

your worth in Christ 5

expectations

Is it possible to be an unhappy Christian? We will surely have bad days and difficult times. We will experience trials and suffering. But can we be a Christian and lack long-term joy? It is a question worth considering particularly because it seems that there are many Christians that lack joy. One reason why we may not be experiencing the Christian joy that God has called us to experience is because, without realizing it, we are focusing on our self-image rather than our God-image. To put this another way, we have certain expectations for how our lives are to go. But when life does not go according to our conception and ideals, we lose our joy in life.

Shattering Your False Image

- 1 What are your expectations for your life? As you answer consider what your expectations were for your life when you were a teenager, in your 20s, in your 30s, in your 40s, etc. How have your expectations changed over time? What are your expectations for life now?
- 2 **Read Job 1:20-21.** What did Job expect from his life? What had Job lost by the hand of Satan in Job 1? How could he say the words he said and worship God after losing everything?
- 3 **Read Job 2:9-10.** Did Job attribute his family, wealth, and health to his own abilities or moral uprightness? Where did Job say everything came from? Also **read James 1:17.**
- 4 How does Job's words in Job 1:21 and 2:10 help us in setting proper expectations for our lives? If we start life with nothing and we end life with nothing, how should we view everything we have and everything that happens in life to us?

Establishing Your True Image

- 5 How does changing our expectations for life alter how we deal with life when it does not go according to plan? For example: how does this help us with bad or difficult marriages, disabilities, loss of life, loss of health, financial troubles, etc?
- 6 **Read Philippians 4:10.** How was Paul able to deal with any change of circumstances in life? What was “the secret” to facing his difficulties? To put it another way, what expectations did Paul have for his life?

10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
(Philippians 4:10–13 ESV)

TRANSFORMATION:

- 1 **Read Romans 8:17-18.** How should we handle any sufferings we face? Rather than having expectations for this life, where should we place our hope and expectations? How can you begin doing this today? Be practical.

17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. 18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (Romans 8:17–18)