

The Basis for Real Joy

I John 1:1-4

By now most of us are getting a bit more used to the changes that a New Year brings, especially writing 2011 on everything that we sign or fill out that requires a date. There is always a sense of anticipation as well as anxiety with the coming of a New Year. I am not a prophet of doom, but it doesn't appear that things are going to get much better financially in the near future, and I really don't expect much improvement spiritually either.

If we spend our time focused on the adversity and challenges that a New Year brings, we will find ourselves feeling depressed and overwhelmed. It seems that many begin the New Year in search of things that have eluded them in the past. I am no psychologist, but I am certain that peace, contentment, and joy would be at the top of the list for many of us. The trouble is most have a skewed perception of what that really involves. The average person view joy and happiness as synonymous. They certainly can go hand in hand, but that isn't always the case. Happiness is based on current surroundings; it is more of an external emotion that comes and goes. Real joy is based on a relationship; it is internal and lasting.

In this passage, the apostle John is exhorting the believers regarding a fullness of joy. He reveals some [unchanging principles](#) related to that joy. I want to preach on the thought: [The Basis for Real Joy](#).

I. The Principle (1) – [That which was from the beginning](#). Keep in mind that John was writing to the church at large, in essence all believers. It would appear that he would've began with a greeting or introduction, but he immediately speaks of the eternal nature of Christ. He urges them to consider the source of their faith, the Principle element in Christianity.

- This should come as no surprise. John began his gospel account of our Lord in the same manner: [John 1:1-2](#). The early believers were under intense persecution and he wanted them to take comfort in the fact that their faith in Christ was not some new found religion. It wasn't something that sprang up from a group of lunatics at Pentecost. They had trusted in the eternal God, the Sovereign of the ages.
- When the apostles were confronted concerning their faith in [Acts 5](#), Gamaliel offered wisdom and insight to us. John was reminding them that their opposition wasn't the first and it wouldn't be the last, but they had no reason to fear. Their faith was in One who would endure and wasn't limited to the unbelief or hindrances of man.

II. The Proof (1b-2) – [That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; \[2\] \(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;\)](#) John had

already assured them of Christ's eternal nature, but for those who needed a bit more assurance, he now speaks of the proof he has to offer regarding Jesus.

- He was an eyewitness to the life, ministry, and miracles of the Lord. He had sat at His feet and heard His wisdom. His eyes had beheld the miracles He performed. John was there as He died upon the cross and he entered the tomb, finding it empty. He was among those who witnessed the Lord after the resurrection, receiving instruction to continue in the faith and the furtherance of the gospel.
- Peter too reveals his eyewitness testimony of our Lord in [2 Pet.1:16](#). He had not been part of something carnal, but he witnessed the glorious majesty of God Himself. We have never seen the Lord with these eyes, but we all have encountered His glory and power. I have witnessed God transform too many lives to doubt who He is. I know what He has done for me and you will never convince me that my Lord is not alive and well today. The world may doubt and scoff, but we have undeniable, irrefutable proof that our Lord lives and has the power to change lives!

I. The Principle (1)

II. The Proof (1b-2)

III. The Proclamation (3) – [That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.](#) There are a couple of things that we need to consider concerning the proclamation. Notice:

A. An Obligation (3a) – [That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.](#) It is impossible for us to understand all that John had hidden within His heart. He had enjoyed the very presence of Christ! He knew the Lord in an intimate way and it had drastically and eternally changed his life. There was no way that he could keep it quiet. He was compelled to tell all he met of the love of Christ and the hope that He brought to the world. John was filled with abundant joy and he wanted the world to experience that joy as well. He was simply sharing his personal encounter with the Lord.

- We too should feel that same obligation. You might argue that your life doesn't compare with the experiences of John, but I believe that anyone who has met the Lord in salvation has something wonderful and worthwhile to share. Has Christ not changed our lives? Have we not experienced a wonderful and fulfilling transformation? How can we experience such wonder and keep it quiet?

B. An Expectation (3b) – [that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.](#) John had one desire: to tell others of Christ. He knew what had happened to him and he was convinced that Christ had the power to transform their lives as well. In fact, he fully expected them to experience the wonder of salvation.

- I believe that we allow fear and doubt to rob us of victory and joy. We ought to serve the Lord with a confident expectation. If He can save me and you, He can save anyone. If John could enjoy His presence and fellowship, we can too! If the early church experienced His power in great and mighty ways, we ought to expect the same. Our Lord is more than able to meet our needs and the needs of others, whatever they may be!

I. The Principle (1)

II. The Proof (1b-2)

III. The Proclamation (3)

IV. The Priority (4) – [And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.](#) John wanted them to experience the same joy that he did. He knew what it was to experience a fullness of joy and he realized that life was lacking without it. The word **full** means “*to abound, to be complete.*” There was absolutely no reason for the believers to be lacking when it came to joy.

- The **key** to fullness of joy is revealed in [v.3, fellowship with believers, but most importantly with the Father.](#) That is what eludes so many in our day. Churches are filled with Christians who live defeated lives, void of joy. You might ask how to possess fullness of joy. I am glad you asked. This is certainly not an exhaustive list, but I can assure you that if these are present in our lives, we will have joy. We must ensure that we have fellowship with other believers, but above all, we must have fellowship with God.

A. Prayer – I am convinced that prayer is the most powerful tool that we have and yet is likely the least used. We never reach the place in our spiritual journey that we no longer need to pray. May I ask a personal question? How is your prayer life? Is it a priority or a rarity? Do you pray daily or simply on an as needed basis? If we are to have fellowship and experience joy, we must talk to God. [Phil.4:6 – Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.](#) [1 Thes.5:17 – Pray without ceasing.](#)

B. Passion – By this I am interested in what consumes us. What is it that we focus upon and make a priority? There are a couple of things that if we are passionate about, we can experience joy in its fullness.

1. The Word – Just as it is with prayer and talking to God, we in turn need to hear from God. We need to be fed daily from the Word. Many today lack joy because they fail to read and meditate upon the Word. We will never get to the place that we don't need to read God's Word. Is.34:16a – Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: Jn.5:39 – Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. Josh.1:8 – This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Spending time in the Word is of immeasurable benefit. Ps.119:11 – Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

2. Our Worship – If we are to experience real joy we must make worship a priority. It isn't something we can take or leave; it is a necessity. Ps.122:1 – I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Ps.27:4 – One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. Ps.84:10 – For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. There is something special about worship and attending the house of God.

C. Participation – Few seem to sense the need for activity in their Christian life. They rarely put anything into it and rarely get anything out of it. A lack of activity on the part of a believer is a sure way to grow complacent and disinterested in the things of God. Most of those who complain are inactive. Those who are busy for the Lord are experiencing joy.

▪ I want to challenge each of us to get busy and stay busy for the Lord. There is no place to sit down or quit. Jam.1:25 – But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the **work**, this man shall be blessed in his deed. Deut.10:12 – And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. 2 Tim.4:7 – I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

D. Progression – One sure way to experience real and lasting joy is to ensure spiritual growth. I can assure you that a life that is progressing spiritually will be a life that experiences joy. Many seem unhappy because they feel as if their Christian journey isn't going anywhere. They feel as if they are in the same place they've been for years, and they likely are.

- Can you sense any growth in your spiritual life? If you are not progressing you are likely regressing. We need to be moving forward for the Lord. That is what the Lord desires for us, but we must make the decision to pursue spiritual growth. [1 Cor. 13:11 – When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.](#) [2 Cor.3:18 – But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.](#) [Col.1:10 – That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;](#)

I pray that we all enjoy a happy and prosperous New Year. Things may not work out when or how we hoped they would, but we can experience the joy of the Lord even in difficult times. I know that God wants us to experience His joy. He has given us His Word so that we might obtain that joy.

Is there joy in your life or are you struggling through? One thing is certain; you can have joy if you want it. I am not about to promise that God will immediately remove all your problems, but I assure you that He will provide joy in your life even if the problems remain. Why not come and trade your burdens for the joy that only Jesus gives?