

[In All Things, Be Joyful](#)

by Rick Warren

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.” (Philippians 4:6 NLT)

You have a fundamental need for joy in your life. Life without joy is overwhelming, overburdened, and oppressive. It is true that you have more energy, more creativity, and more productivity when you have joy in your life.

In the short book of Philippians — only four chapters long — Paul uses the word “joy” 16 times. The amazing thing is, Paul didn’t write this book when he was on vacation in the Caribbean or Disney World. He was in prison in Rome, waiting to be executed. In the darkest days of his life, he wrote the most positive book in the Bible.

In Philippians, Paul gives us six joy-builders that will help diffuse our discouragement and lift our depression. To make them easy to remember, I’ve made them into an acrostic — JOYFUL.

J: Jettison all regrets about your past.

“Jettison” means “to abandon as worthless, to discard, to eliminate, to get rid of.” Paul says if you want to enjoy life, there are some things you’ve got to get rid of because they are wearing you down and overburdening your life. The Bible says to forget your regrets, because that’s what God does — he chooses to forgive your mistakes once they’re confessed. The starting point of joy is letting go of the past. Philippians 3:13 says, “One thing I do is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead” (GN).

O: Omit all worries about your future.

If you’re going to enjoy the present, you must omit all worries about your future. Worry, hands-down, is the greatest killjoy of them all. You cannot be joyful and worried at the same time. Paul’s antidotes are these verses: “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done” (Philippians 4:6 NLT). You can either worry or you can pray.

Y: Yield yourself to God’s purpose.

If you’re just drifting, if you don’t know where you came from or where you’re going or why you’re here, of course you’re not going to have any joy in your life. We all need a cause greater than ourselves for which we live. That is what brings us joy. Living for yourself does not bring joy.

Even when Paul had literally lost everything, there was one thing that could not be taken away from him — his purpose in life. Paul says in Philippians 1:21, “To me, the only important thing about living is Christ.” (ERV).

If you want to have a joy-filled life, you need to get in line with God's purpose for your life. When you begin to live the purpose for which you are made, life makes sense, and joy is a lot more easily found.

Talk It Over

- What are the things — people, circumstances, situations, or feelings — that are wearing you down and keeping you from living a joyful life?
- What is the difference in happiness and joy?
- What are you worried about? What do you need to do to release your worry?

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Joy Is a Choice

by Rick Warren

“I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.” (Philippians 1:6 NLT)

F: Focus on what's good.

Life is filled with ups and downs, but you have a choice: Which are you going to focus on — the good or the bad? Paul says in Philippians 4:8, “Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise” (NLT). Where do you get a list of things like that? Talk radio? Not likely! Television? No. The newspaper or magazines? No.

But there is one place you can count on: God's Word. The more you fill your mind with this book, the more positive and joyful you're going to be. God's Word is true, it is right, and it is admirable. It is worthy of value. Spend some time reading God's Word every day.

U: Use your life to help others.

Paul was joyful because he was unselfish. He invested his life in others. If you want to have continuous joy in your life, here is the secret: Give your life away. Stop focusing on your puny problems and aches and pains, and start focusing on helping others. The more you give your life away, Jesus said, the more you find it. The more unselfish you become, the more joyful a person you're going to be.

“I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy and the crown I receive for my work” (Philippians 4:1b). Paul's joy came from serving the people in whom he had invested his life — the people he had led to Christ and discipled.

L: Learn to be content.

This is the bottom line: Joy is a decision. You are as joyful as you choose to be.

We get caught up in “when and then” thinking (“When ‘this’ happens in my life, then I’ll be happy”). You are as joyful as you choose to be, because joy is a choice. Philippians 4:11 says, “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (NIV). You can always be joyful — no matter what happens — because God is in control.

You may think that joy is some kind of characteristic for a naturally upbeat and cheerful person, and you’re “just not the joyful type.” You’re wrong.

You have a chance to determine your destiny. Change right now the priorities in your life. Change right now what you’re going to live the rest of your life for. If you will begin to yield yourself to God’s purpose, get to know God’s Son, and use your life to help other people, then you will have more joy than you could ever imagine.

Talk It Over

- What are the honorable, right, pure, lovely, and admirable truths that you discover in your Bible reading? How can you remind yourself to focus on these things today?
- What are the circumstances that are keeping you from being content and joyful?
- How will serving others help save you from focusing on your circumstances?

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