

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Enjoying

GOD

“REJOICE in the
LORD always; again
I say, REJOICE!”

LEADER'S
GUIDE

PASTOR STEPHEN HILDEBRANDT

NAME: _____

ENJOYING GOD

“REJOICE in the
LORD always; again
I say, REJOICE!”

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DEDICATED TO THE MEMBERS
OF GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH
MAY THE JOY OF
THE LORD BE YOUR STRENGTH.

Enjoying God Retreat Outline

*“You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy;
in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.” - Psalm 16:11*

Lesson 1. The Joy of the Lord.

“Very few people think of God as supremely happy in the fellowship of the Trinity and in the work of creation and redemption. The volcanic exuberance of God over the worth of His Son and the work of His hands and welfare of His people is not well-known. God’s delight in being God is not sung the way it should be, with wonder and passion, in the worship places of the world. And we are the poorer and weaker for it.” - John Piper, The Pleasures of God, p. 21.

Lesson 2. God's Design for His People: Fulness of Joy.

“God intends the Christian life to be a life of joy - not drudgery. The idea that holiness is associated with a dour disposition is a caricature of the worst sort. In fact, just the opposite is true. Only those who walk in holiness experience true joy.” - Jerry Bridges, The Pursuit of Holiness, p. 131.

Lesson 3. Glorious Good News of the Happy God.

“Christ did not die to forgive sinners who go on treasuring anything above seeing and savoring God. People who would be happy in heaven if Christ were not there, will not be there. The gospel is not a way to get people to heaven; it is a way to get people to God. It's a way of overcoming every obstacle to everlasting joy in God. If we don't want God above all things, we have not been converted by the gospel.” - John Piper, God is the Gospel: Meditations on God's Love as the Gift of Himself, p. 47

Appendix. Manifesto of a Church that Enjoys God.

“God is great, and worship is our response to His greatness! The church’s primary purpose is to insure that God receives the glory He desires and deserves. That is why the saints gather together to corporately rehearse the greatness of God through worship. The focus of the church should be the worth-ship of God. Evangelism’s main goal is first and foremost to recruit worshippers for God. When Christ is embraced as offered in the Gospel, the believer is brought into a personal worshipping relationship with God the Father.” - Mike Chastain, The Goal of Redemption, Tabletalk, Feb. 2004

Lesson 1. Small Group Discussion

1. Historically, do you think that most people who believe in God think He is supremely joyful? Why or why not?
2. According to Jeremiah 9:24, in what does God delight? Who is the ultimate example of these virtues? What conclusion can be drawn from these two facts?
3. If man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, what is God's chief end?

Lesson 1. The Joy of the Lord.

God's Eternal Joy

“From all eternity God has been supremely happy in the fellowship of the Trinity. From this inexhaustible fountain of self-replenishing joy flows the freedom of God in all His sovereign work, creating the universe, spreading His fame, choosing a people, and bruising His Son.”

- John Piper, The Pleasures of God, p. 18



A. God's **Public Persona**.

(Small Group Q. 1)

- Historically -

*Mean, Angry
all the time.*

- Currently -

*God is Love;
No Wrath, Hell, etc.*



B. God's **Joy & Delight**.

- 1 Timothy 6:15** - He "is the **blessed** and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see"

"blessed" - Greek: μακάριος, *makarios*, from *makar* - "happy"

- God "is the Happy and only Sovereign ..."

C. God's Delight in ***Himself***, i.e. in His Own ***Attributes***.

- **Jeremiah 9:24** - "I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I **delight** in these things,' declares the Lord."

Qualities God Loves	God's Attributes
"He loves RIGHTEOUSNESS " Psalm 11:7b, 33:5	"the Lord is RIGHTEOUS " Psalm 11:7a, 36:6, 145:17
"For I, the Lord, love JUSTICE " Isaiah 61:8; Jer. 9:23	"all His ways are JUST " Deuteronomy 32:4
"He delights in UNCHANGING LOVE " Micah 7:18	"The STEADFAST LOVE of the Lord never ceases" Lam. 3:22; Psalm 103:17
"I desire COMPASSION " Matthew 9:13	"the Lord is full of COMPASSION " James 5:11
"I desire MERCY " Hosea 6:6	"The Lord is gracious and MERCIFUL " Psalm 145:8
"You desire TRUTH in the innermost being" Psalm 51:6	"Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and TRUTH '" Exodus 34:6

D. **Conclusion.** (Small Group Q. 2)

- God is the epitome of all that He delights in, Hence He delights in Himself .

E. God's Delight in His *Works*.

- [Genesis 1:31](#) - "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was *very good*."
- [Psalm 115:3](#) - "But our God is in the heavens; *He does whatever He pleases*." (cf. Psa. 135:6)
- [Isaiah 46:10](#) - "My purpose will be established, and *I will accomplish all My good pleasure*."



F. God's Delight in His *Son*.

- [Isaiah 42:1](#) - "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul *delights*. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations."
- [Matthew 3:17](#) - "And behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am *well-pleased*.'"

G. God's Delight in *the Cross*.

- [Isaiah 53:10](#) - "But the Lord was *pleased* to crush Him, putting Him to grief"
- [Isaiah 53:11](#) - "As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be *satisfied*; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities."

H. God's Delight in *His People*.

- [Psalm 149:4](#) - "For the Lord takes *pleasure* in His people"
- [Isaiah 62:5](#) - "as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will *rejoice* over you."
- [Jeremiah 32:41](#) - "I will *rejoice* over them to do them good"
- [Zephaniah 3:17](#) - "The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with *joy* ... He will *rejoice* over you with *shouts of joy*."

I. God is Glorified in ***Creation***.

- [Psalm 19:1](#) - "The heavens declare the ***glory*** of God"

J. God is Glorified in ***Redemption***.

- [Ephesians 1:3-6](#) - God the Father has blessed us (v. 3), chosen us (v. 4), and predestined us (v. 5), "***to the praise of the glory of His grace***" (v. 6).
- [Ephesians 1:7-12](#) - God the Son has redeemed and forgiven us (v. 7), lavished His grace on us (v. 8), and given us an inheritance (v. 11), "***to the praise of His glory***" (v. 12).
- [Ephesians 1:13-14](#) - God the Holy Spirit has sealed us (v. 13), and given us a guarantee of our inheritance (v. 14), "***to the praise of His glory***" (v. 14).
- [Isaiah 43:7](#) - "Everyone who is called by My name ... I have created ***for My glory***"

K. God is Glorified in ***Worship***.

- [Isaiah 42:8](#) - "I am the Lord, that is My name; ***I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images.***"

L. God's Purpose is to ***Glorify Himself***.

- [John 12:28](#) - "'Father, glorify Your name.' Then a voice came out of heaven: ***'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.'*** "
- [John 17:5](#) - "Now, Father, ***glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.***"



M **CONCLUSION.** (Small Group Q. 3)

- God does all things for *His own glory & pleasure,*
hence God's "chief end" is to *glorify & enjoy Himself* .

ADDITIONAL NOTES

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Lesson 1 Personal Devotions

God's Public Persona Versus the Biblical Data.

Along the central section of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in Rome are nine scenes from the book of Genesis, painted by Michelangelo between 1508 and 1512. In the panel illustrating the creation of the sun and the moon, Michelangelo depicts God with a very stern and austere expression. But according to Scripture, when God created the universe, He was supremely pleased with all that He had made, because it was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). Pleasure or joy is not an attribute of God that we hear much about. Nevertheless, in the Bible, God is called "the *blessed* and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15), and the Greek word translated "blessed" can also be translated "happy". God is the happy and only Sovereign, because He delights in all that He does (Psa. 115:3) and is (Jer. 9:23-24).
Read Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 46:10

God's Supreme Delight in Himself.

Here is a thought-provoking question: Before God created anything, before there were any angels to sing His praise, before there were men to worship Him, before there was anything but God, and that not for a thousand years but for all eternity past, what was God doing? The answer is profound: For all eternity God was and still is enjoying His own internal perfection. Listen to what His Word says: "'I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the Lord." (Jer. 9:24). God delights in lovingkindness, justice and righteousness, and because He is the paragon of all of these virtues, He delights in Himself. God is the epitome of happiness! Let us therefore be diligent to enter into the joy of our Master; that is, into His joy in Himself.
Read Psalm 11:7

God's Pleasure & Satisfaction in the Cross of Christ.

Concerning the coming Messiah, Isaiah prophesied, "But the Lord was *pleased* to crush Him, putting Him to grief ... As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be *satisfied*; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:10-11). Herein lies a great mystery: perhaps the greatest atrocity in the history of mankind, putting the Son of God to death, was according to God's predetermined plan (Acts 2:23); and per Isaiah 53, it brought God pleasure and satisfaction, because by Jesus' substitutionary atonement for our sins, God saved for Himself a people.
Read Hebrews 12:1-2

God's Delight in His Covenant People.

What does God think of His people, His own imperfect, whining and complaining children? More specifically, what does God think about you, Christian? Scripture declares, "For the Lord takes pleasure in His people" (Psa. 149:4); and again it says, "The Lord ... will rejoice over you with shouts of joy" (Zeph. 3:17). So then, out with all self-esteem! You will never feel as good about yourself as God feels about you, Christian! You are esteemed by God, because Christ lives in you! God says of His Son, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17), and if Christ lives in you, then you are pleasing to God, positionally speaking. Now, by grace through faith strive to make your practice match your position.
Read Ephesians 4:1

What is God's Chief End?

If glorifying God by enjoying Him is man's chief end, then what is God's chief end? God's chief end is to glorify and enjoy Himself! Yes, God does all things for His own glory. In Ephesians 1 we read that God the Father has blessed us (v. 3), chosen us (v. 4), and predestined us (v. 5), "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (v. 6); and God the Son has redeemed and forgiven us (v. 7), lavished His grace on us (v. 8), and given us an inheritance (v. 11), "to the praise of His glory" (v. 12); and God the Holy Spirit has sealed us (v. 13), and given us a guarantee of our inheritance (v. 14), "to the praise of His glory" (v.14). So then, if God does all things for His own glory, what should be our practice, Christian?
Read 1 Corinthians 10:31

Lesson 2. Small Group Discussion

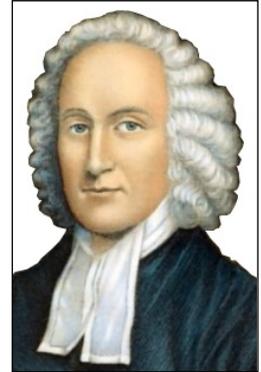
1. How are glorifying God and enjoying God related?
2. What are some prerequisites to enjoying God?
3. What are some reasons why God wants His people to enjoy Him?

Lesson 2. God's Design For His People: Fulness of Joy.

God's Purpose for Man

"How good is God that He has created man for this very end, to make him happy in the enjoyment of Himself, the Almighty, who was happy from the days of eternity in Himself ... that he might make them blessed in the beholding of His excellency, and might this way glorify Himself."

- Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758



A. **Man's Chief End.** (Westminster Catechism, 1647, Question 1)

- **Q. What is Man's chief end?**
- A. Man's chief end is to *glorify* God and *enjoy* Him forever.**

B. Scripture Proofs that Man's Chief End is to **Glorify** God.

- **1 Corinthians 10:31** - "whatever you do, *do all to the glory of God*"
- **1 Peter 4:11** - "whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that *in all things God may be glorified* through Jesus Christ"

C. Scripture Proofs that Man's Chief End is to **Enjoy** God Forever.

- **Psalm 32:11** - "*Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous ones; and shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.*"
- **Psalm 37:4** - "*delight yourself in the Lord*"
- **Philippians 4:4** - "*rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice!*"



D. The *Eternal Joy* of the Redeemed.

- [Matthew 25:21, 23](#) - “enter into *the joy of your master*”
- [Isaiah 35:10](#) - “And the ransomed of the Lord will return and come with *joyful shouting* to Zion, with *everlasting joy* upon their heads. They will find *gladness and joy ...*”
- [Psalm 16:11](#) - “In Your presence is *fullness of joy*; in Your right hand there are *pleasures forever.*”

God's Purpose for Man

“The greatest joy is joy in God. This is plain from Psalm 16:11: ‘You [God] will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.’ Fullness of joy and eternal joy cannot be improved. Nothing is fuller than full, and nothing is longer than eternal. And this joy is owing to the presence of God.”

- John Piper, [The Pleasures of God](#)



- [Ephesians 2:4-7](#) - “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ... raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that *in the ages to come* He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”
- [1 Corinthians 2:9](#) - “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.”

EVERLASTING JOY!

E. The ***Relationship*** between Glorifying God and Enjoying God.
(Small Group Q. 1)

- Man's Chief end is to glorify God BY enjoying Him forever.
- "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him."
- John Piper, Desiring God, p. 50

F. Five Grace-Based ***Prerequisites*** for Enjoying God,
i.e. the means to the man's chief end. (Small Group Q. 2)

1. Salvation .

- Psalm 13:5 - "My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation."

2. Daily Repentance .

- Acts 3:19 - "Therefore **repent** and **return**, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of **refreshing** may come from the presence of the Lord"

3. Trust & Obey .

- Genesis 4:7 - "If you do what is right will not **your countenance be uplifted?** And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." (cf. Romans 6:14). ★

4. ABC's of Sanctification .

5. Faith in the sufficiency of

God's grace during trials .

- 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 - "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, "**My grace is sufficient for you**, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

- A•C•T•S of Prayer
- Bible Study
- Christian Fellowship

G. **Promise** to Those Who Truly Delight in God.

- [Psalm 37:4](#) - “**Delight** yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the **desires** of your heart”
- [Matthew 6:33](#) - “**Seek first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be **added** unto you.”

H. Is it Improper for the Christian to **Enjoy Anything Else** besides God?

- [1 Timothy 4:4](#) - “For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is **received with gratitude**”
- [Psalm 103:2](#) - “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and **forget none of His benefits**”
- Conclusion: No, but what do you love / enjoy more: God's gifts or the Gift-Giver? (cf. Matthew 6:24) .

I. Guard Against a **Mercenary Spirit**.

- [Job 22:25](#) - “**The Almighty** will be **your gold and choice silver** to you”
- [Ecclesiastes 2:25](#) - “For who can eat and **who can have enjoyment without Him?**”
- “The deepest and most enduring happiness is found only **in** God. Not **from** God, but **in** God.” - John Piper, [Desiring God](#), p. 23
- Conclusion: What you enjoy most is your “god” .

J. Trials Reveal the **True Object** of Our Joy.

- [1 Peter 1:3-9](#) - “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope ... In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been **distressed by various trials**, so that **the proof of your faith**, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though **tested by fire**, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, **you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible** and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.”

K. Five **Reasons** Why God Wants His People to Enjoy Him.
(Small Group Q. 3)

1. Because *It glorifies Him.* .
 - **Isaiah 61:3** - God grants us “the oil of gladness instead of mourning ... that He may be glorified.”

2. Because *It encourages other believers.* .
 - **Philippians 1:12-14** - “Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.” (Philippians: “joy”- 7x; “rejoice” - 7x)

3. Because *It is a testimony to unbelievers.* .
 - **1 Peter 3:15** - “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you”

4. Because *It decreases our attraction to sin* .
(we desire what we enjoy most)
 - **Colossians 3:1-3** - “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind (affections) on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

5. Because God *loves* us and He wants us to experience
the greatest joy in the universe: *knowing God* .
 - **Psalm 16:11** - “In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”

L. Stop & Think.

- **In Your Own Life How Can YOU Glorify and Enjoy the Lord?**

Man's Chief End: To Glorify God & Enjoy Him Forever

Westminster Catechism (1647)

How Can I Glorify God?

- G** - Give thanks to God in everything. (*1 Thess. 5:18; Psa. 50:23*)
- L** - Love the Lord with all your heart. (*Deut. 6:5*)
- O** - Obedience to God's commandments. (*John 14:15*)
- R** - Rejoice in the Lord always. (*1 Thess. 5:16*)
- I** - Intend to do even routine acts to glorify God. (*1 Cor. 10:31*)
- F** - Faith in God (*Prov. 3:5-6*) that bears Fruit. (*John 15:8*)
- Y** - Yield to God's Will / Word. (*1 Peter 5:6*)

How Can I Enjoy God?

- E** - Examine God's attributes & works. (*Psa. 145:5*)
- N** - Number your blessings. (*Psa. 103:2*)
- J** - Joyful worship in spirit and in truth. (*John 4:23-24*)
- O** - Overwhelming sense of God's presence. (*Psa. 16:11*)
- Y** - Your unhurried conversation with God. (*1 Thess. 1:17*)

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Lesson 2 Personal Devotions

Man's Chief End.

The *Westminster Catechism* declares that man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, a statement that is thoroughly supported by Scripture. But some have seen an even closer relationship between enjoying and glorifying God, and would say that man's chief end is to glorify God *by* enjoying Him forever. In other words, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him" (Piper). Christian, you bring God the greatest glory when you rejoice in the Lord always. Read Psalm 32:11; Philippians 4:4

Sin is a Kill-Joy.

Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). But sin grieves the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) and diminishes the fullness of the Holy Spirit in us (Eph. 5:18), so that joy and unconfessed sin cannot coexist; they are mutually exclusive. So the unrepentant Christian is more often than not unhappy (Psa. 32:3-4). But when we repent, we are refilled, refreshed and we can rejoice. For this is contained in Scripture, "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). While it is admitted that sin has its "passing pleasures" (Heb. 11:25), true joy and lasting satisfaction are found only through the repentance of known sin. Christian, keep short accounts with the Lord. As soon as you are aware of sin in your life confess it quickly, for it is robbing you of joy. Read Genesis 4:7; Romans 6:14

True Worshipper or Mercenary?

Scripture commands us to "rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:4). For the Christian, God is not only the *source* of joy (Gal. 5:22), but He is also to be the *object* of our joy; that is, we rejoice in Him. Well then, is it improper for the Christian to enjoy anything else besides God? No, for Scripture also says that "everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude" (1 Tim. 4:4); and again, "bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits" (Psa. 103:2). But how can I know if I am rejoicing in God or just rejoicing in His benefits? Trials are the litmus test. If the removal of some of God's benefits causes you to lose your joy, then there might be a bit of a mercenary spirit in your relationship with God; that is, you are delighting more in what you get from God than in God Himself. Our responses to trials reveal the true object of our joy, and I suspect that there is a little mercenary spirit in all of us that needs to be addressed. Read 1 Peter 1:3-9

Delight in God Produces Godly Desires.

God's Word declares, "Delight yourself in the Lord; and He will give you the desires of your heart" (Psa. 37:4); and again it says, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). But here is a peculiar thing: the one who truly delights in God, not for what God can give him, but because God is truly delightful (Psa. 16:11), undergoes such a transformation of character that even his desires are changed. He desires the things that delight the Lord. And so it stands to reason that God would give to such a one his heart's desire. "The deepest and most enduring happiness is found only in God. Not *from* God, but *in* God." (John Piper, *Desiring God*, p. 23). Read Job 22:25; Ecclesiastes 2:25

God's Greatest Gift.

What could God give to His people that would show Him most loving? And what could God give to them so that they might experience the greatest possible joy? There is only one possible answer: Himself! O Lord, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever" (Psalm 16:11). Read John 3:16

Lesson 3. Small Group Discussion

1. Why is the Gospel such good news of a “great joy” (Luke 2:8-11)?
2. What is the ultimate goal of evangelism?
3. The Bible says that “the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). How might this relate to our testimony, evangelism, and outreach?

Lesson 3. Glorious Good News of the Happy God.

The Ultimate Goal of Evangelism

*“Our goal in evangelism is to be
His instruments in creating new people who
delight in God through Jesus Christ.”*

- John Piper, Desiring God



A. The Gospel is **Good News of a Great Joy.**

- [Luke 2:8-11](#) - “In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you **good news of great joy** which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.’”

Why is the Gospel such Good News of **Great Joy**? (Small Group Q. 1)

- [Titus 2:13](#) - Jesus is a GREAT Savior ...
- [1 Timothy 1:15](#) - Who came to save GREAT Sinners ...
- [2 Thessalonians 1:9](#) - From GREAT Destruction ...
- [Ephesians 2:4-5](#) - So they can experience the GREAT Love ...
- [Psalm 96:4](#) - Of a GREAT God ...
- [Psalm 16:11](#) - Resulting in GREAT Joy .

B. The Gospel is the message of *Reconciliation to a Joyful God*.

- **1 Timothy 1:11** - The Apostle Paul described the Gospel as:
 "the *glorious gospel* of the *blessed God*" (NAS, KJV)
 "gospel" - Greek: εὐαγγέλιον, *euangelion* - "good news"
 "blessed" - Greek: μακάριος, *makarios*, from *makar* - "happy"
- The Gospel is the *glorious good news* of the *joyful* God.

**C. What is the *Chief End of the Gospel*?
 (Small Group Q. 2)**

- **John 15:11** - Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, *that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full*".
- The chief end of the Gospel is:
Saved sinners glorifying God by enjoying Him.

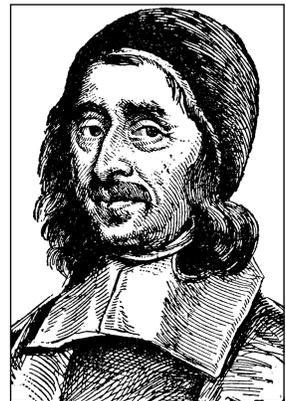
D. What then does it mean to *Fall Short of the Glory of God*?

- **Romans 3:23** - "All have sinned and *fall short of the glory of God*"
- Falling short of God's glory is failing to fulfill man's chief end (created purpose):
Failure to glorify God by enjoying Him.

Your Countenance & Christian Testimony

"I desire the dejected Christian to consider, that by his heavy and uncomfortable life, he seems to the world to accuse God and His service, as if he openly called Him a rigorous, hard, unacceptable Master, and His work as a sad unpleasant thing ... If you see a servant always sad, will you not think that he has a master that displeases him? ... You were born and born-again for God's honor; and will you thus dishonor Him before the world? What do you (in their eyes in) but dispraise Him by your very countenance and carriage?"

- Richard Baxter, Puritan, 1674



E. Why is Joy so Necessary to Your **Christian Testimony?**
(Small Group Q. 3)

1. The joy of the Lord is *attractive* .
 - **Isaiah 53:2** - “He has **no stately form** or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be **attracted** to Him.”
 - **Hebrews 1:9** - “You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of **joy** above Your companions.”
2. The joy of the Lord *invites questions* .
 - **1 Peter 3:15** - “sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who **asks** you to give an account for the **hope** that is in you”
3. The joy of the Lord *reflects/represents Christ* .
 - **2 Corinthians 5:20** - “we are **ambassadors** for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”
4. The joy of the Lord *displays God's grace* , especially during trials.
 - **1 Peter 1:3-9** - “... you have been *distressed by various trials*, so that **the proof of your faith**, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though *tested by fire*, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, **you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible**”
 - Tertullian (155-240 AD) — “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church”
5. The joy of the Lord *demonstrates the work of the Spirit* .
 - **1 Corinthians 2:4** - “and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”

Lesson 3 Personal Devotions

The Greatness of the Gospel.

At Christ's birth, we remember the angel's announcement, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). But what exactly makes the birth for Christ such good news of a "great" joy? First, our joy in the birth of Christ is great, because Jesus is a *great Savior* (Titus 2:13), who came not only with the promise to save (Jn. 3:16), but the power to do it (Mt. 9:6). Second, our joy is great because Jesus can save even *great sinners* like us (1 Tim. 1:15). Third, we rejoice because we have been saved from *great destruction* (2 Thess. 1:9). Finally, the message of the gospel is such good news of a great joy because of the *great love* of God that He has purposed to lavish up His people throughout all of eternity (Eph. 2:4-7). Today, meditate upon the greatness of your salvation. Read 1 Peter 1:8

Reconciliation to a Joyful God.

In his first letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul refers to the message of salvation as "the glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1 Tim. 1:11). In Greek, the word *gospel* means "good news," and the word *blessed* can be translated "happy." So here the gospel is literally "the glorious good news of the happy God." Think about that, Christian! The infinite, eternal and unchanging God and Creator of all things is a "happy God." Yes, that is good news, glorious good news! For who could bear spending eternity with any other type of God? Read Zeph. 3:17

The Chief End of the Gospel.

The goal of the gospel is not just to save sinners from hell, or to persuade people to believe in God. Those are great things, but they are not the ultimate goal. The chief end of the gospel is saved sinners glorifying God by enjoying Him forever. "Jesus said, 'These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full'" (John 15:11). Read Isaiah 35:10

The Joy of the Lord is My Strength.

Christian, "the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10), and among other things, joy is the strength of your Christian testimony! Evangelism is a spiritual battle and to fight it we must employ spiritual weapons, not the least of which is the fruit of the Spirit, including joy (Gal. 5:22). Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-4

Joy is Essential to Evangelism.

The joy of the Lord in the heart of the one who wishes to be an effective soul-winner is absolutely essential, for several reasons: [1] *Joy is attractive*. Christ had no stately appearance that we should be attracted to Him (Isa. 53:2), nevertheless great multitudes followed Him (Mk. 3:7), in part because He was the epitome of joy (Heb. 1:9). [2] *Joy invites questions*. Scripture commands, "Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3:15). Only when unbelievers see joy on your face, will they ask about the hope in your heart. [3] *Joy represents Christ*. The Christian is an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). You are called to imitate the One who is supremely joyful (Heb. 1:9), in order to accurately reflect and represent Him to the world. [4] *Joy reveals God's grace*. The atheist and the Christian who have everything going their way look basically the same, but the Christian-difference or "proof" of your faith is shown in your joy especially during trials (1 Peter 1:3-9). [5] *Joy demonstrates the Spirit*. Effective evangelism is not just a matter of "persuasive words of wisdom, but a demonstration of the Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:4; Zech. 4:6), including the fruit of Spirit in the soul-winner (Gal. 5:22). Read Daniel 12:3

Manifesto

Of a Church that Enjoys God

*Contributions made by the Participants at Grace Community Church's 2014 Retreat,
Compiled and Edited by Pastor Stephen Hildebrandt,
And ratified by the Session of Grace Community Church in Chesapeake, VA.*

- 1. Focus.** As children of the Living God, redeemed by the blood of His Son Jesus Christ from every tribe and tongue and people and nation (**Revelation 5:9**), we freely confess and openly proclaim our desire to live each day with this chief end in mind: to glorify God **By Enjoying** Him, because it is our firm belief that God is most glorified in us when we are most **Delighted** in Him (**1 Corinthians 10:31; Philipians 4:4**).
- 2. Salvation.** We affirm and do not deny that God was **Pleased** to crush His own Son for our transgressions (**Isaiah 53:10-11**), and that Christ endured the cross for the **Joy** set before Him (**Hebrews 12:1-2**). Therefore we also **Rejoice** in this great salvation (**Hebrews 2:3**), bought with a great price (**1 Peter 1:18-19**), by a great Savior (**Titus 2:13**), for great sinners like us (**1 Timothy 1:15**). This truly is good news of **Great Joy** (**Luke 2:8-11**).
- 3. Repentance & Obedience.** Inasmuch as sin grieves the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 4:30**), we confess our sins without attempting to justify, relabel or excuse them (**1 John 1:9-10**). We affirm that this is a prerequisite to being filled with the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 5:18**) and **Joy** (**Acts 3:19; Genesis 4:7**).
- 4. Teaching & Preaching.** In view of the fact that Christ has given His written Word to those who believe in Him, that by hearing and doing what it says they might have **Fulness of Joy** (**John 15:11**), we the members of His church do **Gladly** submit to the preaching of the inerrant and inspired Word of God (**1 Corinthians 1:18**), for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**).

5. **Worship.** Since man's chief end is to glorify and **Enjoy** God, we believe that the regulative principle for worship, as it is expressed not only in corporate church gatherings (**Psalm 33:1, 66:2**), but also in routine daily activities (**1 Corinthians 10:31**), is that all worship should be **Joyful** and God-glorifying (**John 4:24**).
6. **Prayer.** Since God's house is to be a house of prayer (**Matthew 21:13**), we affirm that personal and corporate prayer are not only a solemn responsibility but also a **Joyful** privilege (**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**). And so we bring our humble prayers before His mighty throne of grace (**Hebrews 4:16**), sometimes triumphantly and sometimes tearfully, remembering that in His presence there is **Fullness of Joy** (**Psalm 16:11**).
7. **Evangelism.** We believe that the most effective apologetics and strongest verbal testimony concerning the glorious gospel of our **Happy** God (**1 Timothy 1:11**) are made by those soul-winners whose countenance and lifestyle visibly reflect the **Joy of the Lord** (**Nehemiah 8:10**). As ambassadors for Jesus Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:20**), we go out with a message that we believe (and try to reflect) is truly **Good News of Great Joy** (**Luke 2:8-11**).
8. **Discipleship.** We firmly believe the ultimate purpose of all Christian education is to make disciples (**Matthew 28:19**) who are **Glad in the Lord** (**Psalm 105:3**), and thereby equipped to give an account of the hope that lies within them (**1 Peter 3:15; Colossians 1:28**).

- 9. Membership.** We affirm that just as Christ, the Head of the church (**Colossians 1:18**), is anointed with the oil of **Joy** (**Hebrews 1:9**), so also the members of His body ought to be imitators of Him (**1 Corinthians 11:1**). And they, being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, must be intent on one purpose (**Philippians 2:2**); that is, to glorify God **By Enjoying Him** (**Philippians 4:4**), along with all that implies as outlined herein. And since we are members of one another (**Romans 12:4-5**), we recognize our responsibility to look out, not only for our own personal interests (e.g. **Happiness**), but also for the interests of others (**Philippians 2:4**), so as to stir up one another in the **Joy of the Lord** (**Hebrews 10:24-25**).
- 10. Stewardship.** As co-laborers in Christ, we **Cheerfully** (**2 Corinthians 9:7**) employ our time, treasures, and talents in our local church, for the furtherance of the kingdom of God (**1 Peter 4:10**). Therefore we endeavor to serve heartily and **Joyfully** as unto the Lord (**Colossians 3:23**), recognizing that by faithful stewardship the redeemed enter into the **Joy** of their Master (**Matthew 25:21**).
- 11. Leadership.** We pray that our church leaders will be: [A] Men of integrity who are continually filled with **Joy** and with the Holy Spirit (**Acts 13:52**); [B] Diligent students of the Bible who **Delight** in God's Word (**Psalms 1:2**), and who study to show themselves approved, accurately handling the Word of God (**2 Timothy 2:15**), for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (**Ephesians 4:12**); [C] Faithful undershepherds who shepherd the flock of God, not under compulsion or for sordid gain, but with a **Joyful Heart** (**1 Peter 5:2**); [D] Hard-workers who are steadfast, immovable, **Joyfully** abounding in the work of the Lord (**1 Corinthians 15:58**).
- 12. Assurance.** We affirm that one of the greatest assurances of salvation is the fruit of the Spirit, including **Joy** (**Galatians 5:22-23**), which may be evident in the true child of God even during trials (**1 Peter 1:3-9**; **James 1:2-3**).

BRINGING
PEOPLE TO
JESUS CHRIST
& EQUIPPING
THEM FOR
MINISTRY IN
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WORLD

