



## TIME OF GRACE®

### *Help Me Have More: Joy*

#### Study Notes

#### *Summary*

We all strive for happiness and make decisions on what we think will bring us joy. This feat is even more challenging considering that, according to God, there are three different kinds of joy to be had. But only one of them really works. Pastor Mike takes us through the different joys and shares how to have the greatest, everlasting joy.

- 3 types of Biblical Joy: \_\_\_\_\_ Joy, \_\_\_\_\_ Joy, \_\_\_\_\_ Joy
- Bad Joy is being happy about \_\_\_\_\_.
- Proverbs 15:21a: — Folly brings joy to one who has no sense.
- Good joy is being happy about God's \_\_\_\_\_.
- Acts 14: 17b — He provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.
- God Joy is being happy about God's \_\_\_\_\_.
- Psalms 21:6 — Surely you have granted him unending blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence.
- Isaiah 12:6 — Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.
- Acts 2:28 — You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.
- Hebrews 12:2 — Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

## *Points to Ponder*

1. Take note of at least one of the many volunteers who make your church service/events happen (greeters, ushers, servers, technology team, musicians, etc.). Thank them for helping make your gatherings as great as possible.
2. Meditate on Galatians 5:13-25, the context for the famous section on the “fruit of the Spirit.” What warnings do you see about the short-term joy of sin? What reminders of God’s presence do you notice?
3. Next week’s message is all about peace. Do you know someone who is unsettled, anxious, or constantly worried about life? Invite them to participate with you in the Time of Grace messages.

## *Homework for Next Week*

Read Galatians 5: 13 - 25

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Help Me Have More: Joy**  
Proverbs 15:21; Acts 14:17; Psalms 21:6; Isaiah 12:6; Acts 2:28; Hebrews 12:2  
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*Pastor Mike Novotny*

Some of you like to read fiction, some of you like to fish, some of you like to play Fantasy Football. Have you ever thought the reason that you do what you do and the person next to you does what they do is for this reason? Because you want to be happy. The reason some grade school and middle school boys play Apex Legends or Minecraft or Halo or the latest craze is because it makes them happy. The reason some of you scroll TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter is because in some small way, it makes you happy. The reason I preach and read books is because it makes me happy. The reason I play soccer or go on dates with my wife is because it makes me happy. We all do what we do because we all live in the hot pursuit of the thing we all want, happiness.

And it might be wrong and it might be right, it might be biblical and it might be sinful, but if I followed you around or your life was a reality show and we stopped you every minute and asked, "Why?" The honest answer I think, at the end of everyday would be, "Because I thought it would make me happy." Isn't that true? If I caught you at Dunkin' Donuts and asked you, "Why are you eating that donut?" You'd say, "Because I like it." And if I stopped you two minutes later and I said, "Why are you ordering a second donut?" You'd say, "Because it makes me happy." And if I stopped you and I'd say, "How'd you just drive past Dunkin' Donuts without a single donut?" You'd say, "Because I want to step on a scale and feel happy," right? Some of you are praying that God would help you conceive and have a baby because you think having a baby in your home would make you happy. Some of you are desperately looking for a babysitter right now. Why? Because getting that child that you love out of your home for just one night, just one hour would make you so happy, right?

It's hobbies, it's family, it's fitness, it's health. You and I make the choices that we do because deep in our heart is the desire for joy, to be happy. Did you know that between the years 1990 and 2008 Google books said that there was a three-word phrase that tripled in usage in America? The phrase that American authors were using three times as much as they did back in the '80s, '70s, and '60s was the phrase, "Make yourself happy." I know enough about publishing books that you write books that you think people will read. And authors are picking up and publishers and editors are picking up more than ever that what people want, as different as they may be, ethnicity, background, language, education, occupation, everyone at the end of the day wants to be happy.

Ah, but have you noticed this just yet? Have you noticed that not everything makes you happy for very long? Some of you guys out there have spent thousands of dollars for something that is currently stored in your garage that you haven't used in 90 days, but you had to have it and when

you did it made you so happy. It went so fast, it zipped across the water, it sped down the road, but then after a while you got used to it. And the thing that you thought would work, it didn't work for very long. To me, this is one of the key questions about life, life in general, and especially your spiritual life if you're a person of faith. You and I are all going to choose something. At the end of the day, we all have a belief that something will make us happy, we just have to figure out what that something is and if that something works.

And that's why today, I want to tell you what I found in this book in the Bible. Recently, I did a study and I read every single passage from cover to cover in the entire Bible that uses the word, "Happy, happiness, joy, joyful, rejoice, rejoiced, rejoices, rejoicing, glad, gladness." About 400 separate passages in this whole book. I got to read all of them and what I found out is that God himself admits there are at least three different ways to be happy. But God himself knows that only one of them really works. And that's what I want to share with you today. Grab a pen and write this down. Let me give you the big summary of what I found. According to God in the Bible, there are three kinds of happiness or joy. There is bad joy, there is good joy and finally there's God joy. According to God, there is bad joy, good joy, God joy, and right now is my favorite part of this message because I want you to turn to a person next to you, maybe you know them, maybe you don't and I need you to say, "Bad joy, good joy, God joy," five times fast. Are you ready? On your marks, get set, go. Exactly, I've been practicing this for weeks and I still can't do it. So, today's theme is bad joy, good joy, God joy. All right, God, is first of all, he's going to warn us about bad joy. It's tempting but don't give into it. He's going to remind us of good joy, lean into it, enjoy it. And he's going to remind us of God joy, the deepest, longest lasting source of being happy. So, let's explore those three things together.

First of all, bad joy. Here's my definition of bad joy if you want to write this down. Bad joy is being happy about disobedience. Right? It's something where you're disobeying God, it's technically unbiblical, it's sinful, it's wrong but... but it just kind of makes you happy. Look at this passage with me from Proverbs 15, verse 21 says, "Folly brings joy." All right? Folly is like foolishness, sinfulness, it's not living a wise, biblical obedient life. But God says here that that kind of behavior brings joy. It's true, isn't it? There's something joyful even about sin, even if you're a Christian. Like, sin is tempting, temptation is tempting because there's something about it in the moment that makes us very, very happy.

All right, so mom yells downstairs to her son, "No more video games, come up for dinner right now." Why does he dishonor her? Why does he act like he didn't hear her? Why does he squeeze in one more minute, one more round? Well, the basic answer is because playing video games makes him happy. Why do some teenagers hide their devices even though dad said, "No more screen time"? Well, the answer is because connecting with their friends, jumping on social media in the moment makes them happy. Why do some Christians not just live together before marriage but try to take God's gift of sex pre-marriage? Like it's not a shocker if you've been coming to church for a bit, that's not what God wants. Why do we do it? Because it makes us happy. Why do most college kids, even though the law says don't drink if you're under 21, even if they've been baptized and confirmed, why do they get fake I.D.'s and take drinks they shouldn't have? "Well, sorry God, but I kind of want to; it makes me happy."

Why do couples who have vowed to love one another for better or worse get into these arguments where they just try to win instead of just trying to be the most like Jesus in the room? And the answer is the same, because winning this argument, making my points, forcing her or him to change their mind and do what I want, that would make me so happy.

So, it might be bad. Technically, God, it might be wrong. I'm sorry, but folly brings joy. But you know how the passage ends? Check this out. "Folly brings joy," the Bible says, "to one who has no sense." God is saying, "Sure, yeah, I'm not denying that it will make you happy but have you used your senses, have you thought with your mind what will happen next?" Have you thought an hour from now? You can hold onto the controller, you can hide your phone, you can dishonor your parents, but you know what dinner is going to be like if you tick your mother off? Do you know what marriage -- I mean, you could try to win the argument today but when you wake up in the same bed tomorrow with a person you've tried to change instead of a person you've tried to love, is that what you want? You can party throughout your teenage years, I mean, you can be the guy from the high school and the college, but do you know what addiction is like? And I'm just talking about the earthly tomorrow. What about the eternal tomorrow? I think God would say, "You could live your whole life living for you, doing what you want, ignoring the rules, living your kind of life, playing God and Lord, but what will happen when you die?" When you stand before the God that you didn't want even though he gave you a thousand chances? Right? This passage is so profound, "Folly brings joy to one who has no sense." In other words, bad backfires. And God is a good father.

Recently, I heard the story of a man who visited a Christian counselor named Larry Crabb. Also, a famous author. And he's desperate, he's going through a really hard time in life and he said, "Doctor, I just wanted to feel good now." And the Christian counselor thought for a second, he said, "Okay, number one, here's what I'm recommending. Buy a lot of your favorite alcoholic beverages. Number two, find some cooperative women. And three, go to the Bahamas." And the patient was shocked, he said, "I thought this was like Christian counseling." And Dr. Crabb just shrugs and he said, "Well, given your request, it was the best I could do."

Listen, if you want to be happy, like right now, there are ways to do it. But God wants more than that for you. He's not just a king, a lord and a judge. He's a father, and good fathers deny their children instant pleasures all the time. Not because they hate their kids, but because they love them. Moms and dads say, "No, no, no, no," about a billion times in the first ten years of their children's life, why? Because they hate the kids? No, because they want something better for them.

Here's what I'm asking you to believe today. That a sinless God is a good father. Right? That if there's something in this book where he says, "You shall not do that, I forbid that you live like that." I just hope that you believe he's not some chump trying to take advantage of you. He's a good dad. So, if he says it's bad, believe him. Maybe this week when that temptation comes to cross the line, to say the thing, to click, to buy, to go, to do - maybe you could whisper, just say out loud if you need to, shout it in the room if you have to, bad joy. Like, "Yep, yep, yep, yep, this would be joyful. There's short-term pleasure in this, this could make me happy, it would feel so good if I just forgot my faith." So, fight back against it and say, "Bad joy, I'm not going to be

happy about disobedience because disobedience will catch up with me." That is what the Bible has to say about bad joy.

Which brings us to part number two. The Bible, yes, says a little bit about bad joy but it has a lot more to say about good joy. Here's my definition of good joy, write this down, please. "Good joy is being happy about God's presence." When God's gifts to you, when his blessings make you happy, that's good joy. There's a great passage in Acts 14, it says this, "God provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." I love that. God provides, not just a little bit of food, not just daily bread, he provides you with plenty of food. You ever been to a buffet before? Right. And he fills your hearts with joy. Why does God provide? What does God give? Why does God bless? The answer is, because you being happy makes God happy. To step out on a sunny day, 75 degrees, and you just... [inhales and exhales] It could be raining today, good joy. When you order something to eat and the dish comes out and it's so good and the Oreo cheesecake that's like a -- like 4 pounds of it that they're serving at Applebee's, like, "Oh God, you didn't have to give this but you do." There are so many good things, open your eyes to see it, don't be rushing so quickly through life that you miss it. God's a generous father and he wants you to receive every good and perfect gift that comes from above.

This actually happened to me the other day at Menards. In case you don't know, a guy like me is rarely caught in a store like that. The tools, it's just overwhelming to me, but I needed to buy a broom, so I'm wandering aimlessly with my family through Menards when suddenly, I'm not going to say that God whispered to me, but my body just found itself in the section right next to the power tools and in between the lawn furniture, and do you know what was sitting randomly in the middle of my local Menards? Let me show you. A massage chair. What? What? Like, a \$5,000 Cadillac version, luxury massage chair in the middle of a Menards. So, let me ask you, is it shameful for a grown man to sit in a massage chair he has zero intention of buying? The answer is, no, it is not. He can sit there for a minute or two, or thirteen, in case anyone was counting. Good joy, oh my goodness! It's like God threw me a slow pitch, I'm like, "Yep, I'm sitting down in this and I'm not getting up." I'll tell you what, there are moments like that every single day. Not a massage chair in the middle of every Menards, but there are moments that most people just walk right past because their faces are in their phones. Put it in your pocket, look up, and worship. Oh, but you know the problem with good joy? Menards closed at ten.

When the Bible speaks about happiness and joy it sometimes warns us about bad joy, sometimes it encourages us to lean into good joy, but almost all the time it speaks about God joy. Here's my definition of God Joy. If good joy is being happy about God's presents, his gifts, then God joy is being happy about God's presence. Like, God is present, God is in my life, God is with me in my home, God is right here in this church, God is right here in my heart. Finding happiness in the presence of God is what God joy is all about.

Now, some of you know that I talk a ton about this, I wrote a whole book about this, *God Is Here. Three Words That Will Change Your Life*. And the reason I wrote that book, the reason I'm a repetitive preacher is because the Bible is a repetitive book. Ask the Old Testament, ask the New Testament, ask Moses, ask the prophets, ask the apostles, ask Jesus, if I want happiness,

where do I find it? If I want peace, how do I get it? The answer almost always is, in the presence of a glorious God.

Let me prove it to you real quick. In the Book of Psalms, Psalm 21 says this, "Surely you have granted him unending blessings." Does that sound good? Blessings that don't end. How? "You have made him glad with the joy of," say it with me, "your presence." The prophet Isaiah said the same thing in Isaiah 12:6, he said, "Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion". Well, why? I'm kind of a quiet person. What's going to make me shout? Here it is, "for great is the Holy One of Israel among you." God, the Holy One of Israel, this great Almighty, compassionate, powerful, wise, just king, where is he? Among you. And then you jump to the New Testament and Jesus' friend, Peter, is preaching in front of this massive crowd, this crazy impromptu sermon, there are thousands of people and by the end of the day 3,000 will be baptized. What does he tell them about? He says, "Jesus came from heaven and he lived and Jesus died and Jesus rose from the dead." And then he quotes extensively this Psalm, Psalm 16. And here's what the Psalm says that Peter quotes in Acts 2:28. He says, "God, You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in," boom, "in your presence." God, I don't want a little happiness today, I want my heart filled up with joy, where do I get it? Is it marriage? Is it kids? Is it sports? Is it work? Is it money? God says, "No. No, that's good joy. If you want to be filled up here it is, 'In my presence is fullness of joy.'"

And this is why Jesus came for us. If sin covered you, if all of your faults and failures were stuck to you like burrs in a country field, God would turn his face away. But if Jesus would come in mercy and compassion and pull off every sin, if he would separate all of your failures from you as far as the east is from the west, then a great, holy God would not be distant, he would be right here in this place.

Maybe my favorite passage about joy is in Hebrews 12:2. It says this about Jesus, "For the joy set before him," Jesus, "...endured the cross." And if you were there 2,000 years ago standing at the foot of the cross and you asked Jesus, "Why are you doing this?" He would say, "Happiness." He didn't like it, he had to endure it, the passage said. He was being tortured physically and the wrath of God was being poured on him spiritually, but there was joy set before him, what was the joy? The simple joy was you and me, and God right here. That thought made Jesus so happy that he went through everything for us. He bled and he suffered and he died so that at the end of the day, whether your life has lots of good joy or little, you could rejoice always because God is right here. So, let me give you one more pitch. I want you, we want you, to have Jesus roots. Because I know enough about life that people like you and people like me get sick, our loved ones are complicated, there's always something bad on the news, and what I want for you is a source of joy that all of that can't touch. Right, if I had some plan that if you followed these five steps, you'd have an extra \$100k at the end of the year, would you take it? For sure you would.

God is offering me and you something much better than that, he's offering us the fullness of joy. So, you might think this is like my pastor pitch, "Of course, you want us to come to church. Of course, you want us to read the Bible." I do, but here's why; you're going to do something to be happy, why not do the thing that works.

"The fruit of the spirit is joy." The Bible says, and if there's something I know about fruits is that it starts with roots. Let's pray.

Dear Jesus, thank you for being our joy. You said to your disciples before you left that you would be with them always and that's why they were so courageous, it's why they were so generous. There were times when they were mocked, beaten, threatened, and killed, and yet they rejoiced for the sake of your name because you were their treasure, you were their pearl of great price, you were their everything.

God, we're going to waste our lives choosing either bad things that hurt us or good things that aren't enough for us, but we want more than that. So, we pray today for the faith to actually believe this, that you are worth seeking first, that before we worry about food and clothing and everything else in life, we would seek your kingdom and your righteousness because this is where true joy is found.

God, for anyone who's listening that just hasn't had you in their heart or their life, who's been pursuing bad joy, may they realize today that Jesus died for them too, that the door is still unlocked and wide open, that you are calling them to the table. It's nothing you haven't seen before, God, may they come knowing that they're loved and pursued because of Jesus. And for the rest of us, God, who are followers of Jesus, would you just reorient our hearts and our thoughts that as Hebrews says, we would fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. We would think very little of temporary earthly things whose glory always fades and instead, we would set our hearts and our very soul on the things that endure forever.

God, we give you thanks today for you are good, for your love, your kindness, your mercy, and your presence endure forever. We pray this all in the beautiful name of Jesus, and all God's people said, amen.