

7 DAYS TO A MORE JOYFUL LIFE

A Guided Bible
Study from
Dr. Bryan Chapell



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It's true! *Real* joy can be yours.

Dear Friend,

As believers, you and I have an amazing reason to celebrate, knowing that our victory in life and over death has been won by Christ.

But sometimes, that joy can get lost in the heat of the daily battle.

That's why I'm so glad you're reading these pages. Based on the book of Philippians, this guided Bible study gives you daily Scripture, reflections, and activities to help you experience more joy in the Lord — no matter what life is throwing at you right now.

It's true, friend. Joy... *real* joy... can be yours. And '7 Days to a More Joyful Life' shows you how to find joy, and keep it.

May God bless you on this journey!

Dr. Bryan Chapell

Day 1: Celebrate Christ's Victory

Passage to Read

Philippians 2:6–11 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Thoughts to Consider

When the Chicago Cubs defeated the Cleveland Indians in Game 7 of the 2016 World Series, they ended the longest World Series championship drought in Major League Baseball history.

People cheered, they hugged, they high-fived... and it didn't matter what town they came from, what race they were, or how much money they made. They found joy in each other—all 5 millions fans who marched together from Wrigley Field to Grant Park in Chicago!

When there's been a great victory, you want to express it in ways that are true to the reality that you're experiencing, like the Cubs fans did. This is precisely what the apostle Paul is doing in today's passage.

He's just celebrated the greatest victory ever to be won in history—Christ's death and resurrection—and then Paul begins to talk about what our response as believers should be: *to love beyond all borders*.

When we stop to celebrate what Christ accomplished for us on the cross, we can't help but

celebrate. And even though our brothers and sisters in Christ might be different from us, we can find common ground as we celebrate together what he's accomplished.

Truth to Claim

Real joy can be found when you celebrate with others what Christ has done for you.

Questions to Answer

It's usually easier to focus on our struggles and sorrows. But what about the victories? Write down some reasons you have to celebrate right now.

Think of someone in your life who's different from you, but might need a word of biblical encouragement. Write down their name, and then call, email, or text them today!

Verse to Memorize

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.

Day 2: Rest in Your True Identity

Passage to Read

Philippians 3:4–9 If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day..., a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee...; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ...in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ...

Thoughts to Consider

In 1993, Javier Sotomayor of Cuba jumped just over eight feet in the high jump. That's a huge height to jump using nothing but your own body and strength!

Yet as remarkable a statement of human ability as Javier's high jump record is, it's also a remarkable statement of human limitation — that jump was made in 1993, and it hasn't been surpassed since.

You and I may jump really high in terms of going through the hoops that we think God requires. This is how the apostle Paul lived before he met Christ, as we see in today's passage.

But when you accept Christ, God says, "I have put on you the label: Jesus Christ." Not by your doing. You could never do that. You could never measure up, you could never make it happen. But in Christ Jesus, you're family now. Because his name is upon you.

Truth to Claim

Real joy can be found in resting in who you really are in Christ.

Questions to Answer

What are some ways you might be “jumping” to win God’s love and approval right now?

Imagine God saying to you, “My child, my Son was perfect for you, so you don’t have to perform for me.” How does this make you feel? What behavior(s) might you need to let go of?

Verse to Memorize

Philippians 3:7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Day 3:

Let Go of Past Failures

Passage to Read

Philippians 3:12–14 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Thoughts to Consider

In 1954, British runner Roger Bannister did the impossible. He broke the 4-minute mile. Two months later, John Landy shattered Bannister's record by almost two seconds. The two men then went head-to-head against each other in the mile, and it was clear through most of that race that Landy was going to win.

Yet within yards of finishing the race, one thought began to plague Landy: "Where's Roger?" And within yards of the finish line, Landy looked back and Bannister passed him. Landy later said in an interview with *Time* magazine, "If I had not looked back, I would've won."

The apostle Paul is saying something very similar in today's passage when he talks about "forgetting what is behind." Yet not looking back on our past sins, struggles, and failures is easier said than done, right?

"Forgetting what is behind" means you identify past failures, but you say, "These don't stop me from the reality of Christ." Jesus' blood washed away your sin. What would be your judgment and what God would rightly hold against you, Christ took care of on the cross. You can forget what is behind because Jesus has made you his own.

Truth to Claim

Real joy can be found in letting go of your past sins and failures.

Questions to Answer

What's past sin or failure do you tend to beat yourself up about?

It's time to stop looking back at that past sin or failure. Write a "good-bye note" to it below!

Verses to Memorize

Philippians 3:13b-14 But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Day 4: Choose to Forgive

Passage to Read

Philippians 3:17–21 Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Thoughts to Consider

On a day like any other, James McGee was minding his own business, when a policeman named Andrew Collins stopped him, accused him of dealing drugs, and arrested him. McGee spent the next several years of his life in prison and he lost everything: career, job, home, and family.

During the years McGee was in prison, Collins, the man who had arrested him was also put in prison for falsely planting drugs to increase the arrest record that would advance his career. Both men were eventually released and ended up working at a cafe for ex-cons.

The bad cop and the innocent man imprisoned had to deal with each other, and when they faced each other, the cop told the story. “I faced McGee, I simply said, ‘I have no explanation, all I can do is say “I’m sorry.”’” And the man who was wronged said, “I forgive you” and “I love you in the name of Jesus Christ.”

In today’s passage, the apostle Paul talks about following his example, which of course means following Christ’s example. And perhaps nowhere else is the Christian witness stronger than when we forgive and love those who don’t deserve it. After all, Christ

forgave us and loved us despite our sin. How can we do any less?

Truth to Claim

Real joy can be found in choosing to forgive those who have hurt you.

Questions to Answer

Who do you need to choose to forgive today?

What are some steps you can take to communicate to that person your forgiveness?

Verse to Memorize

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Day 5: Rejoice in the Good and Bad

Passage to Read

Philippians 4:4–5 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Thoughts to Consider

It's easy to rejoice when good things are happening, but what about when the bottom drops out? It's not so easy.

The apostle Paul makes it clear in today's passage that as Christians, we're to rejoice no matter what goes on around us. Yet his wording is important here. Paul's not saying to rejoice about our circumstances. He's saying that despite our circumstances, we should rejoice in Jesus.

Happiness, after all, just depends on what happens. But joy is about Jesus. It's about a relationship that doesn't come and go with earthly whims and winds. It's something deep and flowing and unchangeable, something the world cannot give or cannot take away.

It's also rejoicing in the promise that no matter what, God will be with us and will carry us through every trial, no matter how hard things may be.

Truth to Claim

Real joy can be found in rejoicing *in Christ* no matter what is going on around you.

Questions to Answer

Life might be really hard for you right now. What's one reason you have to rejoice in Christ today?

Write one thing below that Jesus has done for you and why you love him.

Verse to Memorize

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Day 6: Go to God with the Big — and Little — Things

Passage to Read

Philippians 4:6–7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Thoughts to Consider

After my senior year of high school, I worked as an intern at a church on a construction project. One day I got to help an experienced carpenter put up drywall, and he stopped at one point right in the middle of what we were doing and started looking around at the floor.

We had to keep up the pace to stay ahead of the tapers and painters, so I said, “What’s going on?” He said, “Well, I dropped a nail, and I prayed to God that I would find it.”

I figured I owed it to him to look for it a little bit, but when I couldn’t locate the nail, I said, “Maybe we shouldn’t bother God with little things like nails.” And the carpenter said to me, “No, Bryan, the Bible says, ‘In *every* situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.’”

A lot of people wait for just the right moment before they pray. But the apostle Paul says in today’s passage that we should take *everything* to him. That means even the smallest thing we think might “bother” God. Because he wants us to take everything to him and help us. He’s listening. And he’s at hand!

Truth to Claim

Real joy can be found when you take *all* your needs to God.

Questions to Answer

Do you really believe that God wants you to talk to him about everything? Why or why not?

Think about something that might be “too small” for you to pray about. Got it? Now, journal your prayer below.

Verses to Memorize

Philippians 4:6–7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Day 7: Become a Generous Giver

Passage to Read

Philippians 4:14–19 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

Thoughts to Consider

Here at the end of Philippians, the apostle Paul ends by thanking those at Philippi for being so generous with him. He connects joy to generosity, and there's a message for us: that our generosity is meant to actually bring joy into our lives, and not be a burden. But how does that happen?

It starts by recognizing that generosity helps things grow. If you just consider what the apostle is saying here, he is reminding us that the generosity of the Philippians was given to plant seeds, fight weeds, and grow fruit.

In God's economy, he uses the financial resources of his people to further his work on earth. Sure, he can and often does provide miraculously. But more often than not, he leans on our generosity to fund his work because he knows the joy it can bring us!

So look around at the opportunities you have to invest in the work God is doing through your church and other ministries. I promise, the more consistently you give to them, the more joy you'll discover!

Truth to Claim

Real joy comes from being a generous giver.

Questions to Answer

Be honest: Is giving a blessing or burden to you?

What's one way you can be more generous this week?

Verse to Memorize

Philippians 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.



Unlimited Grace is dedicated to spreading the gospel of God's grace to all people through the preaching and teaching ministry of Dr. Bryan Chapell. And we rely on the generosity of friends like you to impact lives.

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