



THE WAYS

REJOICE ALWAYS. The Kingdom of God is a party! Let healthy laughter fill our meetings, our meals, and even our worship. Allow the joy of our faith be clearly evident in our speech and on our faces.

1. What makes you happy? (Feel free to list a few of your favorite things)

READ Psalm 32

1. Do you ever feel blessed that you are forgiven? How?
2. What tends to be a deeper cause for rejoicing: good things happening or being forgiven?
3. What place does confession play in rejoicing?

Scenario: It feels like everyone else has a better life than you do. You regularly see nicer cars, cleaner homes, better jobs, more obedient children. When you look around you, it feels like other people have more reason to rejoice because they have more. While you rarely voice it, you tend to be a little jealous of what others have and kind of bitter that you don't have it. Rejoicing is hard for you because you're often too busy comparing.

1. When you compare, do you tend to compare up or compare down?
2. When you feel jealous or bitter like this, what do you do?
3. Is it possible to rejoice even when you don't feel like it?
4. Even if you had nothing and were surrounded by billionaires, what could you find joy in?

God's heartfelt desire for you is for a filled and fulfilling life. We often see God as the one waiting to punish us, but what if we saw Him as the one looking to gift us. In air to breathe, in nature, in community, and the very shape of the universe, there is joy to be had. Life is filled with God's good gifts to you and our Lord isn't stingy nor does he desire you to be somber or morose. The kingdom of God is one of laughter, of joy, of deep community, of wholeness, of fulfillment. As you live your life, *Rejoice Always* and know God is rejoicing with you.

PRAY TOGETHER.

(Pray to find joy today that you can attribute to and share with God)

DAILY Devotional

MONDAY: *READ:* Gen. 2:4-9. *THINK:* In the second account of Creation, we see God planting a garden just for humans. There is something so intimate and sweet about God gardening to create a special place for us. When God made humans, he also made a place for us to eat, play, dance, run, climb, create, and enjoy. He made a literal paradise so that people could enjoy it and *Rejoice Always*. *PRAY:* and thank God for the joyful gifts He has given you.

TUESDAY: *READ:* Ecclesiastes 8:7-10. *THINK:* We don't read this passage often because the essential idea is "Everyone dies, so you might as well enjoy your life." Pleasant, right? But unpleasantness doesn't make it untrue. Tomorrow has worries of its own. Don't look for fame or wealth, eat your food, drink your wine, enjoy your life, and *Rejoice Always*. *PRAY:* with God about what you don't currently enjoy enough that you should.

WEDNESDAY: *READ:* Luke 17:11-19 *THINK:* Of the 10, 1 returned to thank Jesus. To be fair to the others, they just had their lives changed and may have gotten distracted by all the new possibilities in front of them. They may have been so filled with rejoicing that they forgot to be thankful. Those two though, rightly belong together. Any moment of mirth, revelry, excitement, and fun is a moment to be thankful. When you *Rejoice Always*, find moments in the joy to be thankful. *PRAY:* in the middle of a good moment later today with a simple and silent "Thank you."

THURSDAY: *READ:* Philippians 4:4. *THINK:* We can rejoice in the Lord always because we are with the Lord always. When you became Christian and received the Spirit, you became united with God. At every party, night out, night in, dinner date, and promotion, God is there rejoicing with you. Don't make *Rejoice Always* too churchy; just rejoice and know that your maker and Savior rejoices with you. *PRAY:* for God to send you things to rejoice over.

FRIDAY: *READ:* Luke 15:17-24. *THINK:* After insulting his father, running away from home, and spending his entire inheritance, the son is greeted with a hug and a party. At times, our faith can emphasize so strongly how we have fallen short that we forget that God celebrates us anyway. God wants you to be joyful. God wants you to have a good life. Don't lose sight of the truth that our God loves you and wants nothing but the best for you. He seeks to give you every opportunity to *Rejoice Always*. *PRAY:* that you could see what God wants for you.

SATURDAY: *READ:* Proverbs 17:22. *THINK:* It is a choice to rejoice. Often we rejoice as a reaction to good things, but we also bemoan bad things. We do not *Rejoice Always* because everything is going our way. We *Rejoice Always* because we choose to emphasize the gifts God has given us, that even when in prison, Paul can count himself blessed. We look to *Rejoice Always* as a disposition towards our lives that, in good times and bad, we can see the gifts God has given us. *PRAY:* through some of the gifts you have that you often take for granted. Rejoice with God.