

THOUGHTS, JOY, AND THE LIFE GOD DESIRES

State Goal of the Sermon CHOOSING JOY

Introduction We have spent weeks in our Thought series learning where thoughts come from and why they matter. Thoughts form images. Images shape beliefs. Beliefs guide behavior. Today we bring this series to a living conclusion. We address one dominant thought many believers carry quietly. It is rarely spoken, but it is often lived. That thought shapes how people experience God, themselves, and life. Scripture and history reveal a better way.

Here is a thought many believers carry, even if they have never said it out loud.

THOUGHT WE MUST CONFRONT God expects me to endure life, not enjoy it. This thought creates an image of God that does not match Scripture. A heavy image of God produces heavy living. A joyless image of God produces joyless believers.

GOD GAVE ENJOYMENT AS A GIFT

Ecclesiastes 3:12–13 KJV I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice, and to do good in his life. And also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God.

Enjoyment did not come from culture. It came from God. God calls enjoyment a gift. Responsibility matters. Work matters. Joy belongs inside both.

Renew your mind with this thought from God's Word God designed life with joy included.

JESUS DEFINED HIS MISSION CLEARLY

John 10:10 KJV The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

Jesus identified joy theft as enemy work. He identified abundant life as His purpose.

Abundant life includes peace, rest, hope, and joy. When believers live drained or angry, the issue often begins in the mind.

Renew your mind with this thought from God's Word Jesus restores life. He does not drain it.

JOY STRENGTHENS US FOR RESPONSIBILITY

Nehemiah 8:10 KJV 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.

God tied strength to joy. Weakness grows where joy fades. Strength rises where joy returns. God never asked His people to live faithful and miserable.

Renew your mind with this thought from God's Word Joy fuels obedience and endurance.

THE KINGDOM INCLUDES JOY

Romans 14:17 KJV For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink. But righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

Righteousness leads. Peace follows. Joy remains present. When joy leaves, balance breaks. God never measured maturity by heaviness.

Renew your mind with this thought from God's Word Joy belongs in spiritual maturity.

JESUS MODELED JOY HIMSELF

Luke 10:21 KJV In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father. For so it seemed good in thy sight. Jesus rejoiced openly. He thanked the Father. He lived under pressure and still chose joy. He showed us how to stay focused without losing delight.

Renew your mind with this thought from God's Word If Jesus rejoiced, we follow His example.

EARLY BELIEVERS ENJOYED THEIR SALVATION

Acts 2:46–47 KJV And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

The early church lived under pressure and persecution. Joy still marked their homes and gatherings.

Acts 8:8 KJV And there was great joy in that city.

Renew your mind with this thought from God's Word Salvation produces joy where truth is believed.

INDIVIDUALS IN SCRIPTURE REJOICED IN SALVATION

Luke 19:6 KJV And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.

Zacchaeus received Jesus with joy. Salvation changed his heart and his direction.

Acts 16:34 KJV And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.

The jailer rejoiced even while life was still settling.

1 Peter 1:8 KJV 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.

Renew your mind with this thought from God's Word Joy flows from belief, not circumstance.

HISTORIC BELIEVERS LIVED JOY FILLED FAITH

Paul rejoiced while imprisoned.

Philippians 4:4 KJV Rejoice in the Lord alway. And again I say, Rejoice.

Joy preserved clarity and endurance.

David danced before the Lord.

2 Samuel 6:14 KJV And David danced before the Lord with all his might.

Joy kept his heart tender toward God.

Martin Luther sang theology under threat. Joy fueled courage. John Wesley preached joy as assurance and revival followed. Charles Spurgeon emphasized joy despite depression and sustained long obedience. Corrie ten Boom chose joy after suffering and lived free from bitterness.

Renew your mind with this thought from God's Word

Joy has always followed truth rightly believed.

RELEASING THE WEIGHT OF THE PAST YEAR

Philippians 3:13–14 KJV Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended. But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We thank God for victories. We learn from mistakes. We refuse to carry heaviness into a new year.

Renew your mind with this thought from God's Word

The past teaches. It does not define.

VISION FOR 2026

In 2026, we guard our thoughts. In 2026, we reject joyless Christianity. In 2026, we enjoy our salvation. In 2026, our homes reflect peace. In 2026, our church reflects life. Psalm 118:24 KJV This is the day which the Lord hath made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

CLOSING Each year begins with a thought. Each season flows from an image. Each life moves in the direction of dominant thinking.

If our thought says salvation is heavy, our lives grow heavy. If our thought says salvation is joyful, our lives reflect joy.

FINAL THOUGHT Jesus redeemed our eternity. He redeemed our days. We renew our minds with God's Word. We choose joy. We step into 2026 enjoying the life God gave us.