

Recipe for Joy

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Date: 14 December 2025

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[0 : 00] Alright, if you have your Bibles this morning, I'd encourage you to get them out. And we are once again going to be in the book of Romans. I know we've been in Romans for a little while, but again, there's just so much in the book of Romans that it's all about the gospel.

The gospel message of Jesus Christ, what He came to share, and the message that He brought to this world that we live in. And that message is just as much for you and I today as it was when Jesus spoke the words and when this was written, by Paul. Today we're in Romans chapter 12.

Romans chapter 12, beginning in verse 5. And I encourage you to follow along in God's Word, and I'd also ask if you're able if you'd stand as we read God's Word together this morning.

Romans chapter 12, beginning in verse 5. And this is what God's Word shares. Romans chapter 12, beginning in verse 6.

Romans chapter 12, beginning in verse 6.

[1 : 52] Romans chapter 13, beginning in verse 6.

Let's pray. Lord God, thank You for Your Word, and I pray, Lord, that You would teach us from it this morning. Lord, remind us that You have a message for each one of us, not just for our spouse or children or whoever, our neighbor around us, but Lord, the message is for each one of us.

So give us ears and minds that are open, hearts that are open to Your Word. And I pray, Lord, that You would just mold us and shape us into the people that You'd want us to be. Thank You again for Your Word that we can read on this day.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen. You can be seated this morning. You can be seated this morning. Amen. Amen. Amen. All right. So we've talked about hope, and we've talked about peace.

And this morning, we're on to the third Advent theme that we talk about, and that is joy. And, you know, joy is maybe a little different from the first two. There's certainly all things that Christ brings to this world.

[3 : 16] But, you know, you think about hope. And hope is something that it's future-oriented, something that we can look forward to. And we can read the Bible and find all those kind of things that we can look forward to, can't we?

It's there. All we have to do is open it up and read it. We think about peace, and we understand that if we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, there is peace between us and God.

That's a fact, isn't it? Isn't it? You're awake this morning, right? Are you awake this morning? All right. I'm just really checking there.

You know, you can be guaranteed you have peace, because if you have Christ in your heart, there is peace between you and God. It's not a question. It is present. It is there. So we can know the hope by reading God's Word.

We can know the peace just by having Christ in our hearts. But joy, that one's a little different. Joy is maybe, I was trying to think how to explain it.

[4 : 15] It's maybe a little more elusive. Maybe harder to keep in our lives. Harder to really get a handle on. Because what is joy? How would you describe joy?

And it's maybe not as simple of a definition as we would think. How would you describe joy? Okay, it's contentment. Anything else?

Peace in the midst of a storm. Jesus, others, and yourself. Jesus, others, and yourself. Wonderful acronym. Happiness within.

Anything else? How would you describe joy? That's a lot of different definitions, isn't it? And I think they're all true, and they maybe capture a little different piece of what joy is.

But at its root, joy is really, it's an emotion that we have, isn't it? It's an emotion that we experience, the emotion of joy. And that is the thing that I say so often about emotions.

[5 : 17] Emotions can be tricky. Because our emotions come and go, don't they? Our emotions during any given week, or really reality, during any given day, are your emotions the same all day long?

Are they the same from day to day? Do you sometimes wake up in the morning, and you look at your spouse and say, boy, I've got a lot of joy today.

Is that your everyday experience? No? If you're working, do you go to work every day and say, boy, I just have a joy about going to work today.

Is that every day? Okay. As a parent, do you find joy in your children every moment of every day? I know that you do in the grand sense of things, but in every moment of every day, do you find joy in it?

So joy as an emotion can be like this, can't it? What about for Christians? Because we talk about we are supposed to be different from the rest of the world, right?

[6 : 25] You all agree with that, right? So that means we have this joy that just stays at this level right up here, right? It never drops down here. It's always up here. Do you know, and I always have to be careful with this.

I don't want you to point to your spouse or the person behind you or anybody else. Do you know any Christians that sometimes you look at and you say, boy, there's not a lot of joy there.

Do you know any Christians like that? Don't point. But it's something we're supposed to have as believers, right? So how do we find this joy?

How do we keep this joy in our lives? In our lives that can be busy, in our lives that can be hurried, in our lives that have strife and tribulations and troubles and struggles and ups and downs, all these kind of things.

How do we keep this joy thing going in our lives? And it would be nice if we could just say, well, Jesus puts that joy in your heart and then it just stays there like that. But I think we all know that that's not always the case.

[7 : 33] It's not always the case, even for us as believers. Let's look at what it has to say in Romans about joy. And you may think, well, the things we've read, what does it have to do with joy? Well, there's a couple of things first that I think we have to understand.

And that is, it begins if you look in verse 5. Here's some things we have to understand. So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another.

One of the things we have to remember and understand is that we are in Christ. What does it mean to be in Christ? What does that mean?

What's that? To be born again. Okay. What else does it mean to be in Christ? What's that? Believers that are devoted to Him?

We are part of Him and He is part of us. That is the initial understanding that we need to have. That when we become a Christian, when we become a believer in Christ, that we are in Him.

[8 : 43] We are in His presence. We are in His family. And that is something that should bring us some joy as we think about what that really means. You know, right now, are you in something?

What are you in in a physical sense right now? In church. What about even more basic than that? What are you in right now? In a building, right?

Is there a difference from being in this building to being outside of this building right now? What if I pick some of you and said, Alright, I want you to sit outside this window.

And we'll crack the window a little bit so you can hear what's going on. But you're going to be part of the service from outside. Anybody volunteer for that? No, it's cold out there.

Is there a difference? Yes, Scott was warm this morning. He's saying he'd volunteer. You're no help. But there's a difference we understand from being outside to being in, don't we?

[9 : 45] Because there is a blessing that comes from being in this building. It's the warmth that we experience, the shelter that we experience. Do you think there's some truth in that?

That being in Jesus Christ is that same way? That there is some protection that He offers us. Not that we don't still go through trials and tribulations, but it says our Father watches over us, doesn't it?

We are in Christ. So we are in Christ. The other thing we have to understand, look in verse 5 again. We being many are one body.

Everyone members of one another. What does that mean? We're part of each other. We are a family. We are a family. I think this is one of those things that we truly have to have a better understanding.

And I include myself in that. It means we're all connected, doesn't it? It uses the word body and member for a reason. When it says member in the body, it's talking about a body part.

[10 : 46] It's talking about an arm or a leg or fingers or a foot, all of it. It says it's all one body and we are just different members or parts of that body. You know what that means?

It means every one of us has value and we're important, doesn't it? Doesn't it? I know some of you have had, I mean, we all have different ailments at different times, right?

We have hurts and we have whatever, surgeries, all kinds of things. I know I've seen in the last couple of years people come in wearing a boot on their foot, whether it's from a surgery or whatever. Is that easy?

I can pick on Brady. You had a boot for quite a while. Was it fun? Did it make life more difficult? Well, all it was was just your foot, but it still made things difficult.

Every part of that body is important, isn't it? Ron, where's Ron at? Ron had an issue a while back with a finger. Lucky to still have the finger attached, right?

[11 : 45] Did that bother you at all? How often? Why? Because it hurt. How often did you find you wanted to use that finger and you couldn't?

Daily, multiple times. Some of you recently I know have had back problems. I remember, I don't remember who I was talking to, but we were talking about a back. You use your back for everything, don't you? Rolling over in bed, sitting, standing, getting up, sitting, all of it.

All these body parts are important. And we need to understand it says we're all members of one body. We all are together in that. And you know what? Should that bring us any joy? To know we're not alone in it?

So those are things we need to understand. But the other thing that I think we need to understand and realize about joy. Look in Psalms 100.

This isn't going to be back here because I didn't give Chris this verse. Look in Psalms chapter 100. I'll give you just a moment to find it. Because I believe if we want more joy in our lives, there is something that we can do to have more joy in our lives.

[13:03] An action that we can do. Look in Psalms 100. Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all you lands. Serve the Lord with gladness.

Come before His presence with singing. Talks about gladness there. Gladness and joy are kind of the same thing, isn't it? What's associated with the gladness in that verse?

What does it say to do? Serve the Lord. You see that word serve? What does it mean to serve the Lord? What does that mean?

Is it an action? Is it doing something? Here's the thing. I think that's associated with joy. If we want more joy in our lives or we want to experience joy, there are some things we need to be doing.

We can't just sit back and think that joy is just going to automatically roll into our lives from out of nowhere. I think God gives us a recipe for joy. That there are things that we can do in our lives if we want more joy.

[14:09] Look back in Romans that we were in because it has a whole list of things here. Things that we can be doing if we want to experience joy. Starting in verse 9.

Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil. Cling to that which is good. So it talks about love.

As we think about serving God, how do you show love to others? How do you do that? Treating them kindly. Is that an action? Yeah. How else do you show love to other people?

Helping others. Is that an action? So love is an action, isn't it? You want more joy in your life? Love others. Reach out to others.

Help others. Show them the love of Christ in whatever way you can. Do you think you'll experience joy because of that? Why? It fills your heart.

[15:07] Because what? It fills your heart. It blesses us. I think those are both true. But on an even more basic level, do you understand why we were created?

Because God loves us. But we were created to serve God, weren't we? That's why we were created, to serve God. And when we do what we were created for, do you think that's going to give us joy?

Absolutely. When we do the thing that we are created for, that will bring joy. Do you think that's a coincidence or do you think God made us that way? Folks, God made us that way.

You want to experience more joy in your life? People look for joy in a lot of different areas, a lot of different activities. You want to find more joy in your life? Serve God. Do the things He created you for.

And guess what? That's where you're going to find true joy. Loving others is the beginning of that. Look down in verse 10 what it says after this. Be kindly affectioned one to another.

[16:21] What's that all about? Is that again an action? Is that something we can do in our lives? Being kind to others and involved with others? Look in verse 11.

Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit. And what does it say at the end of that verse? Serving the Lord. Again, you want more joy in your life? Serve God by serving others.

And guess what you're going to find? Joy. You know, I know in my life, I think about things that bring me joy. And there are a lot of things that bring me joy. But some of the biggest joyful things that I can think of in my life are times that I have been serving God in one way or another.

And you know what? There's joy to be found in that. And there are so many ways that we can serve the Lord. You know, I watch people here around the church, whether it is getting ready for a funeral dinner, decorating for Christmas, teaching at Bible school, all these things, we're serving the Lord in that.

And you know what? I see a lot of joy around when that's happening. Serving the Lord brings joy. Look in verse 13.

[17:36] And there's a lot of ways we can serve God. Distributing to the necessity of saints and giving to hospitality. When it says distributing to the necessity of the saints, what does that mean?

What does that mean? Distributing what? Anything that's necessary. Anything specific?

Let me give you a hint. Oh, there's one. Money.

Distributing to the necessity of saints. When somebody else has a need, helping with that need. Necessity and need. Those are the same thing, right? Something that's necessary is a need.

And it says distributing. And I'm not saying we're all wealthy and that's the way each one of us can serve, but is that a way that we can serve God? Yes. And how do you feel when you give to others?

[18:36] Think about that for a moment. Truly when you give to others, how does that make you feel? Doesn't it make you feel good? Again, is that coincidence?

Or is that because God... Not that I don't trust you, but I'm going to put it back. I don't trust myself to remember it. Again, I don't think that's a coincidence. God created us to serve.

He created us to give. And when we do that, we find joy. Distributing to the necessity of the saints. Look down in verse 16. Be of the same mind one towards another.

Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Talking about being humble. And then down in verse 18. If it be possible, as much lies within you, live peaceably with all men.

All these things are talking about ways that we can serve God. And here's the key, folks. If you want that joy in your heart and in your life, first of all, you need to have Christ in your heart.

[19:38] But even then, that joy is not guaranteed every moment of every day. It comes by then doing the things that God asks of us. It comes then by serving God.

And as we serve God, folks, that's when we find the joy. That's when God builds that joy within us as we serve Him and serve others.

It's not complicated, is it? Folks, that is the recipe for joy. So many times, the mistake that people make is they think that joy is found by thinking about themselves.

By what I need to do to get myself joy, well, I need to get this or I need to get that. And folks, finding joy is not about getting. Finding joy is about serving God and giving of ourselves.

And we think about Christmas. Isn't that exactly what Christ did? He gave of Himself. Folks, that's the example for us.

[20:40] To give of ourselves. And that's where we'll find real joy. So I encourage you. You think about hope and you think about peace, but as you think about joy, remember, in part, the amount of joy you have depends on your actions.

Are you doing the things that God asks you to do? Are you serving Him? Because that's what you were created for. And when you do that, that is when the joy will truly come. Let's pray.

Lord God, we just thank You again for this morning. We thank You for Your Word. And Lord, I pray that You'd help us to remember that You do give us a recipe for joy. And it is not in seeking out things that we can get.

It is about serving You. It is about fulfilling the reason and the purpose that we were created for. And that is serving You and reaching out to others in Your name.

And Lord, as we do that, we will experience all these things we talked about. We'll experience peace. We'll experience hope. And we certainly, Lord, will experience joy. Remind us of that.

[21 : 47] Help us to be Christians that aren't Christians that just sit back and watch. Help us to be Christians that are in action, that are involved, that are reaching out, that are serving You. Because Lord, that's when the joy will come. Thank You again for Your Word on this day. In Christ's name we pray. Amen. This morning as we close, the altar's open.

If you have a need, our Father loves each one of us and He's ready to talk to you. If you have a need, come and bring it to Him this morning. The altar's open as we sing. Hope, please. I pray that you find and experience the joy that God can bring as you serve Him this week.

So let's bow our heads as we close in prayer. Lord God, once again, we thank You for Your presence in this place. And Lord, we know that as we leave here that You go with us. And Lord, help us to just to remember each and every day of our lives that You call us to serve You.

Wherever we're at, whether we're at school, at home, at work, wherever we are, we are to serve You. And as we serve You, Lord, we will find joy in that. So thank You again for Your Word this morning.

[22 : 49] Watch over us, Lord, and we thank You for Your blessings. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. And all God's people said, Amen. God bless you, and have a wonderful week.