

50 Bible Verses on Joy

New King James Version • From the songs of David to the letters of the apostles

Joy in Scripture is not the same word as happiness. Happiness depends on what happens. Joy is something deeper — a settled gladness that does not require good circumstances to stay alive. It can coexist with grief, with trials, with the total loss of everything. What it cannot coexist with is the absence of God.

These verses are not a promise that life will feel good. They are a description of what life looks like when God is in it.

Joy as Strength

The most counterintuitive truth in Scripture — joy and strength are the same thing.

1

NEHEMIAH 8:10

“Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

This was spoken to people weeping over their failures, having just heard the Law read aloud for the first time in a generation. God’s first response to their grief was not a performance review. It was this: joy is your fuel. Not your achievement, not your consistency — His joy, given to you, becomes the thing that holds you up.

2

PHILIPPIANS 4:4

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

Paul says it twice because once is not enough for the human heart to believe it. He wrote this from prison. The rejoice is a command, not a suggestion, which means it is something you can do regardless of how you feel. It is an act of the will directed toward a Person.

3

JOHN 15:11

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”

My joy. Jesus does not tell His disciples to produce joy. He shares His own. The joy He offers is not the kind that depends on circumstances going well. It is the joy He carried all the way to the cross — the joy set before Him that Hebrews 12 mentions. That is the joy available to you.

4

ROMANS 15:13

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

All joy. Not measured out, not proportioned to your faith level. All. And the source is the God of hope, which means joy and hope share a root. The Holy Spirit is the one who does the filling. You do not fill yourself with joy. You receive it.

5

GALATIANS 5:22

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.”

Joy is fruit, not a discipline. You do not manufacture it by trying harder. It grows in the person who stays connected to the Spirit, who abides in Christ the way a branch stays on the vine. The question is not how do I become more joyful. It is how surrendered am I.

JOY FOUND IN GOD'S PRESENCE

Joy Found in God's Presence

The deepest joy does not come from what God gives. It comes from where God is.

6

PSALM 16:11

“You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

Fullness of joy is located in the presence of God. Not in answered prayers, not in good circumstances, not in seasons of health and prosperity. In His presence. Which means it is always available, because His presence is always available. Joy is not a destination. It is a room you are already standing in.

7

PSALM 43:4

“Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and on the harp I will praise You, O God, my God.”

My exceeding joy. God Himself is the joy, not merely the source of it. The psalmist does not say God gives me joy — he says God is my exceeding joy. This is the distinction between happiness that depends on God's gifts and joy that depends on God's Person.

8

ZEPHANIAH 3:17

“The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.”

He rejoices over you with singing. The God of the universe sings over you. Not as performance, not as liturgy — with gladness. This is one of the most astonishing verses in Scripture. Before you have done anything, before the day has begun, you are already the subject of His song.

9

LUKE 15:7

“I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.”

More joy in heaven. The return of a lost person triggers joy in the presence of God Himself. Your coming back to God is not a quiet transaction. It is a celebration in heaven. You matter that much. Your return costs that much joy.

10

ISAIAH 61:10

“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.”

Greatly rejoice. The Hebrew is sus sus — to exult, to leap. Isaiah is not describing a mild satisfaction. He is describing the joy of someone who has been dressed in what they could not earn. Salvation as clothing. Righteousness as a robe given, not achieved. That is worth leaping for.

JOY IN DIFFICULT SEASONS

Joy in Difficult Seasons

Joy and suffering are not opposites in Scripture. They are companions.

11

JAMES 1:2-3

“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.”

Count it all joy is a deliberate act of the mind, not a suppression of pain. James does not say feel joy. He says count it — assess it, reason about it, reach the conclusion that this too is producing something. The joy is not for the trial. It is for what the trial is building.

12

ROMANS 5:3-4

“And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.”

Glory in tribulations. The Greek word is kauchaomai — to boast, to exult. Paul does not say endure tribulations stoically. He says boast in them, because you know what they are making. The joy is in the knowing, not the feeling.

1
3

HEBREWS 12:2

“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

For the joy set before Him. Jesus endured the cross by looking past it at what was coming: the joy of bringing many sons to glory, the joy of finishing what He was sent to do. Joy can be the reason you endure something, not just the reward after it.

1
4

1 PETER 1:6

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials.”

Greatly rejoice, though grieved by trials. Both are true at the same time. Peter does not resolve the tension. He holds both — the grief is real, and so is the great rejoicing. Grief and joy are not taking turns. They coexist. That is not contradiction. That is the full texture of a believing life.

1
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2 CORINTHIANS 6:10

“As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things.”

Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Paul’s whole life is captured in this paradox. Always rejoicing is not the denial of sorrow. It is joy running beneath the sorrow like a deep current that the surface weather cannot stop. He carries both at once, and calls it normal for the person in Christ.

JOY THAT OVERFLOWS

Joy That Overflows

Genuine joy does not stay inside. It changes the atmosphere of every room it enters.

1
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ISAIAH 55:12

“For you shall go out with joy, and be led out with peace; the mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

The trees clap their hands. Isaiah finds creation joining in when God’s people walk in joy and peace. Joy is not private and contained. When it is genuine, it spills outward. The world notices. Something in the created order responds.

1
7

PSALM 98:4

“Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth; break forth in song, rejoice, and sing praises.”

Shout joyfully. Not whisper politely, not nod approvingly. Shout. The joy of God is not a refined and restrained thing. It is the kind that comes out loud. The full voice is part of what the Psalms offer: permission to be thoroughly, unashamedly glad.

1
8

LUKE 10:20

“Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

Your names are written in heaven. Jesus redirects the disciples from rejoicing in power to rejoicing in belonging. The deepest ground for joy is not what you can do but what has been done for you: your name, recorded, permanent, in the book of heaven.

1
9

ACTS 2:28

“You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.”

Full of joy in Your presence. Peter quotes Psalm 16 at Pentecost and applies it to the resurrection. The fullness of joy was not finished at the first Pentecost. It is still being poured out. The same Spirit who filled that upper room is the one who fills you.

20

PSALM 126:2-3

“Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, ‘The Lord has done great things for them.’ The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad.”

Filled with laughter. The return from captivity was so overwhelming that the people could not contain it — their mouths filled with laughter before words formed. And the nations noticed. The gladness of God’s people is a witness. Joy is not just personal. It is evangelistic.

JOY AFTER SORROW

Joy After Sorrow

God specialises in turning mourning into dancing.

21

PSALM 30:11

“You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness.”

Mourning into dancing. God does not just comfort the mourner. He turns them. Transforms the mourning itself into something entirely different. Sackcloth becomes gladness. This is not grief management. This is resurrection energy applied to a broken life.

22

ISAIAH 61:3

“To give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.”

The oil of joy for mourning. The exchange is specific: this for that. Your mourning in one hand, God’s joy in the other. He does not dismiss the mourning or pretend the ashes are not there. He takes them, and gives you something entirely different back.

2
3**JEREMIAH 31:13**

“For I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them, and make them rejoice rather than sorrow.”

I will turn it. Not time will soften it, not you will eventually feel better. God personally takes the mourning and turns it toward joy. He is not passive in your grief. He is working, redirecting, leading toward a different place.

2
4**JOHN 16:20**

“Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.”

Your sorrow will be turned into joy. Jesus says this before the crucifixion — the disciples do not know yet what is coming. He promises them that the sorrow they are about to feel will itself become the source of their joy. The resurrection does not undo the grief. It transforms it.

2
5**PSALM 30:5**

“For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”

Joy comes in the morning. Not eventually, not when you deserve it. Morning. The night is real — enduring is the word. But the night is not permanent. God’s direction is always toward morning. Grief has a trajectory. Joy is where it leads.

THE JOY THAT CANNOT BE TAKEN

The Joy That Cannot Be Taken

Some joys are fragile. The joy Christ gives is not one of them.

2
6**JOHN 16:22**

“Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”

No one will take from you. The joy Jesus gives after the resurrection is not vulnerable to theft. It does not depend on circumstances staying good. It is anchored in something nothing can remove: the risen Christ, seen, known, present.

27

1 PETER 1:8

“Whom having not seen you love; though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.”

Joy inexpressible and full of glory. Peter describes people who have not physically seen Jesus and yet carry joy that cannot be put into words. This is not enthusiastic religion. It is something the Spirit produces that overflows the capacity of language to describe.

28

PSALM 118:24

“This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

We will rejoice — future tense, chosen, decided before the day reveals itself. The joy is not in response to how the day goes. It is a prior decision made about who made the day. This day, whatever it holds, was made by God. That is enough to rejoice in.

29

PSALM 21:6

“For You have made him most blessed forever; You have made him exceedingly glad with Your presence.”

Exceedingly glad with Your presence. The gladness is tied directly to where God is. Not what He has done in the last season, not the memory of His goodness, but His living, present, here-and-now nearness. Presence is the gift. Gladness is what presence produces.

30

ROMANS 14:17

“For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Joy in the Holy Spirit is a defining mark of the kingdom of God. Wherever the kingdom comes, wherever God’s reign is welcomed, joy arrives with it. It is not incidental to the kingdom. It is part of its texture, its atmosphere, its daily currency.

JOY AS DELIGHT IN GOD

Joy as Delight in God

True joy is not a feeling you chase. It grows in the person who has found God worth delighting in.

3
1

PSALM 37:4

“Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.”

Delight yourself in the Lord. Before the promise of answered desire, there is the invitation to delight. Not perform, not comply, not serve — delight. As you find your joy in who God is, your desires are slowly reshaped into the things He was already ready to give.

3
2

PSALM 63:5

“My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.”

Satisfied as with marrow and fatness — the richest parts of the meal, the food that fills deepest. David’s satisfaction in God is not polite contentment. It is the soul filled to capacity, the spiritual equivalent of a feast. Joyful lips follow from a satisfied soul.

3
3

PHILIPPIANS 3:1

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.”

It is safe. The reason Paul keeps coming back to rejoice in the Lord is not repetition for its own sake. It is that this particular anchor keeps the soul from drifting. Rejoicing in the Lord is a safe place to land. He returns to it because it is reliable ground.

3
4

PSALM 84:2

“My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.”

Cry out for the living God. The psalmist’s longing for God’s presence is so intense it affects his body — his flesh cries out. Joy is not always loud and present. Sometimes it exists as longing, as hunger for the thing that most satisfies. That hunger is itself a form of joy, because it knows what it is looking for.

3
5

MATTHEW 25:21

“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’”

Enter into the joy of your lord. The reward for faithfulness in Scripture is not rest from all effort. It is entering into God’s own joy — participation in what He is doing, inside the gladness of the One who made everything. That is the invitation at the end of all things.

JOY WHEN NOTHING GOES RIGHT

Joy When Nothing Goes Right

The most tested joy in Scripture is the kind that stands when everything else has failed.

3
6

HABAKKUK 3:17-18

“Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls — yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

Yet I will rejoice. Habakkuk lists every category of failure: no blossoms, no fruit, no crop, no livestock. Total loss. And the conclusion is yet. Yet I will rejoice. This is the most costly and most powerful word for joy in all of Scripture. Not because circumstances are good. Because God is.

3
7

JOB 38:7

“When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”

The sons of God shouted for joy at the creation of the world. Before human history began, before grief existed, before anything went wrong, joy was the response to God’s work. Joy is not a correction to a broken world. It is the original note Creation was struck with.

38

LUKE 24:52

“And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”

They returned with great joy — after watching Jesus ascend. They did not see the ascension as abandonment. They saw it as the confirmation of everything He had said. The disciples leave the mountain worshipping. Their grief has been so thoroughly turned that His leaving is the occasion for their greatest joy.

39

ACTS 13:52

“And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

Filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. The two are listed together. Joy is not separate from the Spirit’s presence — it is part of what filling looks like. A Spirit-filled person is a joy-filled person, not as a personality trait but as a fruit of who is living inside them.

40

PSALM 4:7

“You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that their grain and wine increased.”

More than in the season of harvest. The gladness God puts in the heart exceeds what the best material prosperity produces. David is not making a spiritual-sounding observation. He is reporting from experience: I have had both, and what You put in my heart goes deeper than what the harvest put in my barns.

JOY IN WORSHIP AND PRAISE

Joy in Worship and Praise

The songs of Scripture are not decoration. They are the natural overflow of a heart that has met God.

41

LUKE 1:47

“And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.”

My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. Mary’s Magnificat opens with joy. Before she speaks of what God has done, she speaks of what God is — her Savior — and rejoices in that. The joy precedes the blessings she is about to list. It is rooted in Person, not in gifts.

4
2**PSALM 33:1**

“Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous! For praise is fitting for the upright.”

Praise is fitting. Fitting — it is the right shape, the appropriate response, the thing that belongs. When a person has encountered the living God, praise is not a performance. It is the form that joy naturally takes. It fits.

4
3**PSALM 71:23**

“My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing to You, and my soul, which You have redeemed.”

My soul, which You have redeemed. The sentence answers its own question: why does the psalmist rejoice? Because of what God has done to his soul. The singing is the overflow of a redeemed life looking back at the moment it was purchased.

4
4**REVELATION 19:7**

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.”

The last great celebration in Scripture is the marriage of the Lamb. The book of Revelation ends not in fear or solemnity but in a wedding. Joy is the final note of the whole story. The universe ends the way it began: with joy in the presence of God.

4
5**2 SAMUEL 6:14**

“Then David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod.”

David danced before the Lord with all his might. The king of Israel danced, undignified and unconcerned about appearances. All his might. He held nothing back. The joy of God’s presence did not produce restrained, managed emotion in David. It produced a dance.

THE WELLSPRING OF JOY

The Wellspring of Joy

Joy is not reserved for mountaintops. It can be drawn from God in the ordinary days too.

4
6

ISAIAH 12:3

“Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”

With joy you will draw water. The image is ordinary — drawing water from a well is daily, physical, necessary work. But when the well is salvation, the drawing is done with joy. The everyday reach toward God, the ordinary moments of returning to Him, can all be done with joy.

4
7

PSALM 145:7

“They shall utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness.”

The memory of Your great goodness. Joy has a memory. Recalling what God has done is one of the most reliable paths back to joy. When the present is hard, the memory of His goodness becomes the fuel for present praise.

4
8

DEUTERONOMY 16:15

“Seven days you shall keep a sacred feast to the Lord your God in the place which the Lord chooses, because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.”

Altogether joyful. God commands His people to feast, to celebrate, to be altogether joyful. Joy is not only permitted in the life of faith. In the Old Testament, it was scheduled, structured, required. Refusing to celebrate was missing the point of what God had done.

4
9

ACTS 16:34

“Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.”

He rejoiced, having believed. The jailer’s conversion is followed immediately by a meal and rejoicing. The moment of belief is also the moment joy enters the house. Faith and joy are not separated. When genuine belief arrives, joy comes with it.

JUDE 24-25

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy — to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

With exceeding joy. The last thing Jude describes before his doxology is your arrival in God’s presence with exceeding joy. The story of your life in Christ does not end in relief, or quiet satisfaction. It ends in exceeding joy. That is where you are headed. Everything before that moment is the journey toward it.

Fifty witnesses — kings who danced before the ark, prophets who rejoiced in empty fields, apostles who sang in prison, and a Saviour who carried joy to a cross and came out the other side of it — all saying the same thing:

Joy is not what you feel when everything goes well. It is what you have when God is with you.

Wherever you are reading this, that condition is already met.

A CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, I have read Your words about joy.

Some of them I believe easily.

Some of them I am still reaching for.

Either way, I bring what I have today.

Fill in the rest.

You are my exceeding joy —

let me live like it.

Amen.

* In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore *