

## Joyful Hearts

**Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.** (Psalm 95:1)

**Scripture:** Psalm 95

**Song:** “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy”

“God is great! God is Good! Help me, God! God is faithful to me!” My three-year-old daughter bellowed out a song that was half prayer and half praise. That sweet girl knew from a young age that she was meant to praise the Lord. And praise the Lord she did—every day for hours on end.

In Psalm 95, the psalmist encourages the reader to approach God with a grateful heart. He encourages us to worship with humility and with boldness. And how can we not? For it is God who formed us and created all things. It is God who shepherds and guides us.

Too often, people think they need to approach God quietly, in the perfect setting, while whispering their praises to Him. It is because of His great love that we can approach His throne of grace with excitement and joy! God saved us from destruction. He rescued us from despair. He gave us a purpose and plan that far exceeds our own. He deserves the highest (and loudest) praise!

**Father,** I ask You to daily remind me that You are worthy of all praise and honor. Please let my heart overflow with joy when I look to You. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

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May 25–31. **Jennifer Turner** lives in the Charlotte, North Carolina, area with her husband and three children. She enjoys speaking and writing about God’s goodness, abundant grace, and redemptive love.

## Seeking Him

**I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD.”** (Psalm 122:1)

**Scripture:** Psalm 122

**Song:** “Seek Ye First”

As a patient in an eating disorder treatment center, I was unable to leave the facility to attend church. I was heartbroken. But what I missed the most was not a building. It was the fellowship with others and being in tune to what God was doing in my life. I sought Him through reading my Bible and praying, and I shared His love with others; then I was refreshed and ready to rejoice.

In Psalm 122, King David celebrated that others wanted to worship God with him. He prayed for unity in Jerusalem. He prayed for peace within, for he too had realized that peace came upon seeking the Lord and communing with Him.

It can be easy to think that God’s presence is found in a church setting only. But His presence is shown in the stars in the sky, the birds in the air, and a baby’s first breath. It can never be contained to a building. He is an encompassing God, and it’s in pursuing Him that we find He is always pursuing us. It’s in rejoicing with others that we find He rejoices over us. Praise God for His indwelling love!

**Father**, please help me to not get caught up in routines or rules, but to always seek You no matter where I am. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Retrain Your Brain

**Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.** (Romans 12:2)

**Scripture:** Romans 12:1–8

**Song:** “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”

“If I could just get rid of these thoughts, my life would be much easier!” I proclaimed, in a state of desperation. Harassed by thoughts of being a bad wife, terrible mom, and awful servant of Christ, I finally picked up my Bible. As I read God's promises, my mindset shifted. It's an everyday battle, but as I draw near to Him, He renews my mind.

Paul desired that everyone experience the peace he knew. He understood that peace does not come from being like this world, but by having a mind that is fixed on Jesus. He assured the Roman believers that all members of the body of Christ are important, encouraging them to recognize their giftings and use them for God's glory.

We too can do the same. However, if thoughts of inadequacy plague our minds and paralyze us from using our talents, we will be unable to achieve all God has set out for us to do. Most of us struggle with negative thinking, but we can retrain our brain to listen to what God tells us. He tells us we are His! We are loved! We matter!

**Father**, thank You for Your Word that declares who I am in You. May I focus on Your truths today. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## Misunderstanding

**Then all the people went away to eat and drink, to send portions of food and to celebrate with great joy, because they now understood the words that had been made known to them.** (Nehemiah 8:12)

**Scripture:** Nehemiah 8:9–12

**Song:** “God Will Make a Way”

As a teacher of children with special needs, I sometimes misunderstand a student, and sometimes a student misunderstands me. Those moments can be filled with frustration, especially when a child is unable to use words to express how they are feeling. For this reason, we have a system in place where the student can point to a picture that describes an emotion. This usually helps their frustration pass.

In Nehemiah 8, the people rejoiced and worshiped God with Ezra. Their worship soon turned to weeping upon hearing the commands of the Lord. Nehemiah watched the people cry, and he reminded them that it was a holy day to the Lord. While laws were seemingly hard to follow, Nehemiah advised that the joy of the Lord was their strength. The people went away rejoicing, knowing that God was their great provider.

It's easy to misunderstand what God is saying. I often wonder whether what I am doing is His will or mine. But God assures me in His Word that He is the strength of my heart. This life is too difficult without Him, so I earnestly seek Him. In doing so, I gain understanding.

**Father**, thank You for the reminder that Your joy is my strength! Help me to keep my eyes and ears open to what You say. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## Together Is Better

**“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.”** (Matthew 18:20)

**Scripture:** Matthew 18:15–20

**Song:** “Come, Now Is the Time to Worship”

I have a “shadow” wherever I go—a little boy who adores his mama and wants to be with me all the time. It’s a beautiful thing, but I must admit, at times it’s taxing. My son’s motto seems to be that “two are better than one.” For where I go, he goes.

In today’s passage, Jesus discusses sin in the church. If there’s friction between two individuals, it must be handled. He tells the church that there’s strength in numbers as well. If two people can’t settle their issues alone, they can get help from others—for there is strength in numbers as we seek God.

As an extroverted introvert, I love my alone time, but I also love to be around people. Typically, social settings energize me, until they don’t. Then I like to sneak away by myself. I sometimes do this when I have an issue with another Christian. Instead of resolving it with the person, I tend to dwell on it alone. God says this is unnecessary. He desires peace within His family and wants us to come together and draw near to Him. For where we are, He is.

**Father**, may I commit to resolving issues with others swiftly and according to Your will. Thank You that You are in our midst. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

## Share What You Have

**All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. (Acts 4:32)**

**Scripture:** Acts 4:32–37

**Song:** “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

When I was nine, my family lost nearly everything. With very few possessions left, we didn't know where we were going to get the next meal or where we would live. It was a scary time for us. But God showed up over and over again through the people He had placed in our lives. Were it not for the body of Christ, there is no telling what the outcome would have been.

In Acts, God was working greatly, and the believers were united in “heart and mind.” Those who had what they needed were willing to share their resources with those who did not. The people knew in their hearts that all their possessions were from God and that He would continue to provide all they needed.

How I long to be as generous as those in Acts. Our resources from God are not meant to be our own; they are to be shared with others. This doesn't have to be material items only. Sharing God's love, His promises, and the talents He has given you can help others come to know that God is a good and gracious Father.

**Father**, thank You for Your grace and love. Thank You for providing for me over and over again. May I be quick to receive Your love and share it with others. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

## We Can Draw Near to Him

**Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.** (Hebrews 10:22)

**Scripture:** Hebrews 10:19–25

**Song:** “Blessed Assurance”

My typically reserved toddler ran to a complete stranger and gave him a hug before I could tell him to stay with me. With tears in his eyes, the man looked at me and said, “A hug is just what I needed today.” I didn’t ask why. I just stood there, speechless. It was as though God had directed my boy to run straight into the arms of this man because he needed compassion shown to him at that moment.

In Hebrews, Paul urges believers to run to God, who gave them Jesus, “a great priest.” Jesus intercedes to God on our behalf. And as a result of our faith in Jesus, God relieves us from the guilt of our sins. We are no longer strangers who need a hug. We are held in the loving arms of our Savior.

It’s easy to feel divided from God due to past mistakes or present sin. We want to run in the other direction, thinking that our failures are too great. But we can confidently approach our loving Father. His arms are open to all who draw near to Him.

**Father**, please help me to remember that You love me with an everlasting love. May I know You are near, even when I feel inadequate. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.