

The Joy-Driven God-Centered Life

Session 10: Joy-Driven God-Centered Small Group Bible Studies

Our Mission: To inspire among all peoples an overflowing joy in God through Jesus Christ.

Our Discipleship Process:

Discovering joy in God:

Developing joy in God:

Displaying joy in God:

Declaring joy in God:

What are some different ways that we can develop our joy in God?

Developing joy in God:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom,...” (Colossians 3:16)

God changes our desires, fills us with hope, and increases our delight in Him as we study His Word and share life with other believers.

We challenge every believer to spend regular, consistent time studying God’s Word in an effort to better know and treasure both God and His ways.

Neighborhood church also offers a variety of Small Group Bible Studies where we together read God’s Word, pursue joy in God, and encourage each other in joyful obedience to Him.



BIBLE STUDY.

Why should we study the Bible? The Bible gives hope, strengthens faith, sustains life, secures freedom, provides wisdom, equips believers, reveals sin, and defeats Satan. Yet, foundationally it does two things:

1. **The Word of God is God’s main way of revealing Himself (and of revealing the way to Himself).**

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...”

(Genesis 1:1...)

“...but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

(John 20:31)

2. Because the Word of God reveals God to us, it is essential to joy in God.

“Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts.” (Jeremiah 15:16)

“These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:11)

“I saw more clearly than ever, that the first great and primary business to which I ought to attend every day was, to have my soul happy in the Lord. The first thing to be concerned about was not, how much I might serve the Lord, how I might glorify the Lord; but how I might get my soul into a happy state, and how my inner man may be nourished.... I saw that the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God and to meditation on it.” (George Mueller)

How can we study the Bible in a Joy-Driven God-Centered way? It is easy to read the Bible just looking for what it says about *us* and just looking for things that we are to *do*, but as we read God’s Word we should be striving to know more of God and to have our affections for Him increased.

Ask: What does this passage tell me about God? (What does it reveal about God’s character, His attributes, His ways, His purposes and His works?)

Ask: How does this truth increase my joy in God? (To help see the value of this truth, ask yourself what life would be like if this were *not* true of God)

How might we pray before we study the Bible? John Piper suggests using the acronym I.O.U.S. as a reminder of things to pray for as we approach the Scripture in our quest to increase our joy in God:

I—Incline. Psalm 119:36 says, *“Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain.”*

Often we approach Scripture with hearts that desire other things. Ask God to change your desires and to incline your heart toward Him and His Word.

O—Open. Psalm 119:18 says, *“Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.”*

When we read the Bible it is easy to only see what we want to see and read our own ideas into it. Ask God to open the eyes of your heart so you see God and see truth in His Word.

U—Unite. Psalm 86:11 says, *“Unite my heart to fear your name.”*

Sometimes we come to God with a fragmented heart, a wandering spirit, and a distracted mind. Ask God to unite your heart so that your whole being reveres and desires God.

S—Satisfy. Psalm 90:14 says, *“Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love.”*

We face an ongoing battle to become satisfied with things of this world over God himself. Ask God to satisfy you with Himself and to give you delight in Him above all other things.

PRAYER.

Why should we pray? Through Jesus we can be brought into an intimate relationship with God. Prayer is therefore essential to our fellowship with God, but it is worth noting two results of prayer:

1. **It brings God glory.** We glorify God as we acknowledge our weakness and rely on God's strength.

*"Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son."
(John 14:13)*

*"...call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."
(Psalm 50:15)*

2. **It brings us joy.** Our joy in Him increases as we grow closer to Him and find Him all-sufficient.

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you..." (James 4:8a)

*"Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."
(John 16:4)*

How can we pray in a Joy-Driven God-Centered way? It is easy to turn prayer into a time of reciting a shopping list of things that we have personally decided we need, hoping that God will change His heart to match ours. Instead, we should strive to listen more to God and ask Him to make our heart like His.

*"Prayer is a wartime walkie-talkie for warfare, not a domestic intercom for increasing our conveniences... Could it be that many of our problems with prayer and much of our weakness in prayer come from the fact that we are not all on active duty, and yet we still try to use the transmitter? We have taken a wartime walkie-talkie and tried to turn it into a civilian intercom to call the servants for another cushion in the den."
(John Piper)*

1. **By asking God to change our heart so that it aligns with God's heart.**

"Delight yourself in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4)

2. **By submitting our prayers to God's will and God's purposes.**

*"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you."
(John 15:16)*

3. **By praying the words and prayer of Scripture.**

*"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."
(John 15:7)*

- **Look for truths about God.** Praise God for these truths. Rejoice in His glory.
- **Look for purposes of God.** Ask God to enable you to pursue these purposes with joy.
- **Look for promises of God.** Thank God for these promises. Ask for faith to trust Him.
- **Look for sins against God.** Repent if necessary. Ask God to keep you from evil.

SMALL GROUPS.

How can we make sure that our small groups are helping to develop joy in God? Although there are many reasons why we need other believers, when it comes to pursuing a joy-driven God-centered life, we should recognize that Joy in God is not the default setting for humanity. We are all naturally inclined towards man-centeredness and duty-drivenness. Therefore:

1. We should encourage each other to keep our focus on God, trusting in Him.

“Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.”
(Hebrews 3:12-13)

2. We should encourage each other to examine our affections toward God, seeking joy in Him.

“...we work with you for your joy,...”
(1 Corinthians 1:24)

Why do we need to spend time with other believers in Bible Study?

1. Their testimony increases our faith in God’s Word.

“Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.”
(Hebrews 13:7)

2. Their insight helps us to understand God’s Word.

“There are some things in [Paul’s letters] that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability.”
(2 Peter 3:16-17)

3. Their challenge helps us to apply God’s Word.

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”
(Hebrews 10:24-25)

Why do we need to spend time with other believers in prayer? Faith is infectious. Unbelief thrives in isolation. Note a few examples of the power of prayer in the life of the early church:

- **Acts 4:24-31.** At a united prayer meeting, the believers were filled with the Spirit and boldness.
- **Acts 12:5-11.** At a united prayer meeting, Peter’s release from prison was secured.
- **Acts 13:1-4.** At a united prayer meeting, the missionary enterprise had its birth.