

Joy:

A settled state of contentment,
confidence, and hope.



We often confuse joy with happiness - happiness is an emotion based on circumstances. Joy, on the other hand is a choice, and is not based on circumstances or even emotions. It is hard to image people who do not know Christ or have the Holy Spirit experiencing joy. To be content where we are; to have confidence and a future hope; that only comes through a relationship with the living God. Joy is one of the *Fruit of the Spirit*, produced by the Holy Spirit as a result of our close walk with the Lord. This joy from knowing God isn't just something we experience, it is transforming - of our lives and our marriage relationships.

We must realize that joy doesn't just happen, it is a state that we cultivate through focusing on the Lord and praising Him as we take God's perspective on life, events, and circumstances. We are commanded to rejoice (to have joy in) in the Lord always (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Another version says to "be joyful" always. It is a choice we make in spite of our circumstances. Jesus exemplified this focus as He endured the cross for the *joy* set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). Joy is a state of mind and an orientation of our heart.

Joy is not something we *experience* in our marriage as much as it is something we *bring* to our marriage relationship. Again, joy is an orientation of our heart as a result of our settled state of contentment, confidence, and hope. We live in a broken, sin-filled world; are we going to allow our circumstances to consume us or are we going to rise above those circumstances because of our faith in Jesus Christ, who has overcome the world? Bringing the joy that comes from our trust in Christ into our marriage will certainly help to make us more positive and improve the relationship.

The challenge is to rejoice - to have joy in the God who loves you so much and focus on Him rather than your circumstances. The Word of God tells you to live a life of joy - of contentment, confidence, and hope, and in your joy, love your spouse as the Lord would want you to love him or her. Choose joy; choose to bring joy in the Lord to your marriage and family.

Helpful Resources: *Fortified Marriages Resource page:* www.fortifiedmarriages.com

The Fortified Marriages Manual & Workbook is a great resource helping couples build, healthy, joyful marriage relationships. Also see:

How Do You Define Joy? by Bill High - billhigh.com

4 Habits for More Joy in Marriage by Dave & Ann Wilson - www.familylife.com

8 Ways to Find Joy in Your Marriage by Mike & Carlie Kercheval - christianmarriageadventure.com