THE RESTORATION OF JOY:
5 KEYS TO
THE JOYFUL LIFE
JE NTE ZEN FR ANK LIN
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FIVE KEYS TO THE JOYFUL LIFE

Life comes in seasons. There’s the winter season when everything is cold and barren. Likewise, you’ll experience spiritual winters where you just can’t feel God, and it seems like your prayers are heading into empty air. In this season, feeling God’s presence is difficult, and if it weren’t for what you know to be true in God’s Word, you would struggle in your faith for sure. It’s times like this when you cling to The Word, “. . . and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20 NKJV)

Next there’s spring! Everything greens up and it seems all is right in the world. It’s an amazing season of new beginnings, much needed warmth and new growth. In times of spiritual spring, it feels like everything you do is blessed, and it can represent amazing times of spiritual renewal. It’s a time of new beginnings, and anything is possible!

But then comes summer, and that’s a time when the heat is on. If you’ve ever had God turn the heat up on you, it’s uncomfortable. It is during this season that you are under pressure, and life is happening at a rapid pace all around you. It gets hot and sticky, and the pressure never seems to let up.

Finally it’s fall, and you wonder why you fretted so much just a month or so ago. You start looking ahead to the holidays, the nostalgia they evoke, and all the possibilities ahead. Before you know it, you will be right back in winter, and another year will begin. Another season of life will dawn, and the next set of chapters will begin to unfold.
The good news of the gospel is whether it’s winter, summer, spring or fall; day or night; you are blessed because your sins are forgiven, your transgressions are gone. You can rejoice in the God of your salvation! If you only have joy when the timing is right, you will experience much of life without it. The truth is, OUR joy is based on the reality of our faith and can only be appreciated fully when considered with an eternal perspective. As a mature believer, you cannot allow the season you find yourself in to take your praise, or to steal your joy.

There are far too many Christians today that are living for Jesus, but have no joy. That was never God’s plan. In the pages to follow, I believe the Lord has a timely word for you regardless of the season you are in. God wants to restore your joy and He wants you to live a life that is full of joy . . . in all things, in all seasons.

I have found there are five keys to restoring your joy and living a joyful life. I pray, through these five keys, you will discover whatever it is that has been stealing your joy, and find a clear next step to defeat your joy robber.
The Bible uses words such as *transgression*, *sin*, and *iniquity* to indicate levels of disobedience to God. They are all categorized as rebellion against God.

What is a **transgression**? The word transgression means to go beyond the normal limit. Committing a transgression is like crossing a “No Trespassing” sign that says, “Do not go past this point.” You went beyond the limits and now you are “trespassing” in an area where you don’t belong, or you are not supposed to go.

Then there is the all-too-familiar term, **sin**. The word sin means to miss the mark. It means you know what God wants you to do, but you don’t do it (or vice versa). With this, you have moved from *transgressions*, where you go beyond the known limit, to *sin*, where you totally miss the mark. Maybe you didn’t exactly do something wrong, but you definitely did not do what you know the Lord told you to do . . . or not do.

Lastly, there is the term **iniquity**. In the Bible, iniquity means wickedness or gross injustice. It means you have committed acts that are extreme, perverted, criminal, or morally debased.
WOE TO THOSE WHO PLAN INIQUITY, TO THOSE WHO PLOT EVIL ON THEIR BEDS! AT MORNING’S LIGHT THEY CARRY IT OUT BECAUSE IT IS IN THEIR POWER TO DO IT.

MICAH 2:1 NIV

I suppose this category of iniquity does not apply to most people, but I have been a pastor long enough to know even the most faithful person in their public life, can be leading a private life no one knows about. I know that even good people can struggle with temptation and addiction in ways they never confess. I also know that this kind of rebellion has the ability to bring great harm to an individual, a family and even a church.

Maybe one of these terms describes where you are right now. Well, there is good news! We all have to hide in the wounds of Calvary. We’ve all gone beyond the limit in one or more of the categories above. We’ve all fallen short of the standard! We’ve all rebelled against God’s authority over our life. But we are still blessed, because through confession and repentance, our transgressions, sins and iniquities are forgiven. The price for your sin, and mine, has been paid!


HEBREWS 12:1-2 NIV
If you are going to experience the JOY that is rightfully yours in Christ Jesus, you have to press through your guilt and shame to forgiveness. Or else sin will defeat you, paralyze you, and tell you that you have no future. Once you press through to forgiveness, you have to keep going until you get to the *restoration of joy*.

There’s a place where you’ve got to go beyond forgiveness and enter into His joy!

Many Christians don’t understand they can receive forgiveness and get their joy back, *even when you’ve messed up bad!* The enemy wants you to be eaten up with guilt and condemnation the rest of your life. He wants to make you feel like a second-class Christian—like you really can’t praise God because He knows your past. **You need to know that there is another level of forgiveness where God restores your joy.**

The devil has a plan B. He knows he can’t stop you from praying, repenting, and changing your ways, so he distracts you into your “second-best” life. He can’t keep you from being forgiven, so he tries to steal your joy. He’ll keep lying, and whispering, and bringing up your past until you’re under such condemnation, and living in such a guilt-trip that he’s keeping you from receiving your joy again—**but the JOY of the Lord is your strength!**

**CREATE IN ME A CLEAN HEART, O GOD,**
**AND RENEW A STEADFAST SPIRIT WITHIN ME.**
**RESTORE UNTO ME THE JOY OF YOUR SALVATION,**
**AND UPHOLD ME BY YOUR GENEROUS SPIRIT.**

*Psalm 51:10,12 NKJV*
There are so many Christians that don’t understand the power of God’s grace and the depths of His mercy. They go through their daily lives knowing they are forgiven and heaven-bound, but they think they have to pay for what they did by being sad, guilty and condemned the rest of their life. Nothing could be further from the truth according to the Word of God.

**If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

*1 John 1:9 NKJV*

You have to say to yourself, “I’m going to get happy again! I’m going to smile again! I’m going to have a positive outlook again! I want to live again! I’m going to believe that when He says in Jeremiah, ‘the plans He has for me in my future are for good and not evil,’ He means it!” You have to believe that God is going to turn all the mistakes and the terrible sinful issues into testimonies of His faithfulness, His grace, His mercy, and especially His forgiveness.
YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT DEFINE YOU

We are so familiar with the passage where Paul declares, “Rejoice and again I say REJOICE!” But most do not realize he made that declaration when he was in prison!

Scripture has dozens of stories of the many men and women of God who shouted, “IMPOSSIBLE!” yet overcame their obstacles. David talks about the pressures and circumstances of life when he said:

FOR DAY AND NIGHT YOUR HAND WAS HEAVY ON ME;
MY STRENGTH WAS SAPPED AS IN THE HEAT OF SUMMER.

PSALM 32:4 NIV

When the summer season comes, the comings and goings of every day life can really turn up the heat. David came to a place of heaviness, tough times, and even failure on many occasions. BUT in the process of dealing with his own sin, he always rediscovered that timeless truth; in all things and in all times, he was a blessed man, because his transgressions were forgiven, and he was held in the hand of a loving and just God. Like David, you have to remind yourself that there is a place in God where it doesn’t matter
what kind of season you’re going through. His love, His grace, and His mercies are unending and know no bounds.

Sometimes we let our circumstances determine whether or not we have joy and whether or not we can be happy. But the truth is you are blessed because of what Jesus did on the cross and that is a promise you can hold onto in any season of life. Circumstances, no matter how dire, will never change that timeless truth for any child of God.

It's easy to think we’re not blessed when things are going wrong. Sometimes we think God isn’t pleased with us because things aren’t going our way and difficulty rears its ugly head. You cannot allow circumstances to determine how you think God feels about you. You must get to the place where you recognize you are blessed at ALL times. You must trust in the promises of God and in His word where it says over and over again you are loved and you are held in the palm of His hand. You must cling to His promise in Romans:

**AND WE KNOW THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD WORKS FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE WHO LOVE HIM, WHO HAVE BEEN CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.**

**ROMANS 8:28 NIV**

For Joseph it was a prison. For Job it was wave upon wave of bad news. For David it was a cave. For Paul and Silas it was also prison, and for the disciples it was a very sad and solemn upper room following the death of their Savior. John 16 explains times like this in our lives so beautifully:
WHEN A WOMAN IS IN LABOR SHE HAS PAIN BECAUSE HER TIME HAS COME. BUT WHEN SHE HAS GIVEN BIRTH TO A CHILD, SHE NO LONGER REMEMBERS THE SUFFERING BECAUSE OF THE JOY THAT A PERSON HAS BEEN BORN INTO THE WORLD. SO YOU ALSO HAVE SORROW NOW. BUT I WILL SEE YOU AGAIN. YOUR HEARTS WILL REJOICE, AND NO ONE WILL ROB YOU OF YOUR JOY . . . UNTIL NOW YOU HAVE ASKED FOR NOTHING IN MY NAME. ASK AND YOU WILL RECEIVE, THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE COMPLETE.

JOHN 16:21-22,24 HCSB

If you’re not full of joy, you’re not full of the Word of God, and you’re too full of the world’s philosophy. That is such shaky ground to be on, because the world’s philosophy is not built on the foundation of faith, rather on the ability and inability of man.

The world will never see in you what your Lord sees in you. Remember your faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.

God wants you to have a joy explosion! He wants you to come out of that grief, depression, sorrow and “woe is me” attitude. You do not have to look like the cover girl for the book of Lamentations, weeping all the time! At some point, we need to get “the joy of the Lord,” and say, “You know what? I know what I see, but I ALSO know that I am a child of the King! I am forgiven! I have a purpose, and it is the Lord who orders my steps—not man, and not the devil. And furthermore, NO weapon formed against me will prosper!”

The joy of the Lord is my strength!
WHAT OTHERS THINK, SAY OR DO DOES NOT DEFINE YOU

Psalm 16:11 says, “In His presence is fullness of joy.” But I would be neglect if I did not warn you there are joy robbers on the loose. I would be willing to bet there are a few of those in your life right now. These are your critics, those who speak criticism and condemnation and just generally have a negative outlook. They’re always able to see the spec in your eye, but blind to their own log.

I believe the number one robber of joy is the fear of what people think. Yet, what a wonderful gift to know that The One we serve is a friend who sticks closer than a brother! God sees you as a person with enormous potential and of incredible worth.

BE SATISFIED WITH WHAT YOU HAVE, FOR HE HIMSELF HAS SAID, I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU OR FORSAKE YOU. THEREFORE WE BOLDLY SAY: THE LORD IS MY HELPER; I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT CAN MAN DO TO ME?

HEBREWS 13:5-6 HCSB
You have to get to the place where you say, “I don’t care what people think. I don’t care what people say. I don’t care what people try to do. I don’t care about anything except, I love the Lord and He loves me.” If you live your life worrying about what people say or think you will find yourself losing your joy. You need to care more about what your God thinks of you and rest in that. Have confidence in that. He is your defender, and He is your covering.

Many people live their whole lives in bondage to what others might be saying, or what others might be thinking.

If I would have allowed myself to be discouraged because of what people thought or what people had to say about our church over the years, especially in the early years, we would have quit a long time ago. We are not a typical church and we are not your typical ministry. I think most of you reading this know that, and you stand with us because of that. We haven’t always been celebrated for our diversity and our passionate pursuit of reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. But how refreshing it was when I realized most of our critics had never even been to our church. The world is full of self-proclaimed experts and professional critics, so why should I worry and be stressed, and go around depressed? Why should you?

“Let no man take your joy!”
JOY IS FOUND IN GOD’S PRESENCE

YOU REVEAL THE PATH OF LIFE TO ME; IN YOUR PRESENCE IS ABUNDANT JOY; IN YOUR RIGHT HAND ARE ETERNAL PLEASURES.

PSALM 16:11 HCSB

I wonder if we really believe that. I think you do. I think you made a decision at some point in your life to be different, to give your life to Jesus, and to follow Him at all cost. You must understand there are things you can get from being in God’s presence that you cannot find anywhere else on this earth.

In His presence, there is fullness of joy; at His right hand there are pleasures evermore. That is how close we are to living the joyful life every day! You don’t have to go far at all. You simply need to stop what you are doing, call out His name, and enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit. It really is that simple. Yet, we fill our lives with everything but the simple act of sitting at the feet of our Master.

January 12, 2007 at 7:51 in the morning, an average looking, unassuming man walked into the L’enfant Plaza Metro Station in Washington, D.C. He had a case carrying a musical instrument. And there, in the busy hallway of that metro station, as hundreds of people were pouring on and off of the subway trains, he pulled out a violin. He had on a ball cap and looked quite ordinary.
After readying himself, he began to play beautiful, classical music that was anything but ordinary. The hundreds of people who passed by were essentially unaffected by his presence. No one seemed to realize that he was not just an average guy collecting pocket-change. He was one of the greatest musicians in the world. His name was Joshua Bell, a world-renowned first violinist. So great was this man’s talent that he played his debut concert at Carnegie Hall at the age of 18, had won numerous Grammy awards, and on an average concert night would make well over $90,000 for an hour and a half concert.

No. Hundreds of people rushed by with only seven stopping momentarily to show interest and briefly listen. About 27 people threw money in the open case; a few dimes or a dollar to show gratitude for the man’s ability. 1,070 people never even turned to look. They did not know that he was playing on a 1713 Antonio Stradivarius, who was the most well known violin instrument builder in the world. The prize violin had been purchased for four million dollars. It had never been refurbished and was in its original condition.

The people in the Metro that morning had no idea they were in the presence of greatness. No idea the music they heard was flawless. No idea the instrument being used was invaluable. They rushed by self-absorbed, distracted, disinterested and so, so busy. They had places to go and things to do—unaware they were missing precious moments with the master violinist.

I pray you do not get so busy, so rushed, so stressed, and so hurried in your life that when you come into God’s presence, you miss the Master. The King of heaven is there, waiting to have a moment with you, a moment that will bring you such JOY.

The psalmist understood it well when he said, “Show me the path of life: for in Your presence there is fullness of joy; and at Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore.” The stress, the strain, the business of modern day life, and the society we live in are joy robbers . . . But praise God; they do not have hold on you or your life. Your life is in the hands of the Joy Giver!
Satan is called the great deceiver and the accuser of the brethren. His entire mission is to distract, discourage and accuse you. All this is designed to keep your focus on your sin, your circumstances, and what others say or think about you. It is all cleverly designed for one purpose: to keep you from entering into God’s presence. His entire goal is to keep you from learning and living the truth about who you are, whose you are, and all that is rightfully yours as a child of God.

I refuse to go through the motions and the gestures of worship. I want my heart to be moved by who He is. He is Wonderful. He is Jesus! Allow me to ask you a few questions: Are you still awed in His presence? Are you still moved? Do you still get goose bumps? How long has it been since you felt something going up your spine? Some of you say, “I’ve never felt that.” I’m telling you there are moments in the Lord when the tangible presence of God can move your soul. Even the hardest shelled person will have tears well up in their eyes when the King walks in. Are you in a spirit-filled church every week? Are you placing yourself where you can have an encounter with the living God? Or has life become too busy and filled with things that do not bring joy?

So many today have reached a point where they have lost their first love. Is there anything in your life that can still move your heart? You must resist the numbness of society. We strive as a church, and as a ministry, to stay sensitive to the power of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Refuse to become numb and dull in this hour. We’re competing with all the saturation of everything that’s hitting our family 24 hours a day. We need the presence of
God in our churches, in our homes, and in our lives.

Even if you get the car, the house, the business, the bank account . . . it’ll only satisfy temporarily. “In His presence is fullness of joy.”

Elijah was a faithful prophet of God who found himself sinking in life without joy . . . without pleasure. He was in a state of depression, and for good reason considering his circumstances, as many were hunting to kill him. He thought a big, spectacular stimulation would get him out, so he decided to look for the presence of God. The whirlwind came and God was not in the whirlwind. Then the fire fell, and God was not in the fire. Then the lightening hit, it was brilliant and amazing, but God was not in any of that. Even when the earth shook, God was not in the earthquake. But then, the Bible says, there came a still small voice, and Elijah had an encounter with the living God.

That is what’s missing in our lives. If we are not careful to spend time in the presence of God, we’ll miss what is rightfully ours . . . joy. That’s why I can’t just go through the routine of loving God; I have to have His touch. I have to be in His presence. And so do you my friend.
MAKE ROOM FOR HIS PRESENCE

There’s a war going on, and the enemy wants to take people deeper and deeper into wickedness and defilement and filthiness of the flesh and iniquity. The Holy Spirit will sometimes send a message, like this document you are reading now, that can stop everything and awaken our conscience from the busyness and barrenness of life. If we will be sensitive to the moving of the Holy Spirit, something will begin to stir in our heart again that says, “O God, this is not where I’m supposed to be. I need You!”

I wish there would come a cry from the church today; a cry of men and women, boys and girls, teenagers, moms, grandparents that would say, “God, I don’t just want to rush in and miss the Master. Show me the path of life.”

Some of you have resisted that still small voice so many times that it is becoming harder and harder for the shell that has developed over your heart to be penetrated. You’ve gone so deep into iniquity that it’s becoming harder and harder to connect to the touch of God and the anointing of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit. He doesn’t move you anymore. This is your time.

I’m not asking you to try to muster up enough strength to fight. I’m not asking for that at all. I’m asking you to simply stop what you are doing, focus on the Lord for a moment, and come into His presence. Because when you get in His presence, He changes you. He changes your attitude, He changes your haughtiness, and He changes your self-absorbed mentality. He changes you. He breaks you, He molds you, He melts you . . . and He restores your joy!
If you want to see your joy restored, and begin to live the joyful life, I would challenge you to pray this prayer, right where you are . . . right now:

*Holy Spirit, I don’t want to miss the Master. Lead me in the path of life, for in Your presence, there is fullness of joy, and at Your right hand, there is pleasure forevermore.*

*You are Lord. I have been stimulated with other things; and they have consumed my life. I want to put You in Your rightful place again.*

*I thank You for Your forgiveness, for it frees me from the guilt and shame of my sin. And I confess with my mouth that my circumstances do NOT define me. You, Lord, define me. It is You that defines who I am and my purpose. I determine right now to listen to what You say about me when I am being judged or criticized by others, for they do not define who I am or what I am.*

*I confess my sin right now, and I repent of it and ask for Your forgiveness. I will determine to take time each day to just spend time in Your presence, knowing that in Your presence there is JOY. And I will set my eyes on You Lord when the voices of the enemy begin to whisper in my ear.*

*I am Yours Lord, fully Yours. And I refuse to live a lukewarm existence where there is no joy. I love You Lord, and I thank You for Your blood, and for my salvation, and for being the Lord of my life.*

**Make joy your choice!** Do not allow the enemy to corner you with his plan B. If Jesus can forgive your sins and forget your iniquities, you too should be able to leave them at the cross. The enemy wants to weigh you down with distraction and guilt, but Jesus says:
COME TO ME, ALL YOU WHO LABOR AND ARE HEAVY LADED, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST. TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND LOWLY IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. FOR MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT.

MATTHEW 11:28-30

I close with this one challenge for you to consider: How can you add joy to someone else’s life today? Make it simple with an email, a phone call, a word of encouragement, or maybe even bless a waitress with a big tip! Ask God whom you can bless with the gift of joy. I guarantee that before the day is over, He will show you. Why wait? As you share joy, you will experience joy.