

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

by David Robinson



Christian Joy— Happiness in the Lord

Lesson 1	Walking in the Light	3
Lesson 2	Dealing with Everyday Sin	8
Lesson 3	Rules That Lead to Joy	13
Lesson 4	The Joy of Love	18
Lesson 5	Avoiding Dangers to Joy	23
Lesson 6	Living in Joy	28
Lesson 7	Joy and the Right Spirit	33
Lesson 8	Doing As Jesus Did	38
Lesson 9	The Joy of Assurance	44
Lesson 10	Joy Through Prayer	49
Lesson 11	Joy and a Thankful Spirit	54
Lesson 12	Joy and Humility	59
Lesson 13	Joy and Peace	64

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Walking in the Light

Scripture: 1 John 1:1-7

Aim: By the end of the lesson I will explain why the truth of God’s Word is the foundation for all joy in life.

Start Here



Today we begin a study of Christian joy. Too often our world tends to think of Christians as hypercritical people who do not enjoy life. It seems as if the Bible forbids anything that most people think of as fun. These concepts are wrong. The truth is that no one has more potential for happiness than a Christian, and no one is more miserable than those who do not know Christ.

One foundation for our joy is clear. The Bible declares that whatever God does for us is always for our benefit. God never leads us into disaster. The Holy Spirit always acts in our best interests and leads us in the paths of righteousness. On the other hand, Satan comes to kill and to destroy. Satan isn’t happy and he doesn’t want anyone else to be happy either. Our world promises a false and fickle kind of joy. Only Jesus can offer joy unspeakable and full of glory—the joy that passes our understanding and allows us to function whatever our circumstances may be.

Jesus said in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Real joy, as we shall see, comes from the peace Jesus gives, and our world cannot supply this to children of God.

Take a Closer Look



John, the man whom God used to write the book that we will be studying for most of this quarter,

was one of Jesus' closest associates. He truly loved Jesus and Jesus loved John. Through inspiration, John wrote five books of the New Testament. John lived longer than any of the other apostles. When he died, he was looking forward to the return of Jesus.

Joy and our physical senses. John presented the message of joy in terms of our physical senses. He talked about what he had seen with his own eyes, about what he had heard with his own ears and what his hands had handled. This tells us the life of Jesus had been thoroughly observed by John, but it also tells us our happiness and our joy must touch all parts of our lives. For John, Jesus was not an apparition or a spirit. Jesus touched all parts of John's life. If we are to be happy, He must touch all parts of our lives as well.

We see the purpose of this book declared plainly in verses 3 and 4. It was written to meet two great goals. First was to build and increase fellowship. Fellowship in the Bible indicates things shared or things in common—most often, shared labor. One of the great avenues of happiness in our lives is to have meaningful and shared work. When we are doing something that matters and working together with others, we can find great joy. Second, John also stated plainly that he has written that our joy may be full.

Three conditions of happiness. This suggests that there are at least three conditions relating to happiness. We can have little or no joy. There are many in our world who would fall into this category. If we look at what the world offers, we will see many people living sad and lonely lives. They seem to have little to look forward to. Often they may have wealth and material things, but inside they are lonely and alone. Then, we see those who have some happiness. This is how we might find the majority of human beings. They have some joy some of the time. Some things make them happy and some things make them sad. They are at the mercy of their surroundings and the people in their lives.

Think about it for a moment. If someone can make you happy or make you sad, then, that person controls your emotions. They can do with you as they will. Sobering isn't it? But this is how many people see joy. It's up to everyone else to behave as we expect so that we can be happy. And of course, others seldom behave as we wish they would, so much of the time we are miserable.

John presented a third way of thinking which he called "full joy." Through the wonderful power of Jesus, it is possible to go from

living without joy at all to having some joy to having full joy. Full joy gives you happiness in all the circumstances of your life. It does this because it puts Jesus in control of your life. You are no longer in control and your friends and neighbors are not in control; Jesus is in control. When He leads and we follow, we will find our lives literally filled with joy.

Now remember God desires the best for each of us. God leads the lost to be saved and He leads His children to serve Him in a New Testament church. In every spiritual transaction, the one who benefits the most is the one who makes the transaction. John tells us that the message from the beginning is that God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. This is a picture of good versus evil. Light and dark are mutually exclusive. One always replaces the other. When the light shines, the darkness recedes. When darkness falls, the light goes away. Light and dark are not matters of opinion; they are matters of fact.

A life of hypocrisy. We may say one thing but live another. There is no joy in hypocrisy. Some of the most miserable people in the world are hypocrites. They are pretending to have things they really don't possess. They live in fear of being found out to be what they really are. We may say that we are in the light, but, if our lives do not match our profession, we are simply telling a lie.

As bad as it is to lie to others, perhaps it's worse to lie to ourselves. If we lie to others, we might be found out and exposed. Then, the lie would be obvious. But, if we lie to ourselves, how is the lie ever going to be exposed? It might not be. Then, we will be walking in darkness which is living without fellowship and joy. When we lie to ourselves, it becomes increasingly difficult to find the light.

Walk in darkness or light. The Bible uses the term *walk* in the way we use the term *lifestyle*. It means "a way of living that comes out of a way of thinking." Walking in darkness is saying that sin doesn't have an effect on me. It puts the individual above the rules that God has made and makes each man his own god. The result is that those who do this cannot "do" or practice the truth. And not knowing the truth takes away all hope of being happy. We cannot build a happy life on the shaky shallow foundation of lies.

In contrast is the walk, or lifestyle, of light. This is living in and according to the truth as revealed in the Word of God. That truth is

always bound up in the person and ministry of Christ. Jesus did not say He was a kind of truth or He was some of the truth for some of the people. He simply said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” Jesus is the truth. When we walk in Him, wonderful things happen.

First, we have fellowship one with another. It has never been good for man to be alone. God said that in Genesis 2:18. We need each other, but our relationships must be based on more than need; they must be based on truth. When we walk in the light, we can have sweet fellowship with other Christians who are walking in the light. This is a wonderful blessing and it offers us great joy. But beyond this, we can have the foundation for lasting joy in our lives. We can have our sins forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ. This includes our past sins, our present sins and all the sins we will ever commit. The foundation for true happiness is to have our sins forgiven and to know that whatever else may happen, we will go to Heaven when we die.



Perspectives Underneath everything there is a foundation. This is true in a physical sense, and it is also true in an emotional and spiritual sense. If the foundation is not sound and secure, then whatever is built on that foundation is sure to fall. Because many people in our world have the wrong foundation, they can never build a happy life.

The only foundation that will ultimately yield joy is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Light. That means He is a reliable and authentic source of understanding and comprehension. Walking in Him means living according to His will and behaving as the Holy Spirit directs. This isn't a onetime decision; it is a continual process that is characterized by constant fellowship with God.

Only truly unhappy people are afraid to invite Jesus into their lives. If we have nothing to hide, we will welcome fellowship with Jesus and direction from the Holy Spirit. This happens when we are cleansed of sin through the blood of Jesus.

At the end of the day, happiness and joy are gifts from God available to us through Jesus. When we seek them on our own, we will never find them, but, when we allow God to give them to us, they are constantly and eternally present.

Building Blocks

Every day we make choices, and we must live with the choices we make. Often these are small matters, but they can have a great impact on us. We can choose to believe the truth of God's Word, or we can follow the broad path that leads to destruction. We can choose to follow our own lusts and desires, or we can heed the warnings and instructions of the Bible. We can choose to place our feelings in the hands of others and let them control us, or we can take charge of our own lives and set our own course in living.

So much of what we call joy depends on simple choices. If we choose wrong, it's difficult to find true happiness. If we choose right, it's equally difficult to be miserable. But everyone has a choice to make. It may seem that the spiritual side is not the most important part of life. We may think that material things will make us happy. We can work very hard to have all the trappings of success without finding true joy and satisfaction.

But joy is there for all who would find it. We must find it in the right relationship with Jesus Christ and then in the right relationship with each other. When we "walk" according to the light of truth, we also find full joy. This is the promise of 1 John 1:4.



Springboard Our decisions, when properly made, will grow out of our knowledge and experience of Christ. If we look around at others and try to find happiness from them, we can only expect to be as happy as they are. But, if we look up and seek our joy from above, we have a source of happiness that most of our world does not know. We can then find the great happiness of sharing our faith with others.

We can make clear, as did John, what we have heard and experienced from Jesus. We can live our lives on a continuing basis of joy. We can live without the contradiction of saying that we walk in the light while really walking in the darkness of sin. We will not live above sin, no one does. Instead, we will have a way to deal with every sin and thereby restore and maintain our joy.