



OUR
RESOLUTE
HOPE

The Gift
God Only
Gives His
Children



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Christmas can be a very difficult time for many people. We live daily in a world full of sickness and death and so much pain. When the Christmas season comes around, we're expected to rejoice in this wonderful celebration and commemoration of God coming to Earth as a baby, but we do it with mixed feelings in our hearts because we've lost a loved one, we're alone, or we're hurting inside.

The Bible tells us to “rejoice always.”

*“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks;
for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.”*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NASB

Rejoice always?! Is that even possible?

Well, it isn't unless we realize that joy and happiness are two very different words, with two very different meanings.

***It is imperative to know that the Bible does not tell us
to “be happy always.”***

Happiness comes from the old English word *hap*, which means “circumstance.” When we have good *haps*, we're happy. But, when we have bad *haps*, we are unhappy. When this is the case, when life is lived in the emotion of our circumstances, we live in an ebb and flow. Life becomes a rollercoaster—spiraling up and down, it becomes a wild ride!

Joy, however, is something that is a constant. **Joy is available to the Christian alone because we're told in the Bible that joy comes from the Lord.** Joy comes from having a relationship with God—a relationship where we know that we are loved and secure and significant and right with Him. It's a relationship where we know that everything is well with Him and always will be.

In Him, joy is a constant. God has promised to be all that He is to all that we need in the moment of faith and to never leave us and never ever forsake us. The book of Nehemiah tells us that the joy of the Lord is our refuge and strength.

“Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your refuge.”

Nehemiah 8:10 NASB

He is our refuge in every circumstance we may face.

So, as we go through any given day, we're going to have good *haps*, which in turn make us happy and joyful. But as life goes on we will encounter bad *haps* that will leave us unhappy. **But because of God, we, His children, are given the gift of experiencing unhappiness, while still having joy.**

Christians are the only ones in the world who can weep genuine tears of sorrow and experience joy at the same time.

It is so important for us to stop putting on masks and pretending that everything is okay, and instead, allow ourselves the freedom to hurt and the freedom to grieve. When we are real we will discover how this beautiful gift lives out—right in the midst of our hurt, and in the midst of our grieving, we get to experience the deep and abiding joy of the Lord.

I believe when we stop pretending, the world will look at God's children and say, "I see them—they hurt like I hurt—but they have something I don't have..." It will be through our honesty and realness that we will be able to tell the world about the joy of the Lord that comes from knowing Jesus Christ as our Lord, Savior, and Life.

This Christmas season, and throughout the entire year, may you experience His joy.

*You are loved!
Pastor Frank*