

TIS THE SEASON ... TO BE JOYFUL

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord (Luke 2:10-11 NIV).

When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, God promised that one day He would step in and overcome the devastating consequences of sin. He would restore the relationship between man and God. When Jesus was born, the Jewish people had not heard a word from God in over 400 years. Isn't it appropriate that this time God spoke His Word?

Those who recognized the Messiah and what God was doing were overcome with joy. Mary (Luke 1:46-55), Simeon (Luke 2:22-35) and Anna (Luke 2:36-38) understood the real joy comes from God stepping into the circumstances of the world.

Paul tells us how to have joy on a very practical level in Philippians 4:2-20. Let's look at some of Paul's principles.

- I. **WE CAN HAVE JOY IN SPITE OF DIFFICULT PEOPLE**
 - a. Difficult people often cause us the most stress and turmoil, robbing our joy
 - b. Paul's exhortation: other Christians can step in and help people get along
- II. **WE CAN HAVE JOY IN SPITE OF DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES**
 - a. Difficult circumstances weigh as a burden on our spirits and make us feel out of control
 - b. Paul's exhortation: be careful how you think and act
 - i. Let your gentleness be known to all
 - ii. Don't be anxious about anything
 - iii. Let your prayers be powerful
 - iv. Let God guard your heart and mind
- III. **WE CAN HAVE JOY IN SPITE OF DIFFICULT PATTERNS OF THOUGHT**
 - a. Some stresses are added by the poor thinking patterns we use in approaching difficulties in life
 - b. Paul's exhortation: give purpose to how you think
 - i. Think about what is true
 - ii. Follow the example of wise and mature Christians
 - iii. The God of peace will be with you
- IV. **WE CAN HAVE JOY BECAUSE OF A POSITIVE ACTION: GIVING**
 - a. In difficult times, we often react with little purposeful thought. Instead of reacting, we need to be proactive.
 - b. Paul's exhortation: share and give
 - i. "It was important for you to share in my troubles" (Philippians 4:14)
 - ii. The Philippians sacrificially gave to help Paul's ministry