



Gladness in the Lord

Text: Psalm 5:11

Bible Teacher Duffy Robbins

1. Read Psalm 5. Feeling fearful, anxious, and discouraged are common human experiences. Christians are not immune from such emotions. Instead of allowing our fear or anger to dominate our thinking, we need to focus on God.
 - a. In times of upset and uncertainty, do you seek God's guidance or rely on your education or experience or friends or...?
 - b. What happens to your relationship with God (especially your prayer life) when you find yourself facing difficult situations, hardships, and fear?
 - c. David is clearly accustomed to beginning his day with prayer (v. 3). What are the benefits of this model? How have you seen this work in your life?
2. In verses 4-11, David identifies seven attributes of Jehovah God.
 - a. List the seven attributes identified by the psalmist.
 - b. Why did David meditate on these seven attributes of God?
 - c. Duffy pointed out that we can choose to focus on what God isn't doing or what He *is* doing. Why is it important to include praise and thanksgiving in our prayers?
3. Read Philippians 4:4-8 together. The call to gladness or to rejoice we find in the Psalms was also one of the Apostle Paul's challenges to the Philippians.
 - a. What does Paul tell us we can expect in verse 7?
 - b. What doesn't Paul tell us will necessarily happen?
 - c. Have you ever experienced the peace of God when your circumstances didn't warrant it?
4. Looking back on this year (or other times in your life), where did God surprise you? How does this example affirm that God is for us and working in our circumstances?
5. Read James 4:13-17. What does this teach us about God? About ourselves? How does this perspective change things for us?

Challenge: What is your viewpoint as you head into the New Year? Are you hopeful or does it feel overwhelming? Let your community know how they can pray for you.

Prayer *(by Billy Graham, written for The Saturday Evening Post)*:

Our Father and our God, as we stand at the beginning of this new year we confess our need of Your presence and Your guidance as we face the future.

We each have our hopes and expectations for the year that is ahead of us—but You alone know what it holds for us, and only You can give us the strength and the wisdom we will need to meet its challenges. So help us to humbly put our hands into Your hand, and to trust You and to seek Your will for our lives during this coming year.

In the midst of life's uncertainties in the days ahead, assure us of the certainty of Your unchanging love.

In the midst of life's inevitable disappointments and heartaches, help us to turn to You for the stability and comfort we will need.

In the midst of life's temptations and the pull of our stubborn self-will, help us not to lose our way but to have the courage to do what is right in Your sight, regardless of the cost.

And in the midst of our daily preoccupations and pursuits, open our eyes to the sorrows and injustices of our hurting world, and help us to respond with compassion and sacrifice to those who are friendless and in need. May our constant prayer be that of the ancient Psalmist: "Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end" (Psalm 119:33).

We pray for our nation and its leaders during these difficult times, and for all those who are seeking to bring peace and justice to our dangerous and troubled world. We pray especially for Your protection on all those who serve in our armed forces, and we thank You for their commitment to defend our freedoms, even at the cost of their own lives. Be with their families also, and assure them of Your love and concern for them.

Bring our divided nation together, and give us a greater vision of what You would have us to be. Your Word reminds us that "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12).

As we look back over this past year we thank You for Your goodness to us—far beyond what we have deserved. May we never presume on Your past goodness or forget all Your mercies to us, but may they instead lead us to repentance, and to a new commitment to make You the foundation and center of our lives this year.

And so, our Father, we thank You for the promise and hope of this new year, and we look forward to it with expectancy and faith. This I ask in the name of our Lord and Savior, who by His death and resurrection has given us hope both for this world and the world to come.

Amen

STUDY DEEPER

Building a Life of Hope

It is a wonderful thing to be a child of God, a Christian. You have made your apology to God, believed on the truth of the resurrection of Christ, and by faith He has saved you. Somehow, however, the joy of the Lord has not become your strength. You are discouraged, and it seems that despair has become your constant companion. What can you do? Many of the saints in the Bible went through a similar trial that is haunting you. Below is a list of things that might cause you to despair, and following is a list of things you can do to enter a life of hope again.

Causes for Despair:

Medical problems can affect your emotions greatly. Please schedule an appointment, and have your doctor evaluate your physical condition.

Sinful actions affect our spirits. God is displeased if we do anything that we know is against His will. Ask His forgiveness. If you have sinned against a person, go to them and seek forgiveness.

Your attention is not focused on Christ. The news of the world will cast down our emotions as we focus on war, murder, national problems, and life in general.

You are confused. Despair and confusion are like brothers. Where one goes the other follows. Confusion may be eliminated though learning, asking questions, and thinking (especially from God and his Word.)

You are a people watcher. Your husband has failed you. Your church doesn't understand. Your wife neglects you. Your heroes and friends have forsaken you. The problem? You are following them instead of Jesus Christ. You are a people watcher.

What others can you think of?

Building a Life of Hope:

Trust in the facts of the gospel (the reality of God, Jesus Christ is God, the Bible is God's Word, the resurrection of Jesus, the reality of Heaven, God's faithfulness to honor all His promises, etc.). Feelings come and go and our faith is sometimes affected by our emotional ups and downs. Facts will always be there.

- Begin to read the Bible, the book of hope. Start at page one like any other book and work your way through the Bible. It was written to help our hope grow. The Bible is there to comfort you in times of trouble. Romans 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written

for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope."
(KJV)

- Learn to have patience with yourself. Rome was not built in a day, neither is a strong Christian life. Learn to forgive yourself and leave the past in the past. Learn to forgive others as well.
- Remember that the love of God is stronger than the hate of the Devil. Nothing is going to happen to a Christian that is outside of God's will.
- Keep in mind that God is still in control of the universe. He knows all about the wars, crime, and problems. Leave these in His hands as much as possible.
- The building of hope begins with putting God's thoughts into your thoughts. Begin to think and act like Him. Since He loved others, ask Him to love others through you. He came to serve others, so you should too. He died for others, so we should at least live for others. Put others first and yourself last and see what happens.
- Finally, take life one day at a time. Worry will destroy hope. Worry is telling yourself how terrible things have become. Instead, tell God He is wonderful and trust Him with whatever is worrying you (Matthew 6:25-34).

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Sermon Series Discussion Best Practices

Preparation – www.faithbridge.org/sermon

Week (or weeks) prior to meeting send email to group containing the following:

1. Title of sermon and what will be discussed
2. Link to the sermon that will be discussed
3. Link to the postscript for that sermon
4. Attachment that includes questions and study deeper
5. Any other material you select (Scripture, article, book excerpt, etc.)

Request that group members watch sermon, postscript, and complete questions prior to the meeting.

Group Meeting

1. Discuss challenge presented from previous meeting discussion. How did you apply? What did you discover? How did you see God move?
2. Prepare an introduction summary of the sermon.
3. Highlight the questions you previously selected to discuss for the meeting
4. Focus particularly on additional Scripture study.
5. Do not allow discussion around “feelings about the sermon, pastor, or delivery message.” Keep discussion centered on personal application of biblical truths.
6. Discuss challenge for the week and set clear expectation for follow-up.
7. Leave time for prayer response.