

## JOY

Pastor Ken

November 30, 2025

**It is your choice to rejoice.**

*<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2-NIV)*

Danice and I were blessed with 4 Squires kids. 1 beauty and 3 beasts. When we raised our kids, we emphasized two aspects of life: live for Christ and use your vocation to honor God. Now, years later as all of them have moved into adulthood, I have noticed they caught 1 more Squires attribute. They love to laugh. They are filled with joy. They love a good story, especially at the expense of dad.

**Danice and I struck gold when we unintentionally included laughter and joy as a key family trait.** Perhaps a few examples will remind each of you the value of laughter and joy. You can't have 1 without the other.

**Kenny** and I would ride our bikes together and often stop at a church elder's house who was in the logging and forestry business. His logging truck was parked in the driveway and one day, John Eylander suggested to Kenny he take off his biking helmet and place it on the ground. John proceeded to take the logging truck grappling boom and pick up Kenny's helmet and hand it to him.

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**Rebekah** and I would often go to barbie shows and buy barbie shoes. We would laugh. She would pick out accessories for her collection. She radiated with joy from the experience every time.

**Jesse** and **Joseph** were in Bible Quiz. We would often practice Bible Quiz by playing fumble football while we competed in Bible quiz. If the question had a word in it, any word that started with an f, for fumble, I would announce fumble and throw out the football, and they would jump on it. I am not sure if they learned any 10-point questions, but we recovered quite

a few fumbles. The Pharisees and Sadducees both arrested Jesus. Jesse and Joe never fell for the “f sound.” The red plate for a special occasion always brought a smile and joy to the kids.

At family birthdays, we often used Squires kids, name in an acrostic for their birthday and spelled out meaningful and miserable words. Kenny-kind, kangaroo,

e-Edward, excellent driver, egg head,

n-no(know) it all. Then the letter giver would laugh because of how they used, n, know it all....

n-nobody like him. Nobody likes him,

y-year older, youthful, young, youngster.

Over the years the kids would add pokie-man names to the letters cracking themselves up.

We still do acrostics today as a family. Ok, one more for grins. When I took my kids for a walk, as I held their hand, I would squeeze it several times. I would tell them when they were little, when I squeeze your hand, it means that dad loves you very, very much.

At Thanksgiving this past week, as our eyes were closed and as we prayed, laughter erupted during the prayer, because we were all squeezing the hands we were holding. So, what is the benefit of a kid growing up in a home where laughter and joy prevail?

When Jesus started his public ministry, he had any number of options as to what to do and where to start. He could do a crowd-pleasing miracle. He could preach one of his unforgettable sermons. He did neither of these, we get a glimpse in John 2.

### **Jesus began his public ministry by going to a wedding.**

You ask why did Jesus go to a wedding? It is found in verse 2, of John 2. Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. They were on the guest list. *On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup> and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. (John 2-NIV)*

When the bride and groom were putting together the guest list, someone suggested why not invite Jesus and Mary from nearby Nazareth. Cana and Nazareth were just a few miles apart.

The bride's parents where likely friends with Mary and Joseph so off to a wedding Jesus went. Again, why was Jesus invited, was he a celebrity? No, he was not one yet. Was Jesus invited because of his miracles? No, he hadn't done any yet. I suppose Jesus was invited

because he was just like everyone else. He laughed. He worked as a carpenter. He went to the market. He attended Torah class. Common people in Nazareth enjoyed hanging out with Jesus.

Can I suggest why I think Jesus went to a wedding? To laugh. To have some fun. And to experience the joy connected to weddings, like dancing, drinking wine and eating.

Remember, Jesus began his ministry in the desert during a 40 day fast. He broke in some new recruits. He already had a run in with the religious establishment. Then Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum. Perhaps, Jesus was still living out of boxes.

Jesus went to the wedding because he loved to laugh, he loved to eat, perhaps even a dance with the new bride would have provided great joy for Jesus. Joy for Jesus. Jesus experiencing joy. A joyous savior. Makes sense, doesn't it?

After all, one day Jesus is planning a big wedding for us, with unlimited food, that won't add a pound to the girth. Maybe Jesus wanted to take down a few notes. <sup>9</sup> *Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Rev 19-NIV)*

If you are familiar with the New Testament, Jesus party theme often got him into trouble. Israel's religious police called him a drunkard and glutton. And who can miss that Jesus hung out with tax collectors and prostitutes.

*<sup>19</sup> Then the Son of Man appeared—He didn't fast, as John had, but ate with sinners and drank wine. And the people said, "This man is a glutton! He's a drunk! And He hangs around with tax collectors and sinners, to boot." (Matt 11:19-Voice)*

I doubt whether many of you have pegged Jesus as a party lover. What we often get pegged as is uptight. Stressed out. Exhausted to the max. **Most of us are more familiar with tension, hurt, stress and anxiety more than we are with JOY.**

If you can complete these sentences with the appropriate word, you need either a vacation or a valium:

I am ready to throw in the...**towel.**

I am at the end of my...**rope.**

I am just a bundle of...**nerves.**

My life is falling...**apart.**

I am at my wit's...**end.**

I feel like resigning from the human...**race**.

If you are experiencing a lack of JOY in your life, perhaps it is the result of being too uptight. Stressed out. Eaten up by worry.

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. That is the bad news. The good news is that God has an answer for your stress, anxiety, and worry. It doesn't come in the form of some meds; it comes in the form of some fruit. <sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. (Gal 5-NIV)*

Each fruit enables you to cope with any adverse challenge you face in the Christian life. Struggling with racism, God tells us the fruit of the spirit is love. Struggling with anxiety and worry, God tells us the fruit of the Spirit is joy. Let's take a quick review of God's word and what it says about joy.

Yet this same Jesus is the one who for the joy *set before him endured the cross* (Heb. 12:2). Does that startle you? Jesus will experience the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and yet he declares it as a "joy set before him!"

<sup>2</sup> *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:2-NIV)*

I have never recovered from this verse. Need any more reasons to be joyful. In the Bible, joy does not dismiss suffering. The one crying out, the one we call Lord and whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The story of Christmas drips with the fragrance of joy. Come on ladies, somebody design a fragrance for women called joy, you will make a million \$\$\$

The angel greets Mary with joy and Mary rejoices (Luke 1:47). <sup>46</sup> *And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*

The angel announces "great joy" to shepherds. <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.*

The visiting Magi were "overjoyed." <sup>10</sup> *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. (Matt 2-NIV)*

This Christmas, fill your heart with worship, and your soul will swell in joy. Jesus' words are filled with joy.

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

*"You will weep and lament . . . but your sorrow will turn into joy" (John 16:20).*

He goes on to say, *"But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (John 16:22).*

Joy is the most important fruit if you want to live victoriously and be an overcomer. **The power to overcome is joy's primary attribute. When you make the development of joy and the maturing of the fruit of joy your priority, you will overcome the evil one on a regular basis.**

Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in truth in Psalm 105:43, *He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy;*

Did you realize that 3 little words could pack such a punch? Joy is what makes life meaningful, fun and fulfilling. For so many their lives are filled with a holiday forecast of "little hope for joy and laughter."

Isn't it time to change the weather forecast to endless days of joy? Again, people will often say, "what you did makes me afraid." Or "what you said makes me doubt." Or, how you treated me caused me pain. Ok, do you see what I just did, I told you others caused you to fear, doubt and experience pain.

These statements and actions and many like them are false because they are not what really makes you afraid, doubt or experience pain.

Listen, there is a **step** between what the person says or what they do and the emotion of fear and doubt that is the true cause of how you feel. The step is the cause. Sandwiched between what they say and how you feel. Does that make sense?

Let me illustrate: Your spouse tells you to lay off the greasy food or you will have a heart attack. Fear takes over.

Your pastor reminds you that as you age your bone density and muscle mass declines with age, so you better exercise daily and suddenly you start to **doubt** your health.

Notice your spouse and pastors' comment about greasy food and exercise start you to experience the emotions and feelings of fear and doubt. When you experience an emotion like fear and doubt, or for that fact any emotion you often miss the real culprit or the real cause.

Let me show it to you in Dr Albert Ellis and his ABC model.

A=the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

B=what you think about the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

C= the feelings and emotions of fear and doubt about the greasy food and lack of exercise.

Your emotional reaction to comments about greasy food and lack of exercise is not what caused you to experience fear or doubt.

Your emotional response is what you think about greasy food and lack of exercise.

Let me say it this way: using the ABC model, we see that emotion C (emotions of fear and doubt) is not caused by comment A. No, it is caused by thinking B. Wow!

For so many of you, the reason you struggle to feel joy is because the way you think about life's events leaves you sad, discouraged and even depressed.

Changing the way you think puts you in the driver's seat to correct fear, doubt or any other emotion that is holding you hostage and robbing you of real joy this Christmas.

Why? It is your choice to rejoice.

So, joy can.... JOY coexists with fear. JOY coexists with doubt. JOY coexists with pain.

That is if you think your way back into joy. If you can think your way out of joy, you can think your way back into joy. My take-aways today are simple, they are identified at the bottom of the page:

(1) It is possible to experience JOY regardless of your circumstances. (Phil 4:4)

(2) JOY defies all circumstances and is not dependent on life events (James 1:2)

(3) JOY is an inside job. (Galatians 5)

Helping you understand and live in the power of these insights is my objective and goal today. So, let's head for the winner's circle. But first why is the good news of Jesus at Christmas such a joyful event? And why did some shepherds need a little clarity as to why Jesus' birth was so joyful? Why did it call for a hilarious celebration?

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of Heaven's grace for everyone.

Today we know the birth of Jesus Christ is good news, because we know what is going to happen. It wasn't good news to the people who heard it the first time.

In fact, it scared everyone to death. And today we look at the shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. A distance of 6 miles.

These flocks were used regularly for the temple sacrifice. Lamb sacrifices that made people right with God. Shepherds at the bottom rung of societies hierarchy. As we will see, the shepherds were afraid, because of sudden change.

Here is a word of hope: - like the shepherds, if you find your life filled with fear, look for God's **appearance**, God's **arrival**, and God's **admonition**-don't be afraid another minute.

Why? Because when you discover what God is up to, in the midst of your fear, it all makes sweet sense. If you find your sweet spot in God's plan, life makes sweet sense as Max Lucado says. So many at Christmas struggle to find their place and purpose.

When you find your sweet spot in life, life makes sweet sense. (Lucado)

When you understand God's purpose and meaning for Christmas then life makes sweet sense even in fearful times. Sweet sense makes clear sense even when you are not cheerful, but fearful.

Fortunately, for us we are not the first ones to struggle with fear.

Shepherds in the first century share your fears.

Shepherds share your feelings.

Shepherds share your struggles.

So, for these final few minutes you can receive God's answer, like the shepherds, to the question, "**what am I afraid of?** Now, to understand your fear you have to begin with understanding why God makes such big deal about Christmas. God's word addresses this very issue.

It is **personal** – "*I bring you ...* "

The joy of Christmas is worth celebrating because God has made you one of a kind. And he has designed you for one-of-a-kind assignments, like the shepherds. It is an amazing feature of the Christmas story that the announcement of God's salvation plan came first to

shepherds. Shepherds were dismissed and marginalized by the religious establishment. Why is this?

Their very employment of tending sheep made it virtually impossible to keep the religious laws of the day. They were not trusted in court. A shepherd could never testify in legal matters. Unclean and untrusted the shepherds then passed on the Good News. The fact that this announcement came through the most spiritually needy is nothing short of amazing. Verse 17 tells us they spread the word, *"Today in the city of David, a Savior is born whose name is Christ the Lord!"* This is good news for those experiencing fearfulness instead of cheerfulness.

It is **positive** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy, ..."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Christ was not only born for you, he came to die for you! <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy **for** all the people.* <sup>11</sup> *Today in the town of David a **Savior** has been born to you;*

Jesus Christ came to die for (hyper) your sins (1 Cor. 15:3)

Jesus Christ gave himself for (hyper) our sins (Gal. 1:4)

Jesus himself prophesied, *"The good shepherd lays down his life for (hyper) his friends.* (John 15:13)

Before his death Jesus took bread and explained: *"this is my body given for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:19)

*This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:20)

All of those verses make me hyper about hyper. The good news of Christmas is that Jesus came to exchange hearts with you. Yes, he took your lying, sinful and adulterous heart and exchanged it for his perfect, sinless heart.

His heart was healthy, yours is diseased and sin ridden, and he did more than a heart transplant, he did a heart swap.

Your unholy and vile heart exchanged places for Jesus perfect heart-God made healthy what was sick, right that what was wrong and straight that what was crooked. God made him who had no sin, to be sin for (hyper) us...2 Cor. 5:21)

It is for **everyone** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of heaven's grace for everyone. God offers his salvation world-wide. God's salvation by-passes gender squabbles and ancient traditions. God's salvation invites the whole world to Jesus.

Jesus invites Muslims to salvation even though they don't believe God came in the flesh.

Jesus invites Jews to salvation even though they don't believe he is the Messiah,

Jesus invites Buddhists to salvation even though they believe in no less than 547 reincarnations,

Jesus invites humanists to salvation even though they don't believe in a creator of life,

Jesus invites Hindus to salvation even though they believe in an impersonal and plural God,

Jesus invites atheists to salvation even they would like to drum him out of Christmas,

**So here is my observation:** God wants to show up. Make it so loud and bright, you know it is Him. Then tell you some great news.

Your current spiritual state may cause you to wonder if God still wants you. God takes you however he finds you, whenever he finds you and wherever he finds you. Even, if you request his salvation with your dying breath, God hears your prayer.

Shepherds had a laid-back job. They are like surfers. Fun and easy. That night they put the sheep down for bed. They are sitting around the campfire. They've had dinner. Are playing cards, Go Fish or Old Maid.

All of a sudden, the sky lights up brilliantly, and this is long before electricity, light sabers, the sky lights up brilliantly and it is filled with angels. Angels are singing loudly in a choir. It scared them to death. Their plans for a quiet evening and route were shaken up. They were experiencing sudden change. *I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. (Luke 2:10b-NIV)*

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Here is how I want to end, with a scripture, a prayer, and a song.

SCRIPTURE: *Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! (Psalm 126:5-ESV)*

PRAYER: Father,

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. Yet, Jesus experienced the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and he declared it as a “joy set before him!” The one crying out, the one we call Lord and one whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The power to overcome is joy’s primary attribute. Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in the truth of Psalm 105:43, He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy.

So, God, I declare it is possible to experience JOY regardless of my circumstances. It is my choice to rejoice!

In Jesus Name, Amen.

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Notice your spouse and pastors' comment about greasy food and exercise start you to experience the emotions and feelings of fear and doubt. When you experience an emotion like fear and doubt, or for that fact any emotion you often miss the real culprit or the real cause.

Let me show it to you in Dr Albert Ellis and his ABC model.

A=the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

B=what you think about the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

C= the feelings and emotions of fear and doubt about the greasy food and lack of exercise.

Your emotional reaction to comments about greasy food and lack of exercise is not what caused you to experience fear or doubt.

Your emotional response is what you think about greasy food and lack of exercise.

Let me say it this way: using the ABC model, we see that emotion C (emotions of fear and doubt) is not caused by comment A. No, it is caused by thinking B. Wow!

For so many of you, the reason you struggle to feel joy is because the way you think about life's events leaves you sad, discouraged and even depressed.

Changing the way you think puts you in the driver's seat to correct fear, doubt or any other emotion that is holding you hostage and robbing you of real joy this Christmas.

Why? It is your choice to rejoice.

So, joy can.... JOY coexists with fear. JOY coexists with doubt. JOY coexists with pain.

That is if you think your way back into joy. If you can think your way out of joy, you can think your way back into joy. My take-aways today are simple, they are identified at the bottom of the page:

(1) It is possible to experience JOY regardless of your circumstances. (Phil 4:4)

(2) JOY defies all circumstances and is not dependent on life events (James 1:2)

(3) JOY is an inside job. (Galatians 5)

Helping you understand and live in the power of these insights is my objective and goal today. So, let's head for the winner's circle. But first why is the good news of Jesus at Christmas such a joyful event? And why did some shepherds need a little clarity as to why Jesus' birth was so joyful? Why did it call for a hilarious celebration?

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of Heaven's grace for everyone.

Today we know the birth of Jesus Christ is good news, because we know what is going to happen. It wasn't good news to the people who heard it the first time.

In fact, it scared everyone to death. And today we look at the shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. A distance of 6 miles.

These flocks were used regularly for the temple sacrifice. Lamb sacrifices that made people right with God. Shepherds at the bottom rung of societies hierarchy. As we will see, the shepherds were afraid, because of sudden change.

Here is a word of hope: - like the shepherds, if you find your life filled with fear, look for God's **appearance**, God's **arrival**, and God's **admonition**-don't be afraid another minute.

Why? Because when you discover what God is up to, in the midst of your fear, it all makes sweet sense. If you find your sweet spot in God's plan, life makes sweet sense as Max Lucado says. So many at Christmas struggle to find their place and purpose.

When you find your sweet spot in life, life makes sweet sense. (Lucado)

When you understand God's purpose and meaning for Christmas then life makes sweet sense even in fearful times. Sweet sense makes clear sense even when you are not cheerful, but fearful.

Fortunately, for us we are not the first ones to struggle with fear.

Shepherds in the first century share your fears.

Shepherds share your feelings.

Shepherds share your struggles.

So, for these final few minutes you can receive God's answer, like the shepherds, to the question, "**what am I afraid of?** Now, to understand your fear you have to begin with understanding why God makes such big deal about Christmas. God's word addresses this very issue.

It is **personal** – "*I bring you ...* "

The joy of Christmas is worth celebrating because God has made you one of a kind. And he has designed you for one-of-a-kind assignments, like the shepherds. It is an amazing feature of the Christmas story that the announcement of God's salvation plan came first to

shepherds. Shepherds were dismissed and marginalized by the religious establishment. Why is this?

Their very employment of tending sheep made it virtually impossible to keep the religious laws of the day. They were not trusted in court. A shepherd could never testify in legal matters. Unclean and untrusted the shepherds then passed on the Good News. The fact that this announcement came through the most spiritually needy is nothing short of amazing. Verse 17 tells us they spread the word, *"Today in the city of David, a Savior is born whose name is Christ the Lord!"* This is good news for those experiencing fearfulness instead of cheerfulness.

It is **positive** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy, ..."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Christ was not only born for you, he came to die for you! <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy **for** all the people.* <sup>11</sup> *Today in the town of David a **Savior** has been born to you;*

Jesus Christ came to die for (hyper) your sins (1 Cor. 15:3)

Jesus Christ gave himself for (hyper) our sins (Gal. 1:4)

Jesus himself prophesied, *"The good shepherd lays down his life for (hyper) his friends.* (John 15:13)

Before his death Jesus took bread and explained: *"this is my body given for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:19)

*This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:20)

All of those verses make me hyper about hyper. The good news of Christmas is that Jesus came to exchange hearts with you. Yes, he took your lying, sinful and adulterous heart and exchanged it for his perfect, sinless heart.

His heart was healthy, yours is diseased and sin ridden, and he did more than a heart transplant, he did a heart swap.

Your unholy and vile heart exchanged places for Jesus perfect heart-God made healthy what was sick, right that what was wrong and straight that what was crooked. God made him who had no sin, to be sin for (hyper) us...2 Cor. 5:21)

It is for **everyone** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of heaven's grace for everyone. God offers his salvation world-wide. God's salvation by-passes gender squabbles and ancient traditions. God's salvation invites the whole world to Jesus.

Jesus invites Muslims to salvation even though they don't believe God came in the flesh.

Jesus invites Jews to salvation even though they don't believe he is the Messiah,

Jesus invites Buddhists to salvation even though they believe in no less than 547 reincarnations,

Jesus invites humanists to salvation even though they don't believe in a creator of life,

Jesus invites Hindus to salvation even though they believe in an impersonal and plural God,

Jesus invites atheists to salvation even they would like to drum him out of Christmas,

**So here is my observation:** God wants to show up. Make it so loud and bright, you know it is Him. Then tell you some great news.

Your current spiritual state may cause you to wonder if God still wants you. God takes you however he finds you, whenever he finds you and wherever he finds you. Even, if you request his salvation with your dying breath, God hears your prayer.

Shepherds had a laid-back job. They are like surfers. Fun and easy. That night they put the sheep down for bed. They are sitting around the campfire. They've had dinner. Are playing cards, Go Fish or Old Maid.

All of a sudden, the sky lights up brilliantly, and this is long before electricity, light sabers, the sky lights up brilliantly and it is filled with angels. Angels are singing loudly in a choir. It scared them to death. Their plans for a quiet evening and route were shaken up. They were experiencing sudden change. *I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. (Luke 2:10b-NIV)*

(1) It is possible to experience JOY regardless of your circumstances. (Phil 4:4)

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Here is how I want to end, with a scripture, a prayer, and a song.

SCRIPTURE: *Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! (Psalm 126:5-ESV)*

PRAYER: Father,

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. Yet, Jesus experienced the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and he declared it as a “joy set before him!” The one crying out, the one we call Lord and one whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The power to overcome is joy’s primary attribute. Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in the truth of Psalm 105:43, He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy.

So, God, I declare it is possible to experience JOY regardless of my circumstances. It is my choice to rejoice!

In Jesus Name, Amen.

## JOY

Pastor Ken

November 30, 2025

**It is your choice to rejoice.**

*<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2-NIV)*

Danice and I were blessed with 4 Squires kids. 1 beauty and 3 beasts. When we raised our kids, we emphasized two aspects of life: live for Christ and use your vocation to honor God. Now, years later as all of them have moved into adulthood, I have noticed they caught 1 more Squires attribute. They love to laugh. They are filled with joy. They love a good story, especially at the expense of dad.

**Danice and I struck gold when we unintentionally included laughter and joy as a key family trait.** Perhaps a few examples will remind each of you the value of laughter and joy. You can't have 1 without the other.

**Kenny** and I would ride our bikes together and often stop at a church elder's house who was in the logging and forestry business. His logging truck was parked in the driveway and one day, John Eylander suggested to Kenny he take off his biking helmet and place it on the ground. John proceeded to take the logging truck grappling boom and pick up Kenny's helmet and hand it to him.

One time John squeezed too tight while picking up the helmet and it cracked. Kenny laughed and laughed. We rode our bikes back home with me calling him a **crack head**. **And you are a crack head too, dad.**

**Rebekah** and I would often go to barbie shows and buy barbie shoes. We would laugh. She would pick out accessories for her collection. She radiated with joy from the experience every time.

**Jesse** and **Joseph** were in Bible Quiz. We would often practice Bible Quiz by playing fumble football while we competed in Bible quiz. If the question had a word in it, any word that started with an f, for fumble, I would announce fumble and throw out the football, and they would jump on it. I am not sure if they learned any 10-point questions, but we recovered quite

a few fumbles. The Pharisees and Sadducees both arrested Jesus. Jesse and Joe never fell for the “f sound.” The red plate for a special occasion always brought a smile and joy to the kids.

At family birthdays, we often used Squires kids, name in an acrostic for their birthday and spelled out meaningful and miserable words. Kenny-kind, kangaroo,

e-Edward, excellent driver, egg head,

n-no(know) it all. Then the letter giver would laugh because of how they used, n, know it all....

n-nobody like him. Nobody likes him,

y-year older, youthful, young, youngster.

Over the years the kids would add pokie-man names to the letters cracking themselves up.

We still do acrostics today as a family. Ok, one more for grins. When I took my kids for a walk, as I held their hand, I would squeeze it several times. I would tell them when they were little, when I squeeze your hand, it means that dad loves you very, very much.

At Thanksgiving this past week, as our eyes were closed and as we prayed, laughter erupted during the prayer, because we were all squeezing the hands we were holding. So, what is the benefit of a kid growing up in a home where laughter and joy prevail?

When Jesus started his public ministry, he had any number of options as to what to do and where to start. He could do a crowd-pleasing miracle. He could preach one of his unforgettable sermons. He did neither of these, we get a glimpse in John 2.

### **Jesus began his public ministry by going to a wedding.**

You ask why did Jesus go to a wedding? It is found in verse 2, of John 2. Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. They were on the guest list. *On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup> and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. (John 2-NIV)*

When the bride and groom were putting together the guest list, someone suggested why not invite Jesus and Mary from nearby Nazareth. Cana and Nazareth were just a few miles apart.

The bride's parents where likely friends with Mary and Joseph so off to a wedding Jesus went. Again, why was Jesus invited, was he a celebrity? No, he was not one yet. Was Jesus invited because of his miracles? No, he hadn't done any yet. I suppose Jesus was invited

because he was just like everyone else. He laughed. He worked as a carpenter. He went to the market. He attended Torah class. Common people in Nazareth enjoyed hanging out with Jesus.

Can I suggest why I think Jesus went to a wedding? To laugh. To have some fun. And to experience the joy connected to weddings, like dancing, drinking wine and eating.

Remember, Jesus began his ministry in the desert during a 40 day fast. He broke in some new recruits. He already had a run in with the religious establishment. Then Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum. Perhaps, Jesus was still living out of boxes.

Jesus went to the wedding because he loved to laugh, he loved to eat, perhaps even a dance with the new bride would have provided great joy for Jesus. Joy for Jesus. Jesus experiencing joy. A joyous savior. Makes sense, doesn't it?

After all, one day Jesus is planning a big wedding for us, with unlimited food, that won't add a pound to the girth. Maybe Jesus wanted to take down a few notes. <sup>9</sup> *Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Rev 19-NIV)*

If you are familiar with the New Testament, Jesus party theme often got him into trouble. Israel's religious police called him a drunkard and glutton. And who can miss that Jesus hung out with tax collectors and prostitutes.

*<sup>19</sup> Then the Son of Man appeared—He didn't fast, as John had, but ate with sinners and drank wine. And the people said, "This man is a glutton! He's a drunk! And He hangs around with tax collectors and sinners, to boot." (Matt 11:19-Voice)*

I doubt whether many of you have pegged Jesus as a party lover. What we often get pegged as is uptight. Stressed out. Exhausted to the max. **Most of us are more familiar with tension, hurt, stress and anxiety more than we are with JOY.**

If you can complete these sentences with the appropriate word, you need either a vacation or a valium:

I am ready to throw in the...**towel.**

I am at the end of my...**rope.**

I am just a bundle of...**nerves.**

My life is falling...**apart.**

I am at my wit's...**end.**

I feel like resigning from the human...**race**.

If you are experiencing a lack of JOY in your life, perhaps it is the result of being too uptight. Stressed out. Eaten up by worry.

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. That is the bad news. The good news is that God has an answer for your stress, anxiety, and worry. It doesn't come in the form of some meds; it comes in the form of some fruit. <sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. (Gal 5-NIV)*

Each fruit enables you to cope with any adverse challenge you face in the Christian life. Struggling with racism, God tells us the fruit of the spirit is love. Struggling with anxiety and worry, God tells us the fruit of the Spirit is joy. Let's take a quick review of God's word and what it says about joy.

Yet this same Jesus is the one who for the joy *set before him endured the cross* (Heb. 12:2). Does that startle you? Jesus will experience the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and yet he declares it as a "joy set before him!"

<sup>2</sup> *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:2-NIV)*

I have never recovered from this verse. Need any more reasons to be joyful. In the Bible, joy does not dismiss suffering. The one crying out, the one we call Lord and whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The story of Christmas drips with the fragrance of joy. Come on ladies, somebody design a fragrance for women called joy, you will make a million \$\$\$

The angel greets Mary with joy and Mary rejoices (Luke 1:47). <sup>46</sup> *And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*

The angel announces "great joy" to shepherds. <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.*

The visiting Magi were "overjoyed." <sup>10</sup> *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. (Matt 2-NIV)*

This Christmas, fill your heart with worship, and your soul will swell in joy. Jesus' words are filled with joy.

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

*"You will weep and lament . . . but your sorrow will turn into joy" (John 16:20).*

He goes on to say, *"But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (John 16:22).*

Joy is the most important fruit if you want to live victoriously and be an overcomer. **The power to overcome is joy's primary attribute. When you make the development of joy and the maturing of the fruit of joy your priority, you will overcome the evil one on a regular basis.**

Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in truth in Psalm 105:43, *He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy;*

Did you realize that 3 little words could pack such a punch? Joy is what makes life meaningful, fun and fulfilling. For so many their lives are filled with a holiday forecast of "little hope for joy and laughter."

Isn't it time to change the weather forecast to endless days of joy? Again, people will often say, "what you did makes me afraid." Or "what you said makes me doubt." Or, how you treated me caused me pain. Ok, do you see what I just did, I told you others caused you to fear, doubt and experience pain.

These statements and actions and many like them are false because they are not what really makes you afraid, doubt or experience pain.

Listen, there is a **step** between what the person says or what they do and the emotion of fear and doubt that is the true cause of how you feel. The step is the cause. Sandwiched between what they say and how you feel. Does that make sense?

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Your pastor reminds you that as you age your bone density and muscle mass declines with age, so you better exercise daily and suddenly you start to **doubt** your health.

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a few fumbles. The Pharisees and Sadducees both arrested Jesus. Jesse and Joe never fell for the “f sound.” The red plate for a special occasion always brought a smile and joy to the kids.

At family birthdays, we often used Squires kids, name in an acrostic for their birthday and spelled out meaningful and miserable words. Kenny-kind, kangaroo,

e-Edward, excellent driver, egg head,

n-no(know) it all. Then the letter giver would laugh because of how they used, n, know it all....

n-nobody like him. Nobody likes him,

y-year older, youthful, young, youngster.

Over the years the kids would add pokie-man names to the letters cracking themselves up.

We still do acrostics today as a family. Ok, one more for grins. When I took my kids for a walk, as I held their hand, I would squeeze it several times. I would tell them when they were little, when I squeeze your hand, it means that dad loves you very, very much.

At Thanksgiving this past week, as our eyes were closed and as we prayed, laughter erupted during the prayer, because we were all squeezing the hands we were holding. So, what is the benefit of a kid growing up in a home where laughter and joy prevail?

When Jesus started his public ministry, he had any number of options as to what to do and where to start. He could do a crowd-pleasing miracle. He could preach one of his unforgettable sermons. He did neither of these, we get a glimpse in John 2.

### **Jesus began his public ministry by going to a wedding.**

You ask why did Jesus go to a wedding? It is found in verse 2, of John 2. Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. They were on the guest list. *On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup> and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. (John 2-NIV)*

When the bride and groom were putting together the guest list, someone suggested why not invite Jesus and Mary from nearby Nazareth. Cana and Nazareth were just a few miles apart.

The bride's parents where likely friends with Mary and Joseph so off to a wedding Jesus went. Again, why was Jesus invited, was he a celebrity? No, he was not one yet. Was Jesus invited because of his miracles? No, he hadn't done any yet. I suppose Jesus was invited

because he was just like everyone else. He laughed. He worked as a carpenter. He went to the market. He attended Torah class. Common people in Nazareth enjoyed hanging out with Jesus.

Can I suggest why I think Jesus went to a wedding? To laugh. To have some fun. And to experience the joy connected to weddings, like dancing, drinking wine and eating.

Remember, Jesus began his ministry in the desert during a 40 day fast. He broke in some new recruits. He already had a run in with the religious establishment. Then Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum. Perhaps, Jesus was still living out of boxes.

Jesus went to the wedding because he loved to laugh, he loved to eat, perhaps even a dance with the new bride would have provided great joy for Jesus. Joy for Jesus. Jesus experiencing joy. A joyous savior. Makes sense, doesn't it?

After all, one day Jesus is planning a big wedding for us, with unlimited food, that won't add a pound to the girth. Maybe Jesus wanted to take down a few notes. <sup>9</sup> *Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Rev 19-NIV)*

If you are familiar with the New Testament, Jesus party theme often got him into trouble. Israel's religious police called him a drunkard and glutton. And who can miss that Jesus hung out with tax collectors and prostitutes.

*<sup>19</sup> Then the Son of Man appeared—He didn't fast, as John had, but ate with sinners and drank wine. And the people said, "This man is a glutton! He's a drunk! And He hangs around with tax collectors and sinners, to boot." (Matt 11:19-Voice)*

I doubt whether many of you have pegged Jesus as a party lover. What we often get pegged as is uptight. Stressed out. Exhausted to the max. **Most of us are more familiar with tension, hurt, stress and anxiety more than we are with JOY.**

If you can complete these sentences with the appropriate word, you need either a vacation or a valium:

I am ready to throw in the...**towel.**

I am at the end of my...**rope.**

I am just a bundle of...**nerves.**

My life is falling...**apart.**

I am at my wit's...**end.**

I feel like resigning from the human...**race**.

If you are experiencing a lack of JOY in your life, perhaps it is the result of being too uptight. Stressed out. Eaten up by worry.

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. That is the bad news. The good news is that God has an answer for your stress, anxiety, and worry. It doesn't come in the form of some meds; it comes in the form of some fruit. <sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. (Gal 5-NIV)*

Each fruit enables you to cope with any adverse challenge you face in the Christian life. Struggling with racism, God tells us the fruit of the spirit is love. Struggling with anxiety and worry, God tells us the fruit of the Spirit is joy. Let's take a quick review of God's word and what it says about joy.

Yet this same Jesus is the one who for the joy *set before him endured the cross* (Heb. 12:2). Does that startle you? Jesus will experience the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and yet he declares it as a "joy set before him!"

<sup>2</sup> *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:2-NIV)*

I have never recovered from this verse. Need any more reasons to be joyful. In the Bible, joy does not dismiss suffering. The one crying out, the one we call Lord and whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The story of Christmas drips with the fragrance of joy. Come on ladies, somebody design a fragrance for women called joy, you will make a million \$\$\$

The angel greets Mary with joy and Mary rejoices (Luke 1:47). <sup>46</sup> *And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*

The angel announces "great joy" to shepherds. <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.*

The visiting Magi were "overjoyed." <sup>10</sup> *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. (Matt 2-NIV)*

This Christmas, fill your heart with worship, and your soul will swell in joy. Jesus' words are filled with joy.

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

*"You will weep and lament . . . but your sorrow will turn into joy" (John 16:20).*

He goes on to say, *"But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (John 16:22).*

Joy is the most important fruit if you want to live victoriously and be an overcomer. **The power to overcome is joy's primary attribute. When you make the development of joy and the maturing of the fruit of joy your priority, you will overcome the evil one on a regular basis.**

Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in truth in Psalm 105:43, *He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy;*

Did you realize that 3 little words could pack such a punch? Joy is what makes life meaningful, fun and fulfilling. For so many their lives are filled with a holiday forecast of "little hope for joy and laughter."

Isn't it time to change the weather forecast to endless days of joy? Again, people will often say, "what you did makes me afraid." Or "what you said makes me doubt." Or, how you treated me caused me pain. Ok, do you see what I just did, I told you others caused you to fear, doubt and experience pain.

These statements and actions and many like them are false because they are not what really makes you afraid, doubt or experience pain.

Listen, there is a **step** between what the person says or what they do and the emotion of fear and doubt that is the true cause of how you feel. The step is the cause. Sandwiched between what they say and how you feel. Does that make sense?

Let me illustrate: Your spouse tells you to lay off the greasy food or you will have a heart attack. Fear takes over.

Your pastor reminds you that as you age your bone density and muscle mass declines with age, so you better exercise daily and suddenly you start to **doubt** your health.

Notice your spouse and pastors' comment about greasy food and exercise start you to experience the emotions and feelings of fear and doubt. When you experience an emotion like fear and doubt, or for that fact any emotion you often miss the real culprit or the real cause.

Let me show it to you in Dr Albert Ellis and his ABC model.

A=the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

B=what you think about the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

C= the feelings and emotions of fear and doubt about the greasy food and lack of exercise.

Your emotional reaction to comments about greasy food and lack of exercise is not what caused you to experience fear or doubt.

Your emotional response is what you think about greasy food and lack of exercise.

Let me say it this way: using the ABC model, we see that emotion C (emotions of fear and doubt) is not caused by comment A. No, it is caused by thinking B. Wow!

For so many of you, the reason you struggle to feel joy is because the way you think about life's events leaves you sad, discouraged and even depressed.

Changing the way you think puts you in the driver's seat to correct fear, doubt or any other emotion that is holding you hostage and robbing you of real joy this Christmas.

Why? It is your choice to rejoice.

So, joy can.... JOY coexists with fear. JOY coexists with doubt. JOY coexists with pain.

That is if you think your way back into joy. If you can think your way out of joy, you can think your way back into joy. My take-aways today are simple, they are identified at the bottom of the page:

(1) It is possible to experience JOY regardless of your circumstances. (Phil 4:4)

(2) JOY defies all circumstances and is not dependent on life events (James 1:2)

(3) JOY is an inside job. (Galatians 5)

Helping you understand and live in the power of these insights is my objective and goal today. So, let's head for the winner's circle. But first why is the good news of Jesus at Christmas such a joyful event? And why did some shepherds need a little clarity as to why Jesus' birth was so joyful? Why did it call for a hilarious celebration?

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of Heaven's grace for everyone.

Today we know the birth of Jesus Christ is good news, because we know what is going to happen. It wasn't good news to the people who heard it the first time.

In fact, it scared everyone to death. And today we look at the shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. A distance of 6 miles.

These flocks were used regularly for the temple sacrifice. Lamb sacrifices that made people right with God. Shepherds at the bottom rung of societies hierarchy. As we will see, the shepherds were afraid, because of sudden change.

Here is a word of hope: - like the shepherds, if you find your life filled with fear, look for God's **appearance**, God's **arrival**, and God's **admonition**-don't be afraid another minute.

Why? Because when you discover what God is up to, in the midst of your fear, it all makes sweet sense. If you find your sweet spot in God's plan, life makes sweet sense as Max Lucado says. So many at Christmas struggle to find their place and purpose.

When you find your sweet spot in life, life makes sweet sense. (Lucado)

When you understand God's purpose and meaning for Christmas then life makes sweet sense even in fearful times. Sweet sense makes clear sense even when you are not cheerful, but fearful.

Fortunately, for us we are not the first ones to struggle with fear.

Shepherds in the first century share your fears.

Shepherds share your feelings.

Shepherds share your struggles.

So, for these final few minutes you can receive God's answer, like the shepherds, to the question, "**what am I afraid of?** Now, to understand your fear you have to begin with understanding why God makes such big deal about Christmas. God's word addresses this very issue.

It is **personal** – "*I bring you ...* "

The joy of Christmas is worth celebrating because God has made you one of a kind. And he has designed you for one-of-a-kind assignments, like the shepherds. It is an amazing feature of the Christmas story that the announcement of God's salvation plan came first to

shepherds. Shepherds were dismissed and marginalized by the religious establishment. Why is this?

Their very employment of tending sheep made it virtually impossible to keep the religious laws of the day. They were not trusted in court. A shepherd could never testify in legal matters. Unclean and untrusted the shepherds then passed on the Good News. The fact that this announcement came through the most spiritually needy is nothing short of amazing. Verse 17 tells us they spread the word, *"Today in the city of David, a Savior is born whose name is Christ the Lord!"* This is good news for those experiencing fearfulness instead of cheerfulness.

It is **positive** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy, ..."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Christ was not only born for you, he came to die for you! <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy **for** all the people.* <sup>11</sup> *Today in the town of David a **Savior** has been born to you;*

Jesus Christ came to die for (hyper) your sins (1 Cor. 15:3)

Jesus Christ gave himself for (hyper) our sins (Gal. 1:4)

Jesus himself prophesied, *"The good shepherd lays down his life for (hyper) his friends.* (John 15:13)

Before his death Jesus took bread and explained: *"this is my body given for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:19)

*This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:20)

All of those verses make me hyper about hyper. The good news of Christmas is that Jesus came to exchange hearts with you. Yes, he took your lying, sinful and adulterous heart and exchanged it for his perfect, sinless heart.

His heart was healthy, yours is diseased and sin ridden, and he did more than a heart transplant, he did a heart swap.

Your unholy and vile heart exchanged places for Jesus perfect heart-God made healthy what was sick, right that what was wrong and straight that what was crooked. God made him who had no sin, to be sin for (hyper) us...2 Cor. 5:21)

It is for **everyone** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of heaven's grace for everyone. God offers his salvation world-wide. God's salvation by-passes gender squabbles and ancient traditions. God's salvation invites the whole world to Jesus.

Jesus invites Muslims to salvation even though they don't believe God came in the flesh.

Jesus invites Jews to salvation even though they don't believe he is the Messiah,

Jesus invites Buddhists to salvation even though they believe in no less than 547 reincarnations,

Jesus invites humanists to salvation even though they don't believe in a creator of life,

Jesus invites Hindus to salvation even though they believe in an impersonal and plural God,

Jesus invites atheists to salvation even they would like to drum him out of Christmas,

**So here is my observation:** God wants to show up. Make it so loud and bright, you know it is Him. Then tell you some great news.

Your current spiritual state may cause you to wonder if God still wants you. God takes you however he finds you, whenever he finds you and wherever he finds you. Even, if you request his salvation with your dying breath, God hears your prayer.

Shepherds had a laid-back job. They are like surfers. Fun and easy. That night they put the sheep down for bed. They are sitting around the campfire. They've had dinner. Are playing cards, Go Fish or Old Maid.

All of a sudden, the sky lights up brilliantly, and this is long before electricity, light sabers, the sky lights up brilliantly and it is filled with angels. Angels are singing loudly in a choir. It scared them to death. Their plans for a quiet evening and route were shaken up. They were experiencing sudden change. *I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. (Luke 2:10b-NIV)*

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Here is how I want to end, with a scripture, a prayer, and a song.

SCRIPTURE: *Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! (Psalm 126:5-ESV)*

PRAYER: Father,

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. Yet, Jesus experienced the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and he declared it as a “joy set before him!” The one crying out, the one we call Lord and one whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The power to overcome is joy’s primary attribute. Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in the truth of Psalm 105:43, He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy.

So, God, I declare it is possible to experience JOY regardless of my circumstances. It is my choice to rejoice!

In Jesus Name, Amen.

## JOY

Pastor Ken

November 30, 2025

**It is your choice to rejoice.**

*<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2-NIV)*

Danice and I were blessed with 4 Squires kids. 1 beauty and 3 beasts. When we raised our kids, we emphasized two aspects of life: live for Christ and use your vocation to honor God. Now, years later as all of them have moved into adulthood, I have noticed they caught 1 more Squires attribute. They love to laugh. They are filled with joy. They love a good story, especially at the expense of dad.

**Danice and I struck gold when we unintentionally included laughter and joy as a key family trait.** Perhaps a few examples will remind each of you the value of laughter and joy. You can't have 1 without the other.

**Kenny** and I would ride our bikes together and often stop at a church elder's house who was in the logging and forestry business. His logging truck was parked in the driveway and one day, John Eylander suggested to Kenny he take off his biking helmet and place it on the ground. John proceeded to take the logging truck grappling boom and pick up Kenny's helmet and hand it to him.

One time John squeezed too tight while picking up the helmet and it cracked. Kenny laughed and laughed. We rode our bikes back home with me calling him a **crack head**. **And you are a crack head too, dad.**

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Helping you understand and live in the power of these insights is my objective and goal today. So, let's head for the winner's circle. But first why is the good news of Jesus at Christmas such a joyful event? And why did some shepherds need a little clarity as to why Jesus' birth was so joyful? Why did it call for a hilarious celebration?

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of Heaven's grace for everyone.

Today we know the birth of Jesus Christ is good news, because we know what is going to happen. It wasn't good news to the people who heard it the first time.

In fact, it scared everyone to death. And today we look at the shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. A distance of 6 miles.

These flocks were used regularly for the temple sacrifice. Lamb sacrifices that made people right with God. Shepherds at the bottom rung of societies hierarchy. As we will see, the shepherds were afraid, because of sudden change.

Here is a word of hope: - like the shepherds, if you find your life filled with fear, look for God's **appearance**, God's **arrival**, and God's **admonition**-don't be afraid another minute.

Why? Because when you discover what God is up to, in the midst of your fear, it all makes sweet sense. If you find your sweet spot in God's plan, life makes sweet sense as Max Lucado says. So many at Christmas struggle to find their place and purpose.

When you find your sweet spot in life, life makes sweet sense. (Lucado)

When you understand God's purpose and meaning for Christmas then life makes sweet sense even in fearful times. Sweet sense makes clear sense even when you are not cheerful, but fearful.

Fortunately, for us we are not the first ones to struggle with fear.

Shepherds in the first century share your fears.

Shepherds share your feelings.

Shepherds share your struggles.

So, for these final few minutes you can receive God's answer, like the shepherds, to the question, "**what am I afraid of?** Now, to understand your fear you have to begin with understanding why God makes such big deal about Christmas. God's word addresses this very issue.

It is **personal** – "*I bring you ...* "

The joy of Christmas is worth celebrating because God has made you one of a kind. And he has designed you for one-of-a-kind assignments, like the shepherds. It is an amazing feature of the Christmas story that the announcement of God's salvation plan came first to

shepherds. Shepherds were dismissed and marginalized by the religious establishment. Why is this?

Their very employment of tending sheep made it virtually impossible to keep the religious laws of the day. They were not trusted in court. A shepherd could never testify in legal matters. Unclean and untrusted the shepherds then passed on the Good News. The fact that this announcement came through the most spiritually needy is nothing short of amazing. Verse 17 tells us they spread the word, *"Today in the city of David, a Savior is born whose name is Christ the Lord!"* This is good news for those experiencing fearfulness instead of cheerfulness.

It is **positive** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy, ..."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Christ was not only born for you, he came to die for you! <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy **for** all the people.* <sup>11</sup> *Today in the town of David a **Savior** has been born to you;*

Jesus Christ came to die for (hyper) your sins (1 Cor. 15:3)

Jesus Christ gave himself for (hyper) our sins (Gal. 1:4)

Jesus himself prophesied, *"The good shepherd lays down his life for (hyper) his friends.* (John 15:13)

Before his death Jesus took bread and explained: *"this is my body given for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:19)

*This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:20)

All of those verses make me hyper about hyper. The good news of Christmas is that Jesus came to exchange hearts with you. Yes, he took your lying, sinful and adulterous heart and exchanged it for his perfect, sinless heart.

His heart was healthy, yours is diseased and sin ridden, and he did more than a heart transplant, he did a heart swap.

Your unholy and vile heart exchanged places for Jesus perfect heart-God made healthy what was sick, right that what was wrong and straight that what was crooked. God made him who had no sin, to be sin for (hyper) us...2 Cor. 5:21)

It is for **everyone** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of heaven's grace for everyone. God offers his salvation world-wide. God's salvation by-passes gender squabbles and ancient traditions. God's salvation invites the whole world to Jesus.

Jesus invites Muslims to salvation even though they don't believe God came in the flesh.

Jesus invites Jews to salvation even though they don't believe he is the Messiah,

Jesus invites Buddhists to salvation even though they believe in no less than 547 reincarnations,

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Jesus invites atheists to salvation even they would like to drum him out of Christmas,

**So here is my observation:** God wants to show up. Make it so loud and bright, you know it is Him. Then tell you some great news.

Your current spiritual state may cause you to wonder if God still wants you. God takes you however he finds you, whenever he finds you and wherever he finds you. Even, if you request his salvation with your dying breath, God hears your prayer.

Shepherds had a laid-back job. They are like surfers. Fun and easy. That night they put the sheep down for bed. They are sitting around the campfire. They've had dinner. Are playing cards, Go Fish or Old Maid.

All of a sudden, the sky lights up brilliantly, and this is long before electricity, light sabers, the sky lights up brilliantly and it is filled with angels. Angels are singing loudly in a choir. It scared them to death. Their plans for a quiet evening and route were shaken up. They were experiencing sudden change. *I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. (Luke 2:10b-NIV)*

(1) It is possible to experience JOY regardless of your circumstances. (Phil 4:4)

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Here is how I want to end, with a scripture, a prayer, and a song.

SCRIPTURE: *Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! (Psalm 126:5-ESV)*

PRAYER: Father,

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. Yet, Jesus experienced the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and he declared it as a “joy set before him!” The one crying out, the one we call Lord and one whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The power to overcome is joy’s primary attribute. Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in the truth of Psalm 105:43, He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy.

So, God, I declare it is possible to experience JOY regardless of my circumstances. It is my choice to rejoice!

In Jesus Name, Amen.

## JOY

Pastor Ken

November 30, 2025

**It is your choice to rejoice.**

*<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2-NIV)*

Danice and I were blessed with 4 Squires kids. 1 beauty and 3 beasts. When we raised our kids, we emphasized two aspects of life: live for Christ and use your vocation to honor God. Now, years later as all of them have moved into adulthood, I have noticed they caught 1 more Squires attribute. They love to laugh. They are filled with joy. They love a good story, especially at the expense of dad.

**Danice and I struck gold when we unintentionally included laughter and joy as a key family trait.** Perhaps a few examples will remind each of you the value of laughter and joy. You can't have 1 without the other.

**Kenny** and I would ride our bikes together and often stop at a church elder's house who was in the logging and forestry business. His logging truck was parked in the driveway and one day, John Eylander suggested to Kenny he take off his biking helmet and place it on the ground. John proceeded to take the logging truck grappling boom and pick up Kenny's helmet and hand it to him.

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**Jesse** and **Joseph** were in Bible Quiz. We would often practice Bible Quiz by playing fumble football while we competed in Bible quiz. If the question had a word in it, any word that started with an f, for fumble, I would announce fumble and throw out the football, and they would jump on it. I am not sure if they learned any 10-point questions, but we recovered quite

a few fumbles. The Pharisees and Sadducees both arrested Jesus. Jesse and Joe never fell for the “f sound.” The red plate for a special occasion always brought a smile and joy to the kids.

At family birthdays, we often used Squires kids, name in an acrostic for their birthday and spelled out meaningful and miserable words. Kenny-kind, kangaroo,

e-Edward, excellent driver, egg head,

n-no(know) it all. Then the letter giver would laugh because of how they used, n, know it all....

n-nobody like him. Nobody likes him,

y-year older, youthful, young, youngster.

Over the years the kids would add pokie-man names to the letters cracking themselves up.

We still do acrostics today as a family. Ok, one more for grins. When I took my kids for a walk, as I held their hand, I would squeeze it several times. I would tell them when they were little, when I squeeze your hand, it means that dad loves you very, very much.

At Thanksgiving this past week, as our eyes were closed and as we prayed, laughter erupted during the prayer, because we were all squeezing the hands we were holding. So, what is the benefit of a kid growing up in a home where laughter and joy prevail?

When Jesus started his public ministry, he had any number of options as to what to do and where to start. He could do a crowd-pleasing miracle. He could preach one of his unforgettable sermons. He did neither of these, we get a glimpse in John 2.

### **Jesus began his public ministry by going to a wedding.**

You ask why did Jesus go to a wedding? It is found in verse 2, of John 2. Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. They were on the guest list. *On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup> and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. (John 2-NIV)*

When the bride and groom were putting together the guest list, someone suggested why not invite Jesus and Mary from nearby Nazareth. Cana and Nazareth were just a few miles apart.

The bride's parents where likely friends with Mary and Joseph so off to a wedding Jesus went. Again, why was Jesus invited, was he a celebrity? No, he was not one yet. Was Jesus invited because of his miracles? No, he hadn't done any yet. I suppose Jesus was invited

because he was just like everyone else. He laughed. He worked as a carpenter. He went to the market. He attended Torah class. Common people in Nazareth enjoyed hanging out with Jesus.

Can I suggest why I think Jesus went to a wedding? To laugh. To have some fun. And to experience the joy connected to weddings, like dancing, drinking wine and eating.

Remember, Jesus began his ministry in the desert during a 40 day fast. He broke in some new recruits. He already had a run in with the religious establishment. Then Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum. Perhaps, Jesus was still living out of boxes.

Jesus went to the wedding because he loved to laugh, he loved to eat, perhaps even a dance with the new bride would have provided great joy for Jesus. Joy for Jesus. Jesus experiencing joy. A joyous savior. Makes sense, doesn't it?

After all, one day Jesus is planning a big wedding for us, with unlimited food, that won't add a pound to the girth. Maybe Jesus wanted to take down a few notes. <sup>9</sup> *Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Rev 19-NIV)*

If you are familiar with the New Testament, Jesus party theme often got him into trouble. Israel's religious police called him a drunkard and glutton. And who can miss that Jesus hung out with tax collectors and prostitutes.

*<sup>19</sup> Then the Son of Man appeared—He didn't fast, as John had, but ate with sinners and drank wine. And the people said, "This man is a glutton! He's a drunk! And He hangs around with tax collectors and sinners, to boot." (Matt 11:19-Voice)*

I doubt whether many of you have pegged Jesus as a party lover. What we often get pegged as is uptight. Stressed out. Exhausted to the max. **Most of us are more familiar with tension, hurt, stress and anxiety more than we are with JOY.**

If you can complete these sentences with the appropriate word, you need either a vacation or a valium:

I am ready to throw in the...**towel.**

I am at the end of my...**rope.**

I am just a bundle of...**nerves.**

My life is falling...**apart.**

I am at my wit's...**end.**

I feel like resigning from the human...**race**.

If you are experiencing a lack of JOY in your life, perhaps it is the result of being too uptight. Stressed out. Eaten up by worry.

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. That is the bad news. The good news is that God has an answer for your stress, anxiety, and worry. It doesn't come in the form of some meds; it comes in the form of some fruit. <sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. (Gal 5-NIV)*

Each fruit enables you to cope with any adverse challenge you face in the Christian life. Struggling with racism, God tells us the fruit of the spirit is love. Struggling with anxiety and worry, God tells us the fruit of the Spirit is joy. Let's take a quick review of God's word and what it says about joy.

Yet this same Jesus is the one who for the joy *set before him endured the cross* (Heb. 12:2). Does that startle you? Jesus will experience the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and yet he declares it as a "joy set before him!"

<sup>2</sup> *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:2-NIV)*

I have never recovered from this verse. Need any more reasons to be joyful. In the Bible, joy does not dismiss suffering. The one crying out, the one we call Lord and whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The story of Christmas drips with the fragrance of joy. Come on ladies, somebody design a fragrance for women called joy, you will make a million \$\$\$

The angel greets Mary with joy and Mary rejoices (Luke 1:47). <sup>46</sup> *And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*

The angel announces "great joy" to shepherds. <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.*

The visiting Magi were "overjoyed." <sup>10</sup> *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. (Matt 2-NIV)*

This Christmas, fill your heart with worship, and your soul will swell in joy. Jesus' words are filled with joy.

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

*"You will weep and lament . . . but your sorrow will turn into joy" (John 16:20).*

He goes on to say, *"But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (John 16:22).*

Joy is the most important fruit if you want to live victoriously and be an overcomer. **The power to overcome is joy's primary attribute. When you make the development of joy and the maturing of the fruit of joy your priority, you will overcome the evil one on a regular basis.**

Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in truth in Psalm 105:43, *He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy;*

Did you realize that 3 little words could pack such a punch? Joy is what makes life meaningful, fun and fulfilling. For so many their lives are filled with a holiday forecast of "little hope for joy and laughter."

Isn't it time to change the weather forecast to endless days of joy? Again, people will often say, "what you did makes me afraid." Or "what you said makes me doubt." Or, how you treated me caused me pain. Ok, do you see what I just did, I told you others caused you to fear, doubt and experience pain.

These statements and actions and many like them are false because they are not what really makes you afraid, doubt or experience pain.

Listen, there is a **step** between what the person says or what they do and the emotion of fear and doubt that is the true cause of how you feel. The step is the cause. Sandwiched between what they say and how you feel. Does that make sense?

Let me illustrate: Your spouse tells you to lay off the greasy food or you will have a heart attack. Fear takes over.

Your pastor reminds you that as you age your bone density and muscle mass declines with age, so you better exercise daily and suddenly you start to **doubt** your health.

Notice your spouse and pastors' comment about greasy food and exercise start you to experience the emotions and feelings of fear and doubt. When you experience an emotion like fear and doubt, or for that fact any emotion you often miss the real culprit or the real cause.

Let me show it to you in Dr Albert Ellis and his ABC model.

A=the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

B=what you think about the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

C= the feelings and emotions of fear and doubt about the greasy food and lack of exercise.

Your emotional reaction to comments about greasy food and lack of exercise is not what caused you to experience fear or doubt.

Your emotional response is what you think about greasy food and lack of exercise.

Let me say it this way: using the ABC model, we see that emotion C (emotions of fear and doubt) is not caused by comment A. No, it is caused by thinking B. Wow!

For so many of you, the reason you struggle to feel joy is because the way you think about life's events leaves you sad, discouraged and even depressed.

Changing the way you think puts you in the driver's seat to correct fear, doubt or any other emotion that is holding you hostage and robbing you of real joy this Christmas.

Why? It is your choice to rejoice.

So, joy can.... JOY coexists with fear. JOY coexists with doubt. JOY coexists with pain.

That is if you think your way back into joy. If you can think your way out of joy, you can think your way back into joy. My take-aways today are simple, they are identified at the bottom of the page:

- (1) It is possible to experience JOY regardless of your circumstances. (Phil 4:4)
- (2) JOY defies all circumstances and is not dependent on life events (James 1:2)
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Helping you understand and live in the power of these insights is my objective and goal today. So, let's head for the winner's circle. But first why is the good news of Jesus at Christmas such a joyful event? And why did some shepherds need a little clarity as to why Jesus' birth was so joyful? Why did it call for a hilarious celebration?

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### **Jesus began his public ministry by going to a wedding.**

You ask why did Jesus go to a wedding? It is found in verse 2, of John 2. Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. They were on the guest list. *On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup> and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. (John 2-NIV)*

When the bride and groom were putting together the guest list, someone suggested why not invite Jesus and Mary from nearby Nazareth. Cana and Nazareth were just a few miles apart.

The bride's parents where likely friends with Mary and Joseph so off to a wedding Jesus went. Again, why was Jesus invited, was he a celebrity? No, he was not one yet. Was Jesus invited because of his miracles? No, he hadn't done any yet. I suppose Jesus was invited

because he was just like everyone else. He laughed. He worked as a carpenter. He went to the market. He attended Torah class. Common people in Nazareth enjoyed hanging out with Jesus.

Can I suggest why I think Jesus went to a wedding? To laugh. To have some fun. And to experience the joy connected to weddings, like dancing, drinking wine and eating.

Remember, Jesus began his ministry in the desert during a 40 day fast. He broke in some new recruits. He already had a run in with the religious establishment. Then Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum. Perhaps, Jesus was still living out of boxes.

Jesus went to the wedding because he loved to laugh, he loved to eat, perhaps even a dance with the new bride would have provided great joy for Jesus. Joy for Jesus. Jesus experiencing joy. A joyous savior. Makes sense, doesn't it?

After all, one day Jesus is planning a big wedding for us, with unlimited food, that won't add a pound to the girth. Maybe Jesus wanted to take down a few notes. <sup>9</sup> *Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Rev 19-NIV)*

If you are familiar with the New Testament, Jesus party theme often got him into trouble. Israel's religious police called him a drunkard and glutton. And who can miss that Jesus hung out with tax collectors and prostitutes.

*<sup>19</sup> Then the Son of Man appeared—He didn't fast, as John had, but ate with sinners and drank wine. And the people said, "This man is a glutton! He's a drunk! And He hangs around with tax collectors and sinners, to boot." (Matt 11:19-Voice)*

I doubt whether many of you have pegged Jesus as a party lover. What we often get pegged as is uptight. Stressed out. Exhausted to the max. **Most of us are more familiar with tension, hurt, stress and anxiety more than we are with JOY.**

If you can complete these sentences with the appropriate word, you need either a vacation or a valium:

I am ready to throw in the...**towel.**

I am at the end of my...**rope.**

I am just a bundle of...**nerves.**

My life is falling...**apart.**

I am at my wit's...**end.**

I feel like resigning from the human...**race**.

If you are experiencing a lack of JOY in your life, perhaps it is the result of being too uptight. Stressed out. Eaten up by worry.

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. That is the bad news. The good news is that God has an answer for your stress, anxiety, and worry. It doesn't come in the form of some meds; it comes in the form of some fruit. <sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. (Gal 5-NIV)*

Each fruit enables you to cope with any adverse challenge you face in the Christian life. Struggling with racism, God tells us the fruit of the spirit is love. Struggling with anxiety and worry, God tells us the fruit of the Spirit is joy. Let's take a quick review of God's word and what it says about joy.

Yet this same Jesus is the one who for the joy *set before him endured the cross* (Heb. 12:2). Does that startle you? Jesus will experience the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and yet he declares it as a "joy set before him!"

<sup>2</sup> *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:2-NIV)*

I have never recovered from this verse. Need any more reasons to be joyful. In the Bible, joy does not dismiss suffering. The one crying out, the one we call Lord and whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The story of Christmas drips with the fragrance of joy. Come on ladies, somebody design a fragrance for women called joy, you will make a million \$\$\$

The angel greets Mary with joy and Mary rejoices (Luke 1:47). <sup>46</sup> *And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*

The angel announces "great joy" to shepherds. <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.*

The visiting Magi were "overjoyed." <sup>10</sup> *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. (Matt 2-NIV)*

This Christmas, fill your heart with worship, and your soul will swell in joy. Jesus' words are filled with joy.

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

*"You will weep and lament . . . but your sorrow will turn into joy" (John 16:20).*

He goes on to say, *"But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (John 16:22).*

Joy is the most important fruit if you want to live victoriously and be an overcomer. **The power to overcome is joy's primary attribute. When you make the development of joy and the maturing of the fruit of joy your priority, you will overcome the evil one on a regular basis.**

Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in truth in Psalm 105:43, *He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy;*

Did you realize that 3 little words could pack such a punch? Joy is what makes life meaningful, fun and fulfilling. For so many their lives are filled with a holiday forecast of "little hope for joy and laughter."

Isn't it time to change the weather forecast to endless days of joy? Again, people will often say, "what you did makes me afraid." Or "what you said makes me doubt." Or, how you treated me caused me pain. Ok, do you see what I just did, I told you others caused you to fear, doubt and experience pain.

These statements and actions and many like them are false because they are not what really makes you afraid, doubt or experience pain.

Listen, there is a **step** between what the person says or what they do and the emotion of fear and doubt that is the true cause of how you feel. The step is the cause. Sandwiched between what they say and how you feel. Does that make sense?

Let me illustrate: Your spouse tells you to lay off the greasy food or you will have a heart attack. Fear takes over.

Your pastor reminds you that as you age your bone density and muscle mass declines with age, so you better exercise daily and suddenly you start to **doubt** your health.

Notice your spouse and pastors' comment about greasy food and exercise start you to experience the emotions and feelings of fear and doubt. When you experience an emotion like fear and doubt, or for that fact any emotion you often miss the real culprit or the real cause.

Let me show it to you in Dr Albert Ellis and his ABC model.

A=the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

B=what you think about the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

C= the feelings and emotions of fear and doubt about the greasy food and lack of exercise.

Your emotional reaction to comments about greasy food and lack of exercise is not what caused you to experience fear or doubt.

Your emotional response is what you think about greasy food and lack of exercise.

Let me say it this way: using the ABC model, we see that emotion C (emotions of fear and doubt) is not caused by comment A. No, it is caused by thinking B. Wow!

For so many of you, the reason you struggle to feel joy is because the way you think about life's events leaves you sad, discouraged and even depressed.

Changing the way you think puts you in the driver's seat to correct fear, doubt or any other emotion that is holding you hostage and robbing you of real joy this Christmas.

Why? It is your choice to rejoice.

So, joy can.... JOY coexists with fear. JOY coexists with doubt. JOY coexists with pain.

That is if you think your way back into joy. If you can think your way out of joy, you can think your way back into joy. My take-aways today are simple, they are identified at the bottom of the page:

(1) It is possible to experience JOY regardless of your circumstances. (Phil 4:4)

(2) JOY defies all circumstances and is not dependent on life events (James 1:2)

(3) JOY is an inside job. (Galatians 5)

Helping you understand and live in the power of these insights is my objective and goal today. So, let's head for the winner's circle. But first why is the good news of Jesus at Christmas such a joyful event? And why did some shepherds need a little clarity as to why Jesus' birth was so joyful? Why did it call for a hilarious celebration?

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of Heaven's grace for everyone.

Today we know the birth of Jesus Christ is good news, because we know what is going to happen. It wasn't good news to the people who heard it the first time.

In fact, it scared everyone to death. And today we look at the shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. A distance of 6 miles.

These flocks were used regularly for the temple sacrifice. Lamb sacrifices that made people right with God. Shepherds at the bottom rung of societies hierarchy. As we will see, the shepherds were afraid, because of sudden change.

Here is a word of hope: - like the shepherds, if you find your life filled with fear, look for God's **appearance**, God's **arrival**, and God's **admonition**-don't be afraid another minute.

Why? Because when you discover what God is up to, in the midst of your fear, it all makes sweet sense. If you find your sweet spot in God's plan, life makes sweet sense as Max Lucado says. So many at Christmas struggle to find their place and purpose.

When you find your sweet spot in life, life makes sweet sense. (Lucado)

When you understand God's purpose and meaning for Christmas then life makes sweet sense even in fearful times. Sweet sense makes clear sense even when you are not cheerful, but fearful.

Fortunately, for us we are not the first ones to struggle with fear.

Shepherds in the first century share your fears.

Shepherds share your feelings.

Shepherds share your struggles.

So, for these final few minutes you can receive God's answer, like the shepherds, to the question, "**what am I afraid of?** Now, to understand your fear you have to begin with understanding why God makes such big deal about Christmas. God's word addresses this very issue.

It is **personal** – "*I bring you ...* "

The joy of Christmas is worth celebrating because God has made you one of a kind. And he has designed you for one-of-a-kind assignments, like the shepherds. It is an amazing feature of the Christmas story that the announcement of God's salvation plan came first to

shepherds. Shepherds were dismissed and marginalized by the religious establishment. Why is this?

Their very employment of tending sheep made it virtually impossible to keep the religious laws of the day. They were not trusted in court. A shepherd could never testify in legal matters. Unclean and untrusted the shepherds then passed on the Good News. The fact that this announcement came through the most spiritually needy is nothing short of amazing. Verse 17 tells us they spread the word, *"Today in the city of David, a Savior is born whose name is Christ the Lord!"* This is good news for those experiencing fearfulness instead of cheerfulness.

It is **positive** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy, ..."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Christ was not only born for you, he came to die for you! <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy **for** all the people.* <sup>11</sup> *Today in the town of David a **Savior** has been born to you;*

Jesus Christ came to die for (hyper) your sins (1 Cor. 15:3)

Jesus Christ gave himself for (hyper) our sins (Gal. 1:4)

Jesus himself prophesied, *"The good shepherd lays down his life for (hyper) his friends.* (John 15:13)

Before his death Jesus took bread and explained: *"this is my body given for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:19)

*This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:20)

All of those verses make me hyper about hyper. The good news of Christmas is that Jesus came to exchange hearts with you. Yes, he took your lying, sinful and adulterous heart and exchanged it for his perfect, sinless heart.

His heart was healthy, yours is diseased and sin ridden, and he did more than a heart transplant, he did a heart swap.

Your unholy and vile heart exchanged places for Jesus perfect heart-God made healthy what was sick, right that what was wrong and straight that what was crooked. God made him who had no sin, to be sin for (hyper) us...2 Cor. 5:21)

It is for **everyone** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of heaven's grace for everyone. God offers his salvation world-wide. God's salvation by-passes gender squabbles and ancient traditions. God's salvation invites the whole world to Jesus.

Jesus invites Muslims to salvation even though they don't believe God came in the flesh.

Jesus invites Jews to salvation even though they don't believe he is the Messiah,

Jesus invites Buddhists to salvation even though they believe in no less than 547 reincarnations,

Jesus invites humanists to salvation even though they don't believe in a creator of life,

Jesus invites Hindus to salvation even though they believe in an impersonal and plural God,

Jesus invites atheists to salvation even they would like to drum him out of Christmas,

**So here is my observation:** God wants to show up. Make it so loud and bright, you know it is Him. Then tell you some great news.

Your current spiritual state may cause you to wonder if God still wants you. God takes you however he finds you, whenever he finds you and wherever he finds you. Even, if you request his salvation with your dying breath, God hears your prayer.

Shepherds had a laid-back job. They are like surfers. Fun and easy. That night they put the sheep down for bed. They are sitting around the campfire. They've had dinner. Are playing cards, Go Fish or Old Maid.

All of a sudden, the sky lights up brilliantly, and this is long before electricity, light sabers, the sky lights up brilliantly and it is filled with angels. Angels are singing loudly in a choir. It scared them to death. Their plans for a quiet evening and route were shaken up. They were experiencing sudden change. *I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. (Luke 2:10b-NIV)*

(1) It is possible to experience JOY regardless of your circumstances. (Phil 4:4)

(2) JOY defies all circumstances and is not dependent on life events (James 1:2)

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Here is how I want to end, with a scripture, a prayer, and a song.

SCRIPTURE: *Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! (Psalm 126:5-ESV)*

PRAYER: Father,

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. Yet, Jesus experienced the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and he declared it as a “joy set before him!” The one crying out, the one we call Lord and one whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The power to overcome is joy’s primary attribute. Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in the truth of Psalm 105:43, He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy.

So, God, I declare it is possible to experience JOY regardless of my circumstances. It is my choice to rejoice!

In Jesus Name, Amen.

## JOY

Pastor Ken

November 30, 2025

**It is your choice to rejoice.**

*<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2-NIV)*

Danice and I were blessed with 4 Squires kids. 1 beauty and 3 beasts. When we raised our kids, we emphasized two aspects of life: live for Christ and use your vocation to honor God. Now, years later as all of them have moved into adulthood, I have noticed they caught 1 more Squires attribute. They love to laugh. They are filled with joy. They love a good story, especially at the expense of dad.

**Danice and I struck gold when we unintentionally included laughter and joy as a key family trait.** Perhaps a few examples will remind each of you the value of laughter and joy. You can't have 1 without the other.

**Kenny** and I would ride our bikes together and often stop at a church elder's house who was in the logging and forestry business. His logging truck was parked in the driveway and one day, John Eylander suggested to Kenny he take off his biking helmet and place it on the ground. John proceeded to take the logging truck grappling boom and pick up Kenny's helmet and hand it to him.

One time John squeezed too tight while picking up the helmet and it cracked. Kenny laughed and laughed. We rode our bikes back home with me calling him a **crack head**. **And you are a crack head too, dad.**

**Rebekah** and I would often go to barbie shows and buy barbie shoes. We would laugh. She would pick out accessories for her collection. She radiated with joy from the experience every time.

**Jesse** and **Joseph** were in Bible Quiz. We would often practice Bible Quiz by playing fumble football while we competed in Bible quiz. If the question had a word in it, any word that started with an f, for fumble, I would announce fumble and throw out the football, and they would jump on it. I am not sure if they learned any 10-point questions, but we recovered quite

a few fumbles. The Pharisees and Sadducees both arrested Jesus. Jesse and Joe never fell for the “f sound.” The red plate for a special occasion always brought a smile and joy to the kids.

At family birthdays, we often used Squires kids, name in an acrostic for their birthday and spelled out meaningful and miserable words. Kenny-kind, kangaroo,

e-Edward, excellent driver, egg head,

n-no(know) it all. Then the letter giver would laugh because of how they used, n, know it all....

n-nobody like him. Nobody likes him,

y-year older, youthful, young, youngster.

Over the years the kids would add pokie-man names to the letters cracking themselves up.

We still do acrostics today as a family. Ok, one more for grins. When I took my kids for a walk, as I held their hand, I would squeeze it several times. I would tell them when they were little, when I squeeze your hand, it means that dad loves you very, very much.

At Thanksgiving this past week, as our eyes were closed and as we prayed, laughter erupted during the prayer, because we were all squeezing the hands we were holding. So, what is the benefit of a kid growing up in a home where laughter and joy prevail?

When Jesus started his public ministry, he had any number of options as to what to do and where to start. He could do a crowd-pleasing miracle. He could preach one of his unforgettable sermons. He did neither of these, we get a glimpse in John 2.

### **Jesus began his public ministry by going to a wedding.**

You ask why did Jesus go to a wedding? It is found in verse 2, of John 2. Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. They were on the guest list. *On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup> and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. (John 2-NIV)*

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The joy of Christmas is worth celebrating because God has made you one of a kind. And he has designed you for one-of-a-kind assignments, like the shepherds. It is an amazing feature of the Christmas story that the announcement of God's salvation plan came first to

shepherds. Shepherds were dismissed and marginalized by the religious establishment. Why is this?

Their very employment of tending sheep made it virtually impossible to keep the religious laws of the day. They were not trusted in court. A shepherd could never testify in legal matters. Unclean and untrusted the shepherds then passed on the Good News. The fact that this announcement came through the most spiritually needy is nothing short of amazing. Verse 17 tells us they spread the word, *"Today in the city of David, a Savior is born whose name is Christ the Lord!"* This is good news for those experiencing fearfulness instead of cheerfulness.

It is **positive** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy, ..."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Christ was not only born for you, he came to die for you! <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy **for** all the people.* <sup>11</sup> *Today in the town of David a **Savior** has been born to you;*

Jesus Christ came to die for (hyper) your sins (1 Cor. 15:3)

Jesus Christ gave himself for (hyper) our sins (Gal. 1:4)

Jesus himself prophesied, *"The good shepherd lays down his life for (hyper) his friends.* (John 15:13)

Before his death Jesus took bread and explained: *"this is my body given for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:19)

*This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:20)

All of those verses make me hyper about hyper. The good news of Christmas is that Jesus came to exchange hearts with you. Yes, he took your lying, sinful and adulterous heart and exchanged it for his perfect, sinless heart.

His heart was healthy, yours is diseased and sin ridden, and he did more than a heart transplant, he did a heart swap.

Your unholy and vile heart exchanged places for Jesus perfect heart-God made healthy what was sick, right that what was wrong and straight that what was crooked. God made him who had no sin, to be sin for (hyper) us...2 Cor. 5:21)

It is for **everyone** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of heaven's grace for everyone. God offers his salvation world-wide. God's salvation by-passes gender squabbles and ancient traditions. God's salvation invites the whole world to Jesus.

Jesus invites Muslims to salvation even though they don't believe God came in the flesh.

Jesus invites Jews to salvation even though they don't believe he is the Messiah,

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Jesus invites atheists to salvation even they would like to drum him out of Christmas,

**So here is my observation:** God wants to show up. Make it so loud and bright, you know it is Him. Then tell you some great news.

Your current spiritual state may cause you to wonder if God still wants you. God takes you however he finds you, whenever he finds you and wherever he finds you. Even, if you request his salvation with your dying breath, God hears your prayer.

Shepherds had a laid-back job. They are like surfers. Fun and easy. That night they put the sheep down for bed. They are sitting around the campfire. They've had dinner. Are playing cards, Go Fish or Old Maid.

All of a sudden, the sky lights up brilliantly, and this is long before electricity, light sabers, the sky lights up brilliantly and it is filled with angels. Angels are singing loudly in a choir. It scared them to death. Their plans for a quiet evening and route were shaken up. They were experiencing sudden change. *I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. (Luke 2:10b-NIV)*

(1) It is possible to experience JOY regardless of your circumstances. (Phil 4:4)

(2) JOY defies all circumstances and is not dependent on life events (James 1:2)

(3) JOY is an inside job. (Galatians 5)

Here is how I want to end, with a scripture, a prayer, and a song.

SCRIPTURE: *Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! (Psalm 126:5-ESV)*

PRAYER: Father,

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. Yet, Jesus experienced the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and he declared it as a “joy set before him!” The one crying out, the one we call Lord and one whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The power to overcome is joy’s primary attribute. Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in the truth of Psalm 105:43, He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy.

So, God, I declare it is possible to experience JOY regardless of my circumstances. It is my choice to rejoice!

In Jesus Name, Amen.

## JOY

Pastor Ken

November 30, 2025

**It is your choice to rejoice.**

*<sup>8</sup> And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup> An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup> But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. <sup>11</sup> Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup> This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." <sup>13</sup> Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests." (Luke 2-NIV)*

Danice and I were blessed with 4 Squires kids. 1 beauty and 3 beasts. When we raised our kids, we emphasized two aspects of life: live for Christ and use your vocation to honor God. Now, years later as all of them have moved into adulthood, I have noticed they caught 1 more Squires attribute. They love to laugh. They are filled with joy. They love a good story, especially at the expense of dad.

**Danice and I struck gold when we unintentionally included laughter and joy as a key family trait.** Perhaps a few examples will remind each of you the value of laughter and joy. You can't have 1 without the other.

**Kenny** and I would ride our bikes together and often stop at a church elder's house who was in the logging and forestry business. His logging truck was parked in the driveway and one day, John Eylander suggested to Kenny he take off his biking helmet and place it on the ground. John proceeded to take the logging truck grappling boom and pick up Kenny's helmet and hand it to him.

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a few fumbles. The Pharisees and Sadducees both arrested Jesus. Jesse and Joe never fell for the “f sound.” The red plate for a special occasion always brought a smile and joy to the kids.

At family birthdays, we often used Squires kids, name in an acrostic for their birthday and spelled out meaningful and miserable words. Kenny-kind, kangaroo,

e-Edward, excellent driver, egg head,

n-no(know) it all. Then the letter giver would laugh because of how they used, n, know it all....

n-nobody like him. Nobody likes him,

y-year older, youthful, young, youngster.

Over the years the kids would add pokie-man names to the letters cracking themselves up.

We still do acrostics today as a family. Ok, one more for grins. When I took my kids for a walk, as I held their hand, I would squeeze it several times. I would tell them when they were little, when I squeeze your hand, it means that dad loves you very, very much.

At Thanksgiving this past week, as our eyes were closed and as we prayed, laughter erupted during the prayer, because we were all squeezing the hands we were holding. So, what is the benefit of a kid growing up in a home where laughter and joy prevail?

When Jesus started his public ministry, he had any number of options as to what to do and where to start. He could do a crowd-pleasing miracle. He could preach one of his unforgettable sermons. He did neither of these, we get a glimpse in John 2.

### **Jesus began his public ministry by going to a wedding.**

You ask why did Jesus go to a wedding? It is found in verse 2, of John 2. Jesus and his disciples were invited to the wedding. They were on the guest list. *On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, <sup>2</sup> and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. (John 2-NIV)*

When the bride and groom were putting together the guest list, someone suggested why not invite Jesus and Mary from nearby Nazareth. Cana and Nazareth were just a few miles apart.

The bride's parents where likely friends with Mary and Joseph so off to a wedding Jesus went. Again, why was Jesus invited, was he a celebrity? No, he was not one yet. Was Jesus invited because of his miracles? No, he hadn't done any yet. I suppose Jesus was invited

because he was just like everyone else. He laughed. He worked as a carpenter. He went to the market. He attended Torah class. Common people in Nazareth enjoyed hanging out with Jesus.

Can I suggest why I think Jesus went to a wedding? To laugh. To have some fun. And to experience the joy connected to weddings, like dancing, drinking wine and eating.

Remember, Jesus began his ministry in the desert during a 40 day fast. He broke in some new recruits. He already had a run in with the religious establishment. Then Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum. Perhaps, Jesus was still living out of boxes.

Jesus went to the wedding because he loved to laugh, he loved to eat, perhaps even a dance with the new bride would have provided great joy for Jesus. Joy for Jesus. Jesus experiencing joy. A joyous savior. Makes sense, doesn't it?

After all, one day Jesus is planning a big wedding for us, with unlimited food, that won't add a pound to the girth. Maybe Jesus wanted to take down a few notes. <sup>9</sup> *Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Rev 19-NIV)*

If you are familiar with the New Testament, Jesus party theme often got him into trouble. Israel's religious police called him a drunkard and glutton. And who can miss that Jesus hung out with tax collectors and prostitutes.

<sup>19</sup> *Then the Son of Man appeared—He didn't fast, as John had, but ate with sinners and drank wine. And the people said, "This man is a glutton! He's a drunk! And He hangs around with tax collectors and sinners, to boot." (Matt 11:19-Voice)*

I doubt whether many of you have pegged Jesus as a party lover. What we often get pegged as is uptight. Stressed out. Exhausted to the max. **Most of us are more familiar with tension, hurt, stress and anxiety more than we are with JOY.**

If you can complete these sentences with the appropriate word, you need either a vacation or a valium:

I am ready to throw in the...**towel.**

I am at the end of my...**rope.**

I am just a bundle of...**nerves.**

My life is falling...**apart.**

I am at my wit's...**end.**

I feel like resigning from the human...**race**.

If you are experiencing a lack of JOY in your life, perhaps it is the result of being too uptight. Stressed out. Eaten up by worry.

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. That is the bad news. The good news is that God has an answer for your stress, anxiety, and worry. It doesn't come in the form of some meds; it comes in the form of some fruit. <sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. (Gal 5-NIV)*

Each fruit enables you to cope with any adverse challenge you face in the Christian life. Struggling with racism, God tells us the fruit of the spirit is love. Struggling with anxiety and worry, God tells us the fruit of the Spirit is joy. Let's take a quick review of God's word and what it says about joy.

Yet this same Jesus is the one who for the joy *set before him endured the cross* (Heb. 12:2). Does that startle you? Jesus will experience the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and yet he declares it as a "joy set before him!"

<sup>2</sup> *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:2-NIV)*

I have never recovered from this verse. Need any more reasons to be joyful. In the Bible, joy does not dismiss suffering. The one crying out, the one we call Lord and whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The story of Christmas drips with the fragrance of joy. Come on ladies, somebody design a fragrance for women called joy, you will make a million \$\$\$

The angel greets Mary with joy and Mary rejoices (Luke 1:47). <sup>46</sup> *And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*

The angel announces "great joy" to shepherds. <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.*

The visiting Magi were "overjoyed." <sup>10</sup> *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. (Matt 2-NIV)*

This Christmas, fill your heart with worship, and your soul will swell in joy. Jesus' words are filled with joy.

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

*"You will weep and lament . . . but your sorrow will turn into joy" (John 16:20).*

He goes on to say, *"But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (John 16:22).*

Joy is the most important fruit if you want to live victoriously and be an overcomer. **The power to overcome is joy's primary attribute. When you make the development of joy and the maturing of the fruit of joy your priority, you will overcome the evil one on a regular basis.**

Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in truth in Psalm 105:43, *He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy;*

Did you realize that 3 little words could pack such a punch? Joy is what makes life meaningful, fun and fulfilling. For so many their lives are filled with a holiday forecast of "little hope for joy and laughter."

Isn't it time to change the weather forecast to endless days of joy? Again, people will often say, "what you did makes me afraid." Or "what you said makes me doubt." Or, how you treated me caused me pain. Ok, do you see what I just did, I told you others caused you to fear, doubt and experience pain.

These statements and actions and many like them are false because they are not what really makes you afraid, doubt or experience pain.

Listen, there is a **step** between what the person says or what they do and the emotion of fear and doubt that is the true cause of how you feel. The step is the cause. Sandwiched between what they say and how you feel. Does that make sense?

Let me illustrate: Your spouse tells you to lay off the greasy food or you will have a heart attack. Fear takes over.

Your pastor reminds you that as you age your bone density and muscle mass declines with age, so you better exercise daily and suddenly you start to **doubt** your health.

Notice your spouse and pastors' comment about greasy food and exercise start you to experience the emotions and feelings of fear and doubt. When you experience an emotion like fear and doubt, or for that fact any emotion you often miss the real culprit or the real cause.

Let me show it to you in Dr Albert Ellis and his ABC model.

A=the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

B=what you think about the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

C= the feelings and emotions of fear and doubt about the greasy food and lack of exercise.

Your emotional reaction to comments about greasy food and lack of exercise is not what caused you to experience fear or doubt.

Your emotional response is what you think about greasy food and lack of exercise.

Let me say it this way: using the ABC model, we see that emotion C (emotions of fear and doubt) is not caused by comment A. No, it is caused by thinking B. Wow!

For so many of you, the reason you struggle to feel joy is because the way you think about life's events leaves you sad, discouraged and even depressed.

Changing the way you think puts you in the driver's seat to correct fear, doubt or any other emotion that is holding you hostage and robbing you of real joy this Christmas.

Why? It is your choice to rejoice.

So, joy can.... JOY coexists with fear. JOY coexists with doubt. JOY coexists with pain.

That is if you think your way back into joy. If you can think your way out of joy, you can think your way back into joy. My take-aways today are simple, they are identified at the bottom of the page:

(1) It is possible to experience JOY regardless of your circumstances. (Phil 4:4)

(2) JOY defies all circumstances and is not dependent on life events (James 1:2)

(3) JOY is an inside job. (Galatians 5)

Helping you understand and live in the power of these insights is my objective and goal today. So, let's head for the winner's circle. But first why is the good news of Jesus at Christmas such a joyful event? And why did some shepherds need a little clarity as to why Jesus' birth was so joyful? Why did it call for a hilarious celebration?

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of Heaven's grace for everyone.

Today we know the birth of Jesus Christ is good news, because we know what is going to happen. It wasn't good news to the people who heard it the first time.

In fact, it scared everyone to death. And today we look at the shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. A distance of 6 miles.

These flocks were used regularly for the temple sacrifice. Lamb sacrifices that made people right with God. Shepherds at the bottom rung of societies hierarchy. As we will see, the shepherds were afraid, because of sudden change.

Here is a word of hope: - like the shepherds, if you find your life filled with fear, look for God's **appearance**, God's **arrival**, and God's **admonition**-don't be afraid another minute.

Why? Because when you discover what God is up to, in the midst of your fear, it all makes sweet sense. If you find your sweet spot in God's plan, life makes sweet sense as Max Lucado says. So many at Christmas struggle to find their place and purpose.

When you find your sweet spot in life, life makes sweet sense. (Lucado)

When you understand God's purpose and meaning for Christmas then life makes sweet sense even in fearful times. Sweet sense makes clear sense even when you are not cheerful, but fearful.

Fortunately, for us we are not the first ones to struggle with fear.

Shepherds in the first century share your fears.

Shepherds share your feelings.

Shepherds share your struggles.

So, for these final few minutes you can receive God's answer, like the shepherds, to the question, "**what am I afraid of?** Now, to understand your fear you have to begin with understanding why God makes such big deal about Christmas. God's word addresses this very issue.

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After all, one day Jesus is planning a big wedding for us, with unlimited food, that won't add a pound to the girth. Maybe Jesus wanted to take down a few notes. <sup>9</sup> *Then the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (Rev 19-NIV)*

If you are familiar with the New Testament, Jesus party theme often got him into trouble. Israel's religious police called him a drunkard and glutton. And who can miss that Jesus hung out with tax collectors and prostitutes.

*<sup>19</sup> Then the Son of Man appeared—He didn't fast, as John had, but ate with sinners and drank wine. And the people said, "This man is a glutton! He's a drunk! And He hangs around with tax collectors and sinners, to boot." (Matt 11:19-Voice)*

I doubt whether many of you have pegged Jesus as a party lover. What we often get pegged as is uptight. Stressed out. Exhausted to the max. **Most of us are more familiar with tension, hurt, stress and anxiety more than we are with JOY.**

If you can complete these sentences with the appropriate word, you need either a vacation or a valium:

I am ready to throw in the...**towel.**

I am at the end of my...**rope.**

I am just a bundle of...**nerves.**

My life is falling...**apart.**

I am at my wit's...**end.**

I feel like resigning from the human...**race**.

If you are experiencing a lack of JOY in your life, perhaps it is the result of being too uptight. Stressed out. Eaten up by worry.

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. That is the bad news. The good news is that God has an answer for your stress, anxiety, and worry. It doesn't come in the form of some meds; it comes in the form of some fruit. <sup>22</sup> *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,<sup>23</sup> gentleness, and self-control. (Gal 5-NIV)*

Each fruit enables you to cope with any adverse challenge you face in the Christian life. Struggling with racism, God tells us the fruit of the spirit is love. Struggling with anxiety and worry, God tells us the fruit of the Spirit is joy. Let's take a quick review of God's word and what it says about joy.

Yet this same Jesus is the one who for the joy *set before him endured the cross* (Heb. 12:2). Does that startle you? Jesus will experience the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and yet he declares it as a "joy set before him!"

<sup>2</sup> *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:2-NIV)*

I have never recovered from this verse. Need any more reasons to be joyful. In the Bible, joy does not dismiss suffering. The one crying out, the one we call Lord and whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The story of Christmas drips with the fragrance of joy. Come on ladies, somebody design a fragrance for women called joy, you will make a million \$\$\$

The angel greets Mary with joy and Mary rejoices (Luke 1:47). <sup>46</sup> *And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*

The angel announces "great joy" to shepherds. <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.*

The visiting Magi were "overjoyed." <sup>10</sup> *When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. (Matt 2-NIV)*

This Christmas, fill your heart with worship, and your soul will swell in joy. Jesus' words are filled with joy.

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

*"You will weep and lament . . . but your sorrow will turn into joy" (John 16:20).*

He goes on to say, *"But I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (John 16:22).*

Joy is the most important fruit if you want to live victoriously and be an overcomer. **The power to overcome is joy's primary attribute. When you make the development of joy and the maturing of the fruit of joy your priority, you will overcome the evil one on a regular basis.**

Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in truth in Psalm 105:43, *He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy;*

Did you realize that 3 little words could pack such a punch? Joy is what makes life meaningful, fun and fulfilling. For so many their lives are filled with a holiday forecast of "little hope for joy and laughter."

Isn't it time to change the weather forecast to endless days of joy? Again, people will often say, "what you did makes me afraid." Or "what you said makes me doubt." Or, how you treated me caused me pain. Ok, do you see what I just did, I told you others caused you to fear, doubt and experience pain.

These statements and actions and many like them are false because they are not what really makes you afraid, doubt or experience pain.

Listen, there is a **step** between what the person says or what they do and the emotion of fear and doubt that is the true cause of how you feel. The step is the cause. Sandwiched between what they say and how you feel. Does that make sense?

Let me illustrate: Your spouse tells you to lay off the greasy food or you will have a heart attack. Fear takes over.

Your pastor reminds you that as you age your bone density and muscle mass declines with age, so you better exercise daily and suddenly you start to **doubt** your health.

Notice your spouse and pastors' comment about greasy food and exercise start you to experience the emotions and feelings of fear and doubt. When you experience an emotion like fear and doubt, or for that fact any emotion you often miss the real culprit or the real cause.

Let me show it to you in Dr Albert Ellis and his ABC model.

A=the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

B=what you think about the comments about greasy food and lack of exercise.

C= the feelings and emotions of fear and doubt about the greasy food and lack of exercise.

Your emotional reaction to comments about greasy food and lack of exercise is not what caused you to experience fear or doubt.

Your emotional response is what you think about greasy food and lack of exercise.

Let me say it this way: using the ABC model, we see that emotion C (emotions of fear and doubt) is not caused by comment A. No, it is caused by thinking B. Wow!

For so many of you, the reason you struggle to feel joy is because the way you think about life's events leaves you sad, discouraged and even depressed.

Changing the way you think puts you in the driver's seat to correct fear, doubt or any other emotion that is holding you hostage and robbing you of real joy this Christmas.

Why? It is your choice to rejoice.

So, joy can.... JOY coexists with fear. JOY coexists with doubt. JOY coexists with pain.

That is if you think your way back into joy. If you can think your way out of joy, you can think your way back into joy. My take-aways today are simple, they are identified at the bottom of the page:

(1) It is possible to experience JOY regardless of your circumstances. (Phil 4:4)

(2) JOY defies all circumstances and is not dependent on life events (James 1:2)

(3) JOY is an inside job. (Galatians 5)

Helping you understand and live in the power of these insights is my objective and goal today. So, let's head for the winner's circle. But first why is the good news of Jesus at Christmas such a joyful event? And why did some shepherds need a little clarity as to why Jesus' birth was so joyful? Why did it call for a hilarious celebration?

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of Heaven's grace for everyone.

Today we know the birth of Jesus Christ is good news, because we know what is going to happen. It wasn't good news to the people who heard it the first time.

In fact, it scared everyone to death. And today we look at the shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. A distance of 6 miles.

These flocks were used regularly for the temple sacrifice. Lamb sacrifices that made people right with God. Shepherds at the bottom rung of societies hierarchy. As we will see, the shepherds were afraid, because of sudden change.

Here is a word of hope: - like the shepherds, if you find your life filled with fear, look for God's **appearance**, God's **arrival**, and God's **admonition**-don't be afraid another minute.

Why? Because when you discover what God is up to, in the midst of your fear, it all makes sweet sense. If you find your sweet spot in God's plan, life makes sweet sense as Max Lucado says. So many at Christmas struggle to find their place and purpose.

When you find your sweet spot in life, life makes sweet sense. (Lucado)

When you understand God's purpose and meaning for Christmas then life makes sweet sense even in fearful times. Sweet sense makes clear sense even when you are not cheerful, but fearful.

Fortunately, for us we are not the first ones to struggle with fear.

Shepherds in the first century share your fears.

Shepherds share your feelings.

Shepherds share your struggles.

So, for these final few minutes you can receive God's answer, like the shepherds, to the question, "**what am I afraid of?** Now, to understand your fear you have to begin with understanding why God makes such big deal about Christmas. God's word addresses this very issue.

It is **personal** – "*I bring you ...* "

The joy of Christmas is worth celebrating because God has made you one of a kind. And he has designed you for one-of-a-kind assignments, like the shepherds. It is an amazing feature of the Christmas story that the announcement of God's salvation plan came first to

shepherds. Shepherds were dismissed and marginalized by the religious establishment. Why is this?

Their very employment of tending sheep made it virtually impossible to keep the religious laws of the day. They were not trusted in court. A shepherd could never testify in legal matters. Unclean and untrusted the shepherds then passed on the Good News. The fact that this announcement came through the most spiritually needy is nothing short of amazing. Verse 17 tells us they spread the word, *"Today in the city of David, a Savior is born whose name is Christ the Lord!"* This is good news for those experiencing fearfulness instead of cheerfulness.

It is **positive** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy, ..."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Christ was not only born for you, he came to die for you! <sup>10</sup> *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy **for** all the people.* <sup>11</sup> *Today in the town of David a **Savior** has been born to you;*

Jesus Christ came to die for (hyper) your sins (1 Cor. 15:3)

Jesus Christ gave himself for (hyper) our sins (Gal. 1:4)

Jesus himself prophesied, *"The good shepherd lays down his life for (hyper) his friends.* (John 15:13)

Before his death Jesus took bread and explained: *"this is my body given for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:19)

*This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for (hyper) you.* (Luke 22:20)

All of those verses make me hyper about hyper. The good news of Christmas is that Jesus came to exchange hearts with you. Yes, he took your lying, sinful and adulterous heart and exchanged it for his perfect, sinless heart.

His heart was healthy, yours is diseased and sin ridden, and he did more than a heart transplant, he did a heart swap.

Your unholy and vile heart exchanged places for Jesus perfect heart-God made healthy what was sick, right that what was wrong and straight that what was crooked. God made him who had no sin, to be sin for (hyper) us...2 Cor. 5:21)

It is for **everyone** – *"I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people."*

The good news of Christmas is worth celebrating because Jesus unfurls the banner of heaven's grace for everyone. God offers his salvation world-wide. God's salvation by-passes gender squabbles and ancient traditions. God's salvation invites the whole world to Jesus.

Jesus invites Muslims to salvation even though they don't believe God came in the flesh.

Jesus invites Jews to salvation even though they don't believe he is the Messiah,

Jesus invites Buddhists to salvation even though they believe in no less than 547 reincarnations,

Jesus invites humanists to salvation even though they don't believe in a creator of life,

Jesus invites Hindus to salvation even though they believe in an impersonal and plural God,

Jesus invites atheists to salvation even they would like to drum him out of Christmas,

**So here is my observation:** God wants to show up. Make it so loud and bright, you know it is Him. Then tell you some great news.

Your current spiritual state may cause you to wonder if God still wants you. God takes you however he finds you, whenever he finds you and wherever he finds you. Even, if you request his salvation with your dying breath, God hears your prayer.

Shepherds had a laid-back job. They are like surfers. Fun and easy. That night they put the sheep down for bed. They are sitting around the campfire. They've had dinner. Are playing cards, Go Fish or Old Maid.

All of a sudden, the sky lights up brilliantly, and this is long before electricity, light sabers, the sky lights up brilliantly and it is filled with angels. Angels are singing loudly in a choir. It scared them to death. Their plans for a quiet evening and route were shaken up. They were experiencing sudden change. *I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. (Luke 2:10b-NIV)*

(1) It is possible to experience JOY regardless of your circumstances. (Phil 4:4)

(2) JOY defies all circumstances and is not dependent on life events (James 1:2)

(3) JOY is an inside job. (Galatians 5)

Here is how I want to end, with a scripture, a prayer, and a song.

SCRIPTURE: *Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy! (Psalm 126:5-ESV)*

PRAYER: Father,

Stress, worry, and difficulties are a part of the Christian life. Yet, Jesus experienced the greatest pain ever known to a human being, and he declared it as a “joy set before him!” The one crying out, the one we call Lord and one whose way we follow, experienced joy deep in his bones.

The power to overcome is joy’s primary attribute. Joy is an anti-toxin to falling into bondage and slavery to the enemy of God. And we see this in the truth of Psalm 105:43, He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy.

So, God, I declare it is possible to experience JOY regardless of my circumstances. It is my choice to rejoice!

In Jesus Name, Amen.