

How God Intervenes in our lives – How to live a joy-filled life

El Gil Simchah – God My Exceeding Joy

The Psalmist knew something about being overwhelmed with troubles. He often spoke of God's aid in his times of trouble. He said God was Jehovah Roi, the Lord my Shepherd, Psalms 23. He knew el Shaddai, the God who gives strength to His people, Psalms 63:35. He said Jehovah Rapha was the God Who heals the brokenhearted, Psalms 147:3. In Psalms 43, he talked about the condition of his soul.

Psalm 43:4-5 NKJV Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God. Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

Although his soul was cast down, He turned to God with praise for God was His exceeding joy.

In Isaiah 55, the prophet had a word from God. The Lord told Isaiah, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, and My ways are not your ways." Then God said His word would accomplish what He desired and he gave this promise.

Isaiah 55:12 NKJV For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

God was showing Himself to be the source for joy and answers from heaven.

One of our deepest needs is a joy-filled life. In **Psalm 43:4**, David said "I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy..." He is אֵל גִּיל שִׂמְחָה / ēl gheel simchah – "the God of exceeding joy."

David knew where to go to find the joy he needed. He said: "I will go to the altar, to God – the source of all my joy." You need to know that you can come to God any time to find the joy you need.

The New Testament is filled with examples of people who gained the joy they needed. Paul was in prison in Rome when he wrote the Philippians. Those were some of the darkest days of his life. In that letter he spoke of joy 16 times and rejoicing 10 times. He spoke of things that build joy and he gave antidotes to the things that destroy our joy.

How to have a joy-filled life!

The first step toward a joy-filled life is to throw off what is behind, (Philippians 3:13-14).

If you are going to have a joy-filled life, you must learn how to forget what is behind.

Philippians 3:13-14 NKJV One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

We all have events in our lives that we would like to change. We can recall mistakes, failures, and difficulties of our lives. Sometimes the details of our past come to mind with great clarity.

Many events in the early days of Paul's life and career disturbed him deeply. He had persecuted the church of Jesus Christ, consented to the death of some and binding and delivering many into prison. He had many faults and failures. Paul could easily recall the images of the ugly and painful things that he had done and what had happened to him.

Many believers are just like that. Their joy is threatened by numbers of things in their past. God can take care of this today.

Psalms 103:12 NKJV As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

God knows how to dispatch your faults, failures, and sins.

Micah 7:18-19 NKJV God delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, And will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

Ezekiel 33:16 God promises that when the wicked turn from the wrong to the right, “none of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him.”

Isaiah 54:4 NIV84 Do not be afraid; you will not suffer shame. Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated. You will forget the shame of your youth and remember no more the reproach...

God has made a new covenant through the blood of Jesus Christ that conquers our past.

Hebrews 8:12 NIV84 For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.

The second step toward a joy-filled life is to get rid of all worries about the future.

Worry can destroy your joy. Someone said, “Don’t worry, be happy.” Happiness is not the remedy or cause of a worry-free life. Happiness is a result of a worry-free life. The antidote for worry is not putting on a happy face.

Paul gives us the antidote for worry.

Philippians 4:6 NLT Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything.

According to the Apostle Paul, we have two options: we can worry or we can pray. We can worry as we try to work out our own future; or, we can pray to the God who is working out the future for us.

Why can we cast all our cares on God? The Bible says: “He cares for us.” God’s love and care for us brought Jesus down to our level to die on a cross. You need to know that God uses all of His resources to make things work out for us.

Stop and think how much God has already invested in us.

Philippians 1:6 NLT And I am certain that God, Who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

The third step toward a joy-filled life is to yield to God’s purposes.

Living without meaning or purpose destroys our joy.

- If you are just drifting along...
- If you don’t know where you came from...
- If you don’t know where you are going...
- If you don’t know why you are here...
- You are living without much joy in your life.

The third thing that builds joy is living on purpose. If you want a joy-filled life, yield yourself to God’s purpose.

Paul had lost everything when he was writing Philippians. He had lost his health and wealth, his friends and freedom. He even lost his privacy, being chained to a guard 24/7.

It is amazing that he included the word “joy” in almost every paragraph of his letter. How could he do that? He had not lost his purpose for living.

In Philippians 1:21 NIV Paul said: “For me to live is Christ.”

In 2 Timothy 1:3 in the Living Bible he said: “My only purpose in life is to please Him.” What is your purpose in life? Can you say, “*For me to live is Christ?*” God made us on purpose and for a purpose.

Have you sincerely asked God to use your life? When you find His purpose for your life, you will find real joy. God has a purpose for each of us.

The fourth step toward a joy-filled life is to FOCUS on what is good.

If you want a joy-filled life, you need to focus on what is good. Paul’s life was anything but pleasing. He was surrounded by four dark walls. His dungeon was filled with the smells of mold and mildew. His ears were filled with the sounds of abuse. He felt the pain inflicted by human hands and hostile whips. He could have lost all of his joy. What he said does not make a lot of sense to some people.

Philippians 4:8-9 NLT Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

The fourth step toward a joy-filled life is to “Focus on what is good.”

Have you tried to find something good to focus on? It is not in the media or the news.

Where can you find something positive to focus on? Paul tells us to fix our mind on what is good. Search the Scripture and find what God says about you. Let the One who made you tell you what you are worth. Let Him who died on a rugged cross tell you what you mean to Him.

We need to hear God’s perspective on things. You can choose the things that influence what you think. Focus on God’s message and joy will begin flooding your life.

The fifth step toward a joy-filled life is to use your life to help others.

While Paul was locked up in a Roman prison, the one thing that gave him joy was helping others. He was writing letters to people he had helped through life.

In Philippians 4:1 NLT He said: “Dear brothers and sisters...you are my joy.”

This is not some new concept that Paul came up with. Jesus said the same thing to us.

John 15:11-13 NIV I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

When we invest our lives in others, we will get a dividend. He said your joy will be complete.

Paul’s life was physically miserable. He knew that if he would die, his suffering would end.

Listen to what he wrote: Philippians 1:22-23 LB “I really don’t know which is better, to live or to die. Sometimes I want to live and at other times I don’t, for I long to go and be with Christ... But the fact is, I can be of more help to you by staying.”

This is a living, breathing example of what Jesus said. Invest your life in helping others, and you will get a reward. Jesus said: “Your joy will be complete.”

The sixth and final step toward a joy-filled life is to learn to be content.

Philippians 4:11 NIV84 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

How can we learn to be content? This secret to a joy-filled life addresses every situation we face. Paul said, “I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a

full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.”

He was not letting circumstances determine his joy. He said: “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.”

How do we learn that? The answer comes from a life that is filled with Christ’s strength.

Philippians 4:13 NKJV I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

We learn to be content when we learn to trust God, and know that He is in control. He is managing the details of our lives. Paul believed that God was managing his life. Before he ended up in Rome, he knew that the Lord was in control of his life. His confidence in God had not changed. He still believed that his life was not out of control. Back in the beginning of this letter, he said, “I will continue to rejoice.” (Philippians 1:18-19)

Paul knew that God was managing his life. He didn’t know all of the details of what would happen. He didn’t know that God was using his imprisonment to produce messages that would impact on the world.

We often get frustrated when we don’t know what God is doing in our lives. Perhaps we just need to trust God. Is it enough for God to know what He is doing with us?

Philippians 1:19 LB “I am going to keep on being glad, for I know that...this is all going to turn out for my good.”

Do you need new joy in your life? Has your life become difficult and filled with challenges? Is your health and situation changed and life has become a struggle? Have so many things changed it feel like everything is out of control? The Lord knows how to come into the circumstances and situations of your life and give you joy.

Nehemiah was ministering to a people who had been through extremely difficult times. For the first time in years, God’s word had been found and read. The people were weeping and mourning in God’s presence. Then Ezra the priest had a word that will help you today.

Nehemiah 8:10 NKJV ...this day is holy to our Lord. Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.

God wants to come to your aid today and give you new strength and fill you with His joy.