

# Pathway to Joy

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[ 0 : 00 ] Take your Bibles and turn to Proverbs chapter 31. Proverbs 31, we'll be reading verses 10 through 31.

A wife of noble character who can find. She's worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value.

She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the merchant ships, bringing her food from afar.

She gets up while it is still dark. She provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls. She considers a field and buys it. Out of her earnings, she plants a vineyard.

She sets about her work vigorously. Her arms are strong for her tasks. She sees that her trading is profitable and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand, she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.

[ 1 : 07 ] She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. When it snows, she has no fear for her household, for all of them are clothed in scarlet.

She makes coverings for her bed. She's clothed in fine linen and purple. Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes a seat among the elders of the land.

She makes linen garments and sells them and supplies the merchants with sashes. She's clothed with strength and dignity. She can laugh at the days to come.

She speaks with wisdom and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children arise and call her blessed. Her husband also, and he praises her. Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all.

[ 2 : 06 ] Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

Well, it is Mother's Day and we are going to push pause on our study of the book of Philippians at the end of chapter 2. That means we are halfway through the letter.

And I think you will see the connection between our review this morning of chapters 1 and 2 and Mother's Day as we go on.

In preparation for this study on Philippians, just reading through the letter and marking the major themes, I came up with three major themes. You will remember joy, unity, and the mission.

Now, in the first two chapters, so far we have seen Paul's focus on unity and the mission. These are not two unrelated themes, because it is as we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel, that we commend that gospel most powerfully to the world.

[ 3 : 30 ] We adorn the gospel. And it says the body of Christ is unified, that we show a world that's now locked in bitter divisions, up and down, the power of the gospel to reconcile men to God and to one another.

And as we do everything without complaining or arguing, in a crooked and perverse generation that hardly does anything without complaining or arguing, well, it's in that way that our blameless lives shine bright like the stars in the midst of the darkness that surrounds us.

As we hold out the word of life that this dark world needs to hear and see exemplified. So unity is critical to the church, and it's critical to the church's mission.

There we see the two themes, two out of the three themes. But what about the theme of joy, you ask? Next week, God willing, we're going to come to verse 1 of chapter 3.

And we're going to meet for the first time the command, Rejoice in the Lord. Now that won't be the last time we bump into that command. Indeed, when we come to the last chapter, he will say, Rejoice in the Lord.

[ 4 : 49 ] How often? Always. And again I say, Rejoice. So there's much more that he has to say about joy in the last two chapters.

But I wonder if you realize that already in the first two chapters, no less than 12 times, Paul has spoken of joy, rejoicing, gladness.

So before going on with chapter 3, I want to pause and consider this theme of joy that's already been evident in the first two chapters.

Let's not overlook what we've already seen about joy in chapters 1 and 2. And you'll see the way it ties in with Mother's Day as we go on.

Now everyone is seeking joy. Will anyone argue with that? Everyone seeks joy. But the question is, what is the pathway to true joy?

[ 5 : 55 ] How do we find joy in this world so full of sorrow? And there are just basically two pathways being pursued.

There's the world's way and there's God's way. So the world's way to joy is selfish ambition. We've heard that in chapter 2, haven't we? The world's way is being ambitious about all things concerning myself.

If you're going to have joy, you've got to look out for number one. Do what you want to do. Do what you like.

It's the deification, the worship of self. It's self-pleasing. It's self-seeking. It's self-serving.

It's self-indulgence. It's self-adulation. Joy comes from demanding your rights and protecting your own self-interest.

[ 6 : 59 ] And there are to be no restraints placed upon myself, whether laws of God or laws of man. Everyone must bow to my self-interest as well.

Let's just pause a moment and ask, how is that working? How is that working out in relationships then? How about marriage? When each pursues their own self-interest.

In families, when there's a collision of wills between children with each other and with parents. In churches, in workplaces, in neighborhoods, and in the nation.

How does it work when everybody's out for themselves? Well, James tells us in chapter 3 and verse 16, very plainly. Where there is selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

That's it. That's the fruit of this self-centered pursuit of joy. Whatever the immediate joy of getting your own way, it soon turns to bitter disorder.

[ 8 : 11 ] And every evil practice. Broken relationships. Abuse. Abandoned children. Abortion. All sorts of evil practices from selfish ambition.

James 3.16 Now, we've pushed this worship of self to such depths in our country that if you're a man and have desires within to be a woman, then go for it and identify as a woman.

And we're told that it's just being true to what? To yourself. Right? Self is king. Self is God. So, by all means, if you have any feelings in yourself, give expressions to them and be true to yourself.

And then, of course, everyone else must affirm your new self-identity. Everyone else must bow to whatever you determine for yourself. Now, selfish ambition is the new wisdom, isn't it, of the day?

But James says, James 3.15, such wisdom, in quotes, does not come down from heaven, but is earthly, unspiritual, and from the devil.

[ 9 : 35 ] Devilish. So, it's not new at all, this new wisdom about being true to self. It's the devil's old pathway to joy.

By the way, it didn't work out too well for himself, did it, when he put his own interest ahead of God's. And it's the devil's old pathway of joy that he sold to Eve that didn't work out so well for Eve and her husband and all of their children.

You and I. Their offspring. And yet it remains man's preferred pathway to joy. Seeking me and mine.

It's our fallen nature to seek joy by the indulgence of the self. So, mothers, in bringing up your children, make good use of the children's catechism.

And this one question and answer is one that you could use over and over in so many situations. Question, what happened to our first parents when they sinned?

[ 10 : 40 ] Answer. Answer. Answer. Answer. Instead of being holy and happy, they became sinful and miserable.

Think how holy and happy they were when they were walking with God, pursuing his will, obeying him. And then see just how sinful and miserable they became when they started seeking their own will above God's instead of God's.

Following self-interest, self-ambition. Word to the wise. Seek another way to joy. The world's way is a dead end in this life and it leads to endless misery in the life to come.

That's the world's way to joy. Self. God's way to joy. Well, what have we seen so far about joy in chapter 1 and 2 of Philippians?

Friends, I think that the major uses of joy in these first two chapters could elicit the lesson that joy is the byproduct of seeking the joy of others.

[ 11 : 59 ] The joy is the fruit and the reward, the byproduct of seeking the joys of others. Now, that's counterintuitive to our fallen minds.

But we've been told and we've seen that joy comes when we do nothing out of selfish ambition. The world's way says do everything out of selfish ambition.

And God's way says do nothing. Don't speak. Don't think. Don't act. Don't do anything out of selfish ambition. Or vain pride.

Joy comes when we do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain pride. It comes when we humbly consider others better than ourselves. It comes when we look not to our own interests but also to the interests of others.

And it comes by sacrificing our own rights, our own self-interest out of the greater pursuit of pursuing and serving the interests and welfare of others. And when we do, what we find is not the annihilation of joy but the highest joy of all.

[ 13 : 12 ] If you seek joy by selfishly guarding your rights and pursuing self-interest, you lose.

You forfeit true joy. But if out of interest in the joy of others, you sacrificially serve them, you win. Again, that's the pathway to true joy.

Now, we were shown this in the life of Paul, weren't we? Paul was seeking the joy of others. He was seeking the joy of his Lord who had given him the command to preach the gospel of the grace of God.

And he was seeking the Lord's joy by fulfilling the task that the Lord had given him to do. He was seeking the joy of lost sinners, wasn't he?

By preaching the gospel, the good news of forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name. And it got him thrown into prison in Rome. And the Philippian church, who had been saved through his evangelism, hundreds and hundreds of miles away, wanted to know how he was doing.

[ 14 : 23 ] So they sent Epaphroditus to them and they said, the church is concerned. Here's a gift and they want me to stay here to help you. And so Paul wrote a letter back to them. And if the Philippians expected to hear of a depressed Paul complaining about the loss of his freedom or the terrible food and sanitary conditions in jail, they were disappointed or surprised because there's not one note of complaint in the whole letter about Paul's circumstances and his surroundings there in the prison.

Rather, what we find is he's rejoicing. That's right. Joy in prison. It's possible. That's the dominant note that runs right through the letter.

As I said, 12 times in the first two chapters. We're going to see it a bunch more in the last two chapters. Joy bells ringing in his heart. That would not have been the case.

If he was seeking his own self-interest. Oh, but he was not. He's seeking the pleasure and the glory of God.

He's seeking the eternal joys of sinners. And prison has given him new opportunities to tell the good news, the joy giving gospel of Christ to new audiences, to all the palace guard and through them, many others as well throughout the palace heard of the gospel.

[ 15 : 54 ] And that's why he's rejoicing. He's also rejoicing that due to his imprisonment, many of the brothers were encouraged to speak the gospel with more boldness, with more confidence and courage.

Now, some did it out of love for Paul, but others preached out of, hear me, selfish ambition. Ambition. Christian preachers preaching the gospel out of selfish ambition.

And out of envy and rivalry with Paul. Seeking to stir up trouble for Paul while he was in prison. Wanting to outshine him while he's on the sideline.

Wanting some of the limelight that he has stolen from them. We deserve some recognition around here. And we hope to make trouble for Paul while he's in prison. Yes, some were preaching Christ in that way as well.

Does that spoil Paul's joy? No. He says, what does it matter? What does it matter? Now, it would have mattered greatly if Paul was all about himself and what others were thinking about him.

[ 17 : 11 ] But he wasn't. A bigger agenda had captured his heart. So what does it matter? Whether out of good motives or bad. The important thing is that in every way, whether from false or true motives, Christ is being preached.

And because of that, I rejoice. There's joy in prison. Because Christ is being preached. So his joy is hitched to the gospel chariot that's advancing even while he's in prison.

Even because he's in prison. And that greater good to Christ and to lost people thrills Paul to the bones, even though it comes at the price of self-interest.

Here's a man seeking the joy of others. And finding it to be the pathway to true joy for himself. Or again, he's thinking about his upcoming trial.

Being held to appear before the Nero, Caesar Nero.

[ 18 : 20 ] Wondering whether he's going to live or die. And here's his dilemma. Well, to depart and to be with Christ is better by far. For me. For my interest.

But to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you, Philippians. For your interest. So what shall I do?

Well, Paul says, I'm willing to sacrifice what is better for me by far. If in so doing, I might do something that would be more necessary and needful for you and your interest.

To continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith. So that through my being with you again, your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

Paul's not seeking selfishly what's best for him. He puts that on the altar gladly. Because a bigger ambition has caught him.

[ 19 : 29 ] And that's what's best for them. And he found his own joy in seeking theirs. Joy. Their joy in the faith. Their joy in Christ Jesus.

And so it was again along the pathway of self-sacrificing service that Paul finds true joy. Now, you do that enough times and it starts to get through.

John, true joy is to be found this way, not this way. And so it becomes the habit. The delightful habit.

To die to self and to live to the joys of others. And that's where we find joy. Again, in chapter 2, verse 17.

Even if I'm being poured out like a drink offering. The sacrifice of his life. On the sacrifice and service of your faith. I'm glad and rejoice with all of you. That was the same in Epaphroditus.

[ 20 : 29 ] Whom the Philippian church sent with a gift to help Paul in prison. So, here's the Philippian church. What did they do? Well, we've got some money.

I've got a lot of needs in my family. There's a lot of things I could do with my money. I would like to do this, that, and the other. But maybe I could make somebody else happy with my money.

And so they got a collection and they sent it to brother Paul. They're in prison that it might give him some joy. Say, that's what we're talking about.

And Epaphroditus, a precious man in their midst. We'll give him up to take this gift and to go there and just stay as long as he can. And serve Paul while he's in prison.

They sacrificed their own interest to serve Paul's joy in prison. And Epaphroditus was of great use to Paul. He himself is showing this spirit.

[ 21 : 33 ] Oh, it's safe to stay here in Philippi. To go on this long, dangerous journey. And to identify with Paul, a prisoner of the empire. I'm willing.

I'm willing to sacrifice and to risk my life. If it means the joy of my brother Paul. And then Paul himself, what does he do? He reciprocates the same thing.

Epaphroditus is precious to me. He's useful to me. He's helpful. He's encouraging me here in prison. But I'm sending him back to you, Philippi. That when he comes home safe and sound, you heard he was ill and you're all upset that he's ill and about died.

And I'm sending him back to you so that you might be glad when he arrives home safe and sound. And you know it. The church at Philippi.

Epaphroditus. The apostle. It's this life of loving service that sacrifices for the joy of each other. It is such a precious thing to see in the book of Philippians.

[ 22 : 36 ] But by far the greatest example of those following this pathway to joy was the son of God himself. We see that in chapter two. He was not just following this pathway of joy.

He was blazing the trail. Of this pathway to joy. And that not for the joy of his friends.

But for the everlasting joy of his enemies. And so though he is God. Equal in deity with the father. And though he had every right to stay in heaven.

And to enjoy the status and privilege of worship. Being heaped upon him. And praises heaped upon him. He was willing to sacrifice that life of glory.

And to become nothing. To become a servant. To become a man. What a stoop.

[ 23 : 50 ] To be despised and rejected. By man. Instead of worshipped as was his right. And in this humble self-sacrificing service.

To sinners. And to his heavenly father. He humbled himself and became obedient to death. Even death. On a cross.

Willing to die. That we might live. Willing to save us. Instead of himself. Screaming in agony.

My God. My God. Why you have abandoned me. That we might never. Ever. Be abandoned by God. You see it was.

His interest. Sacrificed. For our joy. For our interest. putting ours above his own.

[ 24 : 46 ] And this was the pathway. And this was the pathway to true joy. It's the path that led to his exaltation. And joy in heaven. This. This was the pathway that.

That led to the father saying. Son. I'm delighted. In your service to me. And to those that I gave you. To give eternal life for. And he raised him from the dead.

And seated him at his right hand. The father. Giving his approval. Showering him with praises. Praise him.

He tells the angels. Praise him. Spirits of just men made perfect. He's worthy. And Jesus joy. Was abounding.

To have the father's. Smile upon him. For fulfilling and completing the task. That he had been given to do. And the joy. Of bringing many sons and daughters.

[ 25 : 42 ] To heaven. That was the joy for which he. He endured the cross. And scorned the shame. Treating as a nothing. Compared to the joy.

Of seeing you and me there with him. Fullness of joy. Eternal pleasures. At God's right hand for us. Who deserved an eternity of misery.

In hell. Where there's weeping. And gnashing of teeth. Without relief. Our joy. Was the cause of his joy. And the cause of his self-sacrifice.

So. Joy really is the byproduct. Of bringing joy to others. Real joy comes not from indulging. And protecting our self-interest. But from sacrificing them. For the interest of others.

I trust we see that. From the first two chapters. And it's teaching on joy. And by the way. This begins with the person. Sitting beside you. Who. Who.

[ 26 : 42 ] What. What interest do I. Deny myself. For who. And we start thinking. Somebody way out there. No, no. It's the people sitting around you.

Your own family. Your own husband. Your own wife. Your children. Your parents. And then. And then your church family. And then your neighbors. And the world.

Yes. Well that's the lesson. From chapters one and two. Do you remember. When Sam Waldron was here.

And preached on Sunday evening. From Hebrews chapter. One and verse nine. God your God. Has set you. Above your companions. By anointing you with.

The oil. Of joy. And he told us. That Jesus Christ. Is the happiest person. In the whole universe. And that ultimate happiness.

[ 27 : 45 ] And joy. Came to our savior. In the way of the cross. In the way of self-denial. In the way of suffering. And self-sacrifice. For others.

What if. This joy of Jesus. In serving the joy. Of others. Is no small part. Of what it means. To be the perfect image.

Of God. To be the exact representation. Of his being. That the very nature. Of deity.

Is to find joy. In serving. The joy of others. It's something that's found. Within the blessed trinity. Before there even was anything.

But the blessed trinity. And there was God the father. Taking joy. In. His son's joy. And there was the son. Taking joy.

[ 28 : 43 ] In his father's joy. And there was. The father and son's joy. In. The spirit's joy. And vice versa. Within the trinity. Before anything else.

The delight. In each other's joy. Was the joyful atmosphere. Of the blessed God. The happy God. And what if then.

In creating man. In his own image. We were hardwired. To find our joy. In serving the joy. Of others. Because we are now made.

In his image. In the image. And that's why. As Jesus says. In Acts 20. 35. It really is more blessed. More happy.

To give. Than to receive. Kids. He's not saying. It's a bummer. To receive. No. He's not saying that. He would acknowledge. It's a wonderful thing.

[ 29 : 39 ] To receive. There's great joy. In receiving. But that's not the highest joy. He's telling us. It is more happy. To give.

Than to receive. That in giving joy. We find our joy. That we have been blessed. In order to bless others.

Blessed. Made happy. That we might make others. Happy. And in so doing. We find great satisfaction. Purpose.

And joy. Ourselves. For living the way. Our creator. Designed us. Hardwired us. To live. That's why. Jesus had more joy.

Than anyone else. In the universe. He was the perfect. Image of. God. And that's why. Paul was rejoicing.

[ 30 : 36 ] In prison. And that's why. You too. Believers. Have been most. Full of joy. When serving. The joy of others. Tell me. It isn't true.

Whether. In witnessing. And giving. The gospel. Of eternal salvation. To a poor. Blind sinner. Dead in sin. Or. Giving some money. To enhance.

The joy. Of another. Who's needy. Or giving. Some time. Whatever. Ways. You have. Given. You've. Come away. Say.

Not. I don't want to do that again. Why don't I do more of that? That's. That's joy. That's where true joy is found.

And. If it means. Sacrificing. Immediate self-interest. To make others happy. Those sacrifices. Only deepen your capacity. For true joy. When you see the joy.

[ 31 : 36 ] Of others. And now. The son of God. Has sacrificed himself. For us.

Do you know. That's the theme. Of the. Songs. In heaven. Worthy. Is the lamb. Who was slain. There's the sacrifice.

And has purchased us. For God. It's all about. That sacrifice. Of Christ. That. That. That. That sets heaven. Ablaze. With joy.

And praise. And singing. But you know. That's. That sacrifice. Is. Is. Is. In adoration.

Philippians. Chapter 2. And verse 5. Tells us. That sacrifice. Of Jesus. Is now. The example. That we are. To follow. That we are.

[ 32 : 34 ] To let. This mind. That was in Christ. Now. Be in us. That. That the attitude. That brought. Jesus. Out of heaven. To the hell. Of the cross. Must now. Be in us. To deny.

Ourselves. For the joy. Of others. Not only.

Is this. What we were. Created for. Christians. This is. What we were. Redeemed for. For though. We were. Created. For this joy. We forfeited.

It. By sin. And self-seeking. By listening. To the world. The flesh. And the devil. Instead of listening. To Christ. And so.

We all. Like sheep. Have gone astray. We've gone astray. From who? From God. And where have we turned? Each one. To his. Own. Way.

[ 33 : 32 ] Self. My way. You went. Your way. I went. My way. But together. We were going. With our backs. To God. We were made. For the joy. Of serving others.

And God himself. And now. We're serving. Ourselves. And we're neglecting. God. And. Others.

Elevating. Ourselves. Above. God. Above. Others. And no one's. To interfere. With my pursuit. Of what I think. Will make me.

Happy. That's a formula. For disaster. We've agreed upon that. And this lie. Rather than leading. To more joy. Is always that. Which leads us.

To more misery. But Christ. Came. For just some. Such people. So we don't want. Your way. We want our way.

[ 34 : 28 ] Oh father. Forgive them. They don't know. What they're doing. They're trading. True joy. Of knowing us. Which is eternal life. To know that. The only true God.

In Jesus Christ. And they're trading that. For what? For misery. For hell. Father. They don't know. What they're doing. And so he came. And he redeemed us.

Believers. From our sin. From our commitment. To self. And he brought us. Back to God. And he's working. In our hearts. A commitment. To him. And his ways.

In which we have found. A joy. We never had before. But believers. There still is. Within us. Have you not found? A part of us. That still hates. God's pathway.

To joy. It's called the flesh. Paul refers to it. As indwelling sin. In Romans chapter 7. Haven't you. Bumped into it. There's a part of us.

[ 35 : 25 ] That's still. Wanting to find joy. By looking out. For number one. And. Sacrificing my interest. For the joy.

For the joy of another. Is something that. My flesh hates. And so it's going to have to be. At the crucifying of flesh. That I will pursue.

Somebody else's joy. Over mine. Somebody else's interest. Over my own. And there's the battle. Of the Christian life. The cross.

Is not easy. And Jesus never said. It would be. Death to self-interest. Is painful. We don't. Want. To die. But each time. We refuse. To deny ourselves.

For the joy of others. We forfeit the joy. That could have been ours. And the glory. That could have been Christ's. Let's never forget. That the example. We're following.



- [ 36 : 22 ] Is the example. Of the crucified one. The crucified one. And he says. If anyone. Would want to come after me. And be my disciple. He must what?
- Renounce. Deny. Himself. He knows that's hard. And that's why he meets us. Right up front.
- You want to be my disciple? You want to be a follower of Christ? You want to be a Christian? You must. Deny yourself. And then you must. Take up your cross.
- Not mine. I've got a cross. That I'm bearing. And you must. Take up yours. What's a cross for? It's for one thing. To die on.
- Deny yourself. Take up your cross. And follow me. That's the entrance. Into discipleship. To Christ. It's a call to die daily.
- [ 37 : 20 ] To our flesh. To deny ourselves. The immediate and shallow joy. Of getting the last word in. Of living for yourself. Of forgetfulness of the needs of others.
- Of only doing whatever you feel like doing at the time. Jesus says no. No that's the part that's got to die. If you're following me. You'll need a cross.
- On which that self-worship must die. And what you'll find. Is that as you lose your life. Life as you demanded it.
- You actually find life. True life. Abundant life. Life that's so much better. So much more full of joy. Than anything you were trying to carve out for yourself.
- But if you keep. Trying. To hold on to your life. You're going to lose it. Kids.
- [ 38 : 17 ] It's not summer yet. But when it is summer. And you go to the beach the next time. I want you to go. And when. The beach is hot. And it hurts your feet.
- To stand on the sand. I want you to grab a handful of that sand. And just squeeze it. And hold it tight. And try to hold on to it. And what you'll find. Is it just. Slips right through your fingers.
- And that's what Jesus is saying. You try to hold on to the life. That you want. Demanding your interest be served. You're going to lose it. But if you're willing to lose your life.
- For my sake. And the gospel. Well you will find it. You'll find. Amazing life.
- This isn't even. Worthy of being called life. They're dead while they live. This is eternal life. Knowing Christ. Living in communion with him. And in conformity.
- [ 39 : 19 ] To his example. Who laid down his life. That we might live. You see it's a paradox. And there's lots of them. In the Christian life. And if. If you're unwilling. To go there.
- Until you understand it. And it's a safe bargain. For you. You'll never get to Christ. The Bible says. That the way up is down. We don't like going down.
- But we must learn. That whoever humbles himself. Will be exalted. The Bible says. The way to life. Is death. And it seems nonsensical.
- To us. But it is as we die. To the self life. That we come to know. God's life. The life of God. In the soul of man. It's as we lose our life.
- That we. We find it. And we find it in Christ. We find what we never. Ever would have known. As long as we're clutching. To self interest. Selfish ambition.
- [ 40 : 17 ] So Jim Elliot. Elliot had it right. He gave his life. In the mission field. To bring this. Sweet joy. To Alka Indians.
- When he said. He is no fool. Who gives. What he cannot keep. To gain. What he cannot lose. What's he talking about.

That's. That's a paradox. Well. He gives up. What he can't keep. That's the sand. Kids. That's. That's your life. The life of joy. That you're pursuing. In the world's ways. That's how we come into this world.

I'm going to get. My joy. My way. My control. But he's no fool. Who gives that up. When he can't keep it anyway. And you'll find that. You can't live in a world.

Where everybody's seeking their way. And keep it. No. You'll lose it. And. And you're not a fool. For just letting go of it. In order to gain. What you can't lose. New life in Christ.

[ 41 : 15 ] Life the way you were designed to live. With joys that go sinking. Into the marrow of your. Your bone. And thrill your socks off. Life.

In Christ. Forever. So come and welcome to life. Through the doorway of conversion. To Jesus Christ. And death to the self life. To find life. That is really life.

Life. Now what does all this have to do with Mother's Day? I would say few people. On the planet.

Know more by experience. What it is. To. Lay aside their own. Joys. For the joys. Of others. Their children.

And it starts very early.

[ 42 : 25 ] And it starts very early. Doesn't it? even before they're born in your prenatal care for your child in the discomfort that you endure by carrying around an extra 35 pounds it would probably be good for us men to strap a 35 pound bag of salt around our belly just for one day to see what your wives are going through have gone through sacrifice of sleep due to kicks and tumbles going on inside at night and the difficulty of even finding a position that's comfortable enough to fade off to sleep and then there's the birth itself which has become proverbial language for pain pain like a woman in the travail of childbirth and then the sleep deprivation continues with cries to be fed and changed and held during the night and it's not like the next day life is put on hold because you lost a night of sleep no it's all there to be done all the housework everything must go on but now without the energies of a good night's sleep and with your baby on your hip with held in one arm and a vacuum in the other you go about your day men you might spend a day with one arm strapped behind your back just to see it complicates things in whatever you're doing but it's a sacrifice she's willing to make and soon the toddler's walking and needs constant care if he's not to do major harm to himself and so that means further self-denial if you're to watch over them and even in their sickness you go an extra mile mothers often must put other self-interests on hold to do what's best for their child and if the next baby's on the way well she goes through it all again additional weight backache sleeplessness and before long you might even see her with a child in each arm and there is a mystery of motherhood how do they get anything done like that well it's tied to this principle of willing to sacrifice for the good and joy of their child and the boys and girls grow up and temptations grow up too and the problems grow up don't they and now there's the need to instruct them in the truths of God and to know who they are as God's creatures and to know his commands and his only Savior Jesus Christ and why they need him and why they need a new heart there's new true wisdom to be teaching them and there's disciplining them teaching them their own God-given place in the world under the authority

God's authority of father and mother learning to obey them all the while finding that our children came into the world with a will of their own that was just like ours that was bent on my way self deification and that's what complicates the whole business of child raising and mothers would you not agree that the problems of mothering get more complicated not easier as they begin to grow up Jim you're not in your head I said mothers but it's true isn't it it's true sin gets more serious has deeper consequences mothers are kept awake at night not by the cries of an infant wanting to be fed or changed by the pangs in her own heart for the salvation the good of her older child and she would gladly go back to the pains of childbirth and to bear those pains of knowing that their child is outside of Jesus Christ and if they died tonight they would go to hell forever and yet it is that willingness to lay aside her own interests that causes her to be a woman of desperate prayer prayer is hard work ask any mother to pour out her heart and cry to God as Monica did for her son

Augustine keep praying moms God saved Augustine at every point along the line of motherhood the easy way is abdicating responsibility the easy way is do what your flesh wants to do the easy way is to pursue your own interests not theirs your immediate gratification not their enduring well-being so mothers we honor you we honor you we honor you for the sacrifices that you have made for the greater joy of your children which is in itself a great gift that you have given to your sons and daughters many of whom are now raising their children and they've seen what it's going to take this sacrifice and you're now reaping the joy of that of seeing your children now your daughters sacrificing for the joy of their children and it's a blessing being passed on to your grandchildren as your children are sacrificing for their joy and they are coming to learn the same pathway to joy and it's pointing to God whose very nature is to find joy in the joy of others and so he's being glorified the one who created mothers and instilled in them this concern for their children even to the point of sacrifice it holds before the world that there's greater joy than self-indulgence and getting your way and it leads right into gospel conversation about the one who laid down his life that we might live self-sacrifice the pathway to joy not just for moms but for dads and children and people of all ages a reflection of the Lord Jesus giving up his life to have us with him forever where gladness and joy will overtake us and sorrow and sighing will flee away forever the joys of motherhood are not to be belittled you older moms would you go back and trade would you say oh I wish I had

I wish I had spent more time serving my own interest it's really the only thing I can look back and really regret was that I didn't pour more of my life into myself and I spent so much of it with my kids but I'll tell you there's a lot of older women that do regret the fact that they poured so much of their life into self-interest and they're not reaping the joys that you are but they're reaping the heartache and the regret having lived selfishly well you've discovered in losing your life you find that life far better than you could have made for yourself and the godly woman who pours out herself in the service of her family is unto the Lord finds that her children arise and call her blessed her husband also and he praises her many women do noble things but you dear far outshine them all for charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised give her the reward she has deserved and let her works bring her praise at the city gate that's where her husband works and where he tells everyone what a precious gift

God has given him in his wife and Christian mothers as you did it and do it is unto the Lord you are looking forward to a joy that surpasses all joys of seeing your children hit each milestone and benchmark of growth and progress along the way you're waiting for this same Jesus to meet you in the day of judgment and to say well done well done good and faithful servant enter into what the joy of your Lord enter into the happy come and share the happiness of your master and come and see where it all ends this pathway of self denying self crucifying of ambition to serve the joy of your Savior and all the people he gives you to enrich and what will all the sacrifice be compared to looking into his eyes and hearing him say that to you and you'll find your joy and being with him is only surpassed by his infinitely greater joy of having you with him and that forever and ever that he really does rejoice in your joy dear mothers and all who are here do you know this

[ 52 : 29 ] Jesus as your Lord and Savior in him alone is life life you were meant to live life here and then forever with him if not you're still going your own way mother father young person older person stop stop and pivot and turn from going your way and come to Jesus Christ and receive this glorious gift that he offers eternal life not not on the basis of what you've done but on the basis of his self-sacrifice come as a poor beggar and just receive it freely as his his gift to you he takes great delight heaven rejoices over one sinner that repents would you not see in that the true heart of God himself and that could be yours all your sins forgiven God is your loving heavenly father Jesus as your savior and friend the Holy Spirit as your indwelling helper and unending and unmixed joy found in communion with him in this life and perfectly in the life to come two pathways to joy which are you on the world's way or God's way let's follow the road our savior trod to glory that he blazed to glory for us and find our true joy in serving the joy of others let's pray thank you thank you father for

Philippians 1 and 2 thank you for the apostle and inspiring him to point us to the Lord Jesus and the one who is indeed our joy and our delight and we confess how often we have we have slipped back to the old way to joy and ask that you teach us to follow our savior to walk in his steps and so to find that joy that makes him the happiest person in the universe do it for the glory of your name do it for the good of people all around us that you you want us to enrich and thank you for the joy that it gives us in Jesus name amen and