

Dancing in the Rain
Finding Joy in the Midst of the Storm

Discussion Guide

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Cindy Shufflebarger
www.cindyshufflebarger.com

Chapter One: What is Joy?

1. What parts of the chapter were most significant to you?
2. List the ideas in this chapter that you embrace and those with which you struggle. Explain.

Embrace:

Struggle:
3. Think of something you recently felt you had to have. How did you think it would make you feel? After acquiring that item, did it bring the joy you anticipated? Was it lasting joy or short lived? Explain.
4. How does God's definition of joy differ from the world's view?
5. What things impair or steal your joy. How can you keep those things from interfering with your joy?
6. What does the Bible say about joy? (See the "God Says" section at the end of Chapter One for a starting point.)
7. List practical ways you can share your joy with others. How can you be an encouragement to others?
8. Prayer: Ask God to fill you with His joy and protect you from those things that steal your joy. Ask Him specifically to help you seek Him in the midst of your current challenges.

Chapter Two: A Matter of Perspective

1. What parts of the chapter were most significant to you?

5. What are some practical ways you can focus on God instead of problems or challenges in life?

2. List the ideas in this chapter that you embrace and those with which you struggle. Explain.

Embrace:

Struggle:

6. Read Philippians 4:8. List some areas in your life where you need to change your thoughts.

7. Read James 1:2-4. Although it seems counterintuitive, there is great truth in this passage. Think about a current or past struggle in your life. What characteristics might God have been trying to work on in your life through that experience? (ex: patience, compassion, etc.)

3. How do you respond to disappointments in life? (check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> anger | <input type="checkbox"/> frustration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sadness | <input type="checkbox"/> seek God's comfort |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sulking | <input type="checkbox"/> destructive behavior |
| <input type="checkbox"/> look for the positive | <input type="checkbox"/> focus on negative |
| <input type="checkbox"/> bitterness | <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____ |

8. What are the benefits of seeking God's perspective of your circumstances instead of focusing on the pain or discomfort of the situation?

4. How does God want us to respond to disappointments in life?

9. Prayer: Ask God to give you His perspective on issues/concerns in your life.

Chapter Three: Out of Control and into the Arms of God

1. What parts of the chapter were most significant to you?

2. List the ideas in this chapter that you embrace and those with which you struggle. Explain.

Embrace:

Struggle:

3. Does the idea of relinquishing control to God bring comfort and relief or stress and anxiety? Explain your answer.

4. In what ways does our need to be in control demonstrate a lack of trust in God?

5. In which of the following ways have you personally experienced God?

- Savior Comforter Friend
 Lord Healer Counselor
 Other: _____

6. How does letting God be our heart's desire change how we feel about our circumstances? How do we make God our true desire?

7. Think of a time when you had to wait for God. In retrospect, can you see why you had to wait and/or the benefits of waiting?

8. Give an example of when you didn't wait for the Lord vs. a time when you did. Which way worked best?

9. What are your current worries? List Scripture passages that speak to your struggles. (You can find topical Scriptures by using an online search tool such as www.biblegateway.com or by looking up keywords in the back of your Bible.)

10. In what area areas of your life do you struggle most to let God have control?

- Marriage career emotions
 Relationships children money
 Health other: _____

11. Why do you think you struggle in those specific areas?

12. Prayer: Ask God to help you trust Him and wait on Him in your current situation.

Chapter Four: God's Endless Love

1. What parts of the chapter were most significant to you?
2. List the ideas in this chapter that you embrace and those with which you struggle. Explain.

Embrace:

Struggle:
3. Read John 3:16 slowly and deliberately. Think of what Jesus gave up to come here and what he endured for us. Write a prayer of thanksgiving.
4. In what ways do you worship God in response to your love for Him?
5. Read 1 John 3:1. What does it mean to be a child of God? List the benefits. (See Psalm 103 for ideas.)
6. Describe a time when you have experienced God's love. If you can't think of a time, pray that God will reveal His love to you in a real and personal way and that your eyes would be opened to Him.
7. In what ways do you struggle to accept God's unconditional love for you?
8. How does understanding and acceptance of God's love impact daily attitude and actions. Be specific.
9. Prayer: Read Ephesians 3:16-19 and ask God to help you understand the depth of His love for you.

Chapter Five: Your Relationship with God

1. What parts of the chapter were most significant to you?

2. List the ideas in the chapter that you embrace and those with which you struggle. Explain.

Embrace:

Struggle:

3. Describe the difference between practicing a religion and having a relationship with God.

4. What are your current priorities? (To get started, think about ways you spend your time.) List them in order of importance.

5. What things are interfering with your relationship with God?

6. How would you rate your faith on the scale below? Place an 'x' in the appropriate spot along the continuum.

Spiritual
Wimp

depends on
circumstances

spiritual
rock

Why did you choose this point on the continuum?

7. What are some ways to grow your faith?

8. How do you discern the voice of God in your life?

9. Describe how you have quiet time with God. (ex: prayer, reading Bible, journaling, etc.) Are there areas in which you need to invest more time and energy? Explain.

10. Identify obstacles to having a consistent, meaningful quiet time. Brainstorm ideas for overcoming those obstacles.

11. Prayer: Ask God to show you practical ways to improve your relationship with Him. Pray that He would lead you to a godly mentor.

Chapter Six: God is Enough

1. What parts of the chapter were most significant to you?

2. List the ideas in the chapter that you embrace and those with which you struggle. Explain.

Embrace:

Struggle:

3. List ways you've experienced God's comfort.

4. When do you feel alone?

What does the Bible tell us about God's presence? (See Joshua 1:9, Psalm 46:1, Psalm 139:1-16)

5. Discuss the meaning of Romans 8:28. How can this be true even when things don't work out the way we want?

6. List ways that God has provided for you in the following areas:

Physical needs:

Spiritual needs:

Emotional needs:

7. In what areas of your life do you need God's strength?

Write a prayer asking God to strengthen you. Include relevant Scriptures and promises from God's word.

Chapter Seven: Ask What, Not Why

1. What parts of the chapter were most significant to you?

2. List the ideas in the chapter that you embrace and those with which you struggle. Explain.

Embrace:

Struggle:

3. Describe the circumstances surrounding a difficult situation you have faced in your life.

Can you prayerfully see how God may have used this situation to grow you spiritually? If so, how? If not, why not?

4. What are some examples of times that you're tempted to ask "why?" (ex: The attacks on September 11, 2001)

For example, consider what would have happened if you asked "what" instead of "why"?

5. What are some ways that God can bring about good out of tragedies? Reflect on biblical examples (such as Ruth, Joseph, and Jesus) as well as personal examples.

6. About what in your life have you been asking God 'why'? How can you change your questioning?

7. Prayer: Ask God to show you how to pray His will, not your own.

Chapter Eight: God's Goodness

1. What parts of the chapter were most significant to you?

4. What are some reasons that God deserves your praise? (If you need some ideas, check out these verse: Genesis 1:1, Matthew 7:11, Romans 5:8, 2 Corinthians 9:8, James 1:17)

2. List the ideas in the chapter that you embrace and those with which you struggle.

Embrace:

Struggle:

3. Make a list of ways God has blessed you.

5. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. What does it mean to give thanks in all circumstances?

6. What is the result of a thankful spirit?

7. How can we protect ourselves from letting our disappointments in life determine how we feel about God?

8. Prayer: Ask God to develop a thankful heart in you for all things.

Chapter Nine: Reaping a Harvest

1. What parts of the chapter were most significant to you?

2. List the ideas from the chapter that you embrace and those with which you struggle. Explain.

Embrace:

Struggle:

3. Read Romans 8:17. What does it mean to be a co-heir with Christ?

4. Which do you prefer – eternal rewards or earthly rewards? Explain your answer.

5. What are you doing with your God-given “talents”? (See the parable of the talents in Matthew 25.)

Are you using them to grow God’s Kingdom, storing them away waiting for Jesus’ return, using them to build your own kingdom?

6. How can you share what God has given you to bless others? List specific examples.

7. Which fruit of the Spirit are most evident in your life? (See Galatians 5:22)

Which areas still need some “cultivating”?

8. Prayer: Ask God to work in your life so that the fruit of the Spirit will be expressed in your daily life and evident to others.

Chapter Ten: The Choice

1. What parts of the chapter were most significant to you?
2. List the ideas in this chapter that you embrace and those with which you struggle. Explain.

Embrace:

Struggle:
3. What things make us ineffective in sharing God's love with others?
4. Review the list of qualities that facilitate resiliency. (See page 139.) Which of these traits do you possess?
5. What life changing events have you experienced? How have you responded to these events?
6. How do you typically choose to respond to stressful situations?
7. What choices can you make today that would result in a greater sense of joy and peace in your life?
8. Write a prayer expressing your desire to have a deeper relationship with Christ and to experience His everlasting joy day by day.

Reflections of the Journey

This section is optional. Some groups like to end their study with a sharing day. They gather for fellowship (often including food) and discuss what they've learned over the course of the study. The following are questions to help facilitate the process:

1. Share how the study impacted your views about God.
2. Was there something specific from each chapter that you were able to apply to your life?
3. What is the most significant change you've experienced in your life as a result of the study?
4. Do you feel that you have progressed in your relationship with Christ?
 - a. Where did you start?
 - b. Where are you now?
 - c. Where do you want to go?

My prayer for you:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I pray that this dear friend will know You in a real and personal way. I pray that she'll fall deeply in love with You – all over again – and that she'll experience the depth of Your love, grace and comfort. May she seek You in all things and praise You at all times, even when life hurts. I pray that she'll invite You to be her everything and that Your fruit will be evident in her life to all who encounter her. Bless her beyond measure. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.