

STUDY 1

Joy in the Old Testament

More than 650 times in the Bible we find various forms of words translated to joy, gladness, and delight. In fact, the theme of joy is prominent throughout scripture, from the book of Genesis onward. In Genesis 1 we see that each aspect of God's creation is described by the Creator as "good" – meaning agreeable, pleasant, and... joyful! Indeed, all of God's world is designed to bring joy to the Creator and to His creations. Yet, throughout the Old Testament, we see God's people struggling with circumstances that could not be described as "good". Let's look at how joy could coexist with struggles in the Old Testament.

Read:**Isaiah 51:11 (NIV)**

"Those the Lord has rescued will return.
They will enter Zion with singing;
everlasting joy will crown their heads.
Gladness and joy will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away."

Discuss:

- What were the circumstances surrounding the people of God at this time?
(For a brief historical overview, quickly skim through Nehemiah 9. *Hint: it was long and repetitive!*)
- Notice the frequency of the word "will" in this passage. What is the significance of this future-oriented word?
- Read Proverbs 10:28 in various translations. What might cause the hope of the righteous to bring joy while the hope of the wicked ends so very differently?

Read:**Zephaniah 3:17 (ESV)**

"The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing."

Discuss:

- How does the reality of God rejoicing with gladness link to the hope of the righteous we just discussed?
- In what ways can future hope and the assurance of joy in that future bring joy to our present?
(See out Hebrews 12:2 for an example)

Share:

Spend some time sharing praise reports, past and present, as you remind yourselves of God's faithfulness.

Pray:

Thank God for the joy and peace you have in the midst of waiting for future joy.

