

THE POWER TO REJOICE

21 DAYS TO VICTORY OVER YOUR PROBLEMS



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Introduction

I want to rejoice but I am struggling with:

- Work/Career Problems
- Physical Health Problems
- Emotional Health Problems
- Death of a loved one
- Financial Problems
- Family Problems

Does this sound like you or someone you love? If not, it probably will in the future. As Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble.” (John 16:33a)

Yet, the Apostle Paul tells us to “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4) When he commands us to “Rejoice” and repeats it, it is comparable to a flashing red light saying “**This is critical**”, “**Don’t miss it!**”

Despite this critical command, instead of rejoicing, we become downcast when we experience problems.

Imagine yourself rejoicing, even as you are experiencing one (or more) of the problems listed above.

The purpose of this book is to show you how to make that image a reality.

I am sure you have several questions:

1. What qualifies me to write this book?

I have studied human behavior and motivation for more than thirty years. I have a master’s degree in Applied Behavior Science from Johns Hopkins University. I completed a year-long church leadership program, which included Bible study methods and counseling. Brent T. Brooks, Th.M, former adjunct

faculty member of Capital Bible Seminary and founding pastor of Grace Community Church, mentored me for three years. I have more than twenty-five years of counseling experience.

I have experienced problems. I was passed over for promotion. I was laid off from my job two years before retirement.

I was my wife's caregiver for 12 years. After 34 years of marriage, she went to be with the Lord. I have had business setbacks, dealt with financial challenges and relational conflicts. One brother was killed in combat, another died of a heart attack at age 37, still another brother committed suicide, just to name a few of the problems I have faced. Through it all, I have rejoiced.

2. How could I rejoice during such problems?

- a. I used the strategy that I present in this book.
- b. I accepted the Apostle Paul's invitation to imitate him. "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)

3. What problems did Paul encounter?

His fellow Jews plotted to kill him, he was stoned and left for dead, he was persecuted and expelled, he spent two years in prison, he was shipwrecked, he was beaten, and at times he was hungry, thirsty and naked. Finally, he had a thorn in the flesh.

4. What was Paul's reaction to his problems?

He rejoiced. "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." (Romans 5:3-4)

Allow me to make a key point:

Paul said he rejoiced. He did not say he was happy. I believe there is a difference between the two.

Happiness is an emotion based on circumstances. For that reason, it can be like a roller coaster ride. We are happy if we get promoted and receive a nice pay raise. We are unhappy if we get laid off or are forced to take a pay cut. We are happy if we are healthy. We are unhappy if we are diagnosed with cancer. We are happy if we have all of our children present. We are unhappy if one of them dies. We are happy if we are in a healthy relationship. We are unhappy if the relationship ends.

Joy, on the other hand, is a state of mind. It is not based on circumstances. Instead, it is an **approach to life** rather than a **reaction to life**. It is the lens through which we see events.

We can rejoice in the midst of problems. So, while I was not happy when I was laid off two years before retirement, I rejoiced.

5. What did Paul do that enabled him to rejoice during his problems?

- a. Paul did not “Rejoice in his circumstances” or “Rejoice in himself.” He “Rejoiced in the Lord.” Why? Because Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, was the source of his joy. When Paul rejoiced in the Lord, his attention was focused on Him; who He is and who Paul is in Him.
- b. He focused on John 16:33b “But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (In John 16a Jesus says: “In this world you will have trouble.”)
- c. He looked to the future. “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18)

- d. He recognized that God was using his problems to make him more like Jesus.

“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.” (Romans 8:28-29)

- e. He recognized that his problems were temporary.

“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

- f. He recognized that his problems enabled him to tap into God’s power.

But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

- g. He believed that God would meet all of his needs as he was going through his problems.

“My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)

- h. He viewed dying as a good thing.

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21)

6. How could Paul sustain such a positive perspective in the midst of so many problems?

He managed his thought life (self-talk*).

- a. He recognized that he had a choice; he could think negative thoughts (God is punishing me for my role in persecuting, torturing and killing Christians before I became a Christian) or he could think positive thoughts (I have gained forgiveness and I have a new calling since becoming a Christian).
- b. He recognized that Satan would send negative thoughts his way. “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the devil’s scheming.” (Ephesians 6:11)
- c. He recognized that his thoughts determined how he felt. If he thought negative thoughts he would feel downcast; if he thought positive thoughts he would rejoice.
- d. He chose positive thoughts and focused on his new calling. “Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead.” (Philippians 3:13)
- e. He thought about God’s truth rather than Satan’s lies. “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8)

*The term “self-talk” has become popular in recent decades. Psychologists say that we *verbalize* much--if not most--of our thinking. Let me give you an example. Suppose you wake up in the morning and the radio announcer says it is raining. You do not just have a vague sense of disappointment. You would actually verbalize negative messages to yourself, such as, “Traffic is going to be backed up”, “I am probably not going to get a good parking space”, and “I am going to be late for my meeting.” When we consider what goes on in our minds, we realize that we are constantly speaking constructively or destructively to ourselves.

These endless messages that we verbalize to ourselves determine our feeling (joy or gloom). The joy or gloom determines the actions we take. The actions we take determine whether we achieve our goals. Here's how it works: If you tell yourself "I am never going to get a job," you will feel discouraged, put forth a half-hearted effort and not get a job. On the other hand, if you tell yourself, "I know I will get a job that matches my skills", you will feel encouraged, put forth a relentless effort, and ultimately find that job.

The Bible, by the way, has lots of examples of "Self-Talk". In Psalm 42:11, the psalmist asks himself, "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?" He commanded himself to "Put your hope in God." Another example of self-talk appears in Genesis 17:17, "Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? And Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"

The great news is that, with concentrated and sustained effort, we can change our negative self-talk to positive self-talk, thereby experiencing joy.

7. How did Paul change his negative self-talk to positive self-talk?

He took captive every thought to make sure it was obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Having taken hold of every thought, he either affirmed it to be **true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent** or **praiseworthy**, (Philippians 4:8) or he replaced it with a scriptural truth.

8. Do you have a system to help me change my negative self-talk to positive self-talk?

Yes. I have identified 26 problems that come our way most frequently. For each problem, I have included nine steps to help you change your negative self-talk to positive self-talk.

9. Can I easily incorporate the system into my life?

Yes. The central step of the system requires you to devote 15 minutes per day for 21 days to meditating on selected verses from God's word that are related to the problem you are facing.

10. How can I get the most out of this book?

- a. Turn to the Contents page.
- b. Find the problem you are facing.
- c. Go to the chapter that provides the prescription for victory over that problem.
- d. Follow the 9 steps presented.
- e. Use the "Living a Joyful Life" discussion with your small group.

Finally, even though it will be challenging, the Scripture suggests that we can change our self-talk. "After the Lord your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, "The Lord has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness. No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is going to drive them out before you." (Deuteronomy 9:4)

The fact that God tells us what not to say to ourselves suggests that we have the power to control what we tell ourselves.

Start rejoicing today. God bless you.

November 20, 2012
Columbia, Maryland

Note: Scripture verses are taken from the New International Version and the New King James Version of the Bible.

Part one

WORK/CAREER PROBLEMS

Chapter One

I Lost My Job

ALTHOUGH LAYOFFS ARE common today, losing your job cannot steal your joy. What you choose to say to yourself about losing your job can. Why? What you choose to say to yourself determines how you feel. For example, if you tell yourself, “I will never get another job” you will feel discouraged. On the other hand, if you tell yourself, “I know I will find a job soon” you will be able to rejoice.

You cannot control whether you lose your job. You can control what you say to yourself about losing your job. In order to rejoice, you must replace the negative statements/questions that you say to yourself. These nine steps will help you accomplish that:

1. Examine typical negative statements/questions that people say to themselves:

“I am angry with my company for laying me off.”

“How am I going to pay my bills?”

“I am never going to find another job.”

“I can’t get a job because the economy is bad.”

“I have not gone on a job interview in over 20 years.”

- 2. List negative statements/questions that you say to yourself in the left column below:**

Negative statements/ questions	Replace each with a verse from today's passage in Step 3

- 3. Meditate*on today's passage for 15 minutes per day for the next 21 days.**

“Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.” (Deuteronomy 11:18-19)

Day	Today's Passage
1	Matthew 6:31-32
2	Psalm 23:1
3	Luke 12:24
4	Philippians 4:19
5	Psalm 37:25
6	Psalm 37:8
7	Philippians 3:13-14
8	Romans 8:28
9	Lamentations 3:22-23
10	John 15:5
11	Psalm 127:1
12	John 14:14
13	Isaiah 40:31
14	Psalm 33:20
15	Deuteronomy 31:6
16	Hebrews 10:23
17	Psalm 34:19
18	Psalm 42:11
19	2 Corinthians 4:17-18
20	1 Peter 5:7
21	1 Thessalonians 5:17

*When I say “meditate” I do not mean incantations or lotus postures. Instead, I mean a time where you block out busy routines – prayer lists, study requirements, etc.

- a. Read the verse out loud two times.
- b. What does the verse mean to you now that you have lost your job?
- c. Do you believe the verse with your mind and your heart?
- d. How will you think differently?
- e. How will I act differently?

f. Memorize the verse.

Everyone wants to rejoice. But that can seem like mission impossible after you have lost your job. However, meditating on the verses in Step 3 for 15 minutes per day for 21 days will give you victory over your negative statements/questions. Then, you will be able to rejoice in the Lord.

4. Replace each negative statement/question you listed in Step 2 with a verse from today's passage in Step 3.

For example, replace: "I have not gone on a job interview in 20 years."

With: "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."
(Philippians 4:13)

5. Keep a journal.

The Lord gave me this answer, "Write down clearly what I reveal to you." (Habakkuk 2:2)

Some things you might want to record in your journal:

- a. Your thoughts
- b. Prayers
- c. Answers you have seen to prayers
- d. Things you have learned
- e. Progress (or lack thereof) you have made

6. Select an accountability partner.

"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up." (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

a. An accountability partner

- 1) Helps clarify goals. Sharing your goals with someone moves you towards achieving them.
- 2) Offers encouragement. A partner encourages you to keep moving towards your goals.
- 3) Challenges you. There may be times when you need a little “tough love”. A partner reminds you of what you are working towards and how it will change your life.

b. What to look for when selecting an accountability partner

- 1) Trust. Select someone that you trust. Otherwise, you will never get the full benefits of the relationship.
- 2) Honesty. Select someone who will be completely honest with you.
- 3) Confidentiality. Select someone who will keep all information discussed between the two of you, without any exceptions.
- 4) Non-judgmental. Select someone who understands that their role is to listen, ask questions and offer feedback, but never to judge.
- 5) Common Core Beliefs. Select someone who shares your beliefs. For example, if you believe it is possible to control your feelings by controlling your thinking, your accountability partner should believe the same thing.

c. How to get the maximum benefit from an accountability partner

- 1) Be clear on your goal(s).

- 2) Meet with your partner (face-to-face or by telephone) once per week for three weeks.
- 3) Make notes in your journal on progress so you can follow-up at the next meeting.
- 4) Keep the commitment to meet on the agreed-upon date at the agreed-upon time.

7. Draw inspiration from a man who chose to rejoice despite losing his job.

Joel relates this story:

My family and I were living a comfortable, middle class lifestyle. I was working at an automobile manufacturer and my wife was a stay-at-home mom for our two kids. Suddenly, I was laid off from my job. I was angry at my employer. After three months of searching, the only job I could find was in retail sales. Although I was grateful for a job, the pay was not nearly what I had been making in the auto industry. Of course, the bills continued as they had been when I was making a larger salary. I was sure there was no way we could manage.

There were times when we were getting down to the last bit of food. However, at just that time, one of the neighbors would bring over some food, or another neighbor would invite us over for dinner and give us lots of leftovers to take home with us. Praise God!

My wife and I prayed and meditated on Psalm 37:25: “I have been young, and now am old. Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor their descendants begging for bread.” The more I read and prayed, the more peace I felt. My anger at my employer disappeared.

I found myself singing an old hymn, “Great is Thy Faithfulness”

I learned that the writer of the song, Thomas Chisholm, had accepted Christ as his Savior at age 27. Chisholm had been a magazine editor who was subsequently ordained a Methodist minister. However, due to failing health, he only did pastoral work for one year. Although his income was practically nonexistent, God continually met all of his needs. This inspired him to write *Great is Thy Faithfulness*.

“Great is Thy faithfulness!

Great is Thy faithfulness!

Morning by morning new mercies I see;

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided – Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!”

As time went on, I struggled to make my car payments. Although I was not sure how God was going to work it out, having seen what He had done in the past, I rejoiced in the knowledge that He would.

Sure enough, just as my wife and I were discussing the car situation, my supervisor discovered that I qualified for a newly created position. My pay increased enough for me to maintain my car. Praise God!

It took almost two years, but I was reinstated to my former job with the automobile manufacturer. The good news does not end there. When I was reinstated, I received two years of back pay. Praise God, indeed!

Summary: Joel started out being angry and doubtful. He ended up rejoicing and praising God. In between, he changed his thoughts from his circumstances to God’s promises.

In addition to rejoicing, Stephen Gallison used losing his job as an opportunity to serve others. While laid off, he wrote a proposal for a federal grant to provide free outplacement services to professionals, executives, managers, and to technical

and scientific employees. The grant was awarded and Stephen became the founding director of The Professional Outplacement Assistance Center (POAC). The program operates under the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. It has been designated as a “Best Practices” program and was recently named an “Innovative Design” program by the U.S Department of Labor. The program has served more than 205,000 Maryland residents since its creation.

8. Draw inspiration from how God brought you through a previous problem.

“Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years.” (Deuteronomy 8:2-4)

a. List a problem that you had in the past.

b. Describe how God brought you through it.

9. Guard against negative statements/questions.

“We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Since you have grown accustomed to making negative statements/questions to yourself about losing your job, you will be inclined to continue doing so. When you are tempted, ask yourself, “Is this statement/question aligned with what God says?” If not, immediately replace it with a verse from today’s passage in Step 3.

"Very Practical! This is a terrific piece of work. I recommend it to anyone facing difficult circumstances. I have known Vernon for more than 20 years. I have seen him rejoice despite losing his job, serving as the caregiver for his late wife, Gayle, and having her go to heaven."

Mark Norman

Senior Pastor, Grace Community Church

You can transform your life in less than a month with **THE POWER TO REJOICE**

In this life-changing book, Vernon Williams shows you how to achieve victory over your problems. Capitalizing on more than twenty-five years of experience as a counselor, mentor, coach and speaker, Mr. Williams presents easy-to-follow steps that are guaranteed to help you rejoice every day. You will be energized as you discover proven ways to:

- Overcome hardships
- Increase job satisfaction
- Improve relationships
- Reduce stress and anxiety
- Experience more joy in your life



VERNON L. WILLIAMS is a national speaker and coach. His mission is helping people become who they were meant to be and do what they were meant to do. He has studied the habits of people who rejoice despite their circumstances. He shares those habits in concrete, easy-to-follow steps which you can grab hold of and implement in less than a month. Vernon has a master's degree in Applied Behavior Science from Johns Hopkins University.

His many books include *Paddle Your Own Boat: 10 Rules that Guarantee Career Success*, *Why Employees Fail to Meet Performance Expectations & How to Fix the Problem*, *425 Ways to Stretch Your \$\$\$\$* and *3 Rules that Guarantee Financial Success*.

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