

ENJOYING FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS ~ John 15:11

*I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy.
Yes, your joy will overflow! (John 15:11 NLT-SE)*

*"Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world
so they would be filled with my joy. (John 17:13 NLT-SE)*

- FIRST THINGS FIRST...ENJOY!

- **What do you get from enjoyment in a relationship?**
 - Good feelings, **pleasure**. (Ps 16:11)
 - A sense of **connectedness**, the opposite of loneliness. (Rom 12:5)
 - **Accessibility**, little is standing in the way of encounter. (2 Cor 13:4)
 - The feeling of **fulfillment**, the empty spaces in relationship get filled. (Eph 3:16-19)
 - The encounter is **mutual**, you are not just receiving, but giving as well. So is the other person. There is a **reciprocal** dynamic to the relationship. Not just facts, but there is an exchange of emotion as well.
 - It feels like there is a **future**, like the encounter is not fleeting, but it is going somewhere. (Rom 15:13)
- **I want that kind of Friendship with Jesus. What I DON'T want is:**
 - A relationship that is built upon **performance** to earn acceptance. (Gal 3:6-8)
 - A **stiff, immovable, tired, crusty** relationship that has no ability to flex. (Mark 2:22)
 - A relationship motivated by **guilt** or **shame**. (Is 54:4)
 - **All taking** and no giving! (2 Cor 9:6-8)
 - A relationship built upon **doing stuff** and not being present.
- ²⁵ One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" ²⁶ Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" ²⁷ The man answered, "'**You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.**' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" ²⁸ "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!" (Luke 10:25-28 NLT-SE)
 - Question: What does it look to love God with all you **soul**?
 - "There is an emotional (soul) capacity to love that must find expression in my relationship with God and it is a lifetime journey." ~ Bill Johnson, November 24, 2019

- SOME KEYS TO ENJOYING FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

• Leaning on His Spirit

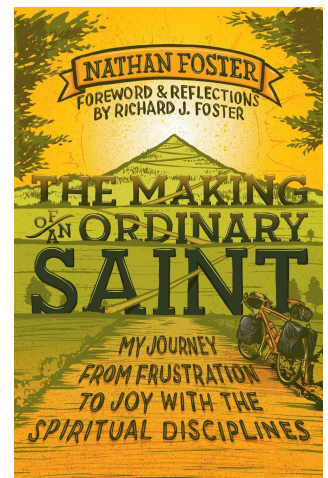
- What/who is it we tend to “lean on” when we are really enjoying a friendship? We trust in what we know to be true about the other person’s **character**. (Phil 4:8-9)
- Jesus told his disciples that the **Holy Spirit** would not only remind them of what he said, but who he said he was. (John 14:26)
- **Leaning on the Spirit opens the door for the supernatural as well**, i.e., dreams, visions, prophetic words, words of knowledge, divine favor, etc. What friendship doesn’t need more of that going on! (Gal 5:17)
- You need faith to be a friend of Jesus. Period. What you’re saying by this is that **you cannot be a friend to Jesus without the enabling power of the Holy Spirit**. (Heb 11:6)

• Encountering His Presence

- **There’s nothing more enjoyable in friendship with Jesus than his presence in our midst!** When we encounter God’s presence, we tend to think it’s because we did something right, right? God’s presence doesn’t show up to make a point. In fact, he doesn’t “show up” at all! He is already there. He is the God in the midst of us. (1 John 4:16)
- God’s presence provides a context for wonder. **Graham Cooke** says, “The key to learning in a new covenant is that you are willing to unlearn.” **Wonder opens the door for unlearning friendship with Jesus based upon performance**. Wonder opens the door to enjoying Jesus. How can you NOT enjoy a Friend who causes you to wonder about everything and still trust him. Get ready to be astonished! (Ps 118:23)
- **Josh Houston**, author of **The Abiding Life** says, “Intimate union with Christ can lead to an increased wonder about life in God, peace beyond circumstances, and a love for God and others that radically transforms our world.”

• Submission to His Will

- **Nathan Foster**, in his book, **The Making of an Ordinary Saint: My Journey from Frustration to Joy with the Spiritual Disciplines** says this, “**Submission is the spiritual discipline that frees us from the everlasting burden of always needing to get our own way**. In submission we are learning to hold things lightly. We are also learning to diligently watch over the spirit in which we hold others— honoring them, preferring them, loving them.”
- Nathan goes on to say, “The touchstone for the Christian understanding of submission is Jesus’s astonishing statement, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me (Mark 8:34).” This call of Jesus to “self-denial” is simply a way of coming to understand that we do not have to have our own way. It has nothing to do with self-contempt or self-hatred. **It does not mean the loss of our identity or our individuality. It means quite simply the freedom to give way to others. It means to hold the interests of others above our own. It means freedom from self-pity and self-absorption.**”
- Take a look at what is called the **Serenity Prayer** attributed **Reinhold Niebuhr**, a great 20th Christian theologian. (The first stanza of the prayer was adopted by Alcoholics Anonymous.)
 - “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting



hardships as the pathway to peace; taking, as He did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it; trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His will; **that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him Forever in the next.** Amen.”

- **Following His Lead**

- Now that we've made the decision to try and **let go of control** through the help of the spiritual discipline of submission to Jesus, we will be free to follow his lead and not feel the need to determine our life's direction apart from him. (Rom 8:38)
- Following his lead is less about the nature of the information that we get from him and more about **our obedience** to his leading. John 15 paints a clear picture of how it works.
 - *⁹ I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love.* (John 15:9–10 NLT-SE)
- **The Lord's leading is always nuanced**, it is rarely all spelled out for us, word-for-word, like an assignment. Usually, the holy Spirit leads us by honing in on our **character**. He's more concerned about how we're living *with* life than what we're doing *in* life. (Rom 12:2)

- **Listening to His Voice**

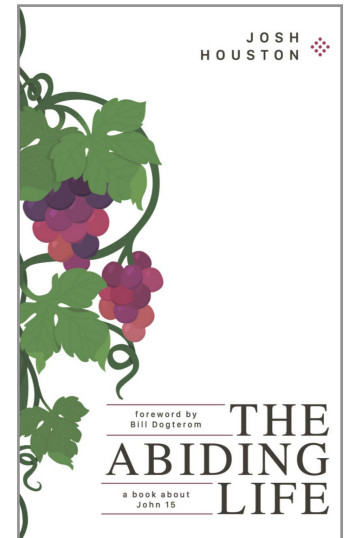
- This is where we make most of our **assumptions** about Friendship with Jesus. We either think we hear his voice all the time (“God told me...”) or we think he never speaks to us and question what more we could do to get him to talk to us. Neither is really helpful if we really want to enjoy Friendship with Jesus. (John 10:27-28, Heb 4:12)
- **Think about how friends communicate.** Is ALL of communication in friendship verbal? Jesus usually speaks to us through **impressions**, but he also wants us to:
 - **Reveal** his heart to us.
 - **Trust** in his love for us.
 - **Look** for him in creation, see him in the faces of other people (especially the poor), notice that he might be orchestrating a certain situation we find ourselves in, etc.
 - He may even speak to us **audibly**, but for most people that is the exception, not the rule.

- **Responding to His Truth**

- Part of great friendships is that they typically **illicit a response** between participants. They don't demand a response, but anticipate one. (Matt 7:8)
- Friendship with Jesus is no different. We are trying to get a response out of Jesus and he wants a response from us. **This is not manipulation, but love.** What is creating the anticipated response is the love we share with Jesus.
- Paul captured this idea when he was encouraging relationship between members of the church. He says that **our relationship with each other should be modeled after our relationship with Jesus:**
 - *¹⁴ We will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. ¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. ¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.* (Eph. 4:14–16 NLT-SE)

- THE OPEN DOOR TO JOY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

- Just days before Jesus goes to the Cross, Jesus begins sharing his most important messages with the disciples; serving each other, the branches staying connected to the vine, the value of serving one another, and the Holy Spirit that he will ask the Father to give them in his absence. “Brennan Manning argued that the living presence of Jesus awakened joy and set people free; that joy was in fact the most characteristic result of all Jesus’s ministry to ragamuffins.”
- **Josh Houston** hits the nail on the head when he says, “The world is in dire need of more joyful Christians. The message of our lives should communicate that following Jesus is not a depressing experience, but a euphoric excursion in the Spirit. According to Jesus, discipleship to him leads to pure joy. However, if this is truly the case, why the schism between the full joy about which Jesus speaks, and the emptiness in the hearts of many who call him Lord?”
- In **John 15:11**, after stressing the necessity of a strong, abiding connection with him as the key to bearing fruit, **Jesus unlocks a door to joy for the disciples** that is not just significant, but has a strong influence throughout the rest of the New Testament...50 verses in all!



• It seems obvious that Jesus is making JOY is a touchstone for relationship with Jesus:

1. John 15:11 I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my **joy**. Yes, your **joy** will overflow!
2. John 16:20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful **joy**. ²¹ It will be like a woman suffering the pains of labor. When her child is born, her anguish gives way to joy because she has brought a new baby into the world. ²² So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that **joy**.
3. John 16:24 You haven’t done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have **abundant joy**.
4. John 17:13 “Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be **filled with my joy**.
5. John 20:20 As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were **filled with joy** when they saw the Lord!
6. Acts 2:28 You have shown me the way of life, and you will fill me with **the joy of your presence**.
7. Acts 2:46 They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord’s Supper, and shared their meals with **great joy** and generosity.
8. Acts 8:8 So there was **great joy** in that city.
9. Acts 11:23 When he arrived and saw this evidence of God’s blessing, he was **filled with joy**, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord.
10. Acts 13:52 And the believers were **filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit**.
11. Acts 15:31 And there was **great joy** throughout the church that day as they read this encouraging message.
12. Rom. 4:7 “Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight. ⁸ Yes, what **joy** for those whose record the LORD has cleared of sin.”

13. Rom. 14:17 For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of what we eat or drink, but of living a life of goodness and peace and **joy** in the Holy Spirit.
14. Rom. 15:13 I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with **joy** and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.
15. 1 Cor. 7:30 Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their **joy** or their possessions.
16. 1 Cor. 11:15 And isn't long hair a woman's pride and **joy**? For it has been given to her as a covering.
17. 2 Cor. 1:24 But that does not mean we want to dominate you by telling you how to put your faith into practice. We want to work together with you so you will be **full of joy**, for it is by your own faith that you stand firm.
18. 2 Cor. 2:3 That is why I wrote to you as I did, so that when I do come, I won't be grieved by the very ones who ought to give me the **greatest joy**. Surely you all know that my joy comes from your being joyful.
19. 2 Cor. 6:10 Our hearts ache, but we always have **joy**. We are poor, but we give spiritual riches to others. We own nothing, and yet we have everything.
20. 2 Cor. 7:7 His presence was a **joy**, but so was the news he brought of the encouragement he received from you. When he told us how much you long to see me, and how sorry you are for what happened, and how loyal you are to me, I was filled with joy!
21. 2 Cor. 8:2 They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.
22. Gal. 5:22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
23. Phil. 1:4 Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with **joy**,
24. Phil. 1:25 Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience **the joy of your faith**.
25. Phil. 2:17 But I will rejoice even if I lose my life, pouring it out like a liquid offering to God, just like your faithful service is an offering to God. And I want all of you to **share that joy**. 18 Yes, you should rejoice, and I will share your joy.
26. Phil. 2:29 Welcome him in the Lord's love and with **great joy**, and give him the honor that people like him deserve.
27. Phil. 4:1 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stay true to the Lord. I love you and long to see you, dear friends, for **you are my joy** and the crown I receive for my work.
28. Phil. 4:4 Always be **full of joy** in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice!
29. Col. 1:11 We also pray that you will be strengthened with all his glorious power so you will have all the endurance and patience you need. May you be **filled with joy**,
30. 1 Th. 1:6 So you received the **message with joy** from the Holy Spirit in spite of the severe suffering it brought you. In this way, you imitated both us and the Lord.
31. 1 Th. 2:19 After all, what gives us hope and **joy**, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when he returns? It is you! ²⁰ Yes, you are our pride and **joy**.
32. 1 Th. 3:6 But now Timothy has just returned, bringing us good news about your faith and love. He reports that you always remember our visit with **joy** and that you want to see us as much as we want to see you.

33. 1 Th. 3:9 How we thank God for you! Because of you we have **great joy** as we enter God's presence.
34. 2 Tim. 1:4 I long to see you again, for I remember your tears as we parted. And I will be **filled with joy** when we are together again.
35. Philem. 7 Your love has given me **much joy** and comfort, my brother, for your kindness has often refreshed the hearts of God's people.
36. Heb. 1:9 You love justice and hate evil. Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else.
37. Heb. 10:34 You suffered along with those who were thrown into jail, and when all you owned was taken from you, you **accepted it with joy**. You knew there were better things waiting for you that will last forever.
38. Heb. 12:2 We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the **joy** awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne.
39. Heb. 13:17 Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with **joy** and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.
40. James 1:2 Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for **great joy**.
41. James 4:9 Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of **joy**.
42. 1 Pet. 1:6 So be truly glad. There is **wonderful joy** ahead, even though you must endure many trials for a little while.
43. 1 Pet. 1:8 You love him even though you have never seen him. Though you do not see him now, you trust him; and you rejoice with a glorious, **inexpressible joy**.
44. 1 Pet. 4:13 Instead, be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful **joy** of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world.
45. 2 Pet. 1:17 when he received honor and glory from God the Father. The voice from the majestic glory of God said to him, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great **joy**."
46. 1 John 1:4 We are writing these things so that you may fully share our **joy**.
47. 2 John 12 I have much more to say to you, but I don't want to do it with paper and ink. For I hope to visit you soon and talk with you face to face. Then our **joy** will be complete.
48. 3 John 4 I could have no greater **joy** than to hear that my children are following the truth.
49. Jude 24 Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with **great joy** into his glorious presence without a single fault.