

DISCUSSION GUIDE



*What Jesus Says About
A Joy-Filled Life*

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Chapter 1

1. What is the difference between removing and pruning? In your life, what things has God removed? What things has He pruned? In regard to the pruning seasons, in what ways did you experience God's intimate presence with you in those seasons?
2. Even though it looks like loss, pruning has a purpose. How does knowing that the Gardener has a purpose help you to endure pruning? Why?
3. What attribute of God as our Heavenly Gardener struck you the most?
4. Can you look back on any seasons of pruning and see now that there is more fruit?
5. Is there something God may be trying to prune in your life right now? If so, are you cooperating in this process with a trustful heart toward Him, or are you resisting the process? Why?

VERSES FOR REFLECTION: Hebrews 12:5-11, Job 5:17-18, Proverbs 3:5-12



Chapter 2

1. Have you ever seen a yard that had lanky and overgrown landscaping? How does that uncontrolled yard display an inattentive gardener?
2. What does an overextended life display about your beliefs about God? Is He your Sustainer or are you trying to provide for yourself? Alternatively, what does an overextended life display about your beliefs about yourself? How have these beliefs proven to be untrue?
3. In what ways has God pruned your life back? Looking back on these seasons of pruning, do you see not just His power to scale back your circumstances whenever He sees fit, but also His love for you?
4. When all else has been taken from you, what have you learned about God? How has He "restored the joy of your salvation" to you?
5. In which area of life are you overextended? What are some action steps that you can take today to not spread yourself so thin? In what ways can you deepen your roots instead?

VERSES FOR REFLECTION: Psalm 16:11, Psalm 37:4, Hebrews 13:5



Chapter 3

1. How is wisdom different than knowledge? Would you rather be around someone who has knowledge or wisdom? Why?
2. How do the heavens declare the wisdom of God? First think big: how do the stars, galaxies, and universe declare His wisdom? Now think small: how does the organization of atoms and design of the created things on earth reflect His wisdom?
3. When you are going through a painful "cut," why do you want someone who is wise to do it? How does this knowledge help you?
4. In your life, how have you seen the wisdom of God displayed?
5. In seasons of pruning in your life, can you look back and see God's intimacy, His purposes, His love, and His wisdom? How?

VERSES FOR REFLECTION: Psalm 139, Isaiah 55:8-9, Romans 11:33, James 1:5



Chapter 4

1. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being never and 10 being always, how much do you depend on God to be your life-source? Why did you rate yourself that way?
2. What things keep you from staying, remaining, or dwelling with God?
3. Do you look to God more as your life-giver or your life-sustainer? Do you see the mutuality of the relationship or do you feel it is more one-sided?
4. For your particular personality or behaviors, what are some telltale signs that you are not remaining in the Lord? What are some habits that you can start today that will help you to remain better connected to your Vine?
5. Is there someone in your life who needs you to tell them (or remind them of) these truths? Is there someone who is trying to live their life on their own strength, but needs to find their life in Jesus? Who needs to be encouraged to "remain in Him" for their joy? Pray that God would give you an opportunity to share with him/her this week.

VERSES FOR REFLECTION: Proverbs 11:2, Philippians 2:1-8, Matthew 23:10-12, Proverbs 3:34, Micah 6:8



Chapter 5

1. Would you identify yourself as an independent or dependent person? Why?
2. Does the idea of God as your Heavenly Father comfort you or scare you? How does this image increase your child-like dependence on Him?
3. If we truly can do nothing apart from God, what are some ways that you deny this fact? In other words, what are ways or areas of life that you try to be independent from God?
4. What are some ways that you can increase your dependence on God?
5. Of the three practical ideas (prayer, memorization, rest), which comes easiest to you? Which is the most difficult? Why?

VERSES FOR REFLECTION: Proverbs 11:2, Philippians 2:1-8, Matthew 23:10-12, Proverbs 3:34, Micah 6:8



Chapter 6

1. What legalistic tendencies do you see in your Christian walk? Do you try to keep all the rules and complete the tasks as the means of finding your joy? Why or why not?
2. How deep is your understanding of God's love for you? What are some ways that you can remind yourself daily that you are loved by the Most High God?
3. If renewing our minds is a crucial part of practicing the presence of God, how are you "taking every thought captive" on this battlefield?
4. Are you a thankster or a crankster? Do you often look for what you do have, or are you discontent with what you don't have? How does this attitude spill out to those around you?
5. In what ways can you be a worshipper who testifies of God's goodness this week? Beyond just worship songs, how can worship become a lifestyle for you?

VERSES FOR REFLECTION: Romans 8:1-4, 31-39, Psalm 91:1-11, Romans 12:1-2, Colossians 3:1-4, 12-17



Chapter 7

1. How does a command differ from a suggestion? Have you ever had to give someone a command that you wanted them to obey with a happy heart?
2. Knowing that God commands us to love one another, why do you think we disregard this command so often? What keeps us from truly loving others the way we have been loved?
3. Have you been shown the love of God through someone? How does their example encourage you to love others too?
4. Sometimes, it is hard to love other people. What person or group is hardest for you to love these days? If loving them has felt especially challenging lately, is it possible you've been trying to muster up love on your own instead of loving them in the Lord's strength? In what ways could you persevere this week in showing love to that particular person or group?
5. When we remain with God, we allow His love to flow through us to others. How does this lead to a life of overflowing joy? Have you ever loved someone else, and in the end, received more joy than you gave?

VERSES FOR REFLECTION: 1 John 4:7, Matthew 22:36-40, Hebrews 10:24-25



Chapter 8

1. Who is easy and natural for you to love? In what ways can you show this person your love for them today?
2. Who is someone that is not easy to love? Do you believe that God will answer your prayer to love that person? Why or why not?
3. Is pride something that you struggle with? In what ways does God want you to fight your pride and put on humility?
4. How is God convicting you to lift your eyes? Is there a habit that you need to break? Is there a tendency to become self-absorbed that you need to repent of?
5. How can you be the hands and feet of Jesus today? How can you love your neighbor well? How can you serve in your community? In what ways is God calling you to leave your comfort zone and love others with intentionality?

VERSES FOR REFLECTION: Philippians 2:1-4, Luke 10:25-37, 1 Corinthians 13:1-8



Chapter 9

1. Could you relate to the story of a "Velcro" friend? Are there people in your life that you have trouble loving because they annoy you? How can you abhor evil and cling to what is good in regards to this person?
2. Do you have any "enemies" that are really hard to love? How does trusting that God sees and knows all things help you?
3. Can you imagine all the emotions Jesus must have felt as he washed the feet of Judas? How can you serve someone that has hurt you?
4. In what ways can you exhibit the love of Jesus to people around you so that they know that you are a Christian?
5. When we love others, it is hard at first, but it does produce a joy from Jesus. Have you ever experienced this in your life? How can you testify that a life of love—even toward an enemy or a frustrating friend—produces joy?

VERSES FOR REFLECTION: 1 John 4:7, Matthew 22:36-40, 1 Peter 3:8-9