

#1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author

Joyce Meyer



BE
JOYFUL

50 Days to Defeat the Things That Try to Defeat You

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NEW YORK • NASHVILLE

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most remarkable stories in the Bible is the account of the apostle Paul, previously known as Saul. As a young man, he was zealous in following the Jewish law—zealous to the point that he persecuted Christians. According to Acts 8:3, he “began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.” Because of his hatred for followers of Christ, he was determined to stop the spread of the early church. In these activities, Saul truly believed he was serving God and doing the right thing. Later in his life, he realized that God had mercy on him because he was ignorant and lacked knowledge (1 Timothy 1:13).

Even though Saul did many wrong things, God, in His mercy, chose to visit him in an amazing way. According to Acts 9:1–2, while Saul “was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples,” he requested permission from the high priest to travel to Damascus, hoping to capture and jail more believers in Christ. Something shocking and wonderful happened during his trip:

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to

the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

“Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied.

Acts 9:3–5

After this encounter, Saul became known as Paul. One of the lessons of Paul’s miraculous conversion is that God’s grace can transform a persecutor of Christians into one of Christianity’s greatest heroes. He can do *anything* for *anybody*. No matter what you need in your life, God can bring it to pass.

Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus changed him completely—from a persecutor of Christians to a powerful minister of the gospel and writer of New Testament letters that have shaped Christian theology for centuries. Paul was forgiven and so transformed that after his personal encounter with Jesus, he forever turned his back on his old life and began pouring all of his passion and energy into helping others know Jesus and live victorious Christian lives.

One of the hallmarks of Paul’s life and writings is his unbounded joy. In fact, he has been called “the apostle of joy.” Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) and a quality that can range from extreme hilarity to calm delight. Because the Holy Spirit lives in us as believers, we can have and demonstrate joy in every circumstance we face. Anyone can be joyful when they have everything they want or when everything is going their way, but it takes the

power of the Holy Spirit to remain steadfastly joyful in our hearts when we face difficulties or disappointments. Joy helps us enjoy life's happy seasons and gives us strength to persevere in faith and trust through hard times. According to Nehemiah 8:10, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." The more joyful you are, the stronger you will be.

Just as God met Paul on a journey and transformed him into a man of joy, I pray that God will meet you on the journey you will take through Paul's writings over the next fifty days as you gain strength to be joyful in every circumstance. These passages have changed my life, helped me mature in Christ, and taught me to find joy in each day, no matter what it may hold. I believe that they will do the same for you as you meditate on them and apply them to your life. I am praying for you, that as you go through this book God will use it to draw you into the joy that comes with a deeper, more intimate, and more powerful relationship with Him.





CHAPTER 1

Grace and Peace Lead to Joy

Galatians 1:3-5



Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



Paul frequently opens his letters with “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” These words are not simply a salutation, but a beautiful and powerful blessing. This greeting was much more beneficial to the hearer than most of our greetings might be today. We may greet a person with “hello” or “hi,” but in saying “Grace and peace to you...” Paul expresses his heartfelt wish for his readers to experience the power of amazing grace and the wonderful peace of God—“which transcends all understanding”—in their lives (Philippians 4:7).

As you and I begin this fifty-day journey together, I pray grace and peace for you, and I hope you will become increasingly aware of all the ways God’s grace and peace

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Romans 14:17

will help you in every area of your life. I also pray that you will deliberately watch for Him to extend grace and peace to you, because when you look for them, you will see that He makes them available in more ways than you may have imagined.

Over the years I have come up with a personal description of grace. To me, grace is God’s freely given, undeserved favor and power that enables us to do with ease what we could never do on our own with any amount

of struggle or self-effort. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8), and we can live our everyday lives—caring for our families, running our households, fulfilling our job responsibilities, and doing everything else we do each day—by grace through faith. There are no limits to the ways we need God’s grace, and, thankfully, there is no limit to the grace God is willing to give us. Jerry Bridges wrote in *The Discipline of Grace*—and I agree—that “Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the *reach* of God’s grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the *need* of God’s grace.”

Understanding and receiving God’s grace makes it possible for us to live in peace. When I hear people say they have no peace in their lives, I feel sorry for them, because a life without peace is difficult, stressful, and joyless. Regardless of what else anyone may have—power, position, an excellent education, good looks, riches, an engaging personality, influential friends, possessions—it is worth nothing if they don’t have peace to go along with it. In fact, all of these external things can become burdens when people do not have peace on the inside.

Grace leads to peace, and peace leads to joy. In fact, I don’t think it’s possible to be truly joyful if we are not living in God’s grace and peace. When I use the word *joy* or *joyful*, I am not referring to what the world calls “happiness” or “happy.” Happiness rises and falls, depending on the situations or moods in which people find themselves. But joy can stay steady through ups and downs, and despite

what we would call a “bad mood.” Joy is not determined by circumstances. It is a gift from God, and it follows a life of grace and peace. As an old spiritual says about joy, “The world didn’t give it, and the world can’t take it away.”

God offers you grace and peace today and every day. When you live in Him, you have access to His grace and peace in every situation, which will lead you to great joy.

Things to Think About

1. How has receiving God’s grace and peace brought joy to a specific situation in your life?
2. What circumstances are challenging your joy right now, and how can you receive God’s grace and peace in them?



CHAPTER 2

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit

Galatians 5:22-23 AMPC

But the fruit of the [Holy] Spirit [the work which His presence within accomplishes] is love, joy (gladness), peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness, gentleness (meekness, humility), self-control (self-restraint, continence). Against such things there is no law [that can bring a charge].

Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit, who lives in all believers. If Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, His Holy Spirit lives in you and gives you the ability to go through every situation with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness (meaning humility), and self-control.

As God's children, we have the Holy Spirit living inside us, and with Him come all the fruits of the Spirit, including joy.

Joyce Meyer

You may notice that the first word in today's verse is *but*, which makes us wonder what came before it. The preceding verses list works of the flesh (life without God's guidance), which include "sexual immo-

rality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like" (Galatians 5:19–21).

But there is an alternative to the kind of troubled, joyless life the works of the flesh lead to, and it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Let me encourage you to take a moment to think about the works of the flesh and then about the fruit of the Spirit. You have the freedom to choose how you want to live. I have chosen to live by the Spirit, and I hope you will too.

The fruit of the Spirit does not simply appear in your life when you become a Christian. It starts with a tiny seed

that is planted when you give your life to Christ, and it develops over time, just as an apple or a pear would. The more you cultivate or practice it, the stronger and more mature it becomes.

The first word in the list of fruit is *love*, and the last word is *self-control*. This is important because we can cultivate all the fruit by focusing on love and self-control. Each fruit comes from love and is a form of love but is also held in place by self-control. Let me explain.

If you concentrate on developing the fruit of love, you will also demonstrate joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness. At times, you may not feel like expressing these qualities, but self-control will enable you to show them. As an example, consider the fruit of patience. Let's say you love your teenage children with all your heart, but one day, they seem determined to do everything that exasperates you. Because you love God and you love them, you don't want to grow impatient, lose your temper, and say angry, hurtful words you would regret. How would you keep from doing that? Self-control. I think you can see exactly what I mean and can understand how the same principle would apply to the other fruit of the Spirit.

There are times in life when circumstances can be so difficult or sad that you think you cannot possibly be joyful. You may even wonder if you will ever experience joy again. These are the moments to exercise self-control and remind yourself that the joy of the Lord lives in you and that it is your strength. You can take joy in the fact that

you know God, that He hears and answers prayer, that He cares for you, and that He will *never* leave you. Some seasons of life are happy and wonderful, and others are not. Happiness is a human emotion that often depends on circumstances, but joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit—a quality that comes from your relationship with God. This is why every season of your life can have its unique joy, because the Holy Spirit lives in you.

Things to Think About

1. Think about the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Which one do you need to focus on today?
2. How can self-control help you grow in that fruit?