

A JOY STRONGER THAN CIRCUMSTANCES

VIDEO TWO

We long for steady joy, but we've seen that joy is hard to pin down.

You may know someone who has apparently unlocked the secret to this kind of joy. They look reality in the face, whatever it brings. Yet their joy stays intact.

Counsellors note that there is a strand in common amongst those who hold such a posture: connectedness. Either with their surroundings, or more commonly with *someone*.

A Christian outlook goes one step further. Steady joy is possible only when we're connected in the right way. Not just with anyone, but with the living God himself. In fact, due to the nature of this connection, joy is even *commanded* of God's people.

In a letter to Christians in Philippi, Paul writes:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

The recipients of Paul's letter were a diverse group. They included a slave girl, a jailer and a businesswoman. For some, life was relatively easy. They had a steady job, status in society and were part of a community. For others life was tough. They had none of these things. But, to all of them, Paul says "rejoice."

This isn't a call to positive thinking. No, Paul can say the same thing to all these Christians because they all have something in common: connection to Jesus.

This is why Paul says: rejoice *in the Lord*.

The secret of Paul's joy is found in knowing connection with – or better – into Jesus. We are connected with Jesus, and into everything that rightly belongs to him, which he freely shares with us.

Paul explains that riches belonged to Jesus; all power, wisdom and majesty. Yet he willingly laid it all aside for us. He suffered a brutal death, and then, having defeated sin, he uniquely offers the way to be connected back into a relationship with God.

God was not satisfied to see a joyless creation, or a people robbed of the joy of knowing him. Though we look for lasting joy in all the wrong places, Jesus comes among us. It was his joy to lay down his life that we might come to know joy in him.

And now, all who are connected to *Jesus* cannot experience a circumstance that ultimately robs them of their joy.

Suffering can't take away our life with Jesus. Endings can't take away our life with Jesus. Boredom can't take away our life with Jesus. Shame can't take away our life with Jesus. Even death can't take away our life with Jesus. Indeed, because of Jesus, all of these apparent joy-robbers are on borrowed time.

When the job opportunities and friendships feel like they're slipping through our fingers, we can still rejoice... because we have Jesus.

When a crisis threatens our anticipated future, it's painful but need not be devastating – because we know the God who cared enough to step into our disappointment and he will not abandon us.

Like the child on Christmas morning expressing delight at the generosity of their loved ones, we can delight in being loved and welcomed by Jesus himself.

For followers of Jesus, even when our circumstances are not happy, we can defiantly rejoice.

It may be with a smile, it may be with tears – but living life with Jesus really can bring us joy stronger than our circumstances.