
COUNTING IT JOY
mini devotional
NATASHA SMITH

"SOMETIMES JOY"
"ALWAYS JOY"

Earth is a “sometimes joy” experience. As deeply as we might know Christ, and as much as we might have faith in Him, our joy here is not constant because we live in a world of circumstances that frequently rob us of joy. Heaven, on the other hand, is an “always joy” experience. It is a place of supreme happiness. -Zig Ziglar

So may we remember that God is not requiring or asking of us to be joyful because of the HARD times we may encounter. But He is asking of us to STILL have joy despite the hard times.

This Mini Devotional is a precursor to the **Counting It Joy** Bible Study by Natasha Smith of Lovely You Blog.

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DAY 1
COUNTING GOD FAITHFUL

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." I Corinthians 1:9 KJV

Remeber the story of Abraham and Sarah? How God promised them a child when she was 90 years old?

Sarah laughed when she heard the promise. But God was faithful to His Word. And she bore a son named Isaac.

God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. There is absolutely no shadow of turning in Him. So, if He said it, we can surely count on it. Thus, we can remain in Joy when we remember who our God is. That He is Faithful.

"The faith to trust God in adversity comes through the Word of God alone." -Jerry Bridges

Recall a time when you have seen God's Word working in a specific situation. What happened and how did God show Himself faithful?

DAY 2
IN HIS PRESENCE

"You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." Psalm 16:11 NKJV

I remember the first time that I felt that I was truly experiencing the presence of God and wondered to myself, why wouldn't I always want to remain in His presence.

The answer is, Life is HARD. And the Bible says that in this life we can expect trouble. And so, these things try to hinder us from the presence of God.

But if we abide in Christ and He abides in us, we can experience Joy, even in the midst of challenging times. We can experience the fullness of Joy, which is independent of life's circumstances and solely dependent on who God is.

At what moments do you feel closest to God? Reading the Word, listening to worship, at church? What is something that you can do today to connect with God to intentionally get into His presence?

DAY 3
BETTER NOT BITTER

“looking carefully lest there be any man that falleth short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby the many be defiled;” Hebrews 12:15 ASV

In order to walk in joy, we must make sure that we do not have any bitterness lerking in our life.

Bitterness can be a feeling of anger, hurt or resentment becasue of a bad experience or sense of unjust treatment.

And we can recognize bitterness as the verse says, because it "springs up trouble". It produces destructive fruit in our lives. On the contrary, what the Bible considers as good fruit, is found in Galatians 5:22-23. Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Take some time to write out a prayer, asking the Lord to reveal and remove any bitterness that you may have in your heart. So that you can experience the fullness of Joy of the Lord.

DAY 4
BEING FRUITFUL

"so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God," Colossians 1:10 NIV

Considering every trouble as an opportunity for great Joy as written in James 1:2-3, is the challenge of every believer.

It's about proclaiming "Joy" in the process, in the HARD, in the challenges, during the tests and trial, simply by knowing that these things are "working in us" what God has planted in us from the beginning of time.

And as Believers, in order to bear fruit, we must be pruned.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful." John 15:1-3 NIV

Recall a time when you have seen the fruit of the Spirit in your life as a result of a challenging situation.

DAY 5
CHOOSING JOY

"These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, that your joy might be full" John 15:11 KJV

Each day that we wake up, we can choose JOY! Even in the midst of trials, tests and loss.

Listen to how Job puts it in Job 1:21 (AMP). "*He said, "Naked (without possessions) I came [into this world] from my mother's womb, And naked I will return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord."*

Now one of the most practical ways to choosing joy each day is to remember who God is and what He says about our situation.

"*When my soul is in the dumps, I rehearse everything I know of you*," Psalm 42:6 MSG

Make a list of all that you know about God (ie Faithful, trustworthy, loving, never-failing, always with us, etc.). When you start to feel your joy slipping away, take a look at your list and remind yourself of who God is and what He has done for you. And Choose JOY!

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