

## Encouragement

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Good Morning Friend,

Otis Skillings wrote a chorus that calls us to practice a joyful Christian life. The lyrics include these phrases about joy, repeated several times . . . *Let there be joy in this place. Let there be joy in this place. Let there be joy . . . exceeding great joy be in this place.* The words come from Matthew 2:10 which describe the response the wise men had when they heard of the birth of Jesus . . . *they rejoiced with an exceeding great joy.* (KJV) It doesn't just say *joy*, but a *great joy*. Better yet, it was *an exceeding great joy*. Their joy was so overwhelming that Matthew doubly modifies it with both an adjective and an adverb . . . *a joy, a great joy, an exceeding great joy.*

Let me share four thoughts about Christian Joy.

[1.] **JOY: It is taught in the Scriptures.** Both the Old and New Testaments explain joy as a gift from God to His people. It is to be a normative lifestyle for all of us who know the Lord. Biblical authors exhort us to rejoice in the Lord. A believer who does not enjoy and exhibit joy is truly an enigma.

[1.] **JOY: It is modeled by the Lord Jesus.** He spoke of joy and He lived joy. John 15:11 expresses these amazing words . . . *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.* Listen and grasp these two things that Jesus says about joy. (1) He offers us the same joy that was in Him: *my joy in you*. (2) He also offers us a *complete joy*. Not a little joy. Not a drop or two. Not an occasional joy. But He offers us a river of joy coming from the Father through the Lord Jesus directly to you and me. Such joy can best be called *JESUS JOY*. That's the kind of joy He wants us to have. The joy of Jesus remained steady in His tough times as He faced the cross and as He endured the cross, as expressed in Hebrews 12:2 . . . *Jesus, who for the joy set before him endured the cross.*

[1.] **JOY: It was exemplified by a friend.** Otis was a long-time personal friend. He was my colleague in ministry. We traveled the world together with multiple trips through Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. He lived and served joyfully. He practiced what he wrote . . . what he produced . . . what he sang. He truly exuded joy. So did his family. When they gathered with

close friends around Otis' casket before the funeral, they joyously and enthusiastically sang this chorus together . . . *Let there be joy in this place. Let there be joy . . . exceeding great joy be in this place.* And God answered their prayer. There was joy in that place. I will never forget it. That joy has continued to be meaningful to his family since his death.

[1.] **JOY: *It is to be enjoyed now by believers . . . including you and me.*** Stanley Collins used to say . . . *Too many Christians look like they have been weaned on pickle juice. Where's the joy?* You might have some questions also. You ask me, *Is it real?* Yes. *Is it possible?* Yes. *Does it work?* Yes.

Is there any secret to experiencing a greater fullness of JESUS JOY in our lives? Yes. The Bible insists that genuine joy must be centered in the Lord. Philippians 4:4 speaks clearly . . . *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice.* Our joy cannot be sourced any place other than "in the Lord." It can't be dependent on anyone else. Not on anything else. Jesus never changes. When we keep focused on Him, there can be genuine joy that is steady regardless of the swirling changes that take place around us.

Be encouraged,

Lareau Lindquist