

Choose Joy

We are often told of an attitude that will be beneficial. Attitudes combine thoughts and feelings. Some people have a positive attitude more easily while others can typically have a negative or neutral attitude. Early in my life I struggled with this.

At 4 ½ years of age my mother was put in a private mental institution. The expenses and other things brought her back home. After several serious events she was taken to Madison State Hospital in 1951 and was under their care until she passed away in August 1980. I know looking back that I was depressed over this and other situations as a teenager. But I had become a Christian. One of the scriptures God kept leading me toward was 1Thessalonians 5:16-19. The scripture said to be joyful always, pray unceasingly, be thankful in all circumstances, and to not quench the Spirit. I wondered how this could be possible in my mother's suffering especially.

At 15 I prayed a rather desperate prayer asking God to teach me how to live by this. I did not know how! Now at 75 I am amazed at how many times and ways He has answered that prayer. So, I am not saying a joyful attitude is easy, but He wants to help us have that as fruit of His Spirit. Choosing joy can bring holy laughter. Laughter is good for the body and soul. God wants to bring fullness of joy to help us overcome circumstances even when it seems we can't rise above them. Joy is not the same as happiness. Happiness is more dependent on the circumstances. Trust His ability to give you joy even when it seems nearly impossible.

Many scriptures have been turned to songs about joy. Here are just a few of those that I love. Psalms 118:24, Nehemiah 8:10, and Philippians 4:4 have been turned to song. David in the Psalms is often singing and playing music. He certainly struggled with attitudes, but chose to ask God to help his spirit. Music is good for our wellbeing and joy.