

ON-THE-GO
DEVOTIONALS

joy

*a godly woman's
adornment*

LYDIA BROWNBACK

■ ■ CROSSWAY

WHEATON, ILLINOIS

Joy: A Godly Woman's Adornment

Copyright © 2010 by Lydia Brownback

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law.

Cover illustration: iStock

First printing 2010

Printed in the United States of America

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (*The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-1301-5

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-1302-2

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-1303-9

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-2412-7

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Brownback, Lydia, 1963–

Joy : a godly woman's adornment / Lydia Brownback.

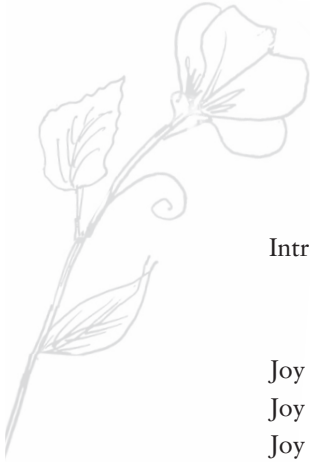
p. cm. — (On-the-go devotionals)

ISBN 978-1-4335-1301-5 (tpb)

1. Christian women—Prayers and devotions. 2. Joy—Biblical teaching—Meditations. 3. Suffering—Biblical teaching—Meditations. I. Title. II. Series.
BV4844.B765 2010
242'.643—dc22 2009040510

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

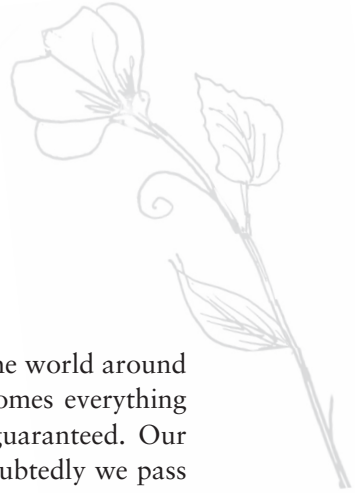


Contents

Introduction	9
The Devotions	
Joy in Going Forward	15
Joy in Repentance	17
Joy in Rejection	20
Joy, No Matter What	22
Joy in God's Place	25
Joy in Thanksgiving	27
Joy in Letting Go	29
Joy in the Present	31
Joy in Eternity	33
Joy in Discipleship	35
Joy in Wisdom	37
Joy in Waiting	39
Good Joy and Bad Joy	42
Joy in the Path of Life	44
Persevering for Joy	46
Joy in Forgiveness	48
Joy in Being Home	51
Joy in Drawing Near to God	53
Joy in the Blessings of Others	55
The Responsibility of Joy	58
Counterfeit Joy	60
Joy in Vulnerability	62

Joy in Knowing Jesus	64
Joy in Abiding	66
Joy in Eating and Drinking	68
The Joy of Wonder	70
The Fruit of Joy	72
Joy in All God's Gifts	74
Joy in Hard Things	76
Joy in Today	78
Joy in God's Providences	81
Joy from Failure	83
Joy in God's Care	85
Joy in Prayer	87
Joy in Discernment	90
Joy in Trust	92
Joy in Full Provision	95
Joy from Rejoicing	97
Joy in Christ Alone	99
Joy in Submission	101
Joy in God's Love	103

Introduction



*J*oy. It's what makes us stand out from the world around us. Along with the gift of Christ himself comes everything we will ever really need. Our security is guaranteed. Our provision is sure. Our path is guided. Undoubtedly we pass through seasons of difficulty and sorrow and uncertainty, but real joy isn't conditioned upon our circumstances. So why are we gloomy much of the time? We don't have to be gloomy. We should most certainly not be gloomy! But all too often our thoughts and words are punctuated by grumbling and bad moods. We get caught up in looking at what we lack rather than all we have.

Most of us are privileged women, not only spiritually but temporally. That is part of our problem. We are over-privileged. Available to us is a pill for every ailment, government aid for financial difficulty, and eighteen permutations of our preferred Starbucks beverage. On top of that we have free access to the Word and the people of God. Because those things are so easily had, we have come to see our privileges as rights, but such an outlook is a joy crusher. Everything we have—health, freedom, friendship, family, job, government protection—is a gift, not a right. Remembering that, when things go wrong, keeps joy alive. Joy is always available to those indwelt by the Holy Spirit, which is why gloominess is a copout.

The apostle Paul was probably the most joyful man who ever lived, yet he had few privileges. Here is how Paul described his life:

Far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. (2 Cor. 11:23–28)

The man who lived those things also wrote, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). Despite all he went through on a regular basis, he could rejoice because “the Lord is at hand” (v. 5). He never lost sight of who controlled his life, and he lived for his Lord: “for to me to live is Christ” (1:21). Joy and Christ-centeredness go hand-in-hand, so if we lack joy more often than we have it, might the truth be that we aren’t Christ-centered? Surely, for some of us, it is. Even those of us going through a season of darkness can pursue joy, trusting that God designed us for it. Sooner or later, in Christ, we will find it. The trick for some of us is to change our self-oriented, worldly focus to Christ, and for others it is to take fresh hold of God’s promises that no matter how dark life seems, he is going to push you out into the light.

First and foremost, we have to want joy. Some of us find a

perverse satisfaction in our gloom, much like a baby pitching a tantrum to get what she wants. But God doesn't respond to tantrums. Our moodiness dishonors God and robs us of the happiness that lies right at our fingertips. If we want to change—to live with perpetual joy—we must pursue it, and in Christ we are guaranteed to find it.



the
devotions

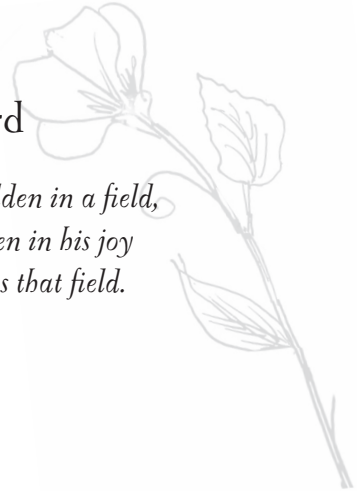
Joy in Going Forward

The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

MATTHEW 13:44

The man in Jesus' parable was no fence-sitter. He had found the kingdom of heaven—the rule and reign and love of God through Jesus Christ—and he was overjoyed. The wonders of it made him want more and more, and his whole life became about acquiring it. He gave all he had to get more than he could even imagine.

Such self-surrender always leads to joy. No matter what we give up for the sake of Christ and knowing God better, joy is going to result. Initially, it might not seem that way. The man in the parable had to sell all he had in order to buy the field. The time of sale is usually where we are tempted to stop. We find the kingdom of heaven, but we don't go all out to possess it fully and to let it possess us. We want Jesus but not necessarily costly discipleship. We want a kind heavenly Father, but not a disciplining one. We want our character bettered but not transformed. We want the benefits of Christianity without the cost, a price we must pay if we would go the whole way into the Christian life. Knowing this about us, Jesus said:



Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matt. 10:34–39)

The man in Jesus' parable did just this, and what he acquired was far better than anything he gave up. Fence-sitters can't know the joy of the man in the parable. Holding back is a joy killer. Why do we cling to the possessions and desires and personal dreams that hinder our possessing the kingdom of God more fully? Some of us do so because we aren't convinced that what we will gain is worth whatever we will leave behind. Others hold back because the pain of the loss just seems too great to bear. We cannot imagine how we will survive without that certain relationship or plan. It feels like death. That's because it is death. It's the losing of our lives that Jesus was talking about.

When we are facing the death of self, the costliness of discipleship, we are likely to pull back unless we remember the promise we have been given about how it will all turn out. The man in Jesus' parable wound up owning the field. And Jesus said that those who lose their lives—all the earthly things they lean on for happiness and security—will find what they have been looking for all along. God will see to that.