

Are you any good at rejoicing? Are you any good at rejoicing? Rejoicing is celebrating, it's expressing joy.

Expressing joy. Are you any good at rejoicing? Couple of years ago, quite a few years ago, actually, I was teaching some of the kids cricket.

We were in the backyard, and it was actually Ben and Locke at the time. And anyone done some backyard cricket? Yeah, look at that.

Good Aussies, I think there's 100 percent. I've asked a lot of other questions. I think that is the first 100 percenter.

Well, you know how important a good tennis ball is, because normally they're ratty, but you've got to manage your neighbours with backyard cricket, don't you?

And we had great neighbours, but there was a fence at the back that was too high to climb, so with the balls that went over, you're at the mercy of the neighbour.

And I understand that a few of our balls had landed in cups of tea or beers or something, and so they had stopped throwing the balls back. There was a bit of a grunt every time a ball came over. I ended up building a massive net later on.

That's not part of the story. So there's a side you don't want to lose the ball over. We've got one ball left, and this is a brand new tennis ball, like backyard cricket, brand new tennis ball.

It's a sweet thing. So Ben's bowling, he bowls to me. I had his lovely cut shot.

It's a little bit lofted. Lockie's seven years old. He dives full length and takes a screamer, an absolute backyard screamer.

Yeah, that's rejoicing. That's good stuff. Takes his screamer, and he stands up and does what any self-respecting cricketer, Aussie cricketer, would do.

He just throws that ball up, but he's not caring where it's going. It's meant to go straight up. It goes straight over the high fence into the neighbours, never to be seen again.

And I'm thinking of Steve War walking off like a duck or something. So we walked back in. Cricket was over for the day.

So Lockie's issue was not how to rejoice or the fact that you would rejoice. He just had that expression of joy with direction that needed some work. Are you any good at rejoicing?

Serious question. Are you any good at rejoicing? Five and a half years ago, our daughter got engaged.

I need to cheer. But it was a cool thing. And my wife Leanne, she got engaged to Callum Baker, who was the son of this church that many of you know.

And it was an awesome celebration worthy statement when Leanne said, Haley and Cal are engaged. This was down at the school down about five and a half years ago, we were at the school. And anyone got noise cancelling headphones?

Yeah, you know when you press the noise cancel, it just goes. That's what happened. That's what happened.

Haley and Cal are engaged. Not even chirping crickets, just quiet. But there are some things that are worthy of rejoicing over.

Amen. And that has never happened again because we learned as a congregation, that wasn't the right response, right? We've had so many people.

Well, several people get engaged like Rodney and Kim, and no one ever gets announced anymore without celebration because such an announcement is worthy of celebrating, of rejoicing.

The Apostle Paul is writing to a church that he started in a place called Philippi. It's a Roman colony. It's just to the left, to the west of Gallipoli in Macedonia.

It's up from Athens, and he had gone there on one of his journeys, and he'd planned to the church, and it had begun and started to flourish. He'd then left, gone back, traveling around the Mediterranean.

He ends up in Rome, in prison, and he is writing to Christians that he knows, and he's telling them about the way of the Master, and he says to them, Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice.

And the Apostle Paul can say, Rejoice in the Lord always, because he's the guy who wrote Romans 8.28, which we studied last week.

He's the guy who said, You know, God is always working for the good of those who love him, and it called according to his purpose. And it's out of that confidence that God is good, and he's working all things together for good.

Ultimately, eschatologically to the very end, for sure. But the collateral goodness of God is spilling out back into our lives now. Amen.

It's not just heaven and the new earth we're looking forward to. He is good all the time to those who love him and they called according to his purposes. And out of that, Paul is saying, You know what?

No matter what, you can rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord always. I say, again, rejoice.

So we're in the sixth week of our series that, if you've been part of church, you'll know what's going on. We're in waveform. It's just a title we came up with, which means spiritual formation in the way of the master.

Fancy way to talk about discipleship, following Jesus. What's it really involve? If you're interested in checking out what we've looked at for the last five weeks, it's all on our website.

So you can check that out. But I guess in essence, what we've seen is Jesus says that following Him is awesome. And foundationally, we get to know God.

That's the massive thing that comes from following Jesus, to know God. But there are other benefits, amazing benefits like forgiveness for sins, like eternal life.

And what we've really been focusing a lot on in this series, the capacity to live the way Jesus said we could live, to change the way we live.

So forgiveness for sins, we often talk about that in Christianity, eternal life, but also the capacity to live the way Jesus said that we could live. And we've looked at how God wants to renew our mind.

We've spent the last three weeks, plus this week, on different principles about the renewal of the mind. We've looked at the replacement principle. You've got to understand what the lies are.

Maybe there's a fortress around some lies, and we need to replace that with truth. The rewire principle, Ben preached on this. Repetition rewires the brain.

So we've talked about the importance of scripture and repeating it and repeating what's true about our lives in Christ. Last week, we looked at the reframe principle.

We talked about how you can look back in life and reframe and look for the fingerprints of God's grace, and that'll affect how you look forward, pre-frame, to see God's fingerprints into the future. So that was a principle we looked at last week.

And then today, tonight, we're going to look at the rejoice principle. It really is a powerful thing to know how to rejoice in the Lord always. Rejoicing, it's powerful.

The rest of Paul's commendation to rejoice reads like this, and Sam read it so well for us. Rejoice in the Lord always, I'll say it again, rejoice. Let your gentleness, which really means fairness, justice, equity, be evident to all.

The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Paul is in prison.

And he has learned the power of rejoicing in God's goodness, no matter what the circumstances, because the Lord is near. I think we can lock that in. We can rejoice always because God is with us.

Amen? We can rejoice. Why are we going to rejoice?

Well, we can rejoice because the Lord is near. God is with us. The presence of God has always been the game changer, if you will.

He promised and encouraged the people of God, the people of Israel, to fear not. But the reason was what? Anyone know?

I'm with you. I'm with you. It's my presence that's going to change everything.

The presence of God is really his greatest gift to know him and be with him. It's exactly what Paul says in Philippians. Rejoice, because the Lord is near.

And this naturally results in gratitude, doesn't it? When you know that God wants to be near us, it's like thankfulness, which again is what he talks about, which leads to rejoicing, this attitude of gratitude.

I know that sounds cheesy, but it's a good line. With an attitude of gratitude to God for everything he's doing, a thankful heart that he is near and part of my life, it helps me to rejoice.

So Paul is writing back to the church at Philippi, but when he was there, when he was there, he had a rough time.

So I want to look at the narrative of the story we find in Acts 16 as a guide to think about a fantastic story that gives us insights about why rejoicing in the Lord is important. Chapter 16 of Acts, let me read from verse 22.

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods.

This is just after they've been sharing the gospel, and some have come to know Christ, but there's a reaction against, there's persecution against the sharing of the gospel.

After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in stocks.

About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. So they've been severely flogged, put in prison, chained up.

But midnight comes around, and they're praising God, they're singing hymns, people can hear them, they're praying to God. It's weird, missionaries in God's work, you'd think they're praying for protection. It doesn't happen.

God allows them sort of somewhat confusingly to be beaten severely. Yet that doesn't stop Paul and Silas. They decide to praise God anyway.

Seven years ago, last Wednesday, we, our family, the Shanks family, moved into Mount Colo, and we've loved living there. It's been so good. I had started on staff at the church about six or seven weeks before.

And then this, but this was the day that the big moving day came. And we had collected some gear. It wasn't exactly like some of the bachelors moving out soon, which will be a very minimalistic.

One little truck and it'll take all four of you, I imagine. But, you know, six of us, four kids, teenagers, we had a lot of gear. And we miscalculated.

We had two big trucks on this day. First time we'd ever actually paid for paid removals to help us. And we miscalculated.

We couldn't fit the garage in. So I had this hanging over my head. Oh, no, I've got to go and find a truck, rent it tomorrow, get back down there before the exchange.

Well, the exchange and settlement had happened. The new people are ready to move in and the garage is full. So that's a stress.

But does anyone remember August 24, the weather? 2015. You do, Kerry?

Yeah, I remember you got water. Oh, that's very good. It was a filthy day.

It was so stormy and raining. So the plan was Ben and I had our van that we used to use to lug the church gear around. We had the van full, and we did the hour and a quarter drive, hour and a half drive from Suttleshire to Mount Kola.

We're 10 minutes in front of the two moving vans. And it's simple. And then behind that, there are two more cars in the convoy.

Simple. Just come up here. We go to the real estate agent, get the keys, go to Mount Kola, open up.

It all works fine. But we know that there's a leak downstairs and some flooding potential. So Ben and I like tapping each other's noses, or our own nose, but looking at each other.

And we're like, let's get a bilge pump. It's like something from the castle, isn't it? Good idea, dad.

I mean, a bilge pump from my local New Bunnings, Thornleigh Bunnings. You always got to know where the New Bunnings is. So we drop in there.

We're like, this won't take a moment. So we close the doors, run in there, grab the bilge pump. It's expensive, but anyway, I'm going to be on top of things.

Get back to the car, pull out my keys. It's a bunch of keys, not this bunch of keys. There's no van key.

There's no van key. I'm just like, mate, can you ever look at that? It's like, there's no van key.

So I'm obviously thinking it's come off when I put the key back in, but there's nothing on the ground. And I can promise you, that key was not... there was not one inch of the floor of Bunnings Thornley that had a key on it.

And we know. We scoured that in about 15 minutes. Couldn't find the key.

So just terrible situation. Sorry, it's a long story, but I hardly ever tell stories, so I'm enjoying it. I'm always teaching the Bible, verse by verse.



So I ring up Leanne and I say, look, you've got a spare key. If you come, I'll ring the real estate agent, get her to take the key over. It'll be fine.

So that happens. We all arrive late, and it's nearly dark, and they've got the two trucks on our steep road at Red Cedar and Mount Cola.

They've got up to the only door at the back, up the ramp, that you could get the fridge in, but the no key opens up the security gate door. So they have ripped it off its hinges, because they're being paid by the hour.

So they've ripped the thing off the hinges. We go in, and then so we all arrive, and we're helping. There's mud everywhere in the house.

And you've probably had this, didn't get the electricity on. So it's pitch black. Never again will we not have candles that you can find easily in a move.

You learn these things, you learn these things. And so anyway, we did find a candle, there's one candle, and then our daughter Haley, she starts having a chronic nosebleed.

And I'm talking about crime scene nosebleed, like just, and I'm a bit of a worrier. I'm like, sweetheart, I think we need to get you ready to take you to the hospital, because like this is blood loss central. And it all ends up finishing up.

We stop the bleeding. We go to bed and wake up the next day. And it's always a bit weird in a new place, isn't it?

But wake up at 6 a.m. and our street is really busy. It's like a main thoroughfare of one of the fingers of Mount Kola, and it's just 6 o'clock, first thing in the morning.

And I'm just lying there, seriously, just going, I can't do this, I can't stand noise like this. At 3 p.m. when we came and did the inspection, there was no noise.

But 6 a.m. it's a noisy bedroom. And so I'm, no joke, I'm doing the sums.

I'm selling this house, selling this house immediately. And we're going to lose tens of thousands of dollars, but I can't live with this. And I'm just stressing, it's stressing.

And then honestly, I am struck by this truth. The Lord is with us. Honestly, in that moment, I'm lying there.

I just feel like God just comes like a blanket on me and goes, mate, I'm here. You think you're doing this on your own? I'm with you.

I am with you. And then in that moment, I start to feel natural, normal, logical thankfulness. I'm like, this person I'm lying next to, my wife, she's amazing and so are my kids.

Thank you, God. So is the church that we've been called to come to. And there is no rain coming in on me.

I've got a roof over my head. I own a home in Sydney and I'm just rattling off the things I can be thankful for. And I start rejoicing in the Lord, honestly.

And there is a peace that comes and guards my heart in Christ Jesus. Do you know what I'm talking about? Rejoice in the Lord because of who He is, not what I think He is doing or what He's done.

It's powerful to rejoice in the who and not the what. Of course, He has done a lot in the Gospel and in our lives that's worthy of praise. But sometimes, like for Paul and Silas, they don't quite understand what God is up to.

So they're going to praise Him for who He is, not the beating that He has just allowed them to have. Not the what, but God is good and He's at work. And so they're rejoicing Paul and Silas before God came through with the miracle.

And that's what I found. I can testify. I love living there.

I don't even hear it in the morning. God's good. It's all fine.

And we got through the move and it's been a wonderful seven years. Paul and Silas praise God and rejoice for the who and not the what. So with Thanksgiving, what are you praising God for?

Because He is near you and with you. Don't be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition, with Thanksgiving present your requests to God.

And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Rejoice in the Lord always because God is with us. It's true.

It's a reality. It takes faith to comprehend it and really truly understand what that means, that God is with us. But also rejoice in the Lord always because God is able.

It's what Paul says in Ephesians 3. He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. God is able to do what you need him to do.

He is. He's not a dog. His name's not Rover.

You don't go, I need this. But as we bring our prayers and requests with thanksgiving in our heart, we are allowed to petition him, amen? And allow him to teach you if what you're asking is wrong.

But the best thing to do is bring what you think you need and let him guide. Rejoice in the Lord always because God is able. The story is, it's really amazing.

It's a cool part of Acts. Acts 16 continues. Suddenly, after this praise, after the prayer at midnight, there's an earthquake, a violent earthquake, that the foundations of the prison are shaken by.

At once all the prison doors fly open and everyone's chains come loose. The jailer woke up and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.

But Paul shouted, don't harm yourself. We're all here. It's one of the great stories of the Bible.

Here they are in prison. They cry out, they petition, they praise, they rejoice. And God turns up and he is able to do something.

Amazing. Breaks open shackles, opens doors, sets captives free. It's what God does.

What are you bringing before him at the moment? We had this dedication service for Flora this morning and it was really special. She's not a little baby girl.

She was. She's six years old. And she's a she wasn't orphan from Rwanda.

She's not anymore. My friend Michelle Black and Michelle and Flora have been online. You guys put your hand up if you know Michelle and Flora from Online Church.

They were joining us from Rwanda for two years in COVID. The same day that we moved August 24, 2015, Michelle Black, my old friend, she stepped out in faith to go to Rwanda on that same day.

And she flew out and her job was to write the first early childhood teacher training program curriculum for Rwanda, the country. Really amazing, epic good that she was asked to do. And she did.

She wrote that. But it wasn't just what she was called by God to do. She didn't know that she was going over there.

This is a woman who is single. She's in her 40s at the time. And you know, I've known Michelle for over 25 years.

And she would have loved to be a mum. But she gave that up and she was like, you know what, I'm just going to seek out after God and follow his call and takes her to Rwanda.

Anyway, a little girl was born named Flora and tragically, her mum died at 19 days old. Flora being 19 days old. And Michelle began a full-time care of Flora at six weeks.

So we're getting all these pictures. We're prayer supporters, financial supporters, and it's like, wow, what's going on? Anyway, she ends up adopting Flora.

And it's just this amazing story. I mean, it's so emotional. It's just a wonderful story because we know in the Old Testament that God loves.

He has this special inclination to the widow, the orphan, the refugee, and the poor. And like Flora's all for. You'd think, oh, well, what about her dad?

Well, Flora's dad was around but unable to care for her. And the community wasn't really there. It was totally impoverished.

In fact, several of Flora's siblings have already died. Because you might ask, can't they raise this child? Well, the father was an illegal immigrant, so he got deported to Burundi.

So her mom's not there. He's gone. The community can't look after her.

So Michelle has adopted this beautiful young girl under the Rwandan adoption scheme system. But she needs an inter-country adoption, and she can't get it without a Rwandan parent, and they can't find the father.

So I won't go into all the detail, but it's messy. So for five years, they have been hanging on, saying, this is a human rights issue. My daughter is not allowed to get a Rwandan passport.

But there's human rights. She has a right. She's a Rwandan citizen.

She's just an orphan. She didn't choose to have a mom. So it's a terrible situation where there's sort of like chains on the family.

Michelle wants to get back to her country, Australia, and bring her daughter, but can't. And he's staying there for five years and fighting. And he meets Philip Ruddock over in Rwanda in Kigali.

And he says, you know what? I think I've got someone you should get in touch with. And that helps.

And so Philip Ruddock was here this morning. We really appreciate it. I tell you this story because it was the dedication service this morning.

But also to say she was given a long term visa and she did get a passport. And it's been one petition prayer after another for five years. And there's a community, a village of about 100 plus people who have been praying the journey.

And so for me, it's one of the highlights of my life to stand here this morning and do a dedication service for a six year old, because they couldn't get her home any sooner.

But for me, it's a beautiful example of God seeing a relative nobody like us, a poor little girl, probably going to be ravaged by poverty.

And, you know, I don't understand why one would get pulled into a Western culture and all the weirdness of that, but I'm confident that God was in it.

That God answered some prayers, and Flora is going to be and is a blessing to Michelle, as much as Michelle is a blessing to Flora. It's a beautiful example of God coming and doing what he is able to do, amen? What do you need God to do?

He is able, he is able. And if you think that sounds like, I've heard that before, it's a bit like what Ben was saying. You need to hear that a thousand times until it sticks.

He is able, in your heart you want to go, no he's not, he's not, he can't, no he is. He's able to guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. He's able, and he's able to save.

The story of the Philippian Jailer is a story of radical spiritual transformation at its core, I think. The ground shakes and the chains fell off. There's prisoners, but this is not good for the jailer.

Verse 29, the jailer called for lights rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, because he can't believe they haven't escaped. He says, sir, what must I do to be saved?

They replied, believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. You and your household. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him, to all the others in his, and to all the others in his house.

At that hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds. Then immediately he and all his household were baptized. Pretty rapid baptism, isn't it?

The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he was filled with what? Joy, because he had come to believe in God. He and his whole household.

What must I do to be saved? That's the question. Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

They did, and they were filled with joy, which is the foundation of rejoicing. Joy. Do you want joy in your life?

Do you want the joy of the Lord in your life? Do you want forgiveness of sin? This sounds weird, because it sort of sounds like a package deal, but I'm telling you the truth.

Forgiveness of sin, eternal life. So weird, just rolling off the tongue. What?

Forgiveness of sin, eternal life, and to live the way that Jesus says you could live, which is going to be the best life possible. Do you want that? You can have that.

Because you need to know online maybe, or here, God is not just with you the same as he's with a Christian. You're not a child of God, the Bible says, until you believe. That sounds harsh, but it's just the truth.

He's wanting to have a close relationship with you. He's around. He's there to call upon.

But he's not inside you. He's not near you like he is for a born again Christian. The jailer has a realisation.

He says, I'm not right with God. What must I do to be saved? I'm not right with God.

The Bible says that everyone has sinned and fallen short of God's standard. We've all disobeyed God. The Bible makes it clear that there's a spiritual reality to our lives.

It matters how we live. I think every human wants to believe it matters how we live. Well, it does, and God is holy and we are not.

And so without some way of dealing with sin, our requirement hanging over us that we might be punished by God's holy wrath. I can't be with God forever. And that's that's what the jailer is realising.



And that's what we need to realise if you don't know Jesus Christ as your saviour. So God is loving and good and able. And so he sent his son.

This is the story of the good news. All through the New Testament, he sent his son to live the perfect life that we could never live, to die a sacrificial death in our place. And then death could not hold him down.

He broke free and was resurrected from the grave. And he's alive today in heaven at the right hand of the father. Jesus died for our sin in our place.

Hallelujah. He did. He did.

And he's the one who seeks and saves. So if tonight you're like, you know what, I don't understand at all, but in my heart I know I need to know God because I'm not right with him. You know what the answer to the question is?

What must we do to be saved? The answer is believe. Believe in Jesus like you're believing in the seat you're sitting in now.

Believe. Believe that he does love you and is able to save you and has done everything required to save you in Jesus. What you need to do is receive that through belief.

In other parts of the Bible, it says repent and believe. Turn away from the wrong thinking and turn to God with an open heart to say, God, have mercy on me. I believe that I need to be saved.

And you've done the saving. Believe that you have received forgiveness and eternal life by His grace, and the result will be joy. Joy.

I know some of us feel like, you know, you hear that good news of Christianity and you think, oh, yeah, it's not for me. I've gone too far. I've done too much.

But I want to say to you in Jesus' name, you're wrong. Because you just look around the room. There's no one who is less a sinner than you in this room.

Amen. There is no one. We are all sinners.

The Bible says we've all fallen short of the glory of God. So if you know, you know what, I'm not right with God and I don't feel quite right in my heart, that's a natural place to be where you're feeling convicted by truth and you need to believe.

Believe in Jesus. And you will be saved. That's what Scripture says.

So rejoice in the Lord always because God is with us. Rejoice in the Lord always because God is able. And rejoice in the Lord always because God is able to save.

Are you any good at rejoicing in the Lord? It comes from gratitude, exactly what Mel said before, I think, for who God is, what he has done and what he's going to do. Who he is, he's unchanging and he's loving and he's good.

What he has done, everything we needed in Jesus. And what he's going to do, he's gonna wrap up this planet, it's gonna be a new creation, and those in Jesus will live forever, and it's just beyond comprehension how good it will be.

But that eternal life starts now. If you have begun a relationship, because I'm telling you, if you believe, that's what the Bible says you need to do.

Anyone online, if you have believing right now and putting your faith in Christ, I just encourage you to write it in the chat. And I want to ask here, anyone is just like the Philippian jailer saying, yeah, I believe. Anybody?

Anyone already believe? Lots of hands. Lord Jesus, we give you all the praise, and Lord, some of us really need to know that you're worthy of rejoicing over, because life's been hard for us.

So I pray in the name of Jesus, in your name, Lord Jesus, that by your spirit you would guard hearts tonight, guard minds. Show us why we should be thankful. Give us that deep, enduring attitude of utter gratefulness for all you've done.

And would you give us the gift of joy, that we might know what it's like to rejoice in all circumstances, giving thanks and praise to God for he is good. I pray, Lord Jesus, that you would seek and save, because you're the only one who can.

People online or in this room who don't know you, I pray, Lord, you would break through for your glory and for the good of each person here. We're so grateful, those who have been walking with you for some time.

It's not because of anything we've done we take no glory in our salvation, other than give it all back to you and say thank you. Thank you, Lord and Holy Spirit, that you want to come and inhabit the praise of your people.

You're already here with us. Would you minister to us in ways that only you can now, deep to our heart, spirit to spirit. We invite you to minister in ways we need you to.

In Jesus' name, Amen.