



## Joy Josh Morris

**Focus** The Holy Spirit empowers us to have joy in all circumstances.

**Fun** Share a funny story about the last time you moved into a new house.

**Review** Key Scriptures: Galatians 5:22–23; Daniel 3:16–18; 1 Samuel 16:6–13; Matthew 10:16

1. Joy and happiness are not the same. Seeking happiness causes corruption and dissatisfaction. Seeking joy in the Lord comes from innocence and impacts us in amazing ways.
2. Learn to say “even if.” The enemy fires darts of “what if” that stir anxiety and awaken our worst fears, but Paul had a better saying: “even if.” Even if you experience things like Paul did—shipwrecks, beatings, prison, danger, hunger, thirst, and cold—you can know and have faith that God will still see you through. “What if” brings doubt and fear. “Even if” builds faith.
3. Maintain your innocence. In Luke 18:17 Jesus said, “Receive the kingdom of God like a little child.” Children are innocent. Man looks on the outside, but God looks at the heart. G. K. Chesterton said we need “an eternal appetite for infancy.” Pray for the Lord to restore our innocence.

**\*Group Dynamics Idea\*** This has definitely been a year of “what ifs” with many fears, ranging from COVID-19 to fires and hurricanes. Think of some “what ifs” for the rest of the year, then shift them to “even ifs.”

- Discuss**
1. What are some ways we chase happiness? For example, a new job, house, or car or vacations. Have these things brought permanent happiness? Why not?
  2. Discuss expectations connected with happiness. Does a new job, house, or car *create* happiness? If so, how long does it last? Does happiness wane with added stress and responsibilities?
  3. Why does joy in the Lord last longer than happiness?

**Take Home**

As we conclude, remember the following:

- The Holy Spirit empowers us to have joy in all circumstances.
- The Holy Spirit empowers us to keep our hearts in the right place.
- The Holy Spirit empowers us to walk with wisdom.

**Prayer**

Father God, forgive us for chasing after temporary things to make us happy. Forgive us for these idols. Help us to refocus on You, and on Your will. Lord, we seek You, and You alone. Help us to chase after Your Word and serving You. Restore innocence in our marriages, relationships, jobs, and passions. Reset our expectations for *Your* will rather than our own. We love You, Lord. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**\*New Leader Tip\*** If you need prayer, text your need to 71010. If you are struggling with your group, please reach out to the Gateway Groups team for help. Remind your group to join us as we celebrate all that God has done through Gateway at our 20th-anniversary celebration services October 3 and 4.