

JOY BUSTERS AND BUILDERS

Galatians 5:22-23

A funny thing happened several years ago. Edith, a mother of eight, was coming home from a neighbor's house one afternoon and as she walked into the living room, she saw five of her children huddled together, concentrating on something. She slipped behind them to discover the center of attraction, and she couldn't believe her eyes. Smack in the middle were five baby **skunks**. Edith screamed, "children run!" So each kid grabbed a skunk and ran.

Life's like that sometimes. We all like being happy. You're enjoying life, then something or somebody takes all of the **fun** out of what you're doing. It's like having a room full of skunks. You just want to escape. You think life is good, then the skunks appear, stink up your world, and suddenly your **JOY** is gone!

John Newton wrote "**Joy** is a fruit that will not grow in nature's barren soil; All we can boast till Christ we know, is vanity and toil. But where the Lord has planted grace, and made His glories known; There fruits of heavenly joy and peace are found, and there alone."

Many things in life can **rob** you of joy. Circumstances or event, People, Bad things. God wants you to experience abundant, overflowing joy. **Joy** is a **choice**. One of the missing commodities in life today is **joy**. **TV** is centered around crudeness or making fun of somebody's misfortune. The leading **news** stories are all bad. The **media** reports very little good. Even the **weather** is negative! Tomorrow will be sunny with a **20%** chance of **rain**! Why don't they just say it will be mostly clear with an **80%** chance of sunshine?

There is **confusion** about what **joy** really is. **Joy** is **fruit** from God's Holy Spirit in your life. Joy is fruit you **choose** to harvest. It's an **attitude** that results from God's Holy Spirit dwelling in you.

The foundation and source of **joy** is God himself. **Philippians 3:1** "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." Do you want to hear something **ironic**? Your **capacity** for **joy** is often related to the **depth** of **sorrow** and **grief** you have experienced. In **John 16:22-24**, Christ said "So you have **sorrow** now, but I will see you again; then you will **rejoice**, and **no** one can rob you of that **joy**. At that time you won't need to ask Me for anything. I tell you the truth, you will ask the Father directly, and He will grant your request because you use **my** name. You haven't done this before. **Ask**, using **my** name, and you will receive, and you will have **abundant joy**." So let me ask you,

How can we avoid joy busters and cultivate joy builders in life?

Even through sorrow, grief, hard times and pain, you can have **joy** that **no** one can steal, no matter what your circumstances. **Grief** is hard. Grief from the **loss** of a loved one or a job, a disease or sickness. When **life** happens, don't descend into the pit of **despair**. God's word promises you a **fruitful** future. A **joy** that can't be taken away by **anybody**. The Bible is full of men and women who faced insurmountable odds with **joy**. They experienced pain, grief, and loss, even of their very lives, but they **never** let go of their contagious **joy**.

There once lived a man who became a Christian as an adult and left the security of another career to follow Christ. Persecution became his constant companion. He was misunderstood by his friends and maligned by his enemies, nevertheless, he pressed on joyfully. This man was a brilliant scholar, an eloquent writer and religious theologian. His name was **Paul**. If anyone **ever** had a reason to give into despair and claim "**victimhood**" it was Paul. From **prison** in Rome, Paul wrote one of the most **joy-filled** letters in the world. **Philippians** was a **prison** epistle written by Paul shortly before he was beheaded. The word **joy** or **rejoice** is

used **nineteen** times in the epistle. How could Paul maintain such a **joyful** spirit? He's in **prison** and his **life** is on the rocks. The **secret** is in **Philippians 3:20-21**. "For our citizenship is in **heaven**, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will **transform** our lowly body that it may be **conformed** to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." **That's** what Paul **focused** on. **Living** like **Jesus**. All your suffering is **nothing** compared to knowing Jesus and eternal life. **Chains** that were binding Paul could **not** shackle his **joy**. **Philippians 3:12-14** "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I **press** on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, **forgetting** those things which are behind and reaching **forward** to those things which are ahead, **press** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Do you hear someone **wallowing** in **despair** in prison? Not **hardly**! Paul saw **setbacks** as **blessings**. He remained hopeful **regardless** of the uncertainties of life. Paul was **confident** of his **eternity**. He was **encouraged** because of the power of the Holy Spirit in his life. He had every reason to expect **victory** and **deliverance**. So can **YOU**! Paul's mind was firmly **fixed** on Jesus. Paul's **circumstances** were not the **end** of the story. Everything would turn out **exactly** as God had **promised** and **planned**. Paul **knew** joy! Fix your **mind** and **HEART** on Jesus and you can know **JOY**!

"Joy or 'chara' is a deep and abiding inner rejoicing promised to those who **abide** in Christ and **obey** his commandments. **Joy** does not depend on **circumstances**; it rests in God's sovereign control of life. **John 15:10-11** says "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."

When composer Joseph **Haydn** was asked why his church music was always so cheerful, the great composer said appropriately, "I cannot make it otherwise; I write according to the thoughts I feel. When I think about God my **heart** is so full of **joy** the notes dance and leap, as it were, from my pen; and since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be pardoned me that I serve Him with a cheerful spirit."

Joy is a by-product of **obedience**, living the **Jesus Way**. But **joy** is often **misunderstood**. People equate **happiness** with **joy**, but they are **totally** different. **Happiness** comes from the **world** around us; **Joy** comes from the **Spirit** of God. **Happiness** is **conditional** based on **circumstances**. If life is **good**, you're **happy**. If your **circumstances** aren't favorable, you're **unhappy**. **Joy**, on the other hand, is a **profound** quality of life that **transcends** the events, disasters, and **circumstances** of life. **Joy** has a **divine** dimension. **It's** not **shackled** by circumstances. **Joy** is **fruit** of the **Spirit**. To let the fruit of **joy ripen** in your life you **desperately** need the Holy Spirit to **prune** your life of sin and **empower** you to make **joyful** lifestyle choices. It's a **GOD** thing.

You can be **happy** or **unhappy** based on your **circumstances**, but **circumstances** don't **dictate** whether or not you have **joy**. **Romans 8:28** "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." **Circumstances** can't **destroy** your **joy**. Do you **see** it?

If you are **called**, **converted**, **loving** God, **walking** in the Spirit, and **obeying** His Word, life **will** work out for God's **best** for you. He **promises** you that!

Look, life is **full** of ups and downs. **Maturity** in Christ is just developing godly **character**. Maybe you get confused, you're angry, maybe discouraged, but all **you** know is that suddenly your **joy** is **gone**. There are many ways Satan can **rob** you of joy. It may be a **loss** - a loved one, a job, or a relationship. Pressures at work? Problems with colleagues or bosses? A problem in your family. Maybe you totaled your car and now you don't have any wheels. Lots of situations can get you down. Concerns about the future, like a marriage partner, or your children's education. Will I get a job when I finish college? Satan uses the **cares** of life to **rob** you of **Joy**.

James 1:2 says "When troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great **joy**." **How** can you **do** that? Well, how could **Paul** do it from **prison** shackled in **chains**? "Knowing that the **testing** of your faith

produces **patience**. But let **patience** have its perfect work, that you may be **perfect** and **complete**, lacking nothing.”

The **trials** of life actually **grow** you, they make you a **better** person, so count it **joy** when you get **wrenched** up because of problems. Bible Knowledge Commentary says “To persecuted Jewish believers scattered among pagan peoples James gave this surprising advice: Consider it pure **joy** when you face trials of many kinds. Trials should be faced with an attitude of **joy**. Trials should not be seen as a punishment, a curse, or a calamity, but something that must prompt **rejoicing**, furthermore, they should produce pure **joy**. Literally **all joy**. **Joy** that is **full** or unmixed, **not** just **some joy** coupled with **much** grief.”

Our **joy** is intended to be a **full** joy. Count it **all** joy. **Joy** is a **choice**. We **choose** to harvest the fruit of God’s Spirit within us called **JOY!** That’s **DEEP!**

Think of your **life** as a **tree**. The Holy Spirit is believer’s life’s blood. To produce fruit, the tree must allow the spirit to take nourishment from the soil. It must allow the spirit to suck water from the earth. It must allow the buds to form, the blooms to be pollinated and blossom, the fruit to ripen. The Holy spirit **brings** His **fruit** when He **enters** your life, but you have to **allow** it to form, bloom, blossom, and ripen in your life. It’s **choosing** to allow the Spirit to control your **life**, your **thoughts**, your **attitudes**, your **words**, and your **actions**. It’s how you approach **life**, what you have **faith** in, what you expect. **Joy** is an **attitude**. The belief that God is at work, that he is in control, that he is sovereign no matter what **has** happened, **is** happening or **will** happen. He is the **JOY** giver. The Key is to **abide** in Christ and **obey** his word. We **choose** to keep God’s commandments and abide in his love. We can **choose** to **obey** him; we have **chosen** a **full** and **fruitful** joy in the Holy Spirit.

Rejoice and **joy** come from the same root word in Greek. God’s people are **commanded** to **rejoice**, so it’s **not** an **option** when you have the Holy Spirit dwelling **in** you. **Philippians 4:4** “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” Our **rejoicing** is in our **Lord** and in **him** lies our **joy**. Rejoice in the Lord.” One commentator wrote “The word form of **rejoice** appears (19) times in Philippians. It seems from this repeated emphasis that the Philippian Christians **needed** this word. **Most** of God’s people **need** this challenge **often**. It is **easy** for believers to let circumstances **discourage** them. The **cure** for discouragement is to **rivet** one’s attention on God and **rejoice** in him. It is significant, that a Roman prisoner, Paul, would beseech people who were **free** to be joyful in their Savior. It seems that it should be the other way around. Paul learned what every child of God needs to learn, there can be **JOY** in God even when outward **circumstances** are **contrary** to a spirit of **rejoicing**.”

What **are** some of the things that can **bust** your **joy**? In **Galatians 4:15** Paul asks a very penetrating question. “Where is that **joyful** and **grateful** spirit?” Maybe I should ask **you** the same question. What has happened to all your **joy**? William Barclay said, “a **gloomy** Christian is a **contradiction** in terms and nothing in all religious history has done Christianity more **harm** than its connection with black clothes and long faces.” Christians should have **joy** in their lives even when **life** isn’t going well. The first **JOY BUSTER** is

A. Unrealized expectations.

Unrealized expectations steal our **joy**. Do you ever feel like you’re just going through some joyless **routines** in life? You expect certain things to happen but they never do. Some folks are just unhappy with life. Maybe your **kids** aren’t living the way they should. Perhaps you don’t have everything you **want**. A **spirit** of **discontentment** can **rob** you of joy. Paul discovered the **secret** of being content with what God had given him. **Philippians 4:11-12** “I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.”

Paul calls **contentment** a **secret**. A **secret** that he **found**. There’s a **mystery** about it. He learned how to **live joyfully** with **unrealized expectations**. Life didn’t **go** like he **hoped**. Like many of **you**, we’ve lived with **plenty** and with **little**. Same as Paul. The **SECRET** is to be **content**. The **discipline of contentment** doesn’t

come when we have **everything** we **want**. It comes when we're **content** with what we **have**. The **secret** is having **faith** and **confidence** in **God** and the **joy** that comes from **knowing** he **controls** all our circumstances.

In 1973, a horse named Secretariat won the Triple Crown of Thoroughbred Racing and did it with **STYLE**. At the Belmont Stakes, he won by 31 lengths. For one-and-one-half miles, the famous thoroughbred ran faster **every** length and **every** furlong. Secretariat was **accelerating** at such an **incredible** pace that his trainer and physician said if the race had been one **lap** longer Secretariat's **heart** would have literally **exploded**. Like Secretariat, our greatest **joy** is found in straining **ahead**, not just to **finish**, but to finish **well**.

B. Unresolved conflict.

Your **joy** can **evaporate** when you allow **conflict** to go on **unresolved**. Allowing offenses to occupy your mind and emotions leaves little time for God. **Anger** clouds your heart, **obscures** your view of God, and **drains** your **joy**. **Hebrews 12:14-15** challenges us to "Pursue **peace** with **all** people, and **holiness**, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any **root of bitterness** springing up cause trouble." A root of **bitterness** grows if you're not pursuing **peace** and **holiness**. If you're itemizing other people's **mess-up's** the fruit of **joy** will get **squashed** in you like a rotten mango. Paul recognized the link between **joy** and **unity** in **Philippians 2:2** "make my **joy** complete by being **like-minded**, having the same love, being **one** in spirit and purpose." You experience **joy** when you pursue **peace** with **all** people, **holiness** within your own **life**, and **joy** and **unity** in the **fellowship**.

C. Unrepented Sin.

Guilt can **destroy** your **joy**. **Sin** will send your **joy** packing, so get **right** with God **daily**. King David tried to **ignore** the Holy Spirit and **refused** to repent. Finally recognizing his folly, he wrote **Psalms 32:1-5** "Oh, what **JOY** for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the Lord has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt." After David is **forgiven** of his **sin** his **joy** returns. **Psalm 32:11** says "So rejoice in the Lord and b, all you who obey him! Shout for joy all you whose hearts are pure!"

There's **joy** in life when you are **right** with God, when you're regularly **repenting** of sin. David wasn't able to **rejoice** and experience the **joy** of God until he **confessed** his sins, and **repented**. Neither will **you**!

NOW FOR THE GOOD NEWS! Lost **joy** can be **restored**. We can take encouragement from King David's bold prayer in **Psalms 51:12** "**Restore** to me the **joy** of Your salvation, and make me willing to **obey** you." A generous **harvest** of God's **spirit** restores the **fruit** of **joy** in your life. It gives you **hope** like that of David and Paul. **Here** are some **JOY BUILDERS** you can **enjoy** in your relationship with Jesus.

God wants you to **cultivate** these things that will **build lasting joy** into your life. The Bible gives us several ways to experience **joy** from God.

A. Recognize that God is joyful.

A Sea voyager once asked an old Sea Captain "Is it always foggy here on the banks of Newfoundland?" He said "How should I know, madam? I don't **live** here." God lives in **JOY**!

God IS a **joyful** God. Because God is joyful, we can be joyful. When God thinks about you, He does it with a **smile** on his face. **Really**. **Zephaniah 3:16-17**. "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. The LORD your God in your midst, The Mighty One, will save; He will **rejoice** over you with **gladness**, He will quiet you with His love, He will **rejoice** over you with **singing**." **That** is the **God** we **worship**. He **delights** in **us** and breaks into **song** when **we** live **his** way. He **delights** in that; he **loves** it. Listen to **Isaiah 65:18-19**. "But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, And her people a **joy**." **Joy** is one of God's character traits. He is not vindictive, waiting for you to

mess up, so he can unleash his fury. He has created you to be his **delight** like children are a delight to their parents. He finds great **joy** in you and **sings** when he **thinks** about **you**. **WOW!**

B. Reaffirm your commitment to others.

George Bernard Shaw wrote “This is the true joy in life, the being used for a **purpose** recognized by yourself as a **mighty** one: the being thoroughly **worn** out before you are thrown on the **scrap** heap, and being a force of **nature** instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the **world** will not devote itself to making **you** happy.”

Romans 12:15 challenges us to “Be happy with those who are happy and weep with those who weep.” The same word is used in vs. 12 for “**rejoice**.” We have a **fellowship** that connects with those who believe like we do. If you’re living a **solitary** life, you can’t **rejoice** with those who **rejoice**. If you’re not in **fellowship** with believers your **joy** will **leak** out. We **need** each other. If you’re not **attending** church regularly, you are **jeopardizing** your joy. **Loving** your brothers and sisters will **increase** your **joy** help **you** to ramp up **their joy**.

C. Re-ignite your passion for the gospel.

The best way to love your life is to focus it on others and be Jesus in their lives. We’re here today **not** just to save our **own skin**, but to do a **job**. We have **work** to do. We’re here for a **reason**. We’re **here** to share the **gospel** in these last days. **Luke 15:7** “I say to you that likewise there will be more **joy** in heaven over one sinner who **repents** than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.” There’s **joy** in heaven over **every** sinner who repents. **Sharing** the good news **increases** you joy. **John 4:34-36** “Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers **fruit** for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may **rejoice** together.” **Share** the Gospel. Help gather **fruit** for eternal life. Assist **other** people in being **redeemed** by Jesus.

D. Release your problems to God.

One of the **hallmarks** of joy is seen during intense **sorrow** and **loss**. We define **happiness** as the **absence** of something undesirable, such as pain, suffering or disappointment. **Joy** is the result of something **desirable**. That **something** is a **relationship** with Jesus Christ and his Spirit living in us.

In Acts 16, the authorities beat Paul and Silas. **Beat** them. After being severely **flogged** they were thrown into **prison**, with their feet fastened in stocks. If that were me, I’d be pretty unhappy and I doubt I’d have a whole lot of joy. **Prison, Beaten, Chained**, doesn’t equal **JOY** for **me!** Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns from their prison cell, and the guards could hear them. The only way to have an attitude like that is to **release** your problems to God, and place your heavy **yoke** on Jesus. You can have **joy** no matter **what** happens. In **2 Corinthians 7:4** Paul said “...I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly **joyful** in all our tribulation.”

That takes a conscious **decision**. You can’t manufacture **joy**, so give your problems to Jesus, lean on him and draw on the power of His Holy Spirit.

E. Remain close to God.

Principal Rainy used a fine metaphor for joy. He said “**Joy** is the flag which is flown from the **castle** of your **heart** when the **King** is in **residence** there.” **Here’s** the **B.L.U.F.** Remain **close** to God. The **only** way to experience the **fruit** of the spirit is to be **obedient** to Christ. **Obedience** to Christ **HARVESTS** the **joy** of the spirit. If you want **joy** that is **complete**, lacking **nothing**, **CHASE HARD AFTER** Jesus. Apart from that, you can bear **no** fruit. “As the **branch** cannot bear **fruit** of itself, unless it **abides** in the vine, neither can **you**, unless you **abide** in Me.” **John 15:4**. The fruit of **joy** comes from **choosing** to **live** for God. **Joy** is a **choice**. Have **you** made **your** choice?

The only way to have real **joy** is to **love** God and **live** for Jesus **every** day. Guard against those **joy busters** that crush your life. Identify the **joy builders** that bless your life and others, and harvest them. Be a **Joy Builder** for Jesus!