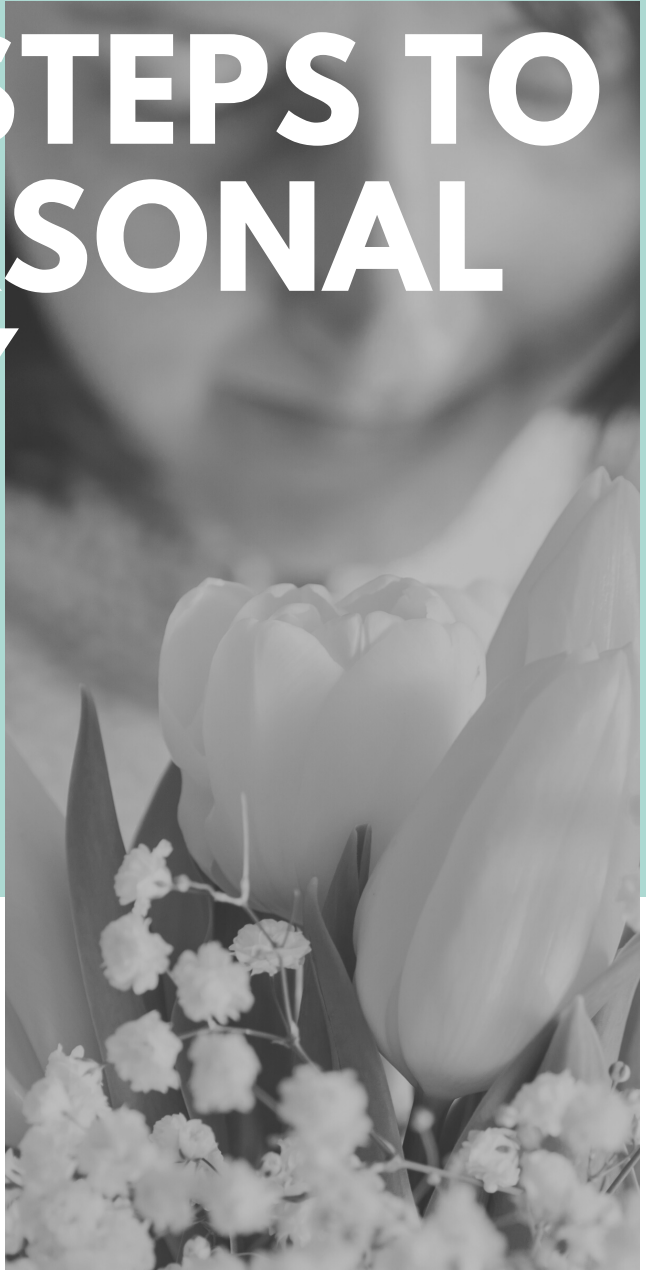


10 STEPS TO PERSONAL JOY



CAROL
McLEOD
MINISTRIES

02

YOU WERE CREATED FOR JOY!

You were created to be the receptacle and the distributor of the joy of the Lord. Every day that you are living and breathing on planet earth, it is up to you to demonstrate the joy of heaven's glory even while living in earth's pain. It's a bona fide miracle that we, as His children, have been allowed to carry the most stunning characteristic of the Father in our human shells.

***“Splendor and majesty are before Him,
Strength and joy are in His place.”***

– 1 Chronicles 16:27

However, because we have been jaded by disappointments, bullied by discouragement and distracted by frustrating people, often the joy of heaven is lost in the haze of earthbound living ~ that's why we need a plan!

We need a strategic plan to recapture the real joy for which we were created. I hope that you will apply the following 10 principles to your life as a daily discipline. If you have been thirsty for a joy that is foreign to your personality and seems to be only a mirage in the desert of life, then these 10 very do-able steps will stir up what has been lacking in your life. Don't wait another day but determine today that you will take at least one vibrant step toward joy!

***“Behold, this is the joy of His way;
And out of the dust others will spring.”***

– Job 8:19

03

STEP ONE: WORSHIP IN SPITE OF!

I know of no other way to access His presence, where there is always fullness of joy, than to just begin to sing. You might not like the sound of your own voice but your Father certainly does!

Worshipping the Lord, even while in the heat of the battles of life, is the unmistakable mark of a follower in Jesus Christ. You are not the first one in all of recorded history who has had to sing in a deluge of frightening and unwelcome circumstances.

Peter sang when the church was being persecuted.

Paul sang in prison.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego worshipped in the fiery furnace.

Job worshipped when his entire life lay in ruins before him.

Noah worshipped as he built the Ark.

Jonah worshipped in the belly of a great fish.

Abraham worshipped on his way to sacrifice his only son.

Moses worshipped in the middle of a horrific battle.

Worship is your first step away from discouragement and it is your first step toward joy! My goal in life is not to be pummeled by my pain but it is to out-sing my circumstances!

When you wake up in the morning, before your feet even hit the floor, take the time to sing a favorite chorus. As you brush your teeth and look sleepily into the mirror, turn on worship music on your phone or other listening device. I dare you to sing along even with your croaky morning voice!

04

Rather than take a mid-morning coffee break, take a mid-morning praise break and listen to 5 minutes of worship music.

At lunch, don't play games on your phone but choose to sing along with one of the finest worship artists of the day. Just think ... it can be you and Kari Jobe in concert! Or you and Michael W. Smith! Or you and Lauren Daigle!

Allow worship and praise music to become the soundtrack of your life. If joy has a sound, it is the sound of worship.

“*When you are tempted
to whine ... sing instead!*”

*When you are tempted to weep
... open your mouth with
thanksgiving instead!*

*When you would rather eat
chocolate ... fill your heart with
the delight that worship brings!*”

***“When the morning stars sang together
And all the sons of God shouted for joy!”***

– Job 38:7

**MAKE A “TOP TEN LIST”! WHAT ARE YOUR
TOP TEN WORSHIP SONGS OR HYMNS?**



05

STEP TWO: READ YOUR BIBLE

I wish that I could express, in mortal words, the joy that is mine simply because I have chosen to read the Bible nearly every day of my life. Some days, to be sure, I am able to read it longer than on other days, but every day I endeavor to read at least a chapter or two in the powerful, miraculous, unchanging, matchless Word of God!

The Bible is not a flat book but it is a dynamic, life-changing source of joy. The Bible is joy in a book format.

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

– Hebrews 4:12

You won't always “feel” like reading the Bible but do it anyway! You might mistakenly believe that you don't have time to read the Bible but believe me when I say that we all make the time for those things that are a priority in your life.

***“I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies,
As much as in all riches.”***

– Psalm 119:14

So many women say to me, “But Carol, when I try to read the Bible, I don't understand it.” My instant response to these women is, “That's o.k. ~ Read it anyway because we don't primarily read the Bible for information but for transformation.”

**WE DON'T PRIMARILY READ THE BIBLE FOR INFORMATION
BUT FOR TRANSFORMATION!**

06

If you are wondering where to start your journey into the Word of God, we have a do-able plan for you. At carolmcleodministries.com, we have created a Daily Bible Reading Strategy just for you.

Know that God will speak to you as you faithfully read His love letter to you. You will also discover the joy for which you have been longing!

“Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law.”

– Psalm 119:18

When I was lost in the dense, black fog of depression, I inhaled the Bible like a dying man gasps for oxygen and like a starving man hungers for one morsel of sustenance. I can't explain it to you, but I can assure you that the Bible did a miracle in me when I was unable to function emotionally or physically. My soul was restored and my joy was rekindled simply by opening the sacred pages of Scripture.

“*Down through the years
I turned to the Bible and found
in it all that I needed.*

– Ruth Bell Graham

”

BUY A NOTEBOOK AND BEGIN TO RECORD THE CHAPTERS AND VERSES THAT YOU ARE READING EACH DAY. HIGHLIGHT THE VERSES IN YOUR BIBLE THAT SPECIFICALLY SPEAK TO YOU.

07

STEP THREE: MEMORIZE VERSES IN THE BIBLE

You might think that I am being redundant in this step, but I am not; I am presenting a new concept to you of how to apply the Word of God to your life.

If you want to be the miraculous receptacle of heaven's joy than you will begin to memorize the Word of God! I always like to remind people that memorizing Scripture is not just for fifth graders but it is for all of us who want to be more like Jesus.

“Your word I have treasured in my heart that I may not sin against You.”

– Psalm 119:11

I have filled my mind with so many different things over the years; I have memorized phone numbers and addresses. I have tucked away the sweetness of the gifts people have given to me; I can recall the words that have been spoken over me many decades ago. I can remember what I wore to my 8th birthday party and to my high school graduation. However, I must tell you, that nothing has brought me more joy than memorizing the Word of God on a regular basis.

“I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.”

– Psalm 119:16

IF YOU WANT TO BE THE MIRACULOUS RECEPTACLE OF HEAVEN'S JOY THAN YOU WILL BEGIN TO MEMORIZE THE WORD OF GOD!

08

If memorizing Scripture is a new concept for you, let me encourage you just to memorize one verse a month. By the end of the first year~ you will have tucked away 12 verses that will bring you joy every time that you remember each one.

I know a woman who suffered a serious nervous breakdown in her late 30's. She had 3 children ~ 2 of whom were teenage girls at the time. She was active in her church where she taught Sunday school and played the organ every week. She was president of the PTA at her children's school and worked a part-time job. This dear woman, whom I will refer to as Linda, spent 3 weeks in the mental ward in the hospital where she was heavily sedated. Her adoring husband went to see her every night after work and prayed diligently for his wife. As Linda began to come out of the stupor of being highly medicated, she began to recall the verses that she had learned as a child in Sunday school and in family devotions. It was the power in the Word of God that brought her back to a place of emotional stability and joy.



09

***“Your testimonies are also my delight;
they are my counselors.”***

– Psalm 119:24

It might be helpful to write out the scripture that you wish to memorize each month and keep it in front of you. Perhaps you could write it on a 3x5 card and keep that card in your purse. You could also write it out several times on little sticky notes and put one on your bathroom mirror, one on the kitchen cabinet and one on the dashboard of your car.

You are going to love the joy that memorizing scripture brings to your life! It is a high power vitamin that will wash away discouragement and discontentment. When you memorize the Bible, a miracle happens in your very soul. I guarantee it!

***“My soul weeps because of grief, strengthen me
according to Your Word.”***

– Psalm 119:28

**CHOOSE ONE OF THE VERSES FROM “STEP
THREE” AND WRITE IT OUT BELOW.
THEN, MEMORIZE IT THIS WEEK.**



10

STEP FOUR: PRAY FOR SOMEONE ELSE

In your quest to be a truly joyful person, it is vital that you stop thinking about yourself and only focus on your own personal pain. One of the healthiest choices you can make is to begin to pray for others.

“Pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective fervent prayer of a righteous person can accomplish much.”

– James 5:16b

On the days that your struggle with depression or emotional pain is the most intense, spend some time on your knees and pray for those in your life who are struggling.

“

No man can do me a truer kindness in this world than to pray for me.

”

– Charles Spurgeon

One time when I was dealing with yet another bout of depression, I wondered what I could do to make it run away and never return. I met with a woman of wisdom and faith and she listened to me over a cup of coffee on a dark and frigid winter morning. After she prayed with me and shared a scripture or two, she quietly said with a sparkle in her eye, “Carol, put your coat on we are going on an errand.

We drove just a short distance with worship music playing as I gazed out the window with little hope of ever experiencing true and lasting joy. My mentor stopped her car in front of the Dollar Store and handed me a dollar bill and some change. She looked directly into my blue eyes and said, “I want you to go into the store, smile at someone and buy the prettiest journal you can find. When you are paying for the journal, I want you to encourage the cashier.”

11

When I walked out of that forlorn, little store, I had the makings of a smile on my face and the hope of a spring in my step.

As she drove me home, she held my hand and spoke peacefully to me, “Carol, you must stop focusing so much on yourself and on your own pain. I want you to begin to pray for other people even while your heart is breaking. The journal that you just bought is your new prayer journal. I will be checking on you and looking in your journal. I want you to write down the names and concerns of others and spend time each day in prayer for them.

It might sound silly to you, but it changed my life. Now, on the bookshelf in my office, I have 50 or more prayer journals that I have filled out over the years.

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all.”

– Philippians 1:3 & 4

**DO YOU HAVE A PRAYER JOURNAL?
PERHAPS IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO BUY ONE!**

WEEKLY, MAKE A LIST OF THE PEOPLE FOR WHOM YOU ARE PRAYING. DEVELOP THE HABIT OF ASKING PEOPLE HOW YOU CAN PRAY FOR THEM AND THEN DO IT!

12

STEP FIVE: JUST BE GRATEFUL

Often, when I am teaching on the topic of joy, someone will say to me, “Carol, I don’t get it. I don’t understand where joy is or how to keep it.”

I have an instant response that I am able to offer based on years of practice in my own life, “If you don’t understand joy, then just be thankful. Thankfulness and joy are not so very far apart.”

“THANKFULNESS AND JOY ARE NOT SO VERY FAR APART.”

Can you be thankful? If you can be thankful then you can also be joyful. Thanksgiving is not a holiday but it is a lifestyle of the very best kind! We must reprogram our emotional responses to life and rather than griping and complaining about every little thing that concerns us, we must pivot and be thankful instead.

“JOY SPRINGS FROM A GRATEFUL HEART.”

I refuse to allow myself to close my eyes on my pillow at night without first recalling three things for which I am grateful that day. I have a friend who keeps a “Thanksgiving Journal” beside her bed and she writes out her daily blessings before she goes to sleep at night.

“

“Seek to cultivate a buoyant, joyous sense of the crowded kindnesses of God in your daily life.”

– Alexander MacLaren

”

13

A thankful person is always a joyful person and a joyful person knows the value of thanksgiving. You will never reach your destination of “joy” without first traveling down the hallway of gratitude.

It is entitlement that tries to convince us that we have not been blessed or that we have little for which to be thankful. Entitlement also lives in a vacuum of joy. Thanksgiving is where the joy is found! Thanksgiving is an anchor that keeps us in the ocean of joy even when the storms are raging around us.

***“Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion;
He will comfort all her waste places.
And her wilderness He will make like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of the LORD;
Joy and gladness will be
found in her,
Thanksgiving and sound of a melody.”
– Psalm 119:28***

CHOOSE ONE OF THE VERSES FROM “STEP THREE” AND WRITE IT OUT BELOW. THEN, MEMORIZE IT THIS WEEK.



14

STEP SIX: JUST BE KIND

One of the grandest delights of participating in the Christian life is that we are called to be a blessing to others. Our job description does not include criticism, judgment or selfishness; we have been assigned to be the encouragers in the world today. Our Creator has appointed us to be givers of the most lavish kind!

Simply being kind to someone else who has had a hard day will increase your joy. When you choose to reach out with sincere tenderness and with unconditional grace to someone in your life, your own joy will increase! It's a miracle in the making!

“Give and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure ~ pressed down, shaken together and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”
– Luke 6:38

Do you know what endorphins are? Endorphins are chemicals produced by the body and their job is to relieve stress and pain. One of the ways that endorphins are stimulated is simply by smiling at someone or by serving a person in need. Endorphins are vital in a person's fight against depression ~ perhaps your endorphins need to be encouraged to encourage someone else!

“I CANNOT EVEN IMAGINE WHERE I WOULD BE TODAY WERE IT NOT FOR THAT HANDFUL OF FRIENDS WHO HAVE GIVEN ME A HEART FULL OF JOY. LET'S FACE IT, FRIENDS MAKE LIFE A LOT MORE FUN.”

– Chuck Swindoll

15



Don't waste the pain of depression but use it as a springboard for ministry. When you get out of bed in the morning, ask the Father to give you an assignment for the day and then fulfill it. Smile at people at the grocery store, call an old friend, check on a widow or bake cookies for the neighborhood children. Your goal in life should be to be the kindest, most generous, most thoughtful person of your generation! When your heart is set on that notable goal, there will be no room for discouragement in your life.

“Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.”

– Colossians 3:12

MAKE A LIST OF THE PEOPLE THAT YOU ARE GOING TO BLESS THIS MONTH AND THEN ACTUALLY DO IT! YOU DON'T HAVE TO SPEND A LOT OF MONEY ON THIS ASSIGNMENT BUT JUST SPEND YOUR TIME AND GIVE YOUR WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT. ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO GIVE YOU CREATIVE IDEAS OF HOW YOU CAN BE A BLESSING IN SOMEONE'S LIFE EVERY SINGLE DAY.

16

STEP SEVEN: GET MOVING AND ENJOY WHAT GOD HAS CREATED JUST FOR YOU!

It's time for you to get up and go out! There is nothing that brings hope to a weary soul like a walk through the wonder of God's handiwork. As you meander through your neighborhood, or enjoy the pathways at the park or even traipse through untouched nature, you will feel a kinship with the Father that is rare and joyful.

“The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord.”

– Psalm 33:5

Exercise is one of those habits that will raise your endorphin level. Do you remember what endorphins are? They are natural chemicals in your body, placed there by your Creator, to help you fight off stress and anxiety and even depression. When you exercise, your brain increases the production of certain types of endorphins that send messages to your nervous system. What might these silent yet powerful messages be? Well, I am not a scientist or a doctor, but these messages might be cheering you on with feelings like this, “You're moving! That's awesome! You got this! Cheer up!”

It also appears that exercise affords the body an opportunity to practice responding to stress and therefore streamlines the communication systems in your body. Doctors believe that the less active a person becomes the more challenging it is to deal with stress.

17



The glory of God’s creative genius in every season of the year is a “pick-me-up” and when you combine that with some of your own personal sweat, you are on the road (literally) to the destination of joy!

*“You have crowned the year with Your bounty,
And Your paths drip with fatness.*

*The pastures of the wilderness drip,
And the hills gird themselves with rejoicing.*

*The meadows are clothed with flocks
And the valleys are covered with grain;
They shout for joy, yes, they sing.”*

– Psalm 65:11 - 13

MAKE IT YOUR GOAL THIS MONTH TO GO FOR A WALK AT LEAST A COUPLE OF DAYS A WEEK. IF YOU ARE ALREADY AN EXERCISE ENTHUSIAST, THEN INVITE SOMEONE TO GO WITH YOU. SHARE THE JOY!

18

STEP EIGHT: JUST FORGIVE

There is no greater exterminator of joy than bitterness or its twin unforgiveness. If you are harboring hostility and resentment because of the way that someone has treated you, you will never experience pure and abundant joy. You might experience moments of joy, but joy will never be pervasive as long as there is bitterness in your heart.

Let me assure you that when you choose to forgive, it does not justify someone's mistreatment of you but it will set you free from the bondage of strife and animosity. When you choose to forgive someone who has been cruel, unkind or even abusive, it is the greatest gift you could ever give to yourself. Forgiveness will always open the door to joy.

Forgiveness is when the innocent one lets the guilty one go free! How amazing is that?!

**“TO FORGIVE IS TO SET A PRISONER
FREE AND REALIZE THE PRISONER WAS YOU.”**

We are woefully unable to control how others treat us but we are certainly able to control our response to those people. When we choose to hang onto the bitterness that accompanies mistreatment, we are allowing that person to steal our joy. Anger aimed at a person will never change that person's heart but prayer always will. The Bible says to forgive as often as someone wrongs us and to refuse to place limits on our forgiveness.

“Then Peter came and said to Jesus, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to Peter, “I do not say to you, up to seven times but up to seventy times seven.”

– Matthew 18:21 & 22

As believers in Christ, we have been forgiven of our sins and it is vital in order to maintain a high level of joy to share that forgiveness with others. We are called to be like Jesus and He forgave us when we were yet sinners. Forgiveness is a power choice and it is definitely not a feeling. You will never “feel” like forgiving but you must choose it. When you choose to forgive ~ you are choosing joy in its fullest measure.

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You might wonder how to forgive someone who has hurt you deeply; you might ponder exactly what the steps are to forgiveness. When I forgive a person, I confess it in prayer,

“Jesus, thank You for forgiving me and I ask that You would give me the power and the strength to forgive _____. Right now, Father, I confess that I forgive _____. I refuse to hold onto the pain but I give it to You.”

Sometimes I must pray that prayer for days on end before anything changes inside of me but I continue to pray and to confess my forgiveness of the one who has caused me pain.

“Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

– Matthew 6:12

Oftentimes I pray for a way to bless the person who has offended me or injured someone I love. I talk kindly about them both in public and in private; I send a gift card for a favorite restaurant or store. I realize that blessing someone who has abused you is not always possible but if it is possible, I'd like to encourage you to do it. After Jesus forgave us, He then blessed us with the Holy Spirit, with heaven and with abundant life! I want to be like Jesus because He is the One who gives me joy.

“You have been forgiven, so act like it!”

– A. W. Tozer

**IS THERE SOMEONE THAT YOU NEED TO FORGIVE?
IS THERE SOMEONE THAT YOU NEED TO BLESS?
DO IT TODAY AND FREE YOURSELF OF PAST
UNDESERVED PAIN.**



20

STEP NINE: DON'T LOOK BACK ... CHOOSE TO LOOK AHEAD

One of the most revolutionary secrets that will enable you to truly live a life of unmatched joy is found in your determinate to live enthusiastically in the present and then to hope wildly for the future. We, as the children of God, must refuse to wallow in the pain of the past and instead be buoyed by the hope of all that lies ahead. Even when we choose to relive all of the delight of yesterday it can tie us to the past in an unhealthy way. We must not wallpaper our memories with regrets nor should we longingly wish for “the good old days.”

***“This is the day which the Lord
has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”***

– Psalm 118:24

Live wholeheartedly in today and look forward with hope to all that God has for you tomorrow. Wring the joy out of an ordinary day and remind yourself often that you serve the God who is working all things together for good. He has been to your future and it is good because He is good.

“

*“I find joy in every day, not
because life is always good,
but because God is.”*

”

21

We can have hope because we know that God's goodness will surely invade our future! He has promised it and He is faithful to His Word.

"I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

– Philippians 3:13 & 14

Remind yourself not to look in the rearview mirror of life but to spend each day in great expectation of all that God has for you.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

– Romans 15:13

When the bittersweet longings of yesterday tug at your heartstrings, spend a moment in thanksgiving for God's goodness in your past but then set your gaze on the miracles of tomorrow. When the pain of the past threatens to remind you of the brokenness of your life, choose to worship the Father and determine that you will serve Him no matter what!

"Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God."

– Corrie ten Boom

**WHAT CAN YOU DO TO SERVE THE LORD TODAY?
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO ACCOMPLISHING WITH HIM
THIS YEAR? SPEND SOME TIME PRAYING THAT GOD WILL USE
YOU IN HIS GREATER PLAN.**

22

STEP TEN: THINK JOY THOUGHTS

I can absolutely guarantee you that the more you think about joy the greater is the likelihood that you will become a joyful person. Conversely, the more that you think discouraging and woeful thoughts, the more depressed you will become.

“As a man or a woman thinks within himself, so is he or she.”

– Proverbs 23:7

If you think angry, critical thoughts today, then guess what?! Tomorrow you are likely to be an angry, critical person. Psychologists concur; they believe that if you can change the way a person thinks or processes circumstances that you have the possibility of changing their very life.

**“I WILL CHOOSE TO FIND JOY IN THE
JOURNEY THAT GOD HAS CREATED FOR ME.”**

So, in my life, no matter how difficult my situation is and no matter how cruel people can be, I choose to think about joy. No matter how bad the economy is and no matter who is elected to the White House, I ponder joy! In my life, no matter what the media says and no matter what the weather is like, I marinate mentally in joy!

“Joy Is not necessarily the absence of suffering, it is the presence of God.”

– Sam Storms



23

Will you join me in making these joyful declarations every day of your life?

I will sing songs that have the word “joy” in them.

I will recite scripture verses that contain the word “joy”.

I will count my blessings and thank the Lord for every good thing that He has done in my life

I will think about all of the ways that I can encourage others.

I will think about the prayers that I can pray for others.

I will go to sleep at night singing, praying and thinking about my favorite “joy” verses in the Bible.

I will extract my joy from His dear presence and not from the circumstances around me.

I will!

My friend, I realize that the more that I think about joy ~ the more that joy becomes an intrinsic and vibrant part of me!

“You have filled my heart with greater joy.”

– Psalm 4:7

