

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Joy In the Presence of the Lord
Psalm 16

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #...). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

In the Name of the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #325; CCLI #16828

The Joy of the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #569; CCLI #14569

He Has Made Me Glad (I Will Enter His Gates), *The Worship Hymnal* # 579; CCLI #1493

We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise, *The Worship Hymnal* #581; CCLI #9990

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Joy In the Presence of the Lord

Focal Text

Psalm 16

Background Text

Psalm 121; 123; Acts 13:35; Romans 8:38-39

Main Idea

A perfect relationship with the Lord includes total dependence on God for all that is good and true delight in those who also love the Lord. We experience joy in God's presence. We see the many blessings of God as a delightful inheritance.

Question to Explore

How can we experience this dependence on God so that we find true joy in the presence of the Lord?

Teaching Aim

Learners will enjoy this psalm in personal meditation.

Learners will seek to view their lives as blessed in many ways.

Learners will agree with the psalmist that one should have no relationships with ungodliness.

Gathering together:

Sing:

In the Name of the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #325; CCLI #16828

First thoughts:

Our theme today is "Joy in the presence of the Lord". There are many references to joy in the Bible. An early one is found in Deuteronomy 16:14-15 describing the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. This was a harvest celebration. The writer admonished the people ***Be joyful at your Feast—you, your sons and daughters, your***

menservants and maidservants and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. For seven days celebrate the Feast to the Lord your God at the place the Lord will choose. For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands and your joy will be complete.

We see several elements in this celebration. There is gratitude for the good harvest, the satisfaction of work done and the knowledge of provision for the future. There is an inclusion of everyone in the festivity. They had not all contributed equally to the success of the harvest, but they were all a part of the joy of the celebration. The Feast was to last seven days; this was not a hurried blessing at the beginning of a Thanksgiving meal. It was a significant time of rejoicing over all of God's blessings. There was a promise of joy that was complete.

A dramatic incident of joy followed the reading of the Book of the Law of Moses by Ezra. The wall around Jerusalem was completed under Jeremiah's leadership. For a long time, the Book of the Law had been largely forgotten by those who had returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. On this day, all the people assembled "as one man" (Nehemiah 8:1). They listened to Ezra the priest read aloud from daybreak till noon. ***Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground.***

The people wept with joy after the reading, but Nehemiah, the governor said ***"Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength"*** (Nehemiah 8:10).

These two Old Testament examples of joy in the presence of the Lord remind us that gratitude for blessings bestowed and worshipping by listening to the Word of the Lord are two of the elements of joy. Our study will remind us of those and others.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Sing:

The Joy of the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #569; CCLI #14569

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Joy In the Presence of the Lord

Focal Text

Psalm 16

Background Text

Psalm 121; 123; Acts 13:35; Romans 8:38-39

Main Idea

A perfect relationship with the Lord includes total dependence on God for all that is good and true delight in those who also love the Lord. We experience joy in God's presence. We see the many blessings of God as a delightful inheritance.

Question to Explore

How can we experience this dependence on God so that we find true joy in the presence of the Lord?

Teaching Aim

Learners will enjoy this psalm in personal meditation.

Learners will seek to view their lives as blessed in many ways.

Learners will agree with the psalmist that one should have no relationships with ungodliness.

Introduction to your personal study:

Read Psalm 4, 21, and 30 devotionally this week. Start a list on the first day of the week of things that bring you joy. Add to it each day. Consider how these joys are gifts from God.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series (Bible Teaching #....) of Bible Study and Worship sessions. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Psalm 16: 1-4

Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.

I said to the Lord, “You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.”

As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.

The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips.

One important characteristic of the Psalms is the intimate way in which the psalmist speaks with the Lord. These verses are examples of a conversation with God. Today’s theme “Joy in the presence of the Lord” should help us realize the everyday nature of the joy of being in the presence of the Lord.

Here, the psalmist speaks of the safety which is his because he takes refuge in the Lord. All around the world today, Christians are faced with unsafe conditions. Many live in war zones and face daily the possibility of their own death. Others are in areas considered safe, but in reality are not safe. A recent incident in a university town in a southwestern state of the United States involved pipe bombs placed on Sunday morning in a garbage can close to a Catholic church and in a mail box close to a Baptist church. Fortunately, both bombs exploded at a time when the congregation was safely inside at worship or had not yet arrived for worship. The safety of which the psalmist speaks is much more than physical safety. It involves a reliance upon the Lord for calmness in the face of danger; ability to cope with situations beyond one’s control and peace even when there has been death and destruction.

Apart from you I have no good thing declares the psalmist. As we list the good things in our lives, we too acknowledge that we have nothing good that is not given by God. Family, friends, ability to learn, food, clothing, fun times are all gifts of God. Realizing this is one of the most liberating things one can do.

As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.

“Saints are people touched by God’s holiness. No one is saintly, or holy, apart from God. Only God is holy. Those who come into right relationship with Him may be said to share in His holiness” (**Disciple’s Study Bible**, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, p. 645). Godly people who are a part of our lives are another of God’s great blessings. These are people who live seeking God’s blessing and seeking to be a blessing to others. They may be rich, poor, well-educated, uneducated, old, young, teenagers, beautiful, good at sports or not. They may be people who blessed us in the past or who are a part of our daily life. Thinking about them should bring great joy and delight.

The psalmist does not concern himself with those who run after other gods. That is, he does not seek their friendship or their praise. “While the Hebrews attached great sacral importance to the vital qualities of blood (Lev. 1&;10-16; Deut. 12:23-27; Gen. 9:4), its use in ritual was carefully regulated (Lev. 1:5ff), and consumption of it strictly forbidden. The poet has reference here to a ‘pagan’ rite, attested in the nonbiblical literature of the ancient Near East, in which blood was regarded as a special food of deity” (**The Broadman Bible Commentary: Esther, Psalms**, Nashville: Broadman Press, 1971, p. 198)

Christ – followers, however, concern themselves with those who are not believers and wish to share their faith with them. However, like the psalmist, they do not seek their approval or share in their activities which would not honour God.

Psalm 16: 5-6

Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.

These beautiful verses are favourite ones for many people. They affirm the psalmist’s contentment with his life. “Portion” ordinarily refers to an allotted share of property. Here its meaning is more encompassing. The psalmist affirms that the way of life which he has experienced has been a good one. We know that David’s life had not always been an easy one. He had many responsibilities as king. He sinned and paid the consequences of that sin. His children turned against him as did his friend and mentor, King Saul. He was hunted by soldiers who had once been faithful to him. But his overall assessment of his life was positive.

“Cup” has a figurative meaning of “destiny”. God’s plan for David – the shepherd boy – was far more than he could ever have imagined and in spite of its difficulties, David sees it as a good destiny. All that he has is secure because that what is really important – his relationship to God – can never be taken from him.

Another picture is that of the choicest lands having been given to the psalmist. The opportunities which he experienced have been pleasant ones. His inheritance has been all he could have ever wanted.

It would be interesting to know at what point in the psalmist's life these words were written. We can assume, however, that it was the attitude which the psalmist took whatever the outward circumstances were at the moment.

What a difference such an attitude makes in the life of any person. Perhaps one of the most persistent attitudes which is a part of our human nature is our desire to always be longing for more. We want more money, more opportunities for success in our area of work, more leisure time to travel, more of the latest technological innovations. These beautiful verses can help us keep our perspective.

Psalm 16: 7-8

I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is my right hand, I will not be shaken.

A passage from a mystery novel speaks to the need for a constant sustaining relationship with God. A man stands sat the bedside of his seriously ill wife and does not seem to know what to do. The author of the novel wrote: "The minutes were slipping by, and still they could think of nothing adequate to say to make up for all the mistakes and missed opportunities. 'Thank you' or 'I love you' was too hard to say and too simple.

And for many it was the fear of death itself, the absolute knowledge that one day they must face it too, and in spite of even profound religious faith, they did not really know what lay beyond. An hour a week of formal ritual was no comfort to the mind or the soul when faced with reality. Faith must be part of the daily web of life, a trust tested in a myriad of smaller things, before it can be a bridge over the chasm of such a passage from the know to the unknown" (Perry, Anne. **Cain His Brother**. New York: Ivy Books, 1995, p. 146).

This would not be the reality of the psalmist. He has found the Lord the best of Counselors – available even in the worries of the dark night. The Lord – His precepts, His promises, His love – is always before him. The Lord is his right hand. This familiar expression is defined as the person with whom someone of power relates to best. A right hand man or woman is a trusted helper. The Lord is the trusted helper of the psalmist. Because He is there, the psalmist will not be shaken – upset, worried, or panicked.

Psalm 16: 9-11

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Because all of the things the psalmist has already affirmed, he is glad. He speaks of God's goodness – "my tongue rejoices". He is not worried about what will happen to his body in the present or in the future. The grave is not a fearful place where the body decays. Instead the psalmist anticipates eternal pleasures with the Lord after a life journey that was fulfilling. Acts 13:35-37 states: ***So it is stated elsewhere: "You will not let your Holy One see decay." For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.***

This is a passage with a very clear Messianic message. ***You will not let your Holy One see decay*** and ***But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay*** refer to Christ – not to the Psalmist. We can only be amazed that the psalmist could declare these truths so many years before Christ's coming.

"Such contemplation leads, as it so often does in an almost over-whelming outburst of joy, for the fellowship which he knows in the Presence of God is a portion from which nothing, not even death itself, can separate him. ***Sheol*** is exclusively a Hebrew word which occurs 66 times in the Old Testament in reference to the dwelling place of the dead; ***Pit*** or abyss is here simply a parallel term. Both terms belong to the popular lore of the day on the subject of the dead and their whereabouts.

In the Presence of God, he has come to a new understanding of what life is and of what makes it valuable. And within the perspective of this new understanding, he realizes that the death which most men fear no longer poses any threat to him. It is the fulfillment of joy (lit. a satiation of joys) to be in Yahweh's Presence, and this is a communion which endures" (The Broadman Bible Commentary, p. 199).

The psalmist does not look at eternity from the perspective of knowing about the victory of Jesus over death. His faith must come from the assurance that an intimate walk with God which he has experienced in life will continue after life has ended. "It is possible that this psalmist is standing on the threshold of belief in eternal life not only as a present reality but also as a future hope" (***The Layman's Bible Commentary: Psalms***, Richmond, Virginia, John Knox Press, 1960, p. 43).

Peter recalled these words when he declared at Pentecost ***Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and***

foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. David said about him

***'I saw the Lord always before me,
Because he is at my right hand,
I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices:
My body also will live in hope,
Because you will not abandon me to the grave,
Nor will you let your Holy One see decay.
You have made known to me the paths of life;
You will fill me with joy in your presence'.***

Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,

***'The Lord said to my Lord:
Sit at my right hand
Until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet'.***

Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Acts 2: 22-36.

Peter understood that David had God-given insight to the coming of the Messiah. The listeners at Pentecost knew about King David and the promise that his descendant would be the Messiah. Peter affirms that Jesus is that long-awaited one. This would have had a powerful effect on his Jewish listeners.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

A perfect relationship with the Lord includes total dependence on God for all that is good and true delight in those who also love the Lord. We experience joy in God's presence. We see the many blessings of God as a delightful inheritance. Your goal as leader is to affirm these truths and guide each participant to rejoice in God's presence.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Joy In the Presence of the Lord

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Psalm 16

Background Text

Psalm 121; 123; Acts 13:35; Romans 8:38-39

Main Idea

A perfect relationship with the Lord includes total dependence on God for all that is good and true delight in those who also love the Lord. We experience joy in God's presence. We see the many blessings of God as a delightful inheritance.

Question to Explore

How can we experience this dependence on God so that we find true joy in the presence of the Lord?

Teaching Aim

Learners will enjoy this psalm in personal meditation.

Learners will seek to view their lives as blessed in many ways.

Learners will agree with the psalmist that one should have no relationships with ungodliness.

Connect with Life:

If appropriate, bring a collection of pictures representing things that bring joy to members of your group. Have each participant choose some and place them on a

cardboard with the title “Joy” If you choose not to use pictures, encourage participants to write or draw an illustration of things that bring joy.

Guide the Study:

Remind the group of the theme for today’s study “Joy in the Presence of the Lord”. Tell them that we will examine the joy which the psalmist expressed in Psalm 16 and contemplate our own joy in His presence.

Have someone read Psalm 16: 1-4.

Look for other passages in which the psalmist speaks of safety – Psalm 37:3; Psalms 4:8; Psalms 70:1,5 are a few examples.

Say: The psalmist looked to God for safety and refuge. That safety and refuge is available to us today.

Ask: Can the psalmist think of any good thing he has which is not a gift of the Lord?

Explain that “Saints are people touched by God’s holiness. No one is saintly, or holy, apart from God. Only God is holy. Those who come into right relationship with Him may be said to share in His holiness” (**Disciple’s Study Bible**, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1988, p. 645). Godly people who are a part of our lives are another of God’s great blessings. These are people who live seeking God’s blessing and seeking to be a blessing to others. They may be rich, poor, well-educated, uneducated, old, young, teenagers, beautiful, good at sports or not. They may be people who blessed us in the past or who are a part of our daily life. Thinking about them should bring great joy and delight.

You need to realize that some in your group may believe that saints are those chosen by the Catholic Church and other Christian “Orthodox” organizations because of exemplary lives. They are named after their death and after much research to indicate their truly pure and godly lives. The definition of saint which the psalmist used was much broader.

Allow time for each participant to think of someone in his/her life who would fit this broader definition of “saint”.

Consider why the psalmist wanted nothing to do with those who “run after other gods”.

Ask: How do we need to relate to those who have not yet come to understand the joy that is found in Christ.

Have someone read Psalm 16: 5-6.

From the background material explain the meaning of portion, cup and lot. ("Portion" ordinarily refers to an allotted share of property. Here its meaning is more encompassing. The psalmist affirms that the way of life which he has experienced has been a good one. "Cup" has a figurative meaning of 'destiny'. Both of these ideas are seen in the word "lot" as it is used here).

Ask for comments on how these beautiful verses are meaningful to the group.

Have someone read Psalm 16: 7-8.

Ask if any have ever been awake in the night concerned about the demands of the following day?

Discuss what the psalmist did when this happened to him.

Say: You may have a counselor here on this earth - a paid professional, a dear friend, a pastor. Would you call them in the middle of the night to help you with a problem? Who can you call upon?

Consider what the psalmist meant when he said ***I have set the Lord always before me.***

Ask what is meant when we say "He's my right hand".

Share the following excerpt from a mystery novel and ask for responses to it.

"And for many it was the fear of death itself, the absolute knowledge that one day they must face it too, and in spite of even profound religious faith, they did not really know what lay beyond. An hour a week of formal ritual was no comfort to the mind or the soul when faced with reality. Faith must be part of the daily web of life, a trust tested in a myriad of smaller things, before it can be a bridge over the chasm of such a passage from the know to the unknown" (Perry, Anne. **Cain His Brother**. New York: Ivy Books, 1995, p. 146).

Have someone read Psalm 16: 9-11.

Ask: Does the psalmist express his gladness? (My tongue rejoices)

Inquire how our body often expresses our inability to rest secure. (We toss and turn; we can't sleep, we ache all over)

Describe how Old Testament people thought of Sheol or the Pit.

Does the psalmist seem to be dreading this?

Identify the teaching about the Messiah which are present here. (***nor will you let your Holy Ones see decay.***) Explain that Peter referred to this Psalm and to David's understanding of the Messiah in Acts 2:22-36. Peter used it to declare that Jesus was

the Messiah of whom David spoke. This affirmation by David would have had a powerful effect on the Jewish listeners.

How does verse 11 indicate the feelings of the psalmist about his life.

Why have we titled this lesson “Joy in the Presence of the Lord”?

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Encourage the group to read this psalm devotionally in the week to come. Suggest that they memorize verses 5-6.

Psalm 16: 5-6

Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

YOUTH!!! TAKE TEN

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Joy In the Presence of the Lord

Psalm 16

youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Psalm 16: 5-6

Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.

Discuss the meaning of these verses and rewrite them in modern language which you might share with a friend. Spend time helping one another memorize the verses.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Joy In the Presence of the Lord***
Psalm 16**Beginning the Service:**

Sing:

He Has Made Me Glad (I Will Enter His Gates), *The Worship Hymnal* # 579; CCLI #1493

We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise, *The Worship Hymnal* #581; CCLI #9990

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

We are asked to pray for a church multiplication movement in Tunisia, North Africa. Here are 10 universal elements for every Church Multiplication Movement:

1. Extraordinary prayer
2. Abundant evangelism
3. Intentional planting of reproducing churches
4. God's word
5. Local leadership
6. Lay Leadership
7. House church networks
8. Churches planting churches
9. Rapid multiplication
10. Healthy churches

Although we are concerned about all of these elements, we are glad to see house church networks included and will pray for those networks to be established.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Every Good and Perfect Gift James 1:17

One important characteristic of the Psalms is the intimate way in which the psalmist speaks with the Lord. The verses we studied are examples of a conversation with God. Today's theme "Joy in the presence of the Lord" should help us realize the everyday nature of the joy of being in the presence of the Lord.

The book of James is also full of pithy sayings and wise advice. The scripture chosen for today's worship time is usually studied like this: ***Every good and perfect gift is from above.***

A sweet 12 year old boy used this part of the verse on a wooden plaque which he made for his grandmother. He used an engraving tool to write the verse and then around the edges he placed the names of her ten grandchildren. It is a constant reminder that those ten children are good and perfect gifts given by God.

But, James had placed a warning in the preceding verses. ***Don't be deceived, my dear brothers (James 1:16).*** Earlier in the chapter he had written ***Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (VV.2-4)***

James, like the psalmist, knew that joy came not from living a life free of trials and disappointments. We focus on the good things God has given us - family, health, beautiful sunrises and sunsets, meaningful work. We find joy in those. At the same time we must seek to understand that joy in the presence of God is real when there is illness, death, war and discouragement.

The complete verse reads like this: ***Every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.***

“God’s goodness can always be depended upon. He wants to give us what is good for us. He is not moody like the gods of the ancient world who had to be placated or humored. He does not run hot and cold. He is not changeable, unpredictable, leading us in one way today and another way tomorrow” (Disciple’s Study Bible, p. 1591).

It seems a strange admonishment for James to say **Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds.** We simply do not want to face trials of any kind at all. What is joyful, we ask, about sitting at the bedside of a 54 year old father of five dying of cancer? What is joyful in learning of the suicide of an 18 year old? What is joyful about sending children and grandchildren across miles and miles of ocean to serve as missionaries – knowing that it will be at least another three years before you meet again.

These everyday realities face us and our friends. How can we be joyful when faced with these things?

It is the task of the believer to understand that God is at work in and through all of these circumstances. He can and does give peace to those who grieve; he can and does give acceptance when no answers come; he can and does give joy in the knowledge that a sacrifice of children and grandchildren will bring salvation to many who would not know Him as Saviour without their going.

The author of the mystery novel wrote wisely when she said “Faith must be part of the daily web of life, a trust tested in a myriad of smaller things, before it can be a bridge over the chasm of such a passage from the known to the unknown” (Perry, Anne. **Cain His Brother.** New York: Ivy Books, 1995, p.146).

“A trust tested in a myriad of small things” is what James is speaking of when he states: **Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.** (James 1:12)

Every good and perfect gift is from above.

The psalmist said **Apart from you I have no good thing. Psalm 16:2** But with God’s continual presence we can joyfully say **Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance** (vv. 5-6).

We can affirm with James: **Every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.**

Call to Commitment:

Sing:

The Joy of the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #569; CCLI #14569

Concluding the Service: