

A SEASONAL GUIDE TO
SPIRITUAL RESILIENCE

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- Joy and Strength
- The Joy Habit
- Take It to Heart
- Reach High, Dig Deep
- Pay Attention
- Joy Loves Company
- Share the Joy
- Bringing Joy Back
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Easter Joy!

SPRING 2013

The Joy of the Lord is Your Strength

The words, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” were first spoken long before the time of Jesus. The Book of Nehemiah, Chapter 8, tells us that after the people of Israel returned from Exile in Babylon, the Priest Ezra gathered them all together for a covenant renewal ceremony. The plan was to read God’s word aloud and then celebrate God’s saving act in returning them home. But as Ezra read, the people began to weep. What they heard in the words was only that they had fallen far short of God’s desire for their lives. In response Ezra told them,

“This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.” He went on to explain that if you hear God’s word fully and understand God’s word rightly, it always leads to great joy for yourself

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and compassionate concern for others. That’s how.....

“the joy of the Lord [becomes] your strength.”

So, Easter is a day and season of celebration. You can read about God’s saving act in the Resurrection at these points in the Gospels.

Matthew 28: 1-20

Mark 16: 1-20

Luke 24: 1-53

John 20: 1—21: 25

Hear these words fully and rightly. Let these words be a source of joy and strength for you. Join with your believing friends in this ancient Christian greeting.

Person 1: He is risen.

Person 2: He is risen, indeed!

Alleluia!

Make It A Habit

Did you know that Easter is more than just one day? Easter is a whole season. It lasts for 50 days from Easter Sunday until the day of Pentecost.

Did you know that it takes 30 days to turn something you do into a habit? Whether

you want to start working out more or playing an instrument better, then you just need to keep at it for 30 days and it becomes a habit. Why not use the 50 days of Easter to make some spiritual practice into a joy-giving habit. Whether it’s sharing a

regular meal with a good friend, or saying a kind word to someone every day for 50 days, you can turn your practice into a joy-filled and joy-giving habit.

**Mark your calendar.
Easter Sunday
31 March, 2013**

For God and Country

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Take It to Heart

Soldiers have to memorize all types of things, including mottos like the Soldiers Creed, the Warrior Ethos, and the NCO Creed.

Everything you are asked to memorize as a Soldier either forwards the mission, enhances your job performance, protects you and your buddies, or guides you through the promotion process.

You cannot memorize everything you need to know to be an effective Soldier, but some things are truly worth it.

The same is true for Scripture. There are some passages that are especially worth it to memorize, to take deeply to heart.

Many POWs have returned home and told stories about how reciting

scripture and singing spiritual songs to themselves kept them alive and sane while living in isolation. Yes, some things are TRULY worth taking to heart!

This Easter season try taking a great piece of scripture to heart. Make a plan to memorize

Philippians 4:4-7.

*Rejoice in the Lord
always, again I will
say, Rejoice. Let your
gentleness be known
to everyone. The
Lord is near. Do not
worry about anything,
but in everything by
prayer and
supplication with
thanksgiving let your
requests be made
known to God. And
the peace of God,
which surpasses all
understanding, will
guard your hearts and
your minds in Christ
Jesus.*

Philippians 4:4-7

Reach High, Dig Deep

“Reach high, dig deep!” Does that sound like your Sergeant at morning PT? Does it sound like an inspirational training video? Does it sound like a call to prayer?... maybe not, but maybe it should be.

Many Soldiers have learned to pray following the words, “now fold your

hands and bow your head.” These are great directions to get you started in prayer, but not the only way to pray. You can raise your head and hands. You can get down on your knees. You can sit, stand, and even lie flat out on the ground. Let your body do what your heart

tells you is right. Be bold in prayer. When your whole body prays, your whole being connects. Reach high, dig deep!

Pay Attention

What you pay attention to makes a difference in your life. If you pay attention to the negative aspects of your life, then you will become a more negative person. If you pay attention to the positive aspects of your life then

you will become a more positive, more joyful person. So look for the positives in your life and pay attention to them. Slow down. Take time to enjoy the little things. When you are eating a good meal, slow down and

pay attention to the delicious food you have received. Give thanks for it. When you are walking to the office, slow down and pay attention to the sunlight touching your face. Give thanks for it. Joy is waiting to be noticed.

Joy Loves Company

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describing
picture or
graphic.**

seeing a great movie, or buying a new car can make you happy. You can experience this kind of happiness all by yourself.

Joy is different.

Joy comes out of you from the inside. Joy is the feeling that wells up from deep inside when

you see that your buddy is safe, or you hold your child in your arms after a long separation, or you receive heartfelt thanks for doing someone a service. You experience joy with people you care about, with your family, your buddies, and other people you care about in your community.

So put yourself out there and plan to spend some time with someone you care about soon.

Joy is different from happiness. Happiness comes at you from the outside. Going on a trip,

*“Restore to me
the joy of your
salvation, and
sustain in me a
willing spirit.”*

Psalm 51:12

Share the Joy

Thanksgiving Day is not the only day to remember and give thanks. You can review your day everyday. What are the moments and who are the people that made a positive difference for you? Write a list. Start with just 3 items. Each day, at the end of the day, write a list of three people or moments that made your day

better. Keep your lists in a book or post them on a board. Once a week review your lists. Look for patterns, particularly people patterns. Who are the people that keep showing up on your lists? Let them know it. Thank them for who they are or what they have done to bring joy into your life. It will be good for both of you.

As you get better at this you may want to start keeping a longer list each day, or remembering further back in your life. Are there people in your life, people from your past, who would enjoy hearing from you? Use this Easter Day or Season to reach out to them. Share your thoughts and feelings. Share the joy!

Bringing Joy Back

Is all of this joy talk almost too much for you right now? Does joy seem like a thing of the past in your life.....if you ever felt it at all?

If you are feeling alone or lonely or hopeless, then you might find a new friend in the Psalms. You can find people just like

you in the Psalms. If you read the Psalms you will find that the writers went through it all, good times and bad, super highs and deep lows. It is all there in the Psalms. But even on a psalm writers worst day, there was always a glimpse of hope or joy. Bring the joy back.

Read the Psalms and you may be able to join a writer in saying.....

*“You have turned
my mourning into
dancing; you have taken off
my sackcloth and clothed
me with joy.”*

Psalm 30: 11

The Color of Joy

Christians have used geometric designs, also called mandalas, as a part of their prayer practice for centuries.

Some of the best examples of this are the hand-printed and colored Bibles created by monks in the Middle Ages.

Today people still use mandalas to focus their minds and hearts, and so can you.

- Color a mandala to help you focus on a problem or concern. Post your mandala on the wall as a sign of giving your prayer over to God.
- Pray for someone else as you color, then give your mandala to that person with a note attached.
- Take a break from words and just focus on the beauty and joy of color filling shape.

The simple act of coloring will focus you in the present moment, but it will also create a visible sign of your prayer time.

Adapted for use from Susan Forshey's "The Contemplative Cottage."