

Read: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Always Joyful

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18,23-24

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Savaya was thinking about what she had just heard her pastor say: "Rejoice always."

That word "always" bothered her. Always? All the time? She was supposed to always be joyful?

Savaya could think of times when she had not been all that happy—like when her friends had been mean to her and had talked about her behind her back. It really hurt her. She felt mad and sad all at the same time. On top of it, she didn't feel happy about her grades at school. She didn't want to go home and be told what to do.

Rejoice always? Sometimes, maybe. Always? What reason did she have to rejoice *always*?

Then Savaya heard her pastor give a sermon she would never forget. He explained how there is a difference between joy and being happy, between joyfulness and happiness. Happiness is a word used to describe an emotion, like how we would use anger or sadness to talk about how we feel. Feeling happy is affected by what is going on in your life. When good things happen, it is easy to be happy. When difficult or hard things happen, there is no happiness. Instead, there may be a different emotion, like anger or sadness.

Savaya's pastor then said this, "It's impossible to always feel the emotion of happiness. But God always makes it possible for you to have joy." Joyfulness might be described as a condition of our heart. The joy and joyfulness that Paul talked about today comes from knowing all that God has done for us. It is the result of Jesus coming and assuring you, "I will *always* love you. I will *always* want to forgive you. I will *always* have a home ready for you with me in heaven." Those things are true no matter what happens in life. Those promises are there to comfort and encourage you when times are good or when times are bad.

Savaya began to understand what her pastor was saying. We may not always be happy. The feeling of happiness can quickly come and go. But we can *always* be joyful because our joy is based on all the things God has done for us and promised us. Savaya found her joy—in Jesus! So, with Savaya, rejoice always!

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- What happened that made Savaya so unhappy?
- Where did Savaya find her joy?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Explain the difference between *joy* and *happiness*.
- Name three things that make you *happy*. Name three things that make you *joyful*.

Questions for Middle School and Above

- What circumstances of your life is the devil trying to use to rob you of joy?
- Why is it important to keep in mind the difference between joy and happiness?

Closing Prayer:

Lord, thank you for assuring me of your love, your forgiveness, and my home with you in heaven. This good news makes my heart joyful. Along with Savaya, help me to remember all that you have done for me when things in life make me unhappy and try to take my joy away. Amen.