

## November 18

**Nehemiah 8:10 (NIV)** Nehemiah said, “Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” **Romans 15:13 (AMP)** <sup>13</sup> May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing [through the experience of your faith] that by the power of the Holy Spirit you will abound in hope *and* overflow with confidence in His promises.

During my days in college, my friends and I would run into people who wanted to share the Gospel with us and to invite us to church. We scoffed at such offers because we viewed Christians as missing out on life. After all, we were the ones drinking, laughing, and fellowshiping. We were the ones who were enjoying life while they trudged around trying to convince us we were on the wrong side. We viewed Christianity as a boring, joyless, and limited life.

Part of that misconception was rooted in my early days in church. For Sunday, I would get dressed up, attend class, and sit quietly during the message. One did not talk, much less laugh. Church seemed a solemn place where the slightest mistake was punished. I realize now I was looking at Christ through eyes that could not see. The “fun” I was having in college came with a huge price tag: death. My perspective changed when Jesus came into my life. I had never experienced joy without that price tag before. As we read from Nehemiah, God wants us to enjoy the life He has given us. Nehemiah tells the people on a holy day to eat, drink, and fellowship! Enjoy life. I also learned that true laughter, laughter not aimed at others, lifts one’s spirit. When Jesus attended the wedding at the beginning of His ministry, I do not believe He stood in a corner in somber contemplation. I believe He rejoiced with the families and the couple. The joy of the Lord is true joy because there is no regret at the end of the day. Following Jesus through the Holy Spirit is the greatest joy we will ever experience.