

Restore Your Joy

group leader's guide

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Contents

How to Use This Guide	4
Days 1–5: God of Joy	5
Days 6–10: Joy Killers	8
Days 11–15: You Choose	11
Days 16–20: Trust and Accept	14
Days 21–25: Celebrate and Hope	17
Days 26–30: The Joy Life	20



How to Use This Guide

This six-week discussion guide is ideal for small groups of six to twelve participants. If you are using this guide with a larger group of women, create multiple small groups of six to twelve that can consistently meet together for these discussions.

Each session includes:

- **Pair Up**—A chance for participants to reflect on their week's experiences with a partner.
- **Tune In**—A brief time of prayer focused on tuning in to God's presence.
- **Talk Through**—Small group discussion questions that open the week's themes.
- **Reflect On**—Small group Scripture exploration and discussion.
- **Live By**—A brief time of prayerful corporate Scripture contemplation.
- **Step Out**—A concluding exercise focused on life application.
- **Offer Up**—A closing prayer to wrap up your meeting.
- **Plan On**—Specifics about preparation for next week's meeting.



GOD OF JOY

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 1–5 in *Restore Your Joy*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Restore Your Joy*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Restore Your Joy* days 1–5 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune In

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

TALK THROUGH

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- What do you most hope to gain from this devotional journey exploring joy?
- What's the first image or memory that comes to mind for you when you think of the word *joy*? Why do you associate that experience or image with joy?

REFLECT ON

Review together the Old Testament Hebrew words describing joy in day 2 “Examine.”
Invite a volunteer to read aloud at least one Scripture passage corresponding with each word.

- How would you define the word *joy* in biblical terms? How does this Old Testament understanding of joy compare or contrast our modern-day understanding of joy?
- God himself is joyful—in fact, God is the very essence of true and ultimate joy! Do you often think of God in this way? What might you be missing when you neglect to acknowledge joy as a central characteristic of God?

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Zephaniah 3:17**.

- This passage describes God’s presence with and love for his people. What is your reaction to the idea that God also delights in and enthusiastically rejoices over you? Explain.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Romans 15:13**.

- In the New Testament, Christians were repeatedly told to be joyful. Why do you think the authors of the Epistles, through the Holy Spirit’s inspiration, viewed joyfulness as such a critical mark of the Christian life? See also **Philippians 4:4**; **2 Thessalonians 5:16**; **James 1:2**; and **1 Peter 1:8**.
- What does it look like, in practical terms, to be a person filled with joy and peace from God? Describe someone you know who is an inspiring example of God-given joy.
- What does joy communicate about the gospel? (Encourage participants to refer to their notes from day 5 “Examine.”)

Live By

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **Romans 15:13** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

STEP OUT

Prompt participants to apply this week's study to their lives by focusing on joy as a central aspect of God's character. Refer them to day 3 "Journal" and encourage each woman to keep an ongoing log of evidences and examples she sees of God's own joy and delight. Challenge them to write one to five items each day this week.

OFFER UP

Close with a time of group prayer focused on worshiping God for his own joy and for the joy he gives to us. Pray the words of "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" (day 1 "Worship") together as participants take turns reading it aloud, line by line.

PLAN ON

Remind participants to journey through days 6–10 for next week's meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Restore Your Joy*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



JOY KILLERS

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 6–10 in *Restore Your Joy*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Restore Your Joy*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Restore Your Joy* days 6–10 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune In

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

TALK THROUGH

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- Sometimes being joyful feels easier said than done. What are some factors in our modern-day lives that make joyful living difficult?
Optional: Create a top 5 or top 10 list as a small group.
- How is joy different than happiness? (Push past the expected Sunday-school answer to explore it deeply and honestly together.)
- When do joy and happiness overlap? Can one exist without the other? How might gladness or rejoicing factor in to understanding joy?

- Review the list of joy killers in day 9 “Ponder.” How are each of these joy killers spiritually dangerous? Be specific.

REFLECT ON

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Psalm 88**.

- No discussion of joy would be adequate without an honest acknowledgement that life can be truly and profoundly painful. Christianity is not about some fake, happy-all-the-time, superficial, and dishonest take on life. The Bible is for our messy, difficult, *real* lives. When has Scripture’s acknowledgment of profound suffering been particularly meaningful to you?
- How does a passage like Psalm 88 encourage you in your own spiritual journey?

Invite a volunteer to read **Lamentations 3:1–26** (or the entire chapter).

- Laments (prayers and songs speaking honestly to God about hard things) are woven throughout Scripture. What phrases or feelings from Jeremiah’s lament here can you most relate to? Why? If you are unable to relate to it right now, draw upon feelings from earlier difficult periods in your life.
- In the midst of expressing his intense grief and emotional torment, Jeremiah also affirmed the solace he found in God (vv. 22–26; see also vv. 32, 58). What does it really mean to place hope in God during truly difficult times?
- What does joy look like in the reality of suffering or other difficulties?
- Have you ever seen this kind of joy in the life of someone going through a very hard time? Describe it.

LIVE BY

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **Lamentations 3:22–23** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
 Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
 Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
 Amen.

STEP OUT

Prompt participants to form pairs. Challenge them to look again at the list of joy killers (day 9 “Ponder”) and to each identify one that is a particular challenge for them right now. Direct them to share ideas for how to combat those specific joy killers in the upcoming week.

Optional: Direct partners to contact each other during the week to encourage each other in their efforts.

OFFER UP

Close by prompting partners to pray with each other, asking God for courage and strength to take action against the joy killers in their lives.

PLAN ON

Remind participants to journey through days 11–15 for next week’s meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Restore Your Joy*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



You CHOOSE

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 11–15 in *Restore Your Joy*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Restore Your Joy*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Restore Your Joy* days 11–15 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune in

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

Talk Through

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- What was it like to actively try to combat a joy killer in your life last week? Describe your experience.
- On the opposite end of the spectrum from joy killers are choices and activities that help you experience joy. What are some things you like to do that bring lightheartedness, delight, smiles, optimism, hope, happiness, laughter, peace, or fun to your life? (Push beyond only spiritual answers to share other types of ideas like hobbies, favorite experiences with loved ones, etc.)

REFLECT ON

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Romans 15:13**.

- This verse and many other passages talk about God giving us joy, but we also have an active role to play in choosing joy for our life. What does it mean to choose joy?
- When in your life have you made such a choice?

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Habakkuk 3:17–19**.

- Habakkuk made these statements in the face of looming disaster. What do you imagine led to Habakkuk being able to have this kind of mind-set?
- What would it take for you to have this same type of joy-determination even in difficult times? What choices, habits, truths, or relationships help grow joy determination in your life?

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Nehemiah 8:1–3, 9–12**.

- What does it really mean that “the joy of the LORD is your strength” (v. 10)? When have you experienced such strength?
- What about the opposite: How is joylessness related to spiritual weakness or frailty? Has joylessness ever led you to feel spiritual weak or frail? Explain. (Prompt participants to refer to their journal notes from day 15 “Journal.”)

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Psalms 42**.

- What principles and truths can you glean from this description of what it looks like to choose trust, hope, and joy?
- Which idea from this psalm most resonates with you?

LIVE BY

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **Habakkuk 3:17–18** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

STEP OUT

Prompt participants to apply this week's study to their lives by committing as a group to the challenges in day 14 "Act" experience. First, identify and fast from a joy-muting habit. Second, intentionally replace that habit with a life-giving, gladdening activity.

OFFER UP

Close by inviting participants to privately pray, silently talking with God about difficulties in their lives and affirming their choice to yet choose joy and rejoicing in their lives.

Optional: Encourage participants to use **Psalm 42** as a model for their time of silent prayer.

PLAN ON

Remind participants to journey through days 16–20 for next week's meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Restore Your Joy*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



Trust and Accept

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 16–20 in *Restore Your Joy*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Restore Your Joy*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Restore Your Joy* days 16–20 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune In

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

Talk Through

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- When is it hard for you to accept situations or life circumstances? Share an example of something, large or small, that has been difficult for you to accept in contentment.
- When is it hard for you to trust God? Describe a circumstance or experience in which you gravitate more toward worry or self-reliance rather than trust in God's provision.

REFLECT ON

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Luke 22:39–44**.

- How are you personally challenged or inspired by Jesus' prayer accepting God's will?
- This type of Christlike acceptance is essential in a life of trusting joy. Is there a circumstance in your life in which you need to honestly say, "Not my will, but yours be done"?

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Philippians 4:4–13**.

- How well does your life mirror Paul's contentment in all circumstances? Explain.
- Which habits or attitudes from the first part of this passage do you think played a role in Paul's acceptance and contentment described in the last part of the passage?
- Which of Paul's instructions in verses 4–8 challenge you?
- We can react to our life circumstances in two very different ways: In resistance and discontentment, or in trusting acceptance and contentment. What form does discontentment take in your life? How is it spiritually dangerous?
- How can you more proactively choose to be content? What spiritual practices could help you do so?

LIVE BY

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **Philippians 4:4–7** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

STEP OUT

Prompt participants to seize Scripture's power as they battle discontent, resistance, and lack of trust this week. Challenge them to memorize and meditate on **Philippians 4:4–7**. Direct them to speak the verse aloud and act on its principles whenever they feel themselves slipping away from joy and into discontentment this week.

Offer Up

Close by reiterating as a group your trust in God's sovereign power and provision by praying **Psalm 23** aloud in unison.

Plan On

Remind participants to journey through days 21–25 for next week's meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Restore Your Joy*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



Celebrate and Hope

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 21–25 in *Restore Your Joy*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Restore Your Joy*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Restore Your Joy* days 21–25 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune In

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God's presence.

Talk Through

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- What are five specific things you're thankful for? (This should be a quick-response answer.)
- How does gratitude change you?
- On the flip side, how does neglecting gratitude wear on your soul?

Reflect On

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **1 Thessalonians 5:16–18**.

- Review the story about Betsie ten Boom in day 21 “Ponder.” What is your gut reaction to Betsie’s bold gratitude?
- What are flea-like circumstances in your life that God may be challenging you to thank him for? How is this kind of gratitude different from thanking God in spite of difficulties?
- Review the biblical patterns of celebration God established for the Jewish people, outlined in day 23 “Ponder.”
Optional: Review **Leviticus 23** and **Deuteronomy 16** together.
- We tend to think of celebration as an optional or even frivolous, less-than-spiritual part of life, but God obviously takes a different view of celebration. Why do you think God established a regular pattern of celebration for his people?
- How is celebration good for the soul?
- When has God used celebration to realign your perspective and nourish your emotional and spiritual health?

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Psalms 100**.

- How are joy, worship, celebration, and gratitude linked in this psalm?
- How are they linked in your own life?
- Have you been taking God or God’s good gifts for granted? How might that be affecting your relationship with God? How do you desire to change?

Live By

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **1 Thessalonians 5:16–18** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

STEP OUT

Prompt participants to apply this week's study to their lives by committing to celebrate the Sabbath in some way. Direct them to review the experiences in day 24. Encourage them to choose rest, recreation, or thanksgiving-focused worship during the time they set aside specifically for them and God. It is OK if participants select a time other than Sunday.

OFFER UP

Close with a prayer of gratitude. Sit in a circle and go around the circle several times, simply speaking short thank-you sentences to God. (For example, "Thank you for freedom," or "Thank you for my children.")

Plan On

Remind participants to journey through days 26–30 for next week's meeting. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Restore Your Joy*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.



THE JOY LIFE

Before the meeting, encourage participants to journey through days 26–30 in *Restore Your Joy*. Make sure each participant brings her copy of *Restore Your Joy*, journal, and Bible to the meeting.

Pair Up

Direct participants to form pairs and discuss these questions:

- Which experience or activity from *Restore Your Joy* days 26–30 stood out to you the most? Why?
- How have you been personally challenged, inspired, or changed in your spiritual journey over the last week? Explain.

Tune In

Gather together and lead the group in a brief time of prayer. Include a short time of silence in the prayer as participants intentionally set aside worries or distracting thoughts in order to focus on God’s presence.

TALK THROUGH

As a small group, talk through these questions:

- As you reflect on this journey, how has your perspective on joy changed?
- What do you believe God most wants you to embrace or remember from this journey?
- How is God changing you?
- What is your response to the argument that you were made to live in joy—that you’re not truly the person God created you to be if your life is devoid of joy? Explain. (See day 26 “Ponder.”)

REFLECT ON

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **John 10:10**.

- In what ways has God made your life abundant, full, and satisfying?
- How can you proactively embrace an abundant-life mind-set, regardless of tough circumstances?

Invite volunteers to read aloud **Psalms 118:24** and the passages listed in day 27 “Internalize.”

- How does everyday life look different through the lens of gladness and wonder? Share specific examples from your life, describing what it would mean to see them through this lens.
- How could your life be richer and more abundant if you intentionally celebrated and rejoiced in each day—in each moment—as a gift from God?
- What is something you want to celebrate and rejoice in right now? Share it with the group.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Psalms 36:5–8**.

- Ultimately, beyond all the good blessings in our lives, God himself is our ultimate reason for true joy. Which phrase or idea in this psalm best captures something you deeply appreciate about God? Explain.

LIVE BY

Invite a volunteer to slowly and expressively read aloud **John 10:10** for a brief time of prayerful Scripture meditation together.

Optional: Lead the group in praying this simple prayer aloud in response to Scripture.

Speak to us, Lord, through your Word.
Inspire us, Lord, with your truth.
Change us, Lord, through your Holy Spirit.
Amen.

STEP OUT

Prompt participants to wrap up their journeys by committing to do the Go Deeper “Contemplate His Character” week-long experience.

Offer Up

Close by praying in unison the words of “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” (day 1 “Worship”) as a concluding expression of worship.

Plan On

Optional: Organize a fun candle-making party with participants, described in Go Deeper “Celebrate His Light” experience.