

## 7 reasons for joy

*A Christmas Carol* is a novella by Charles Dickens about Ebenezer Scrooge, an old man, who is well-known for being miserable and mean.

On Christmas Eve, Scrooge is visited by a series of ghosts, starting with his old business partner, Jacob Marley. The three spirits which follow, the Ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Yet to Come, show Scrooge how his mean behaviour has affected those around him. At the end of the story we see him transformed into a joyful and generous human being.

Many are trying to move from sadness, depression, and anger to joy. Many religious and non-religious people have a 'gratitude' journal. It's good to find reasons to be joyful.

We need to find reasons to be joyful. There is so much to be sad or angry about: war between Israel and Palestine, and Russia and Ukraine. Political uncertainty in Syria. Political fears in the U.S. and the U.K. Violence and murder in Kensal New Town.

God wants your joy. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading, St. Paul says 3 times that he wants your happiness. One day, God will defeat fear, sadness, anger, and selfishness, and give you unending joy forever! However, He wants to share His joy and happiness with you now! In Jesus, God gives us **7 reasons for joy**.

1. **God dances** - Zephaniah: "he will dance with shouts of joy for you." Earlier in the book, Zephaniah gives God's judgement over Israel. However, the deeper judgement is that God "dances with shouts of joy for you." When you fail, say sorry. Fr Daniel is hearing confessions Sunday 10-12. God "dances with shouts of joy for you."

2. **God sings** – "He will exult with joy over you." Other translations say "He will rejoice over you with singing." Parents singing over their children helps to soothe, comfort, give them sleep and peace. Does someone here need

soothing, comfort, and peace for some reason? God “rejoices over you with singing.”

3. **God guards** - Philippians 4:7: “that peace of God ... will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.” I think many here do not guard our hearts and minds. How many here say believe the following: I am no good, not loveable, worthless, shameful, dirty, powerless, hopeless? God \*guards\* you against these lies. In Jesus, you are good, lovable, worthy, exalted, pure, powerful, and have a destiny of the resurrection. Let God “**guard** your hearts and thoughts.”

4. **God is near** - Philippians 4:5: “the Lord is very near.” In Mt 28:20, Jesus said “I am with you until the end of time.” This is a promise for the whole church. It is a promise for you. You are, have never been, and never will be alone. Picture Jesus with you all the time as a friend. “The Lord is very near”.

5. **God calms**: “There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving...” Many people struggle with anxiety, and need calm. Someone once said, ‘if you are a worrier, you are also good at prayer and meditation. Just direct your worries to God and it becomes prayer.’ Give thanks when you do. God brings **calm**.

6. **God gives us tolerance** - Philippians 4:6: “Let your tolerance be evident to everyone.” Some people are only tolerant to people who share the same morals and beliefs as them. At alpha, we tolerate everyone’s opinions, regardless of their beliefs. When you disagree with others, don’t be defensive and argue. “Let your **tolerance** to be evident to everyone.”

7. **God gives moral clarity** – Luke 3:10: Different types of people ask John the Baptist, ““What must we \*do\*?”” He gives moral clarity. Moral clarity brings us and society joy! Like the gospel: Don’t be greedy or selfish; share your possessions and food generously (give to our foodbank). Don’t cheat people; be fair. Don’t bully or intimidate; be content with what you have. Jesus and the church’s **moral clarity** brings joy!

Brothers and sisters, be joyful! God loves you! He enjoys you! He dances and sings over you, guards, is near you, gives you tolerance, calms you, gives you clarity.

3 quotes as you go into life this week:

1. "Being a joyful Christian doesn't mean you don't have problems; it means you've read the back of the book, and you know who wins."
2. "Christians should laugh more—we've been forgiven, loved, and saved. If that's not worth a smile, what is?"
3. "Christians should be like helium balloons—not easily deflated and always ready to lift others up!"

At work, with family, friends, online, social media, or out and about this week, 1 Pt 3:15 says "always be ready to give a reason for the hope [and joy Jesus gives you], but do so with gentleness and respect."

If they write in a gratitude journal, try to be 1 more reason for their joy.

### **Prayer**

Lord, thank you that you rejoice over me as a wounded sinner!

I reject all fear, anxiety, depression, and sadness, in Jesus' name.

Come, Holy Spirit, touch me, and fill me with joy!

Help me to lift others up this week too, and be prepared to tell them that \*You\* are my reason for joy.

In Jesus' name, amen!