

Shawnee Presbyterian Church
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Joy = Prayer

Joke time: A drunk staggers into a Catholic Church, enters a confessional booth, sits down, but says nothing. The Priest coughs a few times to get his attention, but the drunk continues to sit there. Finally, the priest pounds three times on the wall. The drunk mumbles "Ain't no use knockin'. There's no paper on this side either."

A few thousand years ago a man appeared on this earth – He brought change to a depressed world – He instilled love – He gave hope in hopeless situations. He created and distributed a joy that has impacted billions of people – what He had was unique – the religious leaders didn't have it – the Romans didn't have it – but He had it and others wanted it. People today still want it – many are looking for it but it is only found in this person. He did remarkable miracles, He taught astonishing truths and He even healed the multitudes. He walked on water and even calmed raging storms. He set people free from demonic spirits. He had noble character yet was also associated with fisherman – he had personal charm and uttered such wise things that people followed him by the thousands. He baffled the elite and appealed to the regular everyday people with His words. He loved the unlovable, noticed the ignored, and rejected the wrongs of society.

Many communicate about how special He was, many even do that today in our society – I am told His name is spoken somewhere in the world every second. He has been known to appear to people today in dreams and visions - He has sent His Spirit to communicate His timeless message to our world today. Some hear it, others reject it, but it still presses forward.

Many say He had a secret – but what was His secret? It was the secret which transformed the Roman Empire and many empires too. He was and is unique; what was his secret?

Authors state, "The secret of Jesus was and is "His inner joy." Would you agree with that statement?

His Inner Joy - The New Testament repeatedly reveals this secret about Jesus – He had inner joy like no other and it was expressed through His relationship with God the Father. This joy has spilled over into many other lives. His joy has a contagious element about it – but where did His inner joy come from?

Think about this - He owned no material possessions, He had no home, He roamed the country side and slept outdoors – no office to go to work in – no church building to worship in – He dealt with rude angry religious people every day who hated him – He faced off with demons and people needing healing daily. He was not a grumpy old Christian! He was not self-centered. He was not like the religious leaders of the day – all about do's and don'ts. He laughed and made people smile. Yet he had an inner joy no one could quench! A joy that others wanted and sought after – where did His joy come from?

I think one main reason He was filled with joy was because of His prayer life. If you want to find joy in the journey then pray – prayer is a key to being filled with Joy!

Inner joy is connected with God the Father and His son and the Holy Spirit – the venue of prayer connects us with all three of them! Jesus was connected to the Father and to the Holy Spirit – prayer was the link – pray was the energizing beam of joy for Jesus in a world filled with death, disease, sickness, sin, pride, self-centeredness, hopelessness, oppression, bondage, demons and so on. Jesus still had joy as He confronted all these things daily in His day. We can have this same joy too.

So, I want to establish a laser beam for you which links you with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit so you can be filled with joy – that beam which you need to turn on is the key to having and keeping your inner joy even in the midst of trial, tribulations and hard times. That laser beam is prayer.

We have learned how to turn this beam on briefly by looking at the life of Jesus but let's look a little deeper into Jesus prayer life and discover more.

Have you ever studied Jesus prayers? Seriously! Jesus did pray by the way – He prayed a lot in the Gospels! The Bible describes Jesus praying to His Father in Heaven on many different times and in many different situations. Jesus was a man of prayer!

In his 3 prayers in 1 prayer recorded in John 17, "On the night Jesus was arrested, He gathered with His followers in an upstairs room for dinner and expressed His heart's desire for them in a prayer to His Father. In His prayer, He asked for the protection of His followers first, their unity with other believers second, and thirdly, that they would know intimacy with Him and one another as He knew intimacy with His Own.

In verse 11 Jesus prayed, "Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me that they may be one even as We are" (NASB). Later, in verses 20-21, it is clear he is praying for all followers of Him to be united like He was united with the Father.

Jesus prayed: "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me."

Think about it! As Jesus was preparing to go to Calvary, He had you and me on his mind and in His prayers. - Amazing!

To learn how to create our inner joy, we just need to look at how Jesus prayed that night and pray like that.

1. Jesus prayed for himself – it's okay to do that by the way.
2. He prayed that he would honor God with His life and sacrifice!
3. He prayed to make a difference for the Kingdom of God!
4. But --- Jesus also prayed for His disciples and us!

What do we need to know from this message on joy and prayer?

Answer: Prayer brings to us an inner joy along with many other benefits too. Joy equals prayer which equals Joy.

There is a Quote by E.M. Bounds: "Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty."

Pastor Mike Bickle of The International House of Prayer says there are benefits to Prayer:

1. It deepens our intimacy with God and leads to our transformation.
2. It increases our understanding of situations in life.
3. It releases God's power to act on our requests.
4. It unites us in community as it helps us express His love.
5. It renews our faith.
6. It multiplies His blessings.

7. It releases our inheritance in Jesus and His promises.

And I add!

8. It bestows within our soul joy that no man or spirit can steal away.

Why do we need to know joy and prayer are connected?

Answer: Because practicing prayer will change our inner soul and outlook on life!

John 17 is a prayer that Jesus prayed for Himself, for His disciples and for all believers. It was about his inner joy that his prayers brought to us.

In Summary: Jesus was filled with joy and this inner joy came from His relationship with God the Father through prayer. Prayer and inner joy are linked together because prayer opens a door to the presence and guidance of the Lord.

What do we need to do to equal Joy especially during this time of the world?

The Answer is: **Pray!**

Amen