

E X P E C T T H E
unexpected

JOY FOR A STRESSFUL HEART

Philippians 1:3-6 NKJV: I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

LIFE GROUP / PERSONAL STUDY:

One thing we can find in common between the story of Jesus' birth and the year 2020 is that we must always "expect the unexpected." When we really stop to think about it, nothing about the coming of the Messiah was what people expected. They expected a mighty warrior - a conquering king - who would come in great power. That's an accurate description of Jesus, but a helpless baby born to a poor teenage couple in Bethlehem didn't look like that from their perspective. We must all realize that even when the unexpected takes place that God is still working in the situation. We just have to make some adjustments so that it is possible for us to find "joy for a stressful heart."

1A) Besides the idea of a muscle that pumps blood, what is the Bible actually talking about when it describes the "heart?"

1B) According to the following verses, how is the heart described - what is the heart doing?
Deuteronomy 30:2 NIV:

Deuteronomy 30:6 NIV:

Deuteronomy 30:10 NIV:

2A) Explain how the illustration that strings of a musical instrument must have the right amount of stress to be in tune can be applied to the amount of stress that is considered good for our hearts.

2B) PERSONAL: How is the stress of your heart doing? Are you stretched too tight? Not tight enough? Just right? What changes do you think you need to make to adjust the amount of stress you have?

Read Philippians 1:12-14 NIV:

3) How do these verses reveal that Paul was living from a different perspective than most other people?

4) PERSONAL: What new “perspectives” have you discovered throughout the year 2020?

What things are more important to you now than before?

What are you doing differently?

What do you feel that you’re doing is better? or that is worse?

Read Philippians 1:18-21:

5A) What did Paul reveal as the “priority” that he wanted to live by? Verse 18

5B) PERSONAL: What has been your “priority” during this difficult year of 2020?

6A) Knowing that Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians from a jail cell, where did he believe his “power” to live on came from? Verse 19

6B) How did Paul convey this same idea in the following verses?

Philippians 4:13:

Ephesians 3:20:

7A) What did Paul believe was his “purpose” to live for? Philippians 1:21

7B) PERSONAL: People always want to know what their “purpose” is to live for. What do you consider your purpose to be?

Have you ever thought about the idea that your purpose literally is to tell others about Jesus as you go about your daily activities?

How does this simple idea give you “joy for your stressful heart?”

ACT: We all live in very stressful times and the holiday season can add lots of additional stress that may not be good for us. We want to make sure that we have the best perspective as we enter this time of year and as we approach a new year. We need to look at everything from the perspective that “GOD IS IN CONTROL!” The priority of our lives should be to focus on Jesus and His will to be accomplished. If we can point others to Jesus, hopefully that will bring joy to their stressful hearts as well. We must also realize that we have no power on our own. Our only Power comes from the Holy Spirit living within us - but that’s all the power we need. We can do ALL things through Christ who gives us strength. Plus the very purpose of our lives is to be a reflection of Jesus, to be conformed to His image, and to let His Light shine through us. Let’s face each day with “joy in our hearts” and always expect the unexpected as God shows up in mighty but unexpected ways.

Daily Devotional: It always helps to look at the context of the passage. Then try to answer the following questions about the passage. Who is involved? What is going on? Where is the action taking place? When? How can this concept apply to my life? Why is it important? Also look for Commands, Warnings, and Examples to follow or not to follow.

- This week let's explore passages that describe the wonderful joy we can experience through Christ even during stressful times.

Monday:

Psalm 126:3 NIV

The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Tuesday:

Habakkuk 3:17-18 NIV

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

Wednesday:

John 15:11 NIV

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

Thursday:

Acts 2:28 NIV

You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.

Friday:

Romans 12:12 NIV

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.

Saturday:

Romans 15:13 NIV

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sunday:

2 Corinthians 8:1-2 NIV

And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

