

Expectation | John 16:22

So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

Joy Comes with Salvation | Psalm 51:12

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Joy is a Byproduct of Trusting in the Lord | Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God Offers an Exchange | Isaiah 61:3

...and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.

LET'S OBSERVE THE TEXT...

Observe Nehemiah 8:10

- **Context Matters:** For context to this verse, open the Holman Illustrated Bible Handbook in your table basket, open to page 107 and read "First Audience and Destination".
- Now read Nehemiah 8:9-11 for fuller context to this scripture.
 - In their grief they read scripture, but they also ate and gave with generosity to those in need. Practical tools on how to handle grief; spiritually & naturally.

Observe John 16:22

- **Context Matters:** Read John 16:17-22 for a fuller picture.
 - Grief and sorrow are temporary. Have hope for the expiration date. Joy in the midst of it is within reach.
 - Read Hebrews 12:2
 - Read 1 Thessalonians 1:6
 - Read Psalm 30:5
 - Read Psalm 51:12 again
 - **Note:** It's healthy to acknowledge grief, but have joy in knowing that that even sorrow has an expiration date! Here's where hope comes in...
- **Read Romans 15:13**
 - Ok, so we acknowledge that sometimes we host hopelessness and lose our joy. And that's ok! But now what? Here it is...*trust in the Lord!* That's the key to getting your joy back. And here's the kicker...if joy and peace wasn't enough, you'll also overflow with hope! It all begins with trust.
 - Read Isaiah 12:3.



CONCORDANCE ACTIVITY

- ☐ **Joy in Hebrew:** (sason)
Strong's H8342
Found in Psalm 51:12
- ☐ **Joy in Greek:** (chara)
Strong's G5479
Found in Galatians 5:22
- ☐ **Strength:** (ma'owz)
Strong's H4581
Found in Nehemiah 8:10
- ☐ **Hope:** (elpis)
Strong's G1680
Found in Romans 15:13

Have you lost your joy? Read & observe Psalm 77:1-14 for a blueprint on how to get it back:

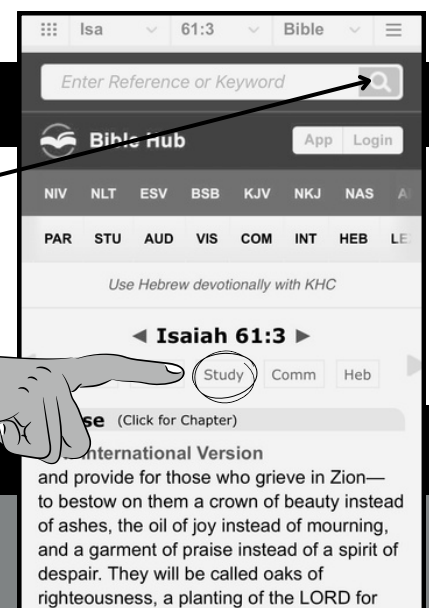
- Verses 1-4 the psalmist acknowledged their lack of joy. Identify it. Don't deny it.
- Verses 5-6: *The "song" may refer to past experiences of God's faithfulness or personal worship, indicating a longing for restored joy and communion with God. This reflects the practice of recalling God's past deeds as a source of comfort and hope. (*Source BibleHub.com Study Bible)
- Verses 7-9: The psalmist lamented the state he was in and questioned God (who he knew as the source of his joy) if it would change.
- Verses 10-12: Do you see the shift? No longer dwelling on the present circumstances, but rather choosing to dwell God's goodness.
- Verses 13-14: As a result, gratitude and praise begins to stir up.



ONLINE RESOURCE ACTIVITIES

Observe Isaiah 61:3

- Go to BibleHub.com and do a search for **Isaiah 61:3** in the "Enter Reference or Keyword" box and then click on the magnifying glass.
- Once it loads, click on the button titled "Study"
 - Read the **Study Bible** section.



LET'S INTERPRET...

- What do you believe all of these verses mean?
- What is God speaking to you personally through this study?
- Read a trusted commentary and compare to your interpretation.



LET'S READ THE AFTER-SUMMARY TOGETHER

Joy is not just a feeling we chase. It is a spiritual weapon. In this study, we looked at joy as more than a sweet byproduct of a good life. Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5, and it stands in direct contrast to the chaos and heaviness that come with walking in the flesh. This kind of joy cannot be manufactured by external circumstances. It is rooted in our connection to Jesus. When we live in step with the Spirit, joy grows naturally in us, even in hard times. Faith stands on what God said. Hope remembers what God's done and believes He'll do it again. Joy gives us the strength to have that hope.

We saw this in Nehemiah 8:10, where the people were told not to grieve, but to celebrate because the joy of the Lord was their strength. That joy gave them power to keep going, even while processing sorrow and repentance. Their strength came not from pretending everything was fine, but from seeing the bigger picture of God's faithfulness and realizing that they were in transition from sorrow to joy. It was a pivot point that required a paradigm shift. We see where their minds were being transformed and renewed. They read the Word, they wept, and then they worshiped with food, generosity, and celebration. That's spiritual strength at work. It's an example of how joy and grief can exist together.

Jesus also pointed to this in John 16. He acknowledged that grief is real and sometimes necessary, but He promised that joy would come again. It would not be the kind of joy that can be stolen or shaken. That joy is anchored in the hope of seeing Jesus again. The scriptures remind us that we may have sorrow for a night, but joy comes in the morning. And this joy doesn't ignore grief, it transforms it. In fact, Isaiah 61 shows us that God exchanges our mourning for the oil of joy, our ashes for beauty, our despair for praise. That is the God we serve. A God who redeems pain.

Psalms 77 gave us a blueprint for how to find joy again when we feel like we've lost it. First, acknowledge the loss. Don't fake it. Then, begin to remember. Remember the songs, the moments, the goodness of God in your past. The psalmist shifted from sorrow to gratitude by choosing to reflect on who God is and what He had done. That's where joy begins to stir again. Gratitude is often the door joy walks through.

Romans 15 reminded us that joy is directly tied to trust. If we trust in God, He fills us with joy and peace. And it does not stop there. That trust causes us to overflow with hope. That is the power of believing God is still good, still near, and still in control. Even if you feel hopeless, even if you feel numb, you can begin again with trust. The rest will follow.

So if you find yourself joyless, you are not broken. You are invited. Invited to reconnect. Invited to remember. Invited to trust. God offers an exchange, not a shame. He calls us oaks of righteousness, strong and deeply planted. Not because we never grieve, but because His Spirit is in us. And His Spirit brings joy that fights back.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Applying Romans 15:13 – Joy is a Byproduct of Trusting in the Lord

- Where are you struggling to trust God lately? What is one step of surrender you can take that might open the door for joy and hope to rise again?

Applying Nehemiah 8:10 – Strength is Found in Joy

- When life gets heavy, do you tend to isolate or celebrate? How can you use joy, generosity, and community as practical tools to gain strength during a hard season?

Applying John 16:22 – Expectation

- What situation in your life feels like a season of grief or disappointment right now? What would it mean for you to believe that joy still has a comeback story ahead?

Applying Psalm 51:12 – Joy Comes with Salvation

- Have you grown numb to the joy that once came with knowing God? What might help you reconnect with the awe and gratitude of your salvation?

Applying Isaiah 61:3 – God Offers an Exchange

- What pain, shame, or heaviness are you still holding onto that God is offering to exchange for beauty, joy, and praise? What would it look like to accept His offer today?

CLOSING PRAYER

God, thank You for being the source of real joy. Not the kind that depends on everything going right, but the kind that holds steady even when life gets hard. We admit that sometimes we have let grief, fear, and disappointment steal our joy. We have carried heaviness instead of trusting You to carry us. But today, we come to You asking for that divine exchange. Trade our ashes for beauty. Cover our tired hearts with a garment of praise. Fill us again with the joy of our salvation and remind us that even in sorrow, You are still good and still with us.



Lord, teach us to trust You more. When hope feels far away and joy seems out of reach, help us remember that You are near, and that You are a God who restores. Make us strong through joy. Let Your Spirit grow good fruit in us that pushes back the darkness around us. We want to be oaks of righteousness, rooted deep and standing tall, not because of our own strength, but because of who You are in us. We give You our heaviness today and receive joy, peace, and hope by the power of Your Spirit. Amen.

WHAT'S AHEAD...

Next Week

Fruit: *Peace; The Calm that Crushes Chaos*

Homework

Read Isaiah 26:3 & John 15:25-28