



LIVING IN JOY
Retreat/Group Companion WORKBOOK



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WORKBOOK

RICHARD T. CASE



To my wife, Linda, whose spiritual name from God is Joy. We were meeting in Dallas to go to a C12 retreat, and she was driven from the airport in a taxi with a driver who is a spirit filled believer. As he was experiencing Linda's joy, he said that God had spoken to him that her name was Joy!—and it is! Her life is one of joy, she brings joy, and those around her experience her joy and, because of this being God's joy, experience God's joy. The key is that joy is the characteristic of God and is not dependent upon circumstances, which often are not joyful. This is not characteristic of the world and most believers who operate based upon circumstances only feel joy when circumstances are positive (which means there will be many times when they are negative because in the world, we will have trouble (John 16: 33). Joy will always be experienced in the Kingdom of God (Romans 14: 17). Thus, regardless of what we are facing, we are to live in joy. Linda exemplifies this—and she helps me, our family, and those in our ministry to stay in joy and understand that when we are not living in joy, there is something off—and then we are to go to God to understand why and how to regain joy, and remain in joy. We are so grateful to her life of joy that gives us encouragement to remain in God's joy.

Acknowledgments

We wish to honor all the leaders of our **Abide Ministries**. As each person and each couple have learned that as we live in God's Kingdom, we are to always experience joy. Since the most believers do not experience nor show the world God's joy, their commitment to give this away and make this key characteristic an emotion that all believers feel is beautiful to see. We together experience the joy of the life of God and experience another level of joy when we walk with others in this amazing truth of Godly life.

These leaders are:

Jake and Mary Beckel
Caden and Lauren Cardie
Colton and Alicia Cardie
Heath and Rebecca Cardie
Rich and Janet Cocchiaro
Larry and Sherry Collet
Katherine Cornell
Scott and Kristen Cornell
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A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a blue dress, is running through a golden field of tall grass or wheat. Her arms are outstretched, and her head is tilted back, suggesting a sense of freedom and joy. The background is a bright, hazy sky, and the overall lighting is warm and golden.

[illegible]

LESSON 1:

THE SOURCE, MISSION, AND ESSENCE OF JOY

SECTION 1 • JOY'S SOURCE—CHRIST HIMSELF

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **When in human history is the formal announcement of joy made by an angel of the Lord?**
- **Why would a Savior being born produce great joy “for all the people”?**

⁸ And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!”

Luke 2:8-14 (ESV)

Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Luke 2

1. The angel says, “I bring you good news of great joy.” What is the “good news”?

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2. Why is the beginning of true joy tied specifically to the arrival of Jesus, rather than to any other event?

3. How does “Christ the Lord” being born change the source of joy for the human race?

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts

- **Isaiah is prophesying about a people walking in darkness. What might that look like in a person’s life today?**
- **Watch for the words “light,” “joy,” and “the government will be upon his shoulder.” How do they connect?**

For to Us a Child Is Born

9 But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he has made glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

² The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

³ You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

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⁴ For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

⁵ For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

⁶ For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

Isaiah 9:1-7

Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Isaiah 9

1. Isaiah says the people in gloom and darkness were turned into joy. What turned them? Who turned them?

THE SOURCE, MISSION, AND ESSENCE OF JOY

2. What does it mean that “the government will be upon His shoulder”? How is His rulership a key element of what brings joy?

3. The text describes joy “as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.” What kind of joy is that—quiet relief, or full celebration?

 PAUSE & WRITE

Where in your life right now do you most need His rulership to break in? Name one specific area.

[illegible]

LESSON 1:

THE SOURCE, MISSION, AND ESSENCE OF JOY

SECTION 2 • CHRIST'S MISSION WAS JOY

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What do you typically think Christ's "mission" was when He walked the earth?**
- **How would the cross relate to joy, of all things?**

1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)

Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Hebrews 12

1. Christ's mission, according to verse 2, was joy. What was the joy that was set before Him?

2. How did the cross and the resurrection open up the possibility of joy for us?

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3. The requirement for joy used to be perfection and performance. What is the requirement now?

CHRIST'S FIRST PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT—LUKE 4 AND ISAIAH 61

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Imagine you are in the synagogue at Nazareth on the day Jesus stands up to read. He has not yet performed His public ministry. What would you expect Him to announce?**
- **What does the word “gospel” mean to you right now, before reading?**

¹⁶ And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as was His custom, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and He stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to Him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

²⁰ And He rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Luke 4:16-21 (ESV)

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Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Luke 4

1. This is Christ's first public announcement of His ministry. Why does He choose Isaiah 61—a passage about good news, freedom, and the year of the Lord's favor?

2. What does it mean that this Scripture was fulfilled "today"—in their hearing?

3. How does Christ tying His mission to Isaiah 61 connect back to what we just read in Hebrews 12 about the joy set before Him?

LESSON 1:

THE SOURCE, MISSION, AND ESSENCE OF JOY

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **1. What kinds of people does Isaiah 61 say the Anointed One has come for? Make a list as you read.**
- **2. Pay attention to the trades—ashes for what? Mourning for what? A faint spirit for what?**

¹ The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ² to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

³ to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins; they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

⁵ Strangers shall stand and tend your flocks; foreigners shall be your plowmen and vinedressers; ⁶ but you shall be called the priests of the Lord; they shall speak of you as the ministers of our God; you shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their glory you shall boast.

⁷ Instead of your shame there shall be a double portion; instead of dishonor they shall rejoice in their lot; therefore in their land they shall possess a double portion; they shall have everlasting joy.

⁸ For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Isaiah 61:1-8 (ESV)

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Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Isaiah 61

1. The phrase “oil of gladness” translates a Hebrew word meaning extreme joy. What does it tell you that God offers extreme joy in exchange for mourning?

2. He says He has come to bind up wounds, free prisoners, turn ruins into beautiful things. When does He say He will do this?

3. What is the difference between thinking the gospel is a ticket to heaven and thinking the gospel is the offer of life and joy right now?

 PAUSE & WRITE

Where have you been treating the gospel as primarily a ticket to heaven rather than an invitation into joy now? Be specific.

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SECTION 3 • CHRIST PRAYS FOR OUR JOY

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **This is Jesus' prayer the night before He goes to the cross. What do you imagine you would pray about if you knew you had hours left?**
- **Watch for the word "joy"—and notice the word "fulfilled."**

⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom You have given me, for they are Yours. ¹⁰ All mine are Yours, and Yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. ¹² While I was with them, I kept them in Your name, which You have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

¹⁴ I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

John 17:9-19 (ESV)

LESSON 1:

THE SOURCE, MISSION, AND ESSENCE OF JOY

Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on John 17

1. Whose joy does Jesus pray would be fulfilled in us? Why does that matter?

2. The word “fulfilled” here carries the sense of overflowing. What is the difference between having a little joy now and then, and a life that is overflowing with joy?

3. Jesus does not pray that we be taken out of the world. What does He pray instead, and how does that connect to joy in the middle of a hard world?

LESSON 1:

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"These things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves."

—John 17:13 ESV

 PAUSE & WRITE

If Jesus asked you today, “Are you living in my joy—overflowing?” what would you honestly answer? Why?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

LESSON 1:

THE SOURCE, MISSION, AND ESSENCE OF JOY

SECTION 4 • THE ESSENCE OF JOY—ABIDING IN CHRIST

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What does the word “abide” mean to you in plain language?**
- **Why do you think Jesus uses the picture of a vine and branches to describe our relationship with Him?**

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His love. ¹¹ These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

John 15:5-11 (ESV)

Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on John 15

1. Jesus uses an “if/then” to define joy: “if you abide in me, and my words abide in you...” What is the “then”?

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2. Asking “whatever you wish” is not a blank check—it is rooted in abiding. What changes about what you ask when you are walking with Him?

3. Why does Jesus connect bearing fruit, the Father being glorified, and your joy being full all into one teaching?

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **David is going to talk about being in God’s presence. What do you think he means by “presence”?**
- **Watch for what God promises about your “lot,” your “inheritance,” and your “path.”**

⁵The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; You hold my lot. ⁶The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. ⁷I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. ⁸I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

⁹Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. ¹⁰For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let Your holy one see corruption.

¹¹You make known to me the path of life; in Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalm 16:5-11 (ESV)

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Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Psalm 16

1. Where does David say the fullness of joy is found?

2. “At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” How do the pleasures God delivers along the way feed our joy?

3. Verse 8 says “I have set the Lord always before me.” What does it look like, practically, to set Him before you in a normal day?

PAUSE & WRITE

Where have you been chasing pleasures to manufacture joy, instead of staying in His presence and receiving the joy that comes with Him?

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SECTION 5 • HEARING THE BRIDEGROOM'S VOICE

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **John the Baptist calls himself the “friend of the bridegroom.” What does that role do at a wedding?**
- **Why would simply hearing someone’s voice produce great joy?**
-

²⁷ John answered, “A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before Him.’ ²⁹ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease.”

³¹ He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. ³² He bears witness to what He has seen and heard, yet no one receives His testimony. ³³ Whoever receives His testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. ³⁴ For He whom God has sent utters the words of God, for He gives the Spirit without measure. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. ³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

John 3:27-36 (ESV)

Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on John 3

1. What specifically makes the friend of the Bridegroom rejoice greatly?

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2. Hearing implies dialogue. How is hearing God's voice different from simply studying the Bible?

3. If you were in the middle of difficulty but you were genuinely hearing His voice, why would that produce joy?

"The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice."

—John 3:29 ESV

 PAUSE & WRITE

When was the last time you genuinely heard God's voice—not just read about Him, but heard Him speak to you personally? Write what you remember, or write what is keeping you from hearing right now.

[illegible]

LESSON 1:

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SECTION 6 • JOY FROM EXPERIENCING GOD'S SUPERNATURAL WORK

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Solomon has just finished dedicating the temple. What kind of mood would you expect Israel to be in after such a moment?**
- **Watch for the phrase about not one of God's good promises failing.**

⁵⁴ Now as Solomon finished offering all this prayer and plea to the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, where he had knelt with hands outstretched toward heaven. ⁵⁵ And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying, ⁵⁶ "Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. Not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He spoke by Moses His servant.

⁵⁷ The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us or forsake us, ⁵⁸ that He may incline our hearts to Him, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His rules, which He commanded our fathers. ⁵⁹ Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, and may He maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day requires, ⁶⁰ that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other. ⁶¹ Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the Lord our God, walking in His statutes and keeping His commandments, as at this day."

⁶⁵ So Solomon held the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly, from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the Lord our God, seven days. ⁶⁶ On the eighth day he sent the people away, and they blessed the king and went to their homes joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had shown to David His servant and to Israel His people.

1 Kings 8:54-61; 65-66 (ESV)

LESSON 1:

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Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on 1 Kings 8

1. Solomon says “not one word has failed.” Joy is the experience of the real work of God. Why does seeing God’s faithfulness—not just hearing about it—produce joy?

2. The people went home “joyful and glad of heart.” What had they experienced that was not hypothetical?

3. If you knew, from your own history with God, that everything He has spoken to you will come to pass, how would your joy level change today?

LESSON 1:

THE SOURCE, MISSION, AND ESSENCE OF JOY

A NEW TESTAMENT EXAMPLE—SUPERNATURAL WORK IN SAMARIA

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Imagine you are living in Samaria when Philip arrives. You have been sick or oppressed by a spirit for years. What happens to your “joy meter” when you are suddenly free?**

⁴ Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵ Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. ⁶ And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. ⁷ For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸ So there was much joy in that city.

Acts 8:4-8 (ESV)

Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Acts 8

1. What did the people of Samaria experience? Why did supernatural work produce so much joy?

2. Why does seeing God do what only God can do trigger joy in a way that mere teaching does not?

LESSON 1:

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3. If Christ had spent three years with His disciples only talking about God—without ever doing anything supernatural—how would their joy have looked?

THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART, SYNCED TO WHO YOU ARE

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What is the difference between God giving you the desires of your heart and you chasing the desires of your heart?**
- **Have you ever experienced anticipation that was joyful all by itself, before the event even happened?**

¹ O Lord, in Your strength the king rejoices, and in Your salvation how greatly he exults! ² You have given him his heart's desire and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah

³ For You meet him with rich blessings; You set a crown of fine gold upon his head. ⁴ He asked life of You; You gave it to him, length of days forever and ever.

⁵ His glory is great through Your salvation; splendor and majesty You bestow on him. ⁶ For You make him most blessed forever; You make him glad with the joy of Your presence.

⁷ For the king trusts in the Lord, and through the steadfast love of the Most High he shall not be moved.

Psalms 21:1-7 (ESV)

THE SOURCE, MISSION, AND ESSENCE OF JOY

Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Psalm 21

1. "You make him glad with the joy of Your presence." How does His presence become the joy itself?

2. He gives the desires of the heart—not because we chase them, but because He synced our hearts to certain things. How does that change how you pray?

3. Where in your life is anticipation of what God might do already producing joy, before the result?

 PAUSE & WRITE

Name one supernatural work—small or large—that God has done in your life that you could call to mind right now to remind yourself He is faithful.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

LESSON 1:

THE SOURCE, MISSION, AND ESSENCE OF JOY

SECTION 7 • JOY IN THE MIDDLE OF TROUBLE—HE DELIVERS

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **When you are in real adversity, what is your typical emotion? Worry, fear, sadness, anger?**
- **Could the same situation produce joy if you knew, with certainty, how it ends?**

¹ He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. ² I will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

³ For He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. ⁴ He will cover you with His pinions, and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness is a shield and buckler.

⁵ You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, ⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.

⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you. ⁸ You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked.

⁹ Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—¹⁰ no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.

¹¹ For He will command His angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. ¹² On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. ¹³ You will tread on the lion and the adder; the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.

¹⁴ “Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. ¹⁵ When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. ¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”

Psalm 91:1-16 (ESV)

LESSON 1:

THE SOURCE, MISSION, AND ESSENCE OF JOY

Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Psalm 91

1. What word does God use repeatedly about what He will do in trouble?

2. He says, “I will be with him in trouble.” He does not say He will exempt us from trouble. What is the difference?

3. How does knowing He will deliver you transform an “Uh oh” moment into “Well, this ought to be interesting”?

LESSON 1:

THE SOURCE, MISSION, AND ESSENCE OF JOY

LIVING IT OUT—A WITNESS FROM THE ROOM

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Watch how many of his troubles David expects God to deliver him from.**
- **Notice the connection between “seeking the Lord” and what we “lack.”**

¹ I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.

² My soul makes its boast in the Lord; let the humble hear and be glad. ³ Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!

⁴ I sought the Lord, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears.

⁵ Those who look to Him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.

⁶ This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. ⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them.

⁸ Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him! ⁹ Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints, for those who fear Him have no lack! ¹⁰ The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

Psalm 34:1-10 (ESV)

Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Psalm 34

1. How many of his fears did the Lord deliver David from? How many of his troubles?

LESSON 1:

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2. "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good." What does it mean to taste—not just believe theoretically?

3. Verse 8 calls the one who takes refuge in Him “blessed”—happy. Why can David say that with such confidence?

**"I sought the Lord, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears."
—Psalm 34:4 ESV**

 PAUSE & WRITE

Name one trouble you are in right now. Then write—in His voice, based on what you have read—what He might be saying to you about how He will deliver you out of it.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

LESSON 1:

THE SOURCE, MISSION, AND ESSENCE OF JOY

SECTION 8 • HEALING, INSTRUCTION, AND RESTORATION

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What is the difference between being a stubborn mule and a willing follower?**
- **Watch for the promise about being “surrounded with shouts of deliverance.”**

⁶ Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to You at a time when You may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.

⁷ You are a hiding place for me; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. ⁹ Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you.

¹⁰ Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the Lord. ¹¹ Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Psalm 32:6-11 (ESV)

Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Psalm 32

1. What does God promise to do that prevents us from having to figure out the way ourselves?

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2. Why is being like a mule—stubborn, having to be yanked—the opposite of joy?

3. If we cooperate with His instruction, what does verse 11 tell us to do?

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **David is talking to his own soul. Have you ever had to do that—to ask yourself why you feel cast down?**
- **Watch what David does about the discouragement. Where does he go?**

¹ Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me! ² For You are the God in whom I take refuge; why have You rejected me? Why do I go about mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

³ Send out Your light and Your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your dwelling! ⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise You with the lyre, O God, my God.

⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my salvation and my God.

Psalms 43:1-5 (ESV)

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Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Psalm 43

1. What does David ask God to send out, that will lead him?

2. He calls God “my exceeding joy.” What is the connection between God Himself being your joy and your circumstances changing?

3. When David’s soul is cast down, what does he do? What can you learn from his pattern?

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HE RESTORES FROM THE INSIDE OUT

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Isaiah is going to describe the most unpleasant places—desert, dry land, hunting ground of jackals. What is God going to do with those places?**
- **Look for the words “strengthen,” “fear not,” “highway,” and “everlasting joy.”**

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; ² it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

³ Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. ⁴ Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.”

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, where they lie down, the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

⁸ And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. It shall belong to those who walk on the way; even if they are fools, they shall not go astray. ⁹ No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

¹⁰ And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah 35:1-10 (ESV)

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Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Isaiah 35

1. What does God do to the most barren, hostile places?

2. Verse 4 speaks to those with an anxious heart. What does He promise them?

3. “Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” How does the Highway of Holiness produce that result?

HE RESTORES WHAT WAS LOST—EVEN WHEN WE CAUSED IT

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Notice that Israel is in a mess—and they caused it. Watch what God offers anyway.**
- **Look for the words “hidden things,” “healing,” “cleanse,” and “restore.”**

³ Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.

⁶ Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. ⁷ I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. ⁸ I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.

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⁹ And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them. They shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.

¹⁰ “Thus says the Lord: In this place of which you say, ‘It is a waste without man or beast,’ in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man or inhabitant or beast, there shall be heard again ¹¹ the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the Lord:

“Give thanks to the Lord of hosts, for the Lord is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!’ For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the Lord.

¹² “Thus says the Lord of hosts: In this place that is waste, without man or beast, and in all of its cities, there shall again be habitations of shepherds resting their flocks. ¹³ In the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the Shephelah, and in the cities of the Negeb, in the land of Benjamin, the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, flocks shall again pass under the hands of the one who counts them, says the Lord.

¹⁴ “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

Jeremiah 33:3; 6-14 (ESV)

Follow-up—work through these as you reflect on Jeremiah 33

1. Verse 3 invites us to call to God and hear “great and hidden things that you have not known.” What kinds of things do you most need to hear from Him right now?

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2. Israel caused their own mess—and yet God promises healing, cleansing, restoration. Why is that good news for us when we have contributed to our own trouble?

3. He says He will restore—and people will look on and ask what happened. How is restored joy a witness to others?

"Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known."

—Jeremiah 33:3 ESV

 PAUSE & WRITE

Is there a place where you have contributed to your own mess and given up hope of restoration? Write what you would say to God right now if you believed verse 3 was true for you.

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SECTION DISCUSS • DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Work through these nine questions individually first, then bring your responses to your group. Use the writing space provided.

Scriptural Understanding

1. Looking back at Luke 2:8-14 and Hebrews 12:2, how does Scripture present joy as the central reason for both Christ's birth and His death? What does it tell you about God's heart that the "good news of great joy" is announced before any teaching, miracle, or resurrection?

2. In John 17:13, Jesus prays that we would have His joy "fulfilled" in us—overflowing. In what context did He pray this, and what does the timing of this prayer add to its weight?

3. Psalm 16:11 says, "In Your presence there is fullness of joy." Tracing the thread through John 15, John 3:29, and Psalm 32:8, what is the relationship between abiding, hearing His voice, and following His instruction—and how does each contribute to joy?

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Deeper Understanding

1. Rich made the point that joy is an emotion—not just a theological idea. Why is it important to keep joy as an emotion, rather than reframing it as a stoic spiritual posture? What is lost when the church treats sorrow as a badge of honor?

2. Joy is described as both the fruit of God's supernatural work (Acts 8:8; 1 Kings 8:66) and the anticipation of it (Psalm 21). How can we be joyful before the resolution arrives—and what does that say about where joy actually comes from?

3. Psalm 91 promises deliverance from trouble; Isaiah 35 promises healing of the inner soul. How are these two kinds of work—outer rescue and inner healing—both necessary for a life of overflowing joy?

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Personal Application

1. If Jesus asked you the question Rich proposed—“Did you have joy? Were you joyful?”—and you had to answer honestly about the past month, what would you say? What is one obstacle you can name that has been keeping joy from being your normal way of life?

2. Think about a current trouble in your life. What would it look like, this week, to treat it as “an interesting adventure” rather than an “Uh oh”? What specifically would you do differently—in prayer, in your thoughts, in conversation with God—to live out Psalm 91 in this situation?

3. Jeremiah 33:3 invites you to call out and hear hidden things you do not yet know. Where in your life—a relationship, a decision, an old wound, a dream you have given up on—do you most need to hear God’s voice this week? Set aside time, and write down what you sense Him saying.



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He says, develop a life of thanksgiving—a life of praise—sharing His beautiful, miraculous works.

SECTION 1—A LIFE OF THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **When you think of someone who lives a life of thanksgiving and praise, what comes to mind?**
- **Have you tended to think of joy as a moment, or as a lifestyle? What is the difference?**
- **What “supernatural works” of God in your life would you tell someone about right now?**

⁷ Then on that day David first appointed that thanksgiving be sung to the Lord by Asaph and his brothers. ⁸ Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! ⁹ Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! ¹⁰ Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice! [...] ²³ Sing to the Lord, all the earth! Tell of his salvation from day to day. ²⁴ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples! ²⁵ For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and he is to be feared above all gods. ²⁶ For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens. ²⁷ Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his place. ²⁸ Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength! ²⁹ Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; ³⁰ tremble before him, all the earth; yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. ³¹ Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, and let them say among the nations, “The Lord reigns!”

—1 Chronicles 16:7-10; 23-31

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“In My presence is splendor and majesty, strength and joy.”

—1 Chronicles 16:27, paraphrased

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What does it mean to “serve the Lord with gladness”? Is gladness a feeling, a posture, or both?**
- **When you read “his steadfast love endures forever,” what do you actually picture?**

¹ Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! ² Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! ³ Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. ⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! ⁵ For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

—Psalm 100:1-5

FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGES

1. First Chronicles 16 ties thanksgiving and praise to telling “of all His wondrous works.” What is the relationship between experiencing His supernatural works and having a life of thanksgiving?

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2. Rich says, “In My presence is splendor and majesty, strength and joy.” What does it look like, in practical terms, to step into His presence today rather than waiting for circumstances to line up?

3. Psalm 100 commands joyful noise, gladness, singing, and thanksgiving. Which of those are most natural for you, and which are the hardest? Why?

SECTION 2—DEDICATE (CONSECRATE) YOUR LIFE TO HIM

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What does the word “consecrate” mean to you? When was the last time you used it?**
- **What does it look like to surrender your will—not in theory, but in a specific decision this week?**
- **Who are the people you are committed to following God with—your inner circle, your spouse, your group?**

¹ As soon as Solomon finished his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. ² And the priests could not enter the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord’s house. ³ When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.” ⁴ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the Lord. ⁵ King Solomon offered as a sacrifice 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. ⁶ The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to the Lord that King David had made for giving thanks to the Lord—for his steadfast love endures forever—whenever David offered praises by their ministry; opposite them the priests sounded trumpets, and all Israel stood.

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⁷ And Solomon consecrated the middle of the court that was before the house of the Lord, for there he offered the burnt offering and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar Solomon had made could not hold the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat. ⁸ At that time Solomon held the feast for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great assembly, from Lebo-hamath to the Brook of Egypt. ⁹ And on the eighth day they held a solemn assembly, for they had kept the dedication of the altar seven days and the feast seven days. ¹⁰ On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their homes, joyful and glad of heart for the prosperity that the Lord had granted to David and to Solomon and to Israel his people.

—2 Chronicles 7:1-10

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As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **When you are afraid, where do you naturally run first—to a person, to a fix, to a distraction, or to His presence?**
- **What does it mean, practically, to “dwell in the house of the Lord” when you are not in a church building?**

¹ The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ² When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. ³ Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. ⁴ One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. ⁵ For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock. ⁶ And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord. [...] ¹¹ Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. ¹² Give me not up to the will of my adversaries; for false witnesses have risen against me, and they breathe out violence. ¹³ I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! ¹⁴ Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

—Psalm 27:1-6; 11-14

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PAUSE & WRITE

Where in your life right now are you tempted to run to a fix instead of running to His presence? Write the situation in one sentence—then write what dwelling with Him in it might look like today.

FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGES

1. Second Chronicles 7 describes consecration as a sacrifice. What is the “sacrifice” God is asking you to bring as you surrender your will?

2. Psalm 27:4 says, “One thing have I asked of the Lord... that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.” What is the “one thing” you are most asking of Him in this season?

3. Rich says it is a habit—“Uh oh, I have a problem; I am going to go be with Him.” What is the current habit your problems trigger, and how would you like that to change?

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SECTION 3—RESTORE THE JOY OF YOUR SALVATION

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **What is the difference between fixing your sin and repenting from it?**
- **When you have walked away from God, what is the first thing you usually try to do—distract, perform, hide, or return?**
- **Out of all the things David could have asked God to restore, why do you think he asked for joy first?**

⁵ Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. ⁶ Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. ⁷ Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. ⁹ Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. ¹¹ Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

—Psalm 51:5-12

“Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.”

—Psalm 51:12

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PAUSE & WRITE

Have you exited recently? Don't fix anything. Just come back. Write a one-sentence prayer below—"Restore to me the joy of my salvation, because I am back in Your presence."

FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGE

1. David asks God to "create in me a clean heart" and to "renew a right spirit within me." Why does he describe these as God's work rather than his own?

2. Rich says joy is an indicator—when joy is gone, it is a signal. What signals does loss of joy look like in your own life (fear, anxiety, determination, heaviness)?

3. Why is repentance described as "coming back" rather than "fixing the problem"? What is the difference, in practice?

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SECTION 4—WALK IN DIALOGUE WITH GOD

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **When you pray, are you asking God to do your will, or asking Him for His will? What is the difference?**
- **Have you ever asked God a specific question and listened for an answer? What happened?**
- **What would it change about your day if you believed every promise of God to you was Yes—not “maybe,” not “perhaps”?**

²³ In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. ²⁴ Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

—John 16:23-24

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As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- If God's promises are always Yes in Christ—never Yes-and-No—what does that change about how you ask Him for things?

¹⁸ As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been Yes and No. ¹⁹For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. ²⁰ For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. ²¹ And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, ²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. ²³ But I call God to witness against me—it was to spare you that I refrained from coming again to Corinth. ²⁴ Not that we lord it over your faith, but we work with you for your joy, for you stand firm in your faith.

—2 Corinthians 1:18-24

PAUSE & WRITE

Bring Him a real question right now. Not “Would You do X?”—but “What is Your will here?” Write the question. Then quiet yourself, and write what you sense Him say.

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FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGES

1. John 16:24 says, “Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” How is the fullness of joy connected to the practice of asking?

2. In 2 Corinthians 1, Paul says all of God’s promises are Yes in Christ. What promise of God do you most need to receive as Yes today?

3. Rich draws a sharp line between asking God to do your will and asking Him for His will. Where in your prayer life does that line need to be redrawn?

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SECTION 5—STAY IN UNITY THROUGH DISAGREEMENT

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Is anger a sin? What is the difference between being angry and sinning in your anger?**
- **When you are in conflict with your spouse or someone close, what happens to your joy?**
- **Have you ever been in a disagreement and found joy in the middle of it? What made that possible?**

³ But know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him. ⁴ Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah ⁵ Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord. ⁶ There are many who say, “Who will show us some good? Lift up the light of your face upon us, O Lord!” ⁷ You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound. ⁸ In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.

—Psalm 4:3-8

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As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- What does it mean to “complete joy by being of one mind”? Have you experienced that with anyone?
- When you and someone you love are in disagreement, do you typically push for unity, push for your way, or cave?

¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

—Philippians 2:1-6

PAUSE & WRITE

Bring to mind one disagreement you are currently in—with a spouse, family member, friend, or co-worker. Where are you headed in that disagreement? Can you find joy in the journey toward unity, even while you remain in honest disagreement?

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FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGES

1. Psalm 4:7 says, “You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.” What earthly “grain and wine” is currently competing with God’s joy in your heart?

2. Philippians 2:4 says, “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” How is this different from caving in?

3. Rich says joy can coexist with unresolved disagreement, but not deeply with sin. What is the practical difference?

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SECTION 6—COOPERATE WITH GOD THROUGH TRIALS

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **How do you usually respond when you are under “extreme pressure”?
What is your default move?**
- **Have you experienced a trial that turned out to be a “test of faith”?
What was being tested?**
- **What is the difference between God’s solution and your solution to a problem?**

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

—James 1:2-8

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FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGE

1. James says trials produce steadfastness, “that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” How does that reframe what a trial is for?

2. Rich says it does not matter the source of the adversity—only that God’s solution is to deliver us. What changes when you stop asking, “Why is this happening?” and start asking, “What is His solution?”

3. Linda’s test was a phone call when she thought she had forgiven. What is the difference between believing you have got it and actually having it?

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SECTION 7—ASK HIM FOR WISDOM

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- What are you currently asking God for wisdom about?
- Have you ever asked God for wisdom and then second-guessed His answer? What did that look like?
- What does it mean to be “double-minded” when you ask?

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. ⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

—James 1:5-8

PAUSE & WRITE

Write down one thing you need wisdom from God about. Now write a single sentence: “I trust You will get it to me.”

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FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGE

1. James 1:5 says God gives wisdom “generously to all without reproach.” What does it mean to you that He gives without reproach—without scolding?

2. Rich says the test of faith is not whether God will give wisdom on the right thing, but whether you trust that He will give it at all. Where are you currently double-minded?

3. What does it look like to ask once and then trust Him to deliver, instead of asking and then re-deciding?

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SECTION 8—REFRESH ONE ANOTHER IN FELLOWSHIP

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Who is your inner circle—the people who refresh your heart?**
- **When you are heavy, who is the first person you call?**
- **Whom are you currently refreshing? How would they describe being with you?**

⁴ I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, ⁶ and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

—Philemon 1:4-7

FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGE

1. Paul prays that “the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.” How does sharing faith become a refreshment to others?

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2. Rich says the question to ask a friend in trouble is, “What did God say?” Why is that question so refreshing?

3. Where in your life is community currently functioning the way Paul describes? Where is it absent—and what is one step you could take this week?

SECTION 9—CELEBRATE AND FEAST

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **When did you last truly celebrate? What were you celebrating?**
- **On a scale from “drive, drive, drive” to “stop and feast,” where do you live most weeks?**
- **What rhythms of celebration could you build into your year?**

¹ Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel. ² For the king and his princes and all the assembly in Jerusalem had taken counsel to keep the Passover in the second month—³ for they could not keep it at that time because the priests had not consecrated themselves in sufficient number, nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem—⁴ and the plan seemed right to the king and all the assembly. ⁵ So they decreed to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beersheba to Dan, that the people should come and keep the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel, at Jerusalem, for they had not kept it as often as prescribed. ⁶ So couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his princes, as the king had commanded,

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saying, "O people of Israel, return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria." [...] ¹³ And many people came together in Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month, a very great assembly. [...] ²² And Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good skill in the service of the Lord. So they ate the food of the festival for seven days, sacrificing peace offerings and giving thanks to the Lord, the God of their fathers. ²³ Then the whole assembly agreed together to keep the feast for another seven days. So they kept it for another seven days with gladness. [...] ²⁶ So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. ²⁷ Then the priests and the Levites arose and blessed the people, and their voice was heard, and their prayer came to his holy habitation in heaven.

—2 Chronicles 30:1-6, 13, 22-23, 26-27

 PAUSE & WRITE

On the calendar, when is your next intentional celebration? If there isn't one, choose a date and write it below—even just one. Who will you celebrate with? What will you rehearse together about what God has been doing?

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FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGE

1. Hezekiah's assembly extended their feast another seven days simply because the joy was so great. What does this say about the role of celebration in our walk with God?

2. Rich says Americans are weak at celebration. Do you agree? Why or why not?

3. What is the difference between celebrating accomplishment and celebrating God's deliverance and provision?

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SECTION 10—JOY IN WORK, MARRIAGE, AND FAMILY

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Are you enjoying your work? (Remember, “work” is what you do every day, not just what pays.)**
- **Are you enjoying your marriage? Your kids?**
- **If the answer is “not really”—is it a heart issue, an unresolved conflict, or a season?**

²⁴ There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, ²⁵ for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? ²⁶ For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

⁹ What gain has the worker from his toil? ¹⁰ I have seen the business that God has given to the children of man to be busy with. ¹¹ He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man’s heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. ¹² I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; ¹³ also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God’s gift to man.

—Ecclesiastes 2:24-26; 3:9-13

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PAUSE & WRITE

Take an honest inventory. Where is your joy thriving—work, marriage, family? Where is it stuck? Don't fix it on paper—just notice it. Ask Him what is in the way, and write what you sense.

FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGE

1. Solomon says, "Apart from Him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?" What is the connection between God and the simple enjoyment of daily life?

2. Rich says joy in work, marriage, and family is the highest and best—before ministry. Why does he order them that way?

3. Where in your daily life have you accepted "not really enjoying it" as normal? What might He be inviting you to address?

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SECTION 11—CARRY OUT YOUR ASSIGNMENT

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **If God has put you somewhere “for such a time as this,” what is the “this”?**
- **What might happen if you said yes to your assignment, even if it looked impossible?**
- **Are you trying to solve God’s problem, or trying to follow His instructions?**

¹ When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and he cried out with a loud and bitter cry. ² He went up to the entrance of the king’s gate, for no one was allowed to enter the king’s gate clothed in sackcloth. ³ And in every province, wherever the king’s command and his decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and many of them lay in sackcloth and ashes. [...] ¹⁰ Then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, ¹¹ “All the king’s servants and the people of the king’s provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—to be put to death, except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live. But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days.” ¹² And they told Mordecai what Esther had said. ¹³ Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, “Do not think to yourself that in the king’s palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. ¹⁴ For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

¹³ A copy of what was written was to be issued as a decree in every province, being publicly displayed to all peoples, and the Jews were to be ready on that day to take vengeance on their enemies. ¹⁴ So the couriers, mounted on their swift horses that were used in the king’s service, rode out hurriedly, urged by the king’s command. And the decree was issued in Susa the citadel. ¹⁵ Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a robe of fine linen and purple, and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced. ¹⁶ The Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor. ¹⁷ And in every province and in every city,

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wherever the king's command and his edict reached, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them.

—Esther 4:1-3, 10-14; 8:13-17

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **When you read this parable, do you tend to identify with the five-talent servant, the two-talent servant, or the one-talent servant? Why?**

¹⁴ "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶ He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. ¹⁷ So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. ¹⁸ But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' ²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' ²² And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.' ²³ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

—Matthew 25:14-23

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PAUSE & WRITE

Write your honest answer: What has God assigned you to right now? List the people. List the work. Don't add what He hasn't added. Don't subtract what He has.

FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGES

1. Esther 4:14—"Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" What is the "such a time as this" He has placed you in?

2. Matthew 25—both servants who were faithful received the same words: "Enter into the joy of your master." What does that say about how God measures faithfulness?

3. Rich distinguishes between joining a ministry and saying yes to God's present assignment. Where is that distinction important for you right now?

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SECTION 12—DISCIPLE OTHERS

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Who are you currently walking alongside in their walk with God?**
- **What does it mean to “help someone walk into the covenant”?**
- **When have you experienced the joy of seeing someone else receive truth from God?**

¹ The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. ² Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul. ³ For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. ⁴ I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

—3 John 1:1-4

FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGE

1. John says, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” Whose walking in truth would bring that level of joy to you?

2. Rich says discipling is not about us doing the work—it is about bringing someone into His presence. How does that change how you approach discipling someone?

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3. Where might you be over-complicating discipleship in a way that is robbing your joy?

SECTION 13—JOY INTO ETERNITY

As you review these verses, answer the following questions/thoughts:

- **Have you tended to think of joy as something you will fully experience only after this life?**
- **What changes if joy in eternity is the continuation of joy now, rather than the beginning of joy?**

¹⁷ “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. ¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. ²⁰ No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed. ²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands. ²³ They shall not labor in vain or bear children for calamity, for they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord, and their descendants with them. ²⁴ Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent’s food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain,” says the Lord.

—Isaiah 65:17-25

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FOLLOW-UP—REFLECT ON THE PASSAGE

1. Isaiah 65 describes a future where labor is not in vain and where God answers before we even call. How is that future already breaking into our lives now?

2. If eternity has already begun, what is one way you would live differently this week?

3. What does it mean that we are not waiting to enjoy God—we are practicing forever right now?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These nine questions are for group conversation at the close of the lesson. They are organized into Scriptural Understanding, Deeper Understanding, and Personal Application. Numbering runs 1 through 9.

Scriptural Understanding

1. First Chronicles 16:27 says, "Splendor and majesty are before Him; strength and joy are in His place." In context, what is the relationship between being in God's presence and experiencing splendor, strength, and joy? What might this mean for the follower of Christ today?

2. In John 16:24, Jesus says, "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." Unpack the keyword "ask" in light of His statement that, until that point, the disciples had asked nothing in His name. What did Jesus mean by that, and what is He inviting us into now?

3. James 1:2-4 calls us to "count it all joy" when we meet trials, because the testing of our faith produces steadfastness. Why does Scripture tie joy specifically to trials, and what does it mean that steadfastness should have its "full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing"?

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Deeper Understanding

4. Rich teaches that joy is not “act joyful” but “express joy because of what God is doing in your life.” In your own words, explain the difference—and how that distinction reframes the whole concept of a “life of joy.”

5. When David sinned, he asked God to “restore to me the joy of my salvation.” Rich says joy is the indicator that we are walking with God. How does that reframe the role of joy in the Christian life—as a measurement of relationship rather than a measurement of circumstance?

6. Throughout this lesson, Rich repeatedly says we can be joyful in disagreement, in conflict, in trials, and in unresolved situations. What is the theological foundation for that claim, and how does it differ from simply suppressing or denying difficult emotions?

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Personal Application

7. Of the twelve practices in this lesson—thanksgiving and praise, consecration, restoration, dialogue, unity in disagreement, cooperating with trials, asking for wisdom, fellowship, celebration, joy in work and family, faithfulness to your assignment, and discipleship—which one is currently most absent from your life? What is one specific step you will take this week to begin building it?

8. Rich and Linda model joy as a lifestyle, not a moment—quarterly celebrations, refreshing fellowship, dialogue with God, faithfulness to their assignment in the season they are in. As you look at the rhythms of your own life, where would others say your joy is most visible? Where is it hidden, and why?

9. Rich closes by saying, “Eternity is now.” If you truly believed that joy now and joy then are the same continuous joy, what is one thing you would stop waiting for—and one thing you would start practicing today?

AN INVITATION TO GO DEEPER

This workbook is a starting point, designed to open your eyes to the incredible life of partnership God has for you. But the journey of walking in the Spirit, hearing His voice, and ministering His power is a daily one, and we are committed to providing resources to help you live it out.

If this material has stirred your heart and you are hungry for more, we invite you to explore the other resources our ministry provides. We have developed these tools specifically to equip you and your community to walk in the fullness of what you have learned.

- **Books and Small Group Curricula:** For those who want to build a solid, biblical foundation, our books and curricula provide in-depth teaching on abiding in Christ, hearing God's voice, and living in the freedom of the Kingdom. They are perfect for personal study or for creating a powerful small group environment where you can learn and grow together.
- **Podcasts:** For encouragement on the go, our podcasts feature practical teachings and real-life testimonies of how these principles are transforming lives, families, and businesses every single day.
- **Retreats:** For a truly immersive experience, we invite you to attend one of our retreats. These are dedicated times set apart to unplug from the world, press into the presence of God, and receive personal ministry and revelation that can accelerate your journey in Him.

You were not meant to walk this path alone. To explore these resources and take the next step in your adventure with God, please visit our website. We look forward to partnering with you as you discover the joy and power of living the full covenant life He has for you.

More information is available at www.AbideMinistries.com



History of **Abide Ministries**



In the 1990s, Rich and Linda Case received a call from God to dig into what it means to truly live in the Spirit.

In the 1990s, Rich and Linda Case received a call from God to dig into what it means to truly live in the Spirit. They had been believers for most of their lives and regularly attended church and Bible studies, but began to realize that, despite knowing the Bible intellectually, their personal experiences seemed disconnected from the promises and truths found in scripture. As they then learned these essential truths through their abiding and hearing God's voice – and began to see the grand life play out in their lives God called them to give that knowledge away. In 2001, God initiated the ABIDE ministry at a retreat with friends in Austria, and through their personal experience of this abiding life, their friends noticed the change in their lives and inquired if Rich and Linda could host a similar retreat the following year. This was repeated three years in a row, and then God called them to host weekend retreats in their home in Colorado.

Through the formal development of the truths revealed by God with Abiding and additional electives, they founded All for Jesus – Living Waters Ministries, now Abide Ministries – and have seen it grow exponentially since then, with 24+ retreat leaders all over the world, 29 online courses, eight books on various aspects of living life with Christ, and a daily podcast. Rich and Linda have also worked with various churches to strengthening them with the truths of an abiding life in Christ, and seeing Christ bring reconciliation and new vision to desperate situations.

Their heart is to bring the truths and promises of God to as many people as possible, showing everyone that when you abide in Christ and seek Him daily, your life can be completely and utterly transformed – enabling you to experience the grand life promised by God.



Vision

At our core, we believe in walking along God's path and connecting to the vine (abiding). As we walk in unity with others and understand God's Word as the truth, we are sure to experience His promised grand life and thus, willingly accept God's will as our chosen path.



Mission

1. Live out and invite everyone to experience the grand, spectacular, abundant life by hearing God's voice.
2. Share God's majesty, a close relationship with us as he yearns for our restoration.
3. God is majestic, grand and pure goodness, so that we can experience His nature in real life.
4. Communicate to everyone, irrespective of their condition, that all are meant to experience God's Divine Life (grand, majestic), by receiving His personal plan for us.
5. God delivers this life for us in a SUPERNATURAL way, transcending human comprehension, and thus, becoming normal in our life.
6. Teach that personal truths are revealed to us by God, grounded on His word – the embodiment of Truth.
7. Recognize that abiding in Christ changes our life in tangible, real ways, and is not just learning about or studying this life.
8. Teach that as we abide in Christ, we learn to understand and follow God's will for our lives, as He leads us personally into His grand, Divine plan for us. His personal plan calls us into His bigger story with our best interest at heart (blessed to bless others).

Statement of Non-Profit Status

Abide Ministries is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization that has been fully funded by our founders, leaders and retreat participants since its inception.

Tax-ID number: 27-1731819

Testimonies

"If I'm not abiding, I feel like I'm dying. Abiding is living...It's powerful to know that you have God's perspective on something."



Steve

"This was the first time that I understood what people meant by God's living Word. And I've been a Christian for a lot of years, but this was the first time it really came alive for me and I really could experience that."



Dan

"It doesn't matter where you are at in your walk. If you just got saved yesterday or if you've been a 20+ year believer like I have, learning how to hear God's voice and learning His will is just as important in day one as it is in day 3,426. You wanna hear God's will and this course has helped me hear Him more clearly."



Bob

"Abiding turned out to be the most transformational thing I've ever had since salvation in my Christian walk and in our marriage, and it's just been amazing. God has a path for us and He is there and He's showing it to us."



Heath

"Before, in my quiet time, it was more of a checklist thing for me to do in the morning, and, honestly, some mornings it was the thing that went if I was busy, and some days it didn't even happen. Now, it's become so personal to me and the time flies by in the morning and God speaks so directly to me and I just never felt that way on a daily basis before. That has been life-altering for me."



Rebecca

"I heard about people living in peace, I heard about people living in joy, and realizing all kinds of things around them are happening. And then we realize, wait a minute, we're there, we have peace beyond understanding."



Brad

Giving to the Ministry

Have you experienced abundant blessing from your time with Abide Ministries?

Pay it forward by donating at abideministries.com/donate and help us support others in learning how to seek Christ and abide in Him! We appreciate your desire to help us share the Abundant Life with the rest of the world.



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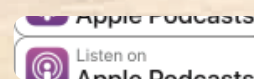
Escape the chaos and uncertainty of the world with our podcast, ***“Come and See, Finding Truth in a World of Chaos,”*** available on YouTube, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify.



CHANNEL



PLAYLIST PAGE



Tune in five days a week as our hosts, Rich Case and Kathy Rocconi, dive into the scriptures and discuss what it looks like to live an abiding life with Christ. Join us as we seek God's truth in a world of turmoil and darkness.

Online Courses



Abide Ministries online courses uncover life-changing biblical truths, with practical application and wisdom. Our courses are joyful and life-giving and are perfect for small groups as well as individuals.

Each course has an accompanying workbook. Join us as we learn about biblical topics like Hearing God's Voice, Discerning God's Will, the Covenant, Living in Forgiveness, Living in the Kingdom of God, Living in the Supernatural, Christ, Clutter and the Calendar, Living the Grand Life, and many, many more.



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Do you have friends or a small group that you would like to experience what you just experienced?

Would you be interested in attending another retreat, which we call electives to go deeper in your walk with God?

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