

JOY AND HAPPINESS

1 Thessalonians 5:16 ... "Rejoice always."

Psalm 16:11 ... "You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

If you ask the average person to define joy and happiness, they will give the same definition for both. Most people do not see a distinction between joy and happiness. However, if you accept the fact that God, our creator, invented both joy and happiness, you must accept his definitions of those two words or concepts. I say "concepts" because each word represents far more than a simple thought; they each reflect the attributes of your faith.

Joy is the product of your faith in God, your righteousness, your personal relationship with Christ, and your salvation. Although unsaved people often use the word "joy" to describe their feelings, they really will never experience genuine joy until and unless they accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. Authentic, permanent and unwavering Joy is an experience that can only be obtained from God, which means that only those who serve God can experience it. God does not bless unbelievers. Joy keeps your feet planted, your heart full, and your mind resolute even in moments of crisis, pain and despair. Our first verse today tells us to "rejoice always." Rejoice and joy share the same definition and joy is contained in the word rejoice.

Happiness is an emotion. It is the product of your mind and circumstances. It is up to you if you want to be happy or not. Many people choose to be unhappy to wallow in their misery, torment themselves for their mistakes, or to attract attention. Others – like most of us – succumb to the hardships of life and unforeseen circumstances and pity themselves. Self-pity is the number one cause of unhappiness. It is a choice. Neither happiness nor unhappiness come from God. Likewise, you cannot make someone else happy. You might do something that helps create a moment of happiness in someone's life, but that person is fully in control of their happiness, how long it lasts, and how strong it is.

God gives us the opportunity to experience joy, which helps us deal with circumstances that threaten our happiness. Joy can be the foundation of a life in which unhappiness does not knock you down. Joy can be the vitamin that strengthens your faith and gives you the tools to manage the circumstances that influence your happiness. Psalm 16:11 tells us that when we remain in God's presence, as opposed to ignoring him and following our own will, we will experience fullness of joy – genuine, authentic, God-given joy.

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