

Choosing Joy with Intent

By Danon Smith

Joy is not the absence of pain — it is the quiet, deliberate decision to trust God in the middle of it.

To choose joy with intent is to trust Him enough to carry us through grief, pain, and anxiety — believing He can use even the hardest parts of our story for good. It is choosing faith when emotions feel heavy and understanding feels far away.

Our lives matter. They have a purpose. And when that purpose is fulfilled, God will call us home. Until then, we live with hope — a hope made possible through Jesus — knowing this life is temporary, but His promises are eternal.

Scripture does not promise easy trials — it promises transforming ones.

James 1:2–7 tells us that trials are not interruptions to our faith — they are instruments that shape it. Testing produces endurance. Endurance matures us spiritually. And in the middle of difficulty, we are invited to ask God for wisdom, trusting Him fully rather than wavering in doubt. It reminds us that growth often comes through pressure, and that steady, trusting faith positions us to receive what God is ready to give.

Trials produce endurance. Endurance strengthens faith. Faith grows wisdom — when we stay anchored in the Lord and keep an eternal perspective.

Happiness depends on our circumstances. Happiness rises and falls with the day. Joy is rooted in truth and remains because God remains.

We choose joy when we remember:

- God is still good.
- God is still present.
- God is still working.
- This season is not a waste.
- This pain is not permanent.

Whispers from the Word
Choosing Joy with Intent

Joy comes from the light of the Father. Darkness exists in this world, but it does not originate from Him. When we stay connected to Him, we stay connected to the source of light, hope, and purpose. That light does not remove the fire — but it lets us see while we walk through it. Choosing joy does not mean pretending everything is fine. It means whispering in faith:

This is hard, but God is here.

This hurts, but it is shaping me.

I do not understand it all, but I trust the One who does.

That kind of joy steadies the heart. It protects our faith-rooted perspective, keeps bitterness from taking root, and allows endurance to finish its work.

Habakkuk 3:17–18 shows us what choosing joy by faith really looks like.

The prophet paints a picture of complete loss — no crops, no fruit, no livestock, no visible provision. In other words: *everything outward that normally brings security and happiness is gone.*

And yet he says he will still rejoice in the Lord.

It teaches us that:

- Joy is not based on circumstances
- Faith can stand even when provision seems absent
- God Himself is the source of our joy, not what He gives
- Worship is possible in lack, not just abundance

It is one of the clearest biblical pictures of the difference between **happiness** and **joy**.

Happiness says: “I will rejoice when things improve.”

Habakkuk says: “Even if they do not, I will rejoice in God.”

This is mature faith — the kind that says:

“My situation may be empty, but my God is not.”

1 Peter 1:6–7 tells us that seasons of heaviness are real, but they are not permanent. Our trials are temporary and purposeful — they refine our faith, like fire refines gold, proving it genuine and precious. That tested faith ultimately leads to praise, honor, and glory when Jesus is revealed.

Struggles have a purpose. God does not delight in our pain or cause evil, but He is powerful enough to use our trials for our growth, our good, and His glory.

And sometimes... joy begins as a whisper before it becomes strength.

Points to Ponder

1. Where in your life right now does joy feel like a choice rather than a feeling?
 - a. What would it look like to “count it joy” in that specific situation?
2. What circumstances have you unknowingly tied your happiness to?
 - a. How might your perspective change if your joy was rooted in God instead?
3. Can you look back on past hardships and see how it strengthened your faith or wisdom?
4. What truth about God do you need to hold onto most in this season?
 - a. (His presence, His goodness, His timing, His promises, etc.)
5. What would it sound like for you to whisper, in faith, *“This is hard, but God is here,”* in your current circumstance?

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

You see the places in our lives that feel heavy right now.

You know the questions we carry, the grief we hold, and the weariness we try to hide. Nothing about our pain is unnoticed by You.

Teach us how to choose joy — not as denial, but as trust. When circumstances feel uncertain, anchor our hearts in what is unchanging: Your presence, Your goodness, and Your promises.

When trials test our faith, grow endurance in us. When endurance feels slow, give us wisdom. When our thoughts begin to waver, steady us like a hand upon our shoulders.

Help us remember that this season is not wasted, that this pain is not permanent, and that You are working in ways we cannot yet see. Let Your light guide us in the fire so we do not lose sight of hope.

We choose to trust You.

We choose to believe You are near.

We choose joy — because we choose You.

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In Jesus' name,
Amen.