

# Rejoice with Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory!

by Holly Elzinga

Christianity is not meant to be boring, drab, or restricting. It's not a set of rules that we have to follow. It's not "don't do this," and "don't do that." Christianity is meant to be enjoyable! Sometimes we make Christianity boring and restricting, but it doesn't need to be that way. Christ has saved us and put His fiery love in our hearts. He gives us the power of the Holy Spirit and the peace of God. He has pulled us out of the deepest, darkest pit and brought us into His arms. Yet so many times when we fall into temptation we want to push ourselves out of His arms and fall back into the pit. That is when we make Christianity restrictive. We say that Christianity won't let us do this or that—it won't allow us to fall back into that pit of sin that our sinful selves want to fall into. We make Christianity boring by saying that we aren't allowed to do so many things. But what about the things we can do? We don't have to suffer, starving and naked, in that deep, dark pit of sin. God has pulled us out so we can enjoy the mountains and the valleys and the meadows. Instead of looking down into that pit at the sinful things of this world and wishing we could be there, we need to enjoy our salvation! Love the Lord! Tell others about Him. The love God puts in our hearts is overflowing—give it to others. Show the world that we are different. We are Christians, and we ENJOY our Christianity!

God is our gracious Savior who out of His great love pulled us out of that pit. We owe everything to Him. He makes it possible for us to love Him and to give that love away to others. Ecclesiastes 12:13 and 14 says, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." When I realize how great God is and how much he loves me, my heart hurts because I owe so much to Him.

We are wretched sinners, disobeying all of God's commandments. Yet God loves us anyway. It is amazing to think that God would love us even though we continue to sin against Him over and over again. His love is so great that He sent His only begotten son, the perfect Jesus, to die. Jesus was willing to give up His life for us with the horrible death on the cross. Bearing our shame and punishment, He justified and sanctified us. We can now go before God blameless because of His great love for us. We owe God so much and there is no way we can ever repay him for saving us. But we can show Him thankfulness.

We show our thankfulness to God by keeping His commandments. God tells us that the greatest commandment is to love Him with everything we've got. Our love for Him should be shown in everything we do. Every hour of every day must be used to glorify God. When we look at God's commandments this way, they're not a set of rules. Realizing how much God has done, we want to obey them as a small token of our thankfulness. And when we do follow his commandments, God will give us His perfect peace.

Every morning come to God in prayer. Ask Him for His guidance throughout the day. Ask Him to help you serve Him and love Him in everything you do. And thank Him for everything. Then throughout the day remember Him. Fear Him and keep His commandments. Psalm 97:12 says, "Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

When we go through our life showing our love for God, others will notice. They will see that our life is not empty; we have a reason for living. And we are joyful! It is our duty to give the love God gives us away to others, believer and unbeliever alike. So many verses in the Bible tell us that we are to love our neighbor. I John 3:18 tells us how we are to love. "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and truth." When we are truly enjoying our salvation, our love for others will be displayed in our actions.

Our relationship to a fellow believer should be one of love and peace. Fellow believers are all those who confess and believe in the one true God of the scriptures. They are found all over the earth in

many different nations, tongues, and denominations. All Christians share a common bond in Christ. We are all members of the body of Jesus with one common goal: to glorify our heavenly Father. I think sometimes we're too concerned about our little differences to take the time to live and enjoy our faith. Christianity is not all about arguing with closed minds about little doctrinal differences while we neglect proclaiming the gospel to others. Christians who spend their time telling others about Jesus are certainly showing their love in deed and truth. This does not mean doctrine is not important. By searching the scriptures daily, we can find the one truth of the Word and be a witness to it. Our duty to fellow believers is to love them and put them higher than ourselves. Always have an open mind and look at the other person's point of view. And be a peace maker. Give of yourself to make the other person happy. "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful." Colossians 3:15.

We should also be peacemakers among the ungodly. Every opportunity we have, we must be showing them God's love. Show them the peace of God which passeth all understanding. Instead of viewing unbelievers as wicked sinners damned to hell, view them as lost sinners in need of God's salvation. We will never know how God will use our witness to bring His children to Himself. That is why we must always witness with an open mind. If we have a negative attitude when we witness, others will not want to listen and we are not showing God's love. God's love overflowing in our hearts will cause us to want everyone to know about Jesus. We want all the world to hear. We must be willing to give of ourselves so that we can give to the cause of God's Name. Our relationship to an unbeliever should be one of compassion and friendliness. II Corinthians 6:14 reminds us not to unequally yoked together with unbelievers. We are unequally yoked with unbelievers when we develop close friendships with them. Being friendly with unbelievers is not wrong, but we must be careful that we have an influence on them and not them on us. Our faith has to be so strong that we can live among unbelievers and yet not be influenced by them. With God working in us, this is possible. John 16:22 says that no one is able to take away that joy that we have in Christ.

We need to treat others with love and respect. View others as better than yourself. Always be a peacemaker and remember to give of yourself to make others happy. Show others the love of God. Take every opportunity there is to give that love away to others. Be a witness and tell the world of Christ. Do not be ashamed to stand up for Jesus.

When God pulled us out of that dark pit of sin, he gave us new life. We are no longer dead, for the Holy Spirit Himself lives in us! It is really amazing to think that God Himself actually comes and dwells in our bodies. I Corinthians 3:16 and 17 says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, Him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Our bodies are made holy because God dwells in them. He gives us His Holy Spirit to comfort us and give us power. We are not to defile this holy temple of God. We are to realize how great God made us, and love ourselves so we can serve Christ better.

There are many ways that we defile our body. Jesus calls them the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:18-21. We are to keep ourselves from adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness. God says he will destroy those who defile the temple of God. Our bodies are holy, and God lives in them. It is our duty to keep them holy by abstaining from evil. We have to take care of our bodies and keep them pure. Using drugs is abusing your body. It is taking the beautiful working system of life that God gave us and messing it up. Addiction to these drugs comes so easily, causing your body to need the drug to survive. Smoking is also defiling your body. I believe that smoking is wrong because it is not keeping your body pure. We need to take care of our bodies.

God made us so great, and we should not look at ourselves and say we are inadequate or not good enough. In fact, the Bible even commands us to love ourselves. Matthew 22:39 says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." We are commanded in this verse not only to love our neighbor but also to love ourselves. Loving ourselves does not mean that we think we are better than others. We cannot be

obsessed with ourselves. But it is wrong to think we are inadequate. God has given each of us so many gifts and talents . We need to use what we have to serve Christ whole-heartedly. We may not complain that God has not made us good enough. God has given us everything we need to serve Him perfectly in this life and accomplish everything He's planned for us. It is our duty to love ourselves so we can serve God joyfully to the fullest. God has made us perfect and has redeemed us fully so each of us can use our special gifts to serve Him.

Our bodies are not our own. We belong to Christ. When we keep this in mind, it will be quite obvious to us what we should or should not do to keep our bodies temples of the Holy Spirit. Christianity is a matter of the heart. If we really want to live our lives for God, we will know how to treat our bodies as temples of God. We will not look at ourselves as inadequate, but we will realize that God made us wonderful. We will joyfully want to serve Him with everything he has given us.

God brought us out of that dark pit and into His beautiful creation. Isaiah 55:12 speaks of how the creation takes part in our joy. "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." We need to enjoy God's beautiful creation and take care of it. God tells Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28 to be fruitful and multiply, replenish the earth, and subdue it. God also gave man dominion over the animals. God tells them in Genesis 2:15 to dress the Garden of Eden and keep it. This means they had to serve and work in the garden and guard it from evil.

God has given man a high place on this earth. We are not like the animals; we have a living soul capable of serving God. God gave us power over the animals and responsibility over creation. We need to take care of creation. We can do this in many ways: recycling, conserving natural resources, not littering, and not polluting as much as possible. This earth is a beautiful place that God gave us to live in and we need to take care of it. It is important that we realize how wonderful God's creation is. God created everything so perfect and beautiful. It is amazing and wonderful when we examine God's creation and see how great it is. God makes everything work out perfect. Our needs are provided for by creation: food, shelter, and clothing. He has given such a great gift for us to enjoy. Every day new wonders of creation pop out at us: tender flowers opening, mountains rising in majesty, the singing of birds and rivers, a bolt of lightning, or the rising sun. Behold creation's beauty!

We have so much to be thankful for, it's incredible! God has given us so much. He has pulled us out of that dark pit of sin and made us glorious children of His! Now with His love in our hearts we can tell others about Him. He has made us wonderful and beautiful people with clean hearts. All of our sin is washed away in Christ's blood. He put each of us on this earth at this time in history so that we can accomplish His special purpose for us. We need to go through life with joy seeking to find and accomplish that special purpose. Christ has given us so much to be thankful for and we need to be joyful! When we realize how great God is and how much He's done for us, we will be joyful. It is impossible to be washed over with such love and not "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" I Peter 1:8. God's people are blessed so much! "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted" Psalm 89:15 and 16. ❖

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