



Network of Evangelical Women in Ministry

The Streams Guided Silent Retreat

June 5, 2021

# The JOY of the LORD is my STRENGTH

Dear Beloved of Christ,

Today is a gift you have given yourself. I extended the invitation, but I also honor and respect your freedom and will not push myself where I am not wanted. I will wait for you to respond, as you have, from the depths of your desire. Call upon me to be with you and trust and believe I will join you. Find a comfortable place to sit, take three deep breaths and ask the Me to join you.

Love,

GOD, Your Father

## Introduction to the Retreat

Now that you are in a comfortable place, come join us in the silence and solitude of God's presence and let him illuminate his word and awaken your heart.

Before you begin, I invite you to sit with God in silence and settle your mind and relax your body in order to be present with the Lord. Spend time preparing your heart to "be" with him.

- ♥ Empty your mind of lingering thoughts.
- ♥ Ask God to cleanse your heart of any sins that come to mind. Confess the sins and repent. Receive your forgiveness and rejoice in God who forgives all your sins and bestows upon you his covenant love for eternity.
- ♥ When you are ready, open with a short prayer, inviting God to join you and guide you by his Holy Spirit during your time of silence and reflection. Offer praise and thanksgiving for this time with him. Then , "Ask the Lord to come."
- ♥ It is not imperative to complete all the questions. The most important thing is to sit with the scriptures, reflect on them, and allow the Lord to speak to your heart and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- ♥ Don't be surprised as you enter your time of silence that you may fall asleep while trying to pray through things or that you are bombarded with a multitude of thoughts or even have trouble concentrating. Just wait on him.
- ♥ If you are anxious, sit with it – let God use it as a teachable moment. Sometimes sitting with our discomfort can be as much of a blessing as being comfortable.
- ♥ Perhaps you become disillusioned because nothing seems to be happening or you can't hear his voice. Perhaps you may be forcing something rather than being drawn into his presence. Stay with it and invite him again. WAIT on him.

- ♥ You might want to change your location for each meditation. If your goal is to be open to God, sometimes we have to shift our perspective and if we get too comfortable or familiar, sometimes that doesn't happen.
- ♥ I encourage you to turn off your cell phones so they will not be a distraction or temptation. Trust God has your back today.
- ♥ As your time in silence and meditation comes to an end, close with a prayer of gratitude for God's presence with you today. It is a good way of transitioning back into the noise of the world.

Richard Rohr said: "A good journey begins with knowing where we are and being willing to go somewhere else."  
Let the Lord take you on a journey today. The deep work of God doesn't happen on the go.  
Psalm 46:10 – "*Be still and know that I am God.*"

"Solitude is the furnace of transformation....(It) is the place of great struggle and the great encounter – the struggle against the compulsions of the false self, and the encounter with the loving God who offers himself as the substance of the new self." Henri Nouwen

May you be richly blessed while in the presence of Three in One,

Your Streams Team



## The JOY of the Lord is my STRENGTH

“Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet drink, and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord, and be not grieved and depressed, for the Joy of the Lord is your strength and your stronghold.” Nehemiah 8:10 Amp.

### AGENDA

8:30 am	Gathering fellowship
9:00 am	Welcome, Prayer, and Orientation to Silence
9:15 am	First Guided Meditation
9:30 am	Time in Silence
11:15 am	Second Guided Meditation and pick up Lunch
11:30 am	Time in Silence
1:15 pm	Scripture Journey to Joy and Strength in Silence
2:10 pm	Re-entry
2:15 pm	Sharing what God has done
2:55 pm	Closing song, prayer and dismissal

# Journey to Finding your Joy

## Introduction to the First Meditation

The early church was characterized by gladness and the joy of the Lord (Acts 2:46; 13:52), and the “joy in the Holy Spirit” is a distinguishing mark of the kingdom of God. (Romans 14:17) Those who are part of the kingdom share in the kingdom’s delight. But when we stray from God’s standards, we find ourselves following our sinful ways.

Nehemiah, the governor, arrived in Jerusalem and found not only broken walls but broken lives. Ezra, the priest and scribe, called the people to a time of repentance and rededication to the Covenant. He shared the Law with them and told the repentant Israelites **the joy of the Lord would be their strength.** (Nehemiah 8:10.)

As you read these verses don’t hesitate to read the ones before and after as well. Especially, verses 1-18. Reflect on the point delivered to Nehemiah and a people who were ravaged by war, weakened by insecurities and constantly reminded of their fragility. Something happened when Ezra, the priest and scribe, read from the Book of the Law of Moses. Don’t miss it!

Now spend time slowly reading Nehemiah 8:8-12. Read from the version included on page 2 or from your bible. Read it slowly and as many times as you wish. As you begin to read, experience the passage with your senses:

- ♥ **SEE** – Read the words or phrases that catch your attention and invite you to linger. Meditate on them and invite them to be a guest in your heart.
- ♥ **HEAR** – Read the words out loud or in a whisper. Meditate on what you are hearing.
- ♥ **TASTE** – Take time to ponder what this passage is saying to your heart. Reflect on the thoughts or emotions that come to your mind.

You might want to write down the key words or phrases that stirred within you. It may be God's way of speaking to you today. Journaling may help you reflect on what you hear and experience. God loves it when his beloveds make space in their busy lives to spend time with him. Perhaps, there is something he wants to develop within you to open you to a deeper understanding of the passage. Whatever leading from the Lord you sense, allow it into your heart. It is all about developing greater intimacy with Jesus and his Word.

## Nehemiah 8: 8-12 (Amplified)

*“8 So they read from the Book of the Law of God distinctly, faithfully amplifying and giving the sense so that the people understood the reading. 9 And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all of them, ‘This day is holy to the Lord your God; mourn not nor weep.’ For all the people wept when they heard the words of the Law. 10 Then Ezra told them ‘Go your way, eat the fat, drink the sweet drink, and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. And be not grieved and depressed, for the Joy of the Lord is your Strength and your Stronghold.’ 11 So the Levites quieted all the people, saying, Be still, for the day is holy. And do not be grieved and sad. 12 And all the people went their way to eat, drink, send portions, and make great rejoicing, for they had understood the words that were declared to them.”*

## First Meditation

1. After reading these passages, define what you think the “joy of the Lord” is, in your own words.
2. Remembering a time when you experienced great joy in the Lord, describe what was it like for you. Take time to reflect...you may want to write, draw or journal about this time with the Lord and how it impacted your life.
3. What do you sense God is saying to you in this passage? You may want to meditate on what you hear, allowing yourself to simply be with the Lord in the stillness.
4. Think about an area in your life where you're not experiencing joy. What do you think is robbing you of joy and would you like to ask the Lord to restore it? Meditate on this.

## First Meditation continued

5. Below is a list of more scriptures you might want to read and ponder listening for a word from the Lord to your heart.

Zephaniah 3:17 (NIV)

Psalms 16:11

Psalms 28:7

Psalms 73:25-26

Psalms 118:24

Isaiah 55:12

Matthew 25:21

John 16:24

Romans 14:17

Romans 15:13

Galatians 5:22

Philippians 2:1-2

James 1:2-4





\*\*\*Optional or Take-Home\*\*\*

## Scripture Journey to Finding Joy – Med 1

### Digging Deeper

1. Read the following verses: Write out God's message to you from these passages.
  - ♥ James 1:2-5 – What must we choose to believe if we are going to consider trials occasions for joy?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - ♥ 1Peter 1:6-9 – Write a prayer to God, in faith, asking him to help you find your joy.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. When you are experiencing trials, what helps you focus on God (your joy) instead of the trial?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. As you think of some of the difficult trials you have experienced, describe the thoughts or beliefs that dominated your mind and your emotions in each circumstance.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Describe a time in your life when sadness and lament turned into joy? Explain what you learned from the experience. Where did you see God in the experience?

5. Describe a time in your life when you were able to praise God in the midst of your grief or loss? What did you experience? Explain how it affected your joy.
  
6. List what you have learned today that could shape your future responses.
  
7. What scriptures did you learn that you can use as handholds during the trials or storms of life?

# Journey to Finding your Joy

## Introduction to the Second Meditation

As we enter the Gospel story in John 14, Jesus is comforting his disciples as he prepares them for his departure and tells them that he will give them another Helper, the Holy Spirit. In John 15 Jesus and his disciples have moved from the upper room and are walking to the Garden of Gethsemane. This is when he speaks “of My joy”, and we discover the secret of ‘abiding joy’. How unique the Lord’s joy must have been if it still remained with him in the time of great trial and testing! His desire and provision for us (every believer) is that his joy, which is so different from the world, should be our joy - “that My joy might be in you and that your joy may be complete.” 4

This meditation has us focusing on abiding, love and joy. Scripture is clear that God doesn’t keep his joy to himself. God’s plan and delight is to fill us with the fullness of joy that is founded totally in him rather than the ever-changing circumstances of our life. We will journey into the heart of God today and find his limitless pool of joy that he longs to give us.

## Second Meditation

Perhaps you would like to begin by meditating on God’s desire to fill you with his love and abounding joy. Spend time resting in his presence as you meditate. When you are ready to proceed, move on to the reading of the scripture.

Begin reading one or both translations of John 15:1-11 on page 2.

- ♥ Spend time listening for key words or phrases that draw you into them. Linger there awhile.
  
- ♥ As you reflect on them, ask God what he is saying to you through them. Take note of the questions or thoughts that come to mind and enter them into your notes or journal. You may want to ponder these questions or thoughts as the Holy Spirit leads you
  
- ♥ Begin your journey when you are ready.

## John 15:1-11 NIV

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener. <sup>2</sup>He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes<sup>[d]</sup> so that it will be even more fruitful.<sup>3</sup>You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.<sup>4</sup>Remain in Me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me.

<sup>5</sup>"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.<sup>6</sup>If you do not remain in Me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.<sup>7</sup>If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.<sup>8</sup>This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.

<sup>9</sup>"As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commands and remain in His love. <sup>11</sup>I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

## John 15:1-11 The Passion (It is a paraphrase.)

<sup>15</sup>"I am a true sprouting vine, and the farmer who tends the vine is My Father. <sup>2</sup>He cares for the branches connected to Me by lifting and propping up the fruitless branches and pruning every fruitful branch to yield a greater harvest. <sup>3</sup>The words I have spoken over you have already cleansed you. <sup>4</sup>So you must remain in life-union with Me, for I remain in life-union with you. For as a branch severed from the vine will not bear fruit, so your life will be fruitless unless you live your life intimately joined to mine.

<sup>5</sup>"I am the sprouting vine and you're My branches. As you live in union with Me as your source, fruitfulness will stream from within you—but when you live separated from Me you are powerless. <sup>6</sup>If a person is separated from Me, he is discarded; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire to be burned. <sup>7</sup>But if you live in life-union with Me and if My words live powerfully within you—then you can ask whatever you desire and it will be done.<sup>8</sup>When your lives bear abundant fruit, you demonstrate that you are My mature disciples who glorify My Father!

<sup>9</sup>"I love each of you with the same love that the Father loves Me. You must continually let My love nourish your hearts. <sup>10</sup>If you keep My commands, you will live in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commands, for I continually live nourished and empowered by His love. <sup>11</sup>My purpose for telling you these things is so that the joy that I experience will fill your hearts with overflowing gladness!

## Second Meditation Continued

1. In your own words, describe your relationship with the Lord. Take your time reflecting on it and ponder your intention of drawing closer to him. Invite the Holy Spirit to lead you.
2. In your own words, define the word “abide,” then spend time meditating on it. You might want to illustrate or describe how you see yourself abiding in Christ and then compare it to 1John 2:5-6, 24-25.)
3. John 15 and so many other scriptures are all about Jesus’ great love for us. Meditate on the idea that Jesus loves you so much that he wants you to abide with him. You might want to spend time pondering his great love and take some time to enjoy being loved. Describe this love in your own words.
4. Let’s take some time and read the following passage, John 15: 9-11, slowly and deliberately. Pause when you come to a word that stirs within you and take note of it. See if there is a truth that the Lord wants to reveal to you or an invitation for you.

*“As the Father loves Me, I also have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love these things I have spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”*

5. Think of a time in your life when you experienced God's love for you. Describe what it was like. Are you experiencing God's love now? If not, would you like to ask him to come and demonstrate his love for you?
  
6. Is there a time in your life when you experienced the "joy of the Lord?" Reflect on the circumstances surrounding that time and the emotions you experienced. If you have not experienced that joy, reflect on Psalm 86 and see what David did.

(There also is an optional meditation you can do now or take home with you.)

Dear Ones,

As you end your time in silence, take a few moments to reflect on what happened between you and God during your time with him. You might want to spend some quality time reflecting on the nugget(s) he has given you today and how you might want to integrate them into your relationship with Him. Is there anything that you know more clearly now than when you began? Was there any clear guidance or invitation from God? So much to ponder.

Ruth Haley Barton says "It takes time and experience to recognize this God who reaches out and seeks to communicate with us. This silence is unlike all other silences, for it is full of a Presence that makes itself known. The fruit of our waiting and willingness in that silence, ironically becomes one of the fullest experiences of the spiritual life." 1 pg 110-111

As you bring this time to a close, thank God for his presence with you and move gently back into your life with others.

~ Your Streams Team





\*\*\*Optional or Take Home\*\*\*

Journey to Finding your Joy - Meditation 2

Additional reflections for Digging Deeper

1. Read and reflect on John 15:4-7 and meditate on what you learn from these verses.
2. What does John 15:9-11 say about God's desire to let his love nourish your heart? Ponder this statement. Express what you experience when you hear those words?
3. John 15:11 - Meditate on God's desire to fill you with abounding joy.
4. Read and reflect on John 17:26. Jesus prays, *"I made known to them your name, Father, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them and I in them."* Explain what this verse is saying to you. Is there a promise in this verse? Thank him for his love for you. You might want to take this time to rest in his joyful and peaceful presence listening for a word to your heart.
5. In John 15:11 *"My purpose for telling you these things is so that the JOY that I experience will fill your hearts with overflowing gladness."* (Passion) In the NIV it says, *"I have told you this so that my JOY may be in you and that your joy may be complete."* Reflect on you own life.
  - ♥ Describe the JOY that fills your heart. Where are you not experiencing JOY? How can I have that joy? What do you think is robbing your joy?
  - ♥ Explain how or where you receive that fullness of JOY? Where do you see the Father's JOY in you exhibited?
  - ♥ Ask the Spirit to lead you into the fullness of JOY in every area of your life.
6. Psalms 16:11 : Ask the Holy Spirit, is there an invitation for me in this passage? Write down what you hear and ponder it.



\*\*\* Optional or Take home \*\*\*

## Journey to Finding your Strength in Joy

### “Digging Deeper”

Stephen J. Cole says “We should seek to know experientially the joy of the Lord, which yields spiritual strength. We are not talking about the joy of natural temperament. It is the ‘Joy of the Lord,’ available to all who know God’s abundant salvation....and in spite of circumstances.”

Ever feel like your strength is running out? Let us journey together through some scriptures to find the strength that comes from the “Joy of the Lord.” The joy of the Lord is the joy that God Himself possesses. He reveals it to us through His Word that tells us of His great salvation and the joy that it brings. It is a joy that one can enjoy in spite of our circumstances. We have access to God’s boundless joy. This joy comes from God alone, and our relationship with him. I pray your heart will be broken, deeply changed and that you would find the path to endless joy and strength today.

God and his Word is a source of joy/strength for every believer.

- ♥ Proceed at your own speed
  - ♥ No need to answer or ponder every question.
  - ♥ One may cause a response in your heart, and you may want to linger there and another question may not.
  - ♥ Let the Holy Spirit guide you on this journey.
1. Take a moment and meditate on the Cross of the Lord Jesus - where God’s love and justice found us. Remember how he chose YOU and called YOU to Himself.
  2. Ask yourself...Where do I find my joy? (Jeremiah 2: 12-13)
    - ♥ Health, food, possessions, social media, recognition, God, etc?

## Journey to Finding your Strength in Joy continued

3 “Joy” is gladness of heart that comes from knowing God, abiding in Christ and being filled with the Holy Spirit.

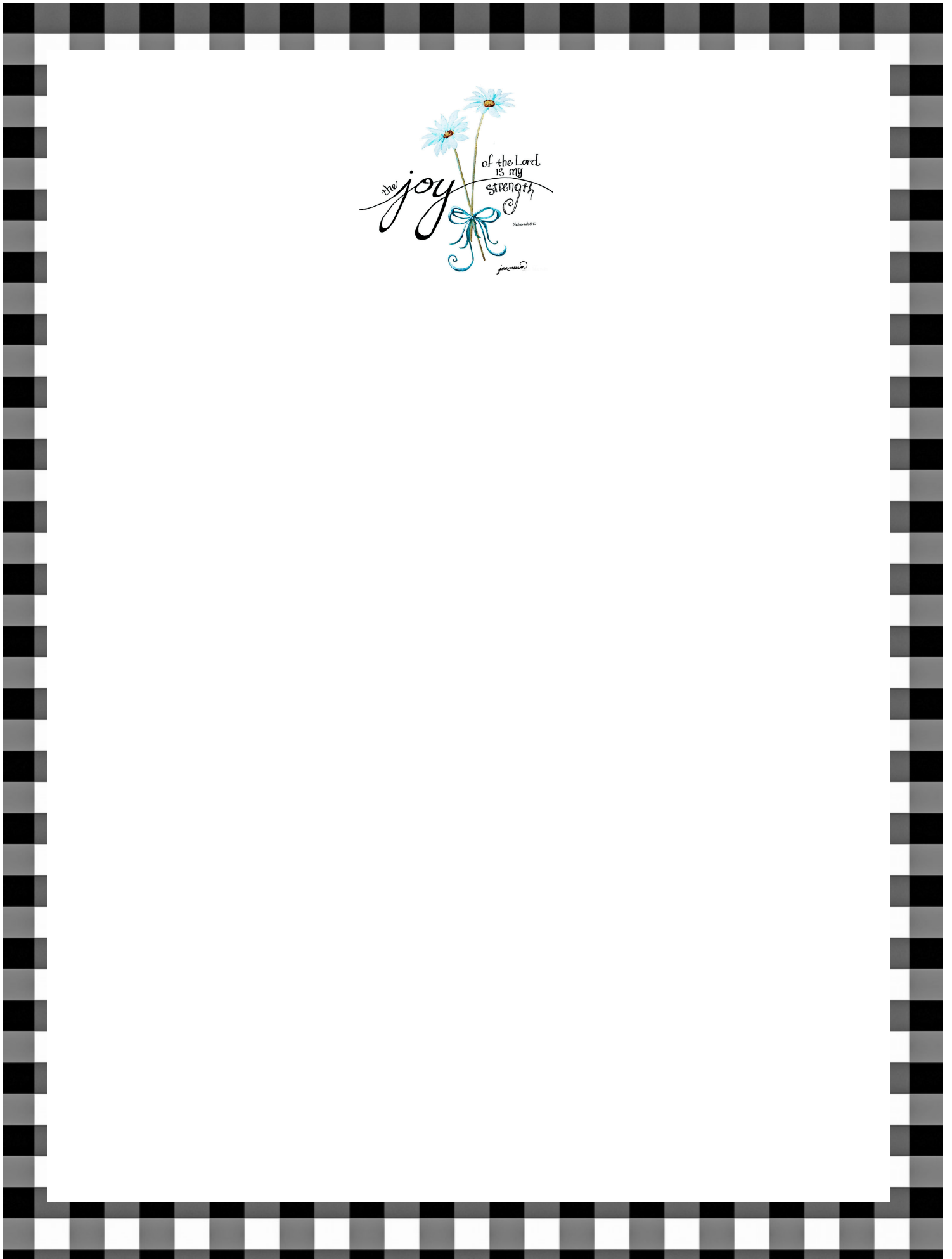
- ♥ You may want to think of ways you can access that Joy/Strength. List them and then, practice them.

4 Romans 15:13... *“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”*

- ♥ In the midst of trials, we can control our thoughts. We can stand in the shadows or the Light of Christ. Which do you choose? 2 Cor 10:3-6
- ♥ You can focus on things of the earth or things above. Which do you choose? Colossians 3:2
- ♥ You can dwell on things that cause you anxiety or on things that are true. Which do you choose? Philippians 4:6-8; Psalms 94:19
- ♥ You can choose to stand firm. 1 Corinthians 16:13
- ♥ You can choose to rejoice. Philippians 4:4

5. Describe how he has helped you through trials in the past?

- ♥ Choose to remember how he helped you and make it a stone of remembrance for future trials. Write it down so the enemy won't steal it from you.



## The JOY of the Lord is my STRENGTH

### Closing Prayer

God of joy unspeakable, you have not created us so that we should merely endure existence. You have created us rather for delight and you have filled our mouths with laughter. Turn our tears into songs of joy, change our wailing into dancing and make our wilderness blossom with life, so that with the morning stars we might sing for gladness and with the festive throng we may come to your house with shouts of praise. We pray this in the name of the One who endured all things for the joy set before him. Amen.

From [Open and Unafraid, The Psalms as a Guide to Life](#), by W. David O. Taylor

# THE JOY of the Lord is my STRENGTH

## EVALUATION

Thank you for taking a few minutes to complete this evaluation for your responses help us to create future retreats. Use the back if you need more room.

1. How did the Lord use this time at the retreat in your life?
2. If you had to boil everything down to one main idea, what is the “main thing” (thought, insight, experience, word, challenge) you are taking home?
3. Is there something you want to be intentional to put into practice when you get home?
4. What did you find most helpful?
5. Any suggestions to improve the retreat?
6. If you joined us virtually, how would you describe this virtual experience for yourself?
7. May we use your comments to post on our website using your first name? Yes or No?  
Name \_\_\_\_\_
8. If you participated virtually, we would appreciate if you would fill out this evaluation and email it to [jilvas@comcast.net](mailto:jilvas@comcast.net). Thank You very much!

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