

JOYFULNESS

"Joyfulness is an inner sense of well-being that comes from a genuine appreciation for the gift of life."

The word "happiness" evokes visions of opening gifts on your birthday or Christmas, strolling through the woods with the person you love, vacationing in the place of your dreams, etc. Everyone wants to be happy & we spend our lives searching for new experiences to bring about our happiness. Running deeper & stronger, joy stands in contrast to happiness. Joy is the quiet, confident assurance of God's love & work in our lives, and no matter what, His love will always be there for us. Happiness depends on happenings while joy depends on Christ.

In Paul's writings to the Philippians, we find letters of joy. The people of Philippi enjoyed a special relationship with Paul and so, he wrote them personal expressions of love and affection. The concept of joyfulness appears sixteen times in the 4 chapters and culminates with the positive message "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice." (4:4) Paul's blueprint for joy is found in each chapter of Philippians - Chapter 1 shows us joy in suffering; Chapter 2 - joy in serving; Chapter 3 he finds joy in believing; and in Chapter 4 Paul finds joy in giving.

Joy comes from a personal relationship with Christ and depending on His strength rather than our own. Joy is not found in outward circumstances, but comes from inner strength, contentment, peace and serenity, no matter what happens. As Christians, we must rely on Christ within us to give us true joyfulness.