

# CHARA

χαρά · *the Spirit's gift of gladness*  
*Joy That Comes from God*

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## A FIVE-DAY SELF-STUDY DEVOTIONAL

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Fruit of the Spirit Series · Galatians 5 (KJV)

*Life Church of New Jersey*

## BEFORE YOU BEGIN

**How to Use This Devotional**

This study walks through the joy of the Spirit over five days. It is meant to be unhurried — you do not need to finish quickly; you need to let the Lord fill a well in you. Each day follows the same simple path:

**Read** the Scripture slowly, out loud if you can. **Reflect** on the short reading. **Search your heart** with the question, and write your honest answer in the space provided. **Take it with you** into the day with one practical step. Then **pray** — and do not rush the prayer.

A word before we start. The world has one word, **happiness** — from the old root ‘hap,’ meaning luck or chance, the feeling that comes when good things happen to you. The Spirit has another word, **chara** — a gift of grace, grown on the inside, that holds when the circumstances do not. This week we are after the second one.

*“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” — John 15:11*

**Context:** *Jesus speaks these words in the upper room, the night before the cross, teaching the disciples to abide in Him as branches in the Vine. His aim for them — and for you — is a joy that remains and is full.*

## DAY ONE

## Two Words: Happiness and Joy

## READ

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” — Galatians 5:22-23*

**Context:** Paul writes to churches being pressured back toward law-keeping, contrasting the works of the flesh with the one fruit the Holy Spirit grows in a yielded believer — joy among its flavors.

*“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” — Psalm 16:11*

**Context:** A psalm of David; Peter later quotes it at Pentecost as a prophecy of Christ’s resurrection. David finds the fullest joy in one place — the presence of God.

## REFLECT

The world has one word and the Spirit has another. **Happiness** comes from the old root *hap* — luck, chance, the same root as *happen* and *haphazard*. So happiness is simply the feeling that shows up when good things happen to you; it rises and falls with your circumstances, and it cannot be held. But the joy Paul lists here is something else entirely. The Greek word is **chara**, kin to *charis*, grace — a gift, not an achievement. It is fruit, grown by the Spirit, rooted in God and not in your conditions.

That is why a believer can lose the good feeling and still keep the joy. Happiness is a thermometer, only reflecting the temperature of the room you are in; joy is a thermostat, setting the climate from the inside. David found the fullest joy in one place — God’s presence. Do not settle for the world’s word when God is offering you His.

## SEARCH YOUR HEART

Where have you been hunting for happiness in things that can only rise and fall? What would change if you went looking for joy in God’s presence instead?

## TAKE IT WITH YOU

Name one circumstance you have tied your happiness to, and deliberately look past it today to the Lord Himself.

## PRAY

*Lord, I have chased happiness and come up empty. Grow Your joy in me — the kind that does not depend on what happens, only on Who holds me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## DAY TWO

## Two Perspectives: His Way, Not the World's

## READ

*"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." — Ecclesiastes 2:11*

**Context:** Solomon, the richest and wisest king of Israel, records his own experiment of seeking joy through pleasure, building, and possessions — and concludes that everything pursued apart from God is empty.

*"Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation." — Habakkuk 3:17-18*

**Context:** The prophet Habakkuk, told the Babylonians are coming and everything he depends on will fail, ends his book with a choice: he will still rejoice in the God of his salvation.

## REFLECT

There are two ways to look for joy. The world's way is to **manufacture** it — through pleasure, possessions, achievement, the next experience — and then to keep feeding it, because it always runs out. Solomon ran the whole experiment and wrote the verdict: vanity, empty, no profit under the sun. If anyone could have bought lasting joy, it was him. He could not.

The Bible's way is the opposite: joy is not generated, it is **received** — and it can even be chosen by faith. Listen to Habakkuk. Everything he leans on is about to collapse, and he makes a decision: though the fig tree does not blossom and the stalls stand empty, **"yet I will rejoice in the LORD."** That little word *yet* is the hinge of biblical joy. It refuses to wait for the harvest to come in.

## SEARCH YOUR HEART

Where are you still trying to manufacture a joy that keeps running out? Can you say Habakkuk's "yet" over your hardest situation?

## TAKE IT WITH YOU

Write your own "yet" sentence today: "Even though \_\_\_\_\_, yet I will rejoice in the Lord."

## PRAY

*Father, teach me to stop manufacturing what only You can give. Even when everything fails, yet I will rejoice in the God of my salvation. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## DAY THREE

# The Source: Joy from the Holy Ghost

## READ

*“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” — Romans 14:17*

**Context:** Paul redirects the Roman believers from arguments over food and days to what the kingdom of God actually consists of — including joy produced by the Holy Ghost.

*“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” — John 7:38-39*

**Context:** Jesus cried this out at the Feast of Tabernacles; John explains the ‘rivers’ are the indwelling Holy Ghost that believers would receive. The wellspring is installed on the inside.

## REFLECT

If joy is a fruit, then it grows the way all fruit grows — not by straining, but by abiding. A branch does not grunt to produce grapes; it stays joined to the vine. So the real question is never “how do I get happier?” It is “am I full of the Holy Ghost?” Scripture ties joy directly to the Spirit: the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy **in the Holy Ghost**.

And the well is on the inside. Jesus promised that out of the believer would flow rivers of living water — and John tells us plainly He was speaking of the Spirit. When you received the Holy Ghost, God installed the wellspring of joy inside of you. It does not have to be imported from your circumstances; it rises up from within. Stay full, and the joy stays with it.

## SEARCH YOUR HEART

Where have you been trying to import joy from the outside when God put a well on the inside? Are you staying full of the Spirit?

## TAKE IT WITH YOU

Spend real time today drawing close to the Source — worship, the Word, prayer — and let the well fill.

## PRAY

*Holy Ghost, You are the source of my joy. Fill me again. Let the rivers You put inside me rise up until the dryness is gone. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## DAY FOUR

## The Test: Joy in Spite of It All

## READ

*“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.” — Acts 16:25*

**Context:** In Philippi, Paul and Silas had been stripped, beaten, and locked in the inner prison with their feet in stocks. At midnight they worship — and an earthquake follows that opens the doors.

*“For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” — Psalm 30:5*

**Context:** A psalm of David celebrating deliverance from a season of trouble; he testifies that God’s favor turns a night of weeping into a morning of joy.

## REFLECT

Joy is not the absence of pain; it is the presence of God *in* the pain. The proof is a prison cell at midnight. Paul and Silas had been stripped, beaten, and clamped in stocks — and what did they do? They prayed and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them. Their joy did not wait for the doors to open; it sang until they did. Joy in the dark is the loudest sermon a believer ever preaches.

This is the joy that holds when feelings do not. Weeping may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning. Jesus Himself, “for the joy that was set before him,” endured the cross (**Hebrews 12:2**). So in your own trial you can make the declaration out loud: in spite of my feelings, in spite of my issues, in spite of the pain and the discomfort — I still have joy.

## SEARCH YOUR HEART

What “midnight” are you in right now? What would it look like to sing before the doors open?

## TAKE IT WITH YOU

In the middle of today’s hardest moment, choose one act of praise — out loud.

## PRAY

*Lord, I will not wait for the circumstances to change to worship You. At my midnight, I still have joy. Let my praise shake the prison. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## DAY FIVE

## The Overflow: Joy That Spills Out

## READ

*“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:” — 1 Peter 1:8*

**Context:** Peter writes to scattered, suffering believers across Asia Minor. Though they have never seen Christ with their eyes, faith fills them with a joy beyond words — unspeakable and full of glory.

*“Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” — Nehemiah 8:10*

**Context:** After the return from exile, Ezra reads the rediscovered Law and the people weep in conviction. Nehemiah tells them this is a holy day, and that the joy of the LORD will be the strength that carries them.

## REFLECT

Joy was never meant to stay a private well; it is meant to become a river. Peter described it in believers who had never even seen Christ: they rejoiced **“with joy unspeakable and full of glory”** — joy too big for words, that has to come out as worship. When the inside is full of the Spirit, it cannot stay inside. It spills.

And the overflow has a purpose. “The joy of the LORD is your strength,” Nehemiah told a weeping people — the very thing welling up in you is what carries you. A full bowl spills; a Spirit-filled believer overflows into praise, into strength, into a testimony the watching world can see. So do not bottle it. Let it out.

## SEARCH YOUR HEART

Is your joy bottled up or spilling over? Who around you needs to catch the overflow this week?

## TAKE IT WITH YOU

Let it out today — one deliberate act of praise or testimony that someone else can see or hear.

## PRAY

*Lord, fill the well until it overflows. Let my joy spill into worship, into strength, into a witness the world can taste. In Jesus’ name, Amen.*

## AFTER THE FIVE DAYS

**Refill the Well**

Over five days we have seen it: happiness happens to you, but joy is grown in you; the world manufactures it and runs dry, but God gives it by His Spirit; it holds in the dark and overflows in the light. Now bring it home. Go slowly through these questions and answer honestly — not as a report card, but as a prayer.

## SEARCH YOUR HEART

1. Where have I been settling for the world's happiness instead of God's joy?
2. Is my well full right now — am I full of the Holy Ghost?
3. What would change this week if I chose joy by faith, the way Habakkuk said his “yet”?

And if your joy has leaked out — through sin, weariness, or the long pressure of a hard season — do not try to manufacture it back. Go to the Source, and pray David's prayer:

*“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.” —*

**Psalm 51:12**

**Context:** David's prayer of repentance after his sin with Bathsheba. Notice he does not ask for his salvation back, but for the joy of it — the gladness that sin had drained away.

***In spite of everything — I still have joy.***

So go back to the well as often as you need to. Stay full of the Spirit. And like Paul from his prison cell, choose it again and again: “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice” (**Philippians 4:4**).

*Holy Ghost, fill me and keep me full. Restore the joy that the pressure drained, and let it overflow until everyone around me gets a taste of Jesus through me. In His name, Amen.*

— Life Church of New Jersey —

*Scripture quotations are from the Authorized (King James) Version.*