




- 1 **Does our world today expect and embrace difficulty?** What about Christians? Do they embrace difficulty as something God allows and even ordains for the believer?


 *How does our culture's view of suffering affect how people often responds to it? How has it affected us?*

- 2 **Some people struggle living in courageous joy, because they base their joy on a particular circumstance or relationship or achievement.** Read the statements below and write down how you see them in your own life. Then read the accompanying passages. How does God's word counsel us in each area?

 *I'll be happy when I have all the things I've ever wanted. (Luke 12:15, John 10:10)*

 *I'll find joy when I have this person (friend, spouse, child) in my life. (Ps 41:7-9, Mark 14:31, 50)*

 *I'll be able to enjoy life once this trouble goes away. (Matt. 5:10-12, James 1:2-4, 12, 5:11)*

 *I'll rejoice when I achieve this goal or realize my dreams. (James 1:11, 1 Tim. 1:5)*

- 3 **Read 1 Peter 1:6-8 in light of what Jesus says in John 16:16, 20.** What parallels do you see? How do Peter's words encourage us on this side of Jesus' ascension into heaven?

4 **Jesus said that in Him sorrow is turned to joy.** From where we stand on this side of the cross and the resurrection, how the agonies of the cross actually become our joy is more plain than it would have been to the disciples as they heard Jesus' words in His farewell discourse. What are some ways of the ways that sorrow is turned to joy at the cross? See 1 Peter 3:18, Psalm 16:11, Romans 5:2. What other passages would you add to that list?

🗨️ Read John 16:33. In what ways can you view your current difficulties "in reverse" with the knowledge of the promised victory that God will one day work through them?

5 **Is Jesus' promise in John 16:23-24 universal?** What biblical caveats are placed on it? See John 14:13, 1 John 5:14, Matthew 6:9-13.

♥️ What specifically should you be praying more for that reflects praying "in Jesus' name" after the Father's will, not yours?

**FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OR PERSONAL ENRICHMENT: G. K. Chesterton once said that joy is the gigantic secret of the Christian life, and there are far too many Christians alive today who would be surprised by his words.** Joy is a fruit of the Spirit and a sign that God is at work in us. Take a moment to think through this overview\* of Christian joy. In the space below each statement, write 2 or 3 personal applications for each principle.

🗨️ **Christian joy cannot be earned.** Read Ecclesiastes 5:19. Some would tell you that joy is a reward for wisdom, wealth, or intellect, but true joy is a gift. Thanks to Jesus, all of us, no matter what the circumstance, can know joy. It's the reason Paul and Silas could sing like crazy in prison, because joy is given, not earned. Trust Christ, and joy is yours to tap into in abundance.

🗨️ **Christian joy is eternal, not temporal.** Read Psalm 16:11. It's not something that is fleeting but that instead will last throughout all eternity. If you know that God is the source of joy, this fact connects your temporal joy to eternal joy.

🗨️ **Joy and sorrow will appear in your life whether you're a Christian or not.** Read James 1:2-4. You'll see both joy and sorrow throughout your time on earth, sometimes right alongside each other. The question that we each need to ask ourselves is, which one will win out in the end? Will joy win out, or will suffering? According to the gospel, if we do not trust in Jesus, then sorrow and death will have the victory. But if we trust in Christ, then eternal joy wins. Death ceases to be something that we need to fear, and joy marks the start of a new beginning.

🗨️ **Christian joy is deep, not shallow.** Read Col. 3:23. Joy gives even the small things in life a deeper meaning. Whatever we do, we should work hard at it, not forgetting that we work ultimately for God and His glory. Everything has purpose for the one who knows Christian joy.

🗨️ **Christian joy is God-centered rather than self-centered.** Read Psalm 37:4. That means we're not just grasping for what we can get from other people like rampant consumers. No, our joy finds satisfaction in God; therefore we can be generous toward other people.

🗨️ **Christian joy is indestructible, and not fragile.** Read 1 Cor. 15:54-58. A hope that the grave can destroy is not a hope worth having, but a hope that can destroy the grave is. If you do not have this eternal, indestructible gift of joy, then you simply have not yet met Jesus. What you have in your heart is a case of divine homesickness. Maybe you've looked at everything under the sun in search of a home, but your bags remained packed and your shoes laced. Your restlessness is a sign that there is something yet to be discovered. Trust in Christ who gave everything for you, the Source who came to you so that you could have joy and have it to the full.

\* Adapted from *Better: How Jesus Satisfies the Search for Meaning*. David C. Cook. Kindle Edition.