



**FULL**  
*Joy*

Living a Life of Full Joy No Matter  
What Life Throws at You

G. Brent Riggs

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## Chapter 1: 1st John Full Joy

1 John 1:4 – And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. (NKJV)

Full joy. Joyful no matter what the circumstances. FULL joy. Not half, partial, occasional or unpredictable. Full.

Hard times at home, but full joy. Trouble at work, but full joy. Disappointment in other people, but full joy. Health problems, but full joy. Life is just not going well, but full joy.

Joyful, joyful, joyful... despite what life throws at you. Possible? Or just a nice sounding Christian concept that we smile and talk about in church, but deep down believe we will can never know this side of heaven. “Full joy” makes for a good sermon (or devotional!) but it’s just not happening out here in the “real” world.

*Well someone better inform  
the Apostle John.*

He begins the first of his three Epistles by declaring “these things we write to you **that your joy may be full**”. So either he is wrong, or people without “full joy” haven’t read, or closely

read, or lately read, or believed or put into practice what the Apostle wrote. I'm not bettin' against the Revelator.

In the first three verses of 1 John, the Apostle declares that they (him and the other Apostles) were eyewitnesses to the things he was preparing to write about. There was a reason for this. Even in the first few decades of the Church, false teaching had begun to sneak in. A group called the Gnostics were teaching that there was a distinct division between the physical body and spirit; to the point that you could engage in immorality with your body without it having anything to do with your spiritual holiness.

To promote this teaching, the Gnostics had to teach that Jesus wasn't fully human AND fully God. They promoted the idea that Jesus only "appeared" to have a physical presence. I won't get into all the details of what they taught, but it's helpful to know the background that was the probable reason for John immediately declaring the physical nature of Christ to open the Epistle. The Apostles had "looked upon", "heard", "seen with our eyes", "hands have handled" the living Christ... all unmistakable physical acts on a tangible, physical Savior. So much for Gnosticism.



Back to our original point: full joy. John declares that he writes the things he has personally witnessed so that we may have fellowship with those who had personally witnessed Christ, and fellowship with “the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ”.

If you are lacking full joy today, then stay with me through this little book as we explore what John had “seen and heard” as he declares the truth of God to us.

*O God, open our eyes that we may see wondrous things from Your Word. We pray for the “full joy” that your blessed Apostle writes about. Help us to have ears that hear, and eyes that see. In Jesus name, Amen.*

**Contemplation:** Are you missing full joy today? Do you believe its possible to even have it? Can you be joyful no matter what life throws at you? Would you like to be?

**Application:** A lot of folks have resigned themselves to a life with inconsistent, partial or rare times of joy. John says that our joy CAN be full. So either we are missing the boat, or he was wrong. For some it will be because they have never seriously read 1 John. For others it will be because they have forgotten what they read or allowed the world to choke out the implanted

Word. Whatever the cause, the blame for a joyless, or partially joyful life cannot be laid in God's lap. He has declared to us all we need that our joy may be full.

- What is the most obvious Bible truth you have learned?
- What change in your life needs to be made concerning this truth?
- What specific thing will you do today to begin that change?

## Chapter 2: 1st John Full Joy Through Fellowship

1 John 1:4 – And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. (NKJV)

What a wonderful opportunity God has given us. The Apostle John declares in the opening verses of 1st John that he is writing “these things” he has eye witnessed. Why? That our joy may be full.

**Full joy.** I don’t know about you, but a life of full joy in the midst of these troubled times and decaying morality is something that I wouldn’t mind experiencing. Let’s take a look at some of “these things”.

- **Thing: we must walk in the light to have fellowship with God that our joy may be full.**

In verse five, John states all inclusively that there is NO darkness in God. God is perfect in all ways and holy in all things. We must habitually and consistently be attempting to become more like Him. We dwell in the light of God’s holiness and hate the darkness.

1 John 1:6 – If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do

not practice the truth. (NKJV)

If we say we love the light of God (holiness) and yet, in secret, (or not so secret!) allow the things of darkness in our life (sin, lust, pride, conflict, gossip, greed, hate, etc.) then we are LIARS!

I find it funny how offended people get when they are called liars (their “offendedness” usually is a good indicator of their guilt). How many times have you heard someone say “are you calling me a liar??!”. Then the typical response back is “no, I’m just stating that what you are saying is not true.” Huh? That somehow placates the liar because at least they are not being called a liar! **Lord, save us from playing such silly word games with you!**

If we say we are a Christian, but **habitually** and **willingly** indulge in darkness (immorality, lust, dishonesty, sensuality, worldliness, etc) then we are lying about our love for God.

*If you profess Christ and live like you don't, you're a liar. Ouch.*

Plain, simple and to the point. Let's not sugarcoat what the Bible declares plainly just because it offends our delicate sensibilities. (I'm speaking of how we deal with our own selves privately. When we deal with others, the Lord

will lead us in truth, gentleness and love and give us the right words to say to a straying Christian).

- **Thing: if we confess our sin, we will be cleansed and forgiven opening the door to full joy.**

In verse eight, the Apostle tells us that if we say we have no sin, the truth is not in us. On the surface, this seems to repeat John's previous statement about "liars" but I believe it is more severe than that.

To proclaim that we have "no sin" is to be devoid of truth (salvation?) completely. There is NO truth in us. It is the most complete and ultimate self-deception. I might be stretching the point a little but think of what a person is claiming if they say "I have no sin". Who is the only person who has truly never sinned? What qualities does a person have to have to be truly sinless? Why, they would have to be God! The only man who was ever truly God, was Jesus Christ the Lamb.

**To claim sinlessness, you are claiming to be God. Oops.**

Do you find it hard to admit you are a sinner? To confess your sins? Why? You're no different than EVERY person who has ever lived.

Admitting your sin doesn't put you in some lower class of humanity. We're all in it together! Admitting it is the first step to being free from the pain of it. Look what God graciously gives in return:

1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (NKJV)

Forgiveness of those sins, and a cleansing from unrighteousness in general. **FULL JOY!**

Now notice one thing here before we move on: "He is faithful". Who? God. When we think of man being faithful it is always tempered with the reality that man will occasionally fail, slip, mess up, forget or fall short. Not so with God!

**When God is faithful, He is perfectly faithful!  
Hooray!**

When we sincerely confess our sins we will be forgiven and cleansed 100% of the time. John lists no conditions, no time limits, no requirements and no exceptions... assuming the confession of sin is genuine. It doesn't matter how many times you've messed up. It doesn't matter how bad you've messed up. It's a good thing too, or Paul (murderer), Peter (coward, liar, betrayer), the Disciples (cowards, deserters), David (murderer, thief, adulterer)

and all the other great heroes of the faith would be in big trouble!

Finally, if we say we have no sin, not only does that make us a liar, but we are proclaiming that Christ is a liar too! Pretty scary thought. Why does that make Jesus a liar? Because our Lord declares plainly and frequently that all men are sinful and only He is without transgression. To state otherwise is to accuse Jesus of lying. I don't know about you, but I'm not sure I want to be calling the Savior a liar.

Do you find it hard to formulate the words of confession free of excuses and rationalizing? Go to Psalm 51 and start with David's prayer of repentance.

- **Thing: when we do sin, Jesus Himself defends us... that our joy may be full.**

What an incredible thought. When I sin, Jesus defends me. He is my Advocate (lawyer, representative). Jesus defends us to the Father. God is the One who demands payment and restitution for all transgressions of His holiness. God is the righteous Judge and Jesus is our righteous Attorney!

He's the eternal pro bono (free) lawyer, but His services will cost you your entire life!

What's more, He has NEVER lost a case! The prosecuting attorney (the Accuser, Satan) lays out his LEGITIMATE charge of "sinner" against us (one the few times Satan tells the truth) and the Defense Attorney of Heaven defends His clients who are GUILTY AS CHARGED!

1 John 2:2 – And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. (NKJV)

We are GUILTY but Jesus is our propitiation, our atoning sacrifice: He has completely satisfied (atonement) God's just demand for punishment of our sin through His willing sacrificial death on the cross. God demands payment for our crime of sin and that payment is DEATH! Jesus has already died for us and paid our penalty. We are now declared righteous because God's need for perfect justice is satisfied. (I know these word pictures don't cover all the theological fine points, so I trust you'll allow me the simplicity of the description without nitpicking the details).

**PAID IN FULL!! Now THAT is full joy!**

John writes these things that we may experience fellowship with Christ that result in the full joy. Two of "these things" are: walk in light, have nothing to do with the darkness (sin), and confess your sins. Do these things and



you have begun your journey towards a life of “full joy”.

*Father, I am a sinner. I confess it freely. I ask for forgiveness and cleansing. Jesus is here to defend me. He has already paid the penalty for my sin. Help me to walk in the light, and hate darkness. In Jesus name, Amen.*

**Contemplation:** Are you sinful? No, really, are you sinful? Or deep down do you think you're pretty good and just mess up once in a while? Do you consistently allow any “darkness” in your life? No? Are you sure? Do you regularly, freely and honestly confess your sin? Have you ever called Jesus a liar?

**Application:** Full joy begins by being in right standing with God. Fellowship with God is attained through confession and walking in the light (holiness, truth). It is truly joyful to realize and meditate on the fact that Jesus Christ Himself personally defends our standing before God, because He has already paid the penalty that God demands.

- What is the most obvious Bible truth you have learned?
- What change in your life needs to be made concerning this truth?
- What specific thing will you do today to begin that change?

## **Chapter 3: 1st John**

### **Full Joy Through Knowing Him**

1 John 1:4 – And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. (NKJV)

In the first chapter of 1st John, we find out that full joy comes from fellowship with God and His beloved Son, Jesus. You can't have fellowship with someone you don't know. How do you do know if you know that you know what you think you know and want to know? (I'll set up an email folder for all English teachers who are clicking "new email" right about now!).

1 John 2:3 – Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. (NKJV)

What is meant by "know"? It's about having an intellectual knowledge and awareness of God but also includes a deeper level of perception, discernment, familiarity and understanding. How can you be sure that you genuinely "know" God? In short, obedience and love. Find out what God says, and do it because you love Him. If you do what God wants then your choice of submission and obedience are evidence that you truly know the God you serve.

John describes obedience as:

- Keeping His commandments
- Keeping His Word
- Walking just as He walked

What a blessing we receive for our obedience – the love of God is perfected in us! Does that mean we are perfect? Not in this lifetime. But it does mean that when we obey God we are headed in the right direction.

We walk as Jesus walked. John says this obedience thing isn't anything new that we haven't heard before. Obedience has always been the trademark of the true believer. Jesus is the light of the world and the darkness will pass away because of Him... an ongoing process in this life (sanctification) and completed fact in the next life for those who know Him (glorification).

1 John 2:9 – He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. (NKJV)

**John has a way of making it simple for those who want to play games concerning sin.** In 1:6 he flat out says we are liars if we practice sin but claim to be Christians. He returns to that blunt but unmistakably plain language in chapter two by declaring “Liar!” to anyone who claims to know Christ but does not obey what the Lord commands.

*Claiming Christ in one breath and sinning the next makes you a liar. Ouch.*

I was thinking on this and wondered how much less I would sin if I had a neon sign around my neck that lit up for all to see every time I sinned: "I am liar. I call myself a Christian but I just chose to sin". Or maybe if I got "Liar" tattooed on me every time I chose to disobey the Lord. I'm afraid after week or so the Guinness Book of World records might want my picture as the "most tattooed man alive".

John continues with his blunt, "here-I'll-give-it-to-you-simple-so-you-can't-mess-it-up" instruction by simply informing us that if you claim to be a Christian but hate your brother you're "in darkness". Whether or not you believe this is talking about salvation or fellowship with God is irrelevant for this discussion. If you're "in darkness", that's some place you don't want to be. Hating your brother will put you there.

So John tells us that obedience is evidence that we "know" God. Then he makes the point practical by giving us some "things" to obey: God's commandments, walk as Jesus walked, love your brethren.

How do we have full joy in this life? One part of it is through assurance. If we know God, we are

assured that we are on the right path and that we will end up with Him for eternity. 1st John gives us many practical and tangible ways to be sure that we know God.

John writes so that we may have full joy. Then tells us how, who, what and why. Thanks John!

*Lord God, forgive us when we lie about loving Christ by denying Him with our willful sin. Help us to walk in the light, and walk in love towards others. In Jesus name, Amen.*

**Contemplation:** Is your claim to know Christ validated and authenticated by your obedience? Do you follow God's commands? Do you seek to find out what they are? Does your conscience convict you each time you sin of "lying" about your claim to know Christ? Or have you become insensitive to that conviction? Do you walk in love and show love to others?

**Application:** Full joy is not only possible, John tells us how. But you can't know what you don't study, pray about and meditate on.

- What is the most obvious Bible truth you have learned?
- What change in your life needs to be made concerning this truth?
- What specific thing will you do today to begin that change?

## Chapter 4: 1st John

### Full Joy for All Types

1 John 1:4 – And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. (NKJV)

The Apostle writes “these things” in 1st John that “your joy may be full” (v.1.4). What things is he writing?

- Full joy comes from fellowship with God, walking in the light. (1.5-7)
- Full joy comes from confessing our sin (1.9)
- Full joy comes from having Jesus as our Defender (2.1)
- Full joy comes with knowing God; evidenced by our obedience and love(2.3-11)

Full joy... for who? Who can attain it? Pastors? Super Christians? Older Christians? Who is John writing to? Starting in 2.12 the Apostle identifies three stages of the Christian walk to which he writes “these things” (1.4):

- **Little Children** – new or immature believers

These are new or immature believers who do not yet have a depth or the experience of faith.

However, there is no doubt the authenticity of their salvation – “because your sins are forgiven” (2.12); “because you have known the Father” (2.13).

The danger for “children” in the faith is that they are easily persuaded to follow the latest Christian fads or questionable doctrines. They are a particularly easy target for Satan because of their inexperience and immaturity which is one reason why mature Christians should be actively engaged in mentoring and discipleship.

Ephesians 4:14 – that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, (NKJV)

It is my opinion that the longer a Christian remains a “child” the more danger they are in of being “tossed to and fro”. It is obviously natural for a recently saved person to be immature in their faith and of course our merciful Father in Heaven understands that. It is however quite a different situation for that same person to still be immature and childish in the faith many years later. A lack of growth because of personal neglect can make someone an easy target for the enemy.

- **Young Men** – Sound and growing but inexperienced Christians

“Youngmen” are those who are grounded in sound doctrine and demonstrate growing spiritual discipline but just lack time and experience in the faith. John speaks of the obvious progress of these young men stating that they have “overcome the wicked one” (1.13) and that the “word of God abides in you” (1.14).

Why are these young men strong? Because the Word of God abides in them. On the surface that may sound a little simplistic but Psalms 119 should quickly dispel that notion:

- Psalm 119:9-16 – How can a **young man** cleanse his way? By taking heed according to **Your word**. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! **Your word** I have hidden in my heart, **that I might not sin against You**. Blessed are You, O Lord! Teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have declared All the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; **I will not forget Your word**. (NKJV, emphasis mine)



The entire 119th chapter of Psalms reverberates the effects that God's Word has on your life. If you are easily bored or dispassionate with the study of the Holy Scripture, read Psalm 119. The Apostle John echoes the power of the Word to make one strong and give power to overcome the "wicked one" (2.13-14).

- **Fathers** – mature, disciplined Christians

The last type of Christian John is writing "these things" to are called "fathers". These are Christians who have matured in the faith through discipline and prayer. They have achieved a fuller understanding of God's nature, His eternality (1.12) and have demonstrated consistent faith and wisdom.

John repeats the phrase "who is from the beginning" twice emphasizing the nature of the mature believers understanding. Any comprehension of the eternal nature of God's plan and His sovereignty, from eternity past to eternity future, is not an easy thing. Understanding God's entire redemptive plan for humanity takes diligent study, prayer and meditation (not to be confused with understanding the plain and simple Gospel message of salvation).

Ephesians 3:14-19 – For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, **to be strengthened** with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, **being rooted and grounded** in love, may be **able to comprehend** with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be **filled with all the fullness of God**. (NKJV, emphasis mine)

John writes “these things” to every believer no matter what stage of their Christian walk they are in. Full joy is attainable for all believers, not just some class of “super Christian”. So if you are waiting around for a period of time to pass or a magical level of spirituality to manifest itself before you can hope for a fully joyful life in Christ, you’re missing out by your choice. Either willfully or in ignorance.

*Merciful God, help me to recognize what stage of my walk I am in. Teach me to know Your Word and to mature through the meditation and application of it. Grant me “full joy” through knowing You, loving You and obeying You. In Jesus name, Amen.*

**Contemplation:** What stage are you in? If you're a "child" in the faith is it because you are recently saved or long term lazy? If you're a "young man" are you growing and staying grounded in the Word? If you are a "father" have you become complacent with your level of maturity? "Fathers", are you discipling any "young men" or "children"? "Young men", are you encouraging and discipling any "children"?

**Application:** Full joy is not a blessing for any special class of Christians. It is attainable for you no matter what stage of your Christian walk you are in. John tells us what brings full joy, it's up to us to avail ourselves of it.

- What is the most obvious Bible truth you have learned?
- What change in your life needs to be made concerning this truth?
- What specific thing will you do today to begin that change?

## **Chapter 5: 1st John**

### **Full Joy Through No Love**

1 John 1:4 – And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. (NKJV)

The Apostle John writes “these things” in 1st John that your joy “may be full” (v.1.4) What things?

- Full joy comes from fellowship with God, walking in the light. (1.5-7)
- Full joy comes from confessing our sin (1.9)
- Full joy comes from having Jesus as our Defender (2.1)
- Full joy comes with knowing God; evidenced by our obedience and love (2.3-11)
- Full joy is for all Christians in every stage of maturity (2.12-14)

There is a “love” that God hates. And that is the love of the world. Sometimes we are guilty of throwing out Christian terms and assuming everyone understands the true meaning. So let’s stop and define “world”.

“The world” in this context can be described in a number of ways. It is sin. It is love of the

creation over the Creator. The world is materialism, immorality and hedonism. It is man-made religion and Godless government.

*The result of the creation trying to exist without the Creator constitutes “the world”.*

I like to define “the world” in this context as everything man has created for Himself originating from a mindset (passively or deliberate) of “I don’t need God”. Whether religion, government, business, recreation or even trying to establish a purpose and meaning to life... the “world” is humankind’s effort to exist without God. It’s a mentality that is quite content to live life with no regard for God... ignoring Him, denying Him, never thinking of Him. Whatever results from man apart from God (sensuality, materialism, war, paganism, etc.) constitutes “the world”.

*Note: I realize there are many ways to define “the world”, some more simple, some more complete, some more elegant. The point remains that man’s attempt to live without God, results in “the world”, whatever form that may take. BR*

1 John 2:15 – Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (NKJV)

So the Apostle John tells us that in part “full joy” comes from **NOT** loving “the world”. In his usual “I-dare-you-to-try-and-misinterpret-this” direct style of communication, John plainly states that if you love the world, the love of God is not in you. I think this is true on two levels.

First, and the obvious primary meaning in my opinion, is that a consistent love for the world indicates a lack of true salvation. If a person claims Christ (or not) and continually lives life in a manner that is obviously based on a love for this world and not a love for God, then it is evidence that a true salvation experience most likely has not occurred.

Second, I believe there is an application for the truly saved as well. To the degree that a “love for the world” infects your life (which it does in various ways and in various degrees for us all), you will no doubt experience a proportionate LACK of the “love of the Father”. In other words, even as a Christian we will most certainly struggle with loving the world our entire life and to the degree we fail in the struggle, we will be missing other Godly attributes and attitudes.

John goes on to describe some specifics about the “love of the world” and while the application to the unbeliever is obvious, genuine Christians should not dismiss the warning or the

descriptions of what identifies “worldly” behavior:

- **The lust of the flesh**

These are lusts that originate in our flesh: uncontrolled appetites, illicit desires, greed, pride, etc. The lust here is any desire derived from our flesh that violates God’s commands.

1 Peter 2:11 – Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, (NKJV)

The “flesh” becomes part of the “world” when it is unrestrained and ungoverned by God’s Word. The lust of the flesh wars against all that is Godly. The more place we give in to the lusts of the flesh, the more unlikely the fruit of the Spirit will be manifest in our lives.

- **The lust of the eyes**

The eyes are the window and entrance to our mind and heart. Our eyes are the seed bag of our thought life. What we dwell on visually is fertilized in our mind. What we choose to set our eyes on stirs and inflames in our heart, whether holy or lustful.

Psalm 101:3 – I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me. (NKJV)

Be careful what you allow your eyes to dwell on. What enters your eyes, plants in your heart and eventually becomes a harvest in your life, whether for God's glory or your shame.

- **The pride of life**

The pride of life is an attitude of arrogance that somehow we are in control of life. It's living day after day believing that we are the masters of our destiny, the creators of our circumstances. It's living life acting like we are god, and God isn't.

James 4:14-16 – whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. (NKJV)

You cannot add one second to your life. You could be dead before you finish this sentence. In an instant your money, health and possessions could be wiped out. God is in control not us. To live disregarding that is pride. Pride is placing man's way over God's.



A life of full joy requires a life marked by a consistently diminishing love for the world. John gives us three plain, working examples of what “the world” is made up of: the lust of the flesh and eyes, and the pride of life. Examine your life today for signs and evidence of what you love... God? Or the world?

*Father in Heaven, help us to recognize the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life. May we love You and not the world. Grant us this day full joy and may You be glorified in it. In Jesus name, Amen.*

**Contemplation:** Do you love the world? Is just a little okay? Do you regularly examine your life? What connection do you think there is to your lack of joy and the worldliness you allow in your life?

**Application:** The Lord promises and grants full joy in our lives. But it’s on His terms, not ours. We want to enjoy the blessings of God, and the pleasures of sin. You have to pick one or the other.

- What is the most obvious Bible truth you have learned?
- What change in your life needs to be made concerning this truth?
- What specific thing will you do today to begin that change?

## **Chapter 6: 1st John**

### **Full Joy Through Righteousness & Purity**

1 John 1:4 – And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. (NKJV)

The Apostle John writes “these things” in 1st John that your joy “may be full” (v.1.4) What things?

- Full joy comes from fellowship with God, walking in the light. (1.5-7)
- Full joy comes from confessing our sin (1.9)
- Full joy comes from having Jesus as our Defender (2.1)
- Full joy comes with knowing God; evidenced by our obedience and love (2.3-11)
- Full joy is for all Christians in every stage of maturity (2.12-14)
- Full joy through loving the things of God and not of the world (2.15)

John continues in chapter three describing the “things” that contribute to a life of “full joy”. I love the way the Apostle just lays it out there in 1st John in such clear, simple and unmistakable

terms. I often hear people say, “I just wish God would just tell me directly and plainly what He wants me to do and I would do it”.

Well there are two problems with that. One, for most things that have to do with daily living a holy life, HE DOESTELL US plainly and directly what to do. We’re just like a bunch of kids who want to find loopholes and exceptions to excuse our poor choices and when that’s not possible, we play dumb like we didn’t know or didn’t understand God’s Word! Second, even when we do discover what God says, we are still faced with the choice of actually doing it!

1 John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (NKJV)

John not only writes to us with a “holiness for dummies” level of simplicity, but gives us an incredible motivating result: FULL JOY! I’ve started this chapter with six bullet points that have been covered previously. We continue at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> John chapter 2 with more clear, precise, simple, to-the-point teaching on how to have a life of full joy:

- **Full joy comes through abiding in Christ**

2:28 And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and

not be ashamed before Him at His coming.  
(NKJV)

“Abide” means to wait with, remain stable in, to continue with or remain in fixed state. We abide in Christ now so that when He comes we won’t have to be ashamed but have confidence. It’s not all that hard to understand when we think of it in terms we can relate to.

For example, when you were a child do you remember the feeling you had when your Dad came walking through the door and you had not done what you were told such as clean up your room? You weren’t exactly confident at that moment, were you? But oh, how proud and ready for inspection a kid is when they have actually done the chore! (However infrequently that may actually occur!)

Or how about at work? How would you feel if you were approaching a project deadline and had procrastinated and been lazy to the point where you knew that your work was unacceptable and below standards? Contrast that with the confidence you have when you know that you hit a home run with your efforts and can’t wait until the boss shows up to take a look.

*Not abiding in Christ will  
rob you of your joy.*

When we abide in Christ, we look forward to His appearing. Are you apprehensive or downright scared of Jesus showing up tonight? How much of that stems from you not abiding in Him at this point in your life?

- **Full joy comes from being righteous**

2.29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. (NKJV)

Are you born again? Is it evidenced by growing and consistent righteousness in your life? Jesus is righteous, we can all get our teeth into that fact. If we know that He is righteous, then those who want to be like Jesus have to practice... guess what? Righteousness. That's a little harder for us to get a grip on.

If our lives are marked by increasing righteousness then according to John we know what fact? That we are "born of Him". If we are born of Him, that means we are what? Truly saved. Knowing that we are truly saved is what? Assurance. Assurance brings what? FULL JOY!

- **Full joy comes from being called children of God**

3.1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! (NKJV)

I love the word “Behold”. It has a kind of timeless elegance that is lost in today’s vocabulary. Behold... pay attention! Behold... look and marvel! Behold... stop and focus your mind! Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us!

What manner of love is it? That we frail, pitiful, sinful, wishwasy, disloyal, ungrateful creatures should be granted the most privileged title in the universe... children of the Most High! Behold, what manner of love!

If that fact doesn’t cultivate “full joy” in your heart, I’m not sure anything can.

- **Full joy come from expecting to see Jesus**

3.2 Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

We are called children of God and at the moment of true salvation it becomes a fact. However true that may be, the fullness of exactly what being a “child of God” actually

encompasses has not been revealed completely to us. But it will be!

When Christ returns we will be like Him and see Him for what He really is. We strive to be like Him now but it is based on understanding that is flawed by the curse of sin. We can read and meditate on the person of Jesus now but our comprehension is inhibited by our sinful nature.

When we appear before Jesus either by death or the Second Coming, we shall see Him “as He is”. Three simple words. “As He is” ... as He truly is; undimmed and undistorted by our sin, ignorance, neglect or biases. And we will finally be exactly like Him in perfect holiness, not just striving to be. Being just like Christ... does that bring any joy to your life?

- **Full comes from purification**

3.3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (NKJV)

Do you hope to see Christ and to be just like Him some day? (for clarity, being just like Christ in this context means that we will finally be free of sin and exist in perfect righteousness and holiness. It is important to define that in this day and age where false teachers even in the church claim that we are “gods” and are “equal” to Christ)

If you have the hope to see and be like Christ then what must you strive for now? Purity. Why? Because Christ is pure and we strive to be like Him. The result? Righteousness. And righteousness is evidence of what? Being “born of Him”. And that means what? That you are truly saved. Which is what? Assurance. And once again, assurance of salvation brings what to your life?.... drum roll please... full joy.

The blessed Apostle John... what a debt of thanks we owe to him for recognizing how hard headed and difficult we can be. He just lays it out there in terms that any believer at any stage of life can understand. Do this, be that. Sweet and simple.

Joy comes through righteousness, being a child of God, expecting to see Jesus and the purification of our lives by becoming more like Christ. These are more of “the things” that John says will result in “full joy”.

*Lord God, thank You for making these things simple for us to understand. Thank You for giving us the recipe for a life full of joy. Thank You for calling us Your children and may we long for the day when we will see your Blessed Son and finally be just like Him. In Jesus name, Amen.*

**Contemplation:** Do you have full joy in your life? Does your lack of joy parallel your lack of



righteousness and purity? Do you have confidence in seeing Jesus or will you be ashamed of your life? Have you ever thought about what it really means to be called a “child of God”?

**Application:** Full joy comes on God’s terms. Righteousness, purity, obedience, love... all of these things are evidence of true salvation and bring assurance of that fact. Assurance of salvation and an eternity with God brings fullness of joy into our lives that is not possible any other way.

- What is the most obvious Bible truth you have learned?
- What change in your life needs to be made concerning this truth?
- What specific thing will you do today to begin that change?

## **Chapter 7: 1st John**

### **Full Joy in Deed & Truth**

1 John 1:4 – And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. (NKJV)

The Apostle John writes “these things” in 1st John that your joy “may be full” (v.1.4) What things?

- Full joy comes from fellowship with God, walking in the light. (1.5-7)
- Full joy comes from confessing our sin (1.9)
- Full joy comes from having Jesus as our Defender (2.1)
- Full joy comes with knowing God; evidenced by our obedience and love (2.3-11)
- Full joy is obtainable for all Christians in every stage of maturity (2.12-14)
- Full joy through loving the things of God and not of the world (2.15)
- Full joy is cultivated by righteousness (2.28) and purity (3.3)

The Bible is full of opposites. God consistently reveals that His ways are opposite of man's. You give to get. Be last if you want to be first. Be

exalted through humility. Gain life by losing it. True to that idea, we find out in 1 John 3 that joy and assurance is found in our sacrifice to love others and give our lives “for the brethren”.

What does it mean to love others? Is this a feeling that you have? While that can certainly be part of it, true love is a choice to serve, to sacrifice, to prefer, to defer... to lay down your life for the good of those you love.

1 John 3:16 – By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (NKJV)

How do we know what true love is? Because Jesus modeled it for us. He laid His life for us. His love was a tangible choice to sacrifice His life for ours. It would have rang hollow for a Savior to only speak of loving us and not demonstrate it with action (given the need for a solution to our sin problem).

1 John 3:18 – My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. (NKJV)

And so we are to love in the same way Jesus modeled it to us. We are to love in “deed” which means it has to be more than words. We are to love in “truth” which means it can’t be

haphazard love based on our own ideas. It has to be love grounded in God's Word.

John, in his usual practicality presents the idea unmistakable terms. If you have money, food, clothes or resources and you ignore a brother in genuine need, then how can you say that the love of God is in you? Does this mean that we are to help every single person that crosses our path who presents a need? We can't possibly help everyone so what is John talking about?

1 John 3:17 – But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? (NKJV)

I think the key to the principle is in the phrase "shuts up his heart". God will direct us to those opportunities and people that He wants us to respond to. If your heart is open to love others, God will lead you in how to respond to needs as they arise. The key is your open heart (love) towards your brethren.

When we love in deed and truth, then we can be assured we are walking in truth (3.19) and our heart is right with God (3.20). When our heart is right, we are free of guilt and condemnation and have confidence when we come into God's presence.

When we are confident in light of our right standing with God, we are primed to receive from Him whatever we ask. Why? Because we are keeping His commandments and doing those things that please Him (3.22). What commandment are we keeping? John circles back around to his opening point:

1 John 3:23 – And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and **love one another**, as He gave us commandment. (NKJV, emphasis mine)

Once again, in beautiful simplicity, John writes “these things” so that we can have “full joy”. Look at the path the Apostle draws out for us (1 John 3):

- v.23 – we are commanded to believe in Jesus and love one another
- v.16 – we know what love is because Jesus modeled it for us by laying down His life
- v.17-18 – love is practical and demonstrable, not just words; you love by helping and serving
- v. 19 – if you show this tangible love, you can know that you are in God’s truth
- v.20-21 – when we know we are in God’s truth, we can be confident towards God

- v.22 – when we are confident towards God, we can ask from God expecting to receive because we keep His commandments and do what pleases Him
- v.23 – And what is the commandment we keep? To believe in Jesus and love one another which starts the cycle over again.

The Apostle John tells how to love, what it means to love, who our example of love is and the benefits of that love: assurance, confidence which help us to have a life of full joy.

*Loving God, thank You for sending Your Son to show us how to love. Help us to learn to lay down our lives for each other to demonstrate that love to the world. In Jesus name, Amen.*

**Contemplation:** Is your life marked by love for others? Is it evidenced by action, or just words? Would you say that the lack or presence of joy in your life is parallel to the amount of selfless love you show others?

**Application:** A life of full joy is obtainable but on God's terms not ours. It always involves doing things His way. Joy is the result of a life characterized by love for others. If you're unsure what that means then look to Jesus to see how true love is demonstrated.

- What is the most obvious Bible truth you have learned?
- What change in your life needs to be made concerning this truth?
- What specific thing will you do today to begin that change?

## **Chapter 8: 1st John**

### **Full Joy, Love & No Fear**

1 John 1:4 – And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. (NKJV)

The Apostle John writes “these things” in 1st John that your joy “may be full” (v.1.4) What things?

- Full joy comes from fellowship with God, walking in the light. (1.5-7)
- Full joy comes from confessing our sin (1.9)
- Full joy comes from having Jesus as our Defender (2.1)
- Full joy comes with knowing God; evidenced by our obedience and love (2.3-11)
- Full joy is obtainable for all Christians in every stage of maturity (2.12-14)
- Full joy through loving the things of God and not of the world (2.15)
- Full joy is cultivated by righteousness (2.28) and purity (3.3)
- Full joy comes from loving in deed and truth, not just words (3.18)



All throughout 1John, especially the 4th chapter, we find that love is evidence of true salvation. God is the source of love and the presence of love shows is authentication of true saving faith.

1 John 4:7 – Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (NKJV)

Godly love characterizes the genuine Christian. This love gives us assurance that we have experienced the true saving power of Jesus Christ. “Assurance” is the overriding theme of 1st John. If you ever doubt your salvation, or need to disciple someone who does, take them to 1st John. There you will find over and over statements about what indicates true salvation.

- If you **are** “this” you can know you’re saved.
- If you **act** like “this” you can know you’re saved.
- If you **believe** “this” you can know you’re saved.
- If you **love** like “this” you can know you’re saved.

The Apostle John writes in very plain and easy to understand language what “this” is.

*1st John can be either very encouraging, or VERY convicting.*

Along with obedience, “love” is one of the most mentioned attributes of the true Believer. How to love, who to love, what to love, when to love... with Jesus being pointed out as our example.

1 John 3:16 – By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (NKJV)

Love is important because it is the base reason for why God bothered to save us. When we return His love by imitating it, then we can be confident of God being pleased with our life. John, in usual fine form, takes us through the logical progression of the affect of Godly love in our life:

- **Why is love important?** So that we can have boldness in the day of judgment (4.17). On the day we stand before the Lord to account for our lives, we haven't nothing to fear when His gaze falls upon the history of our life.

There is no fear in love (4.18), because the essence of true love is to act like Jesus. When we act like Jesus we can boldly stand before the throne and expect approval from Almighty God who is pleased in all ways with His Son.

*If you want be confident and assured  
in God's presence, it's simple:  
act like Jesus.*

- If you have fear in your life it will be directly proportionate to a lack of Godly love (4.18). **Fear of what?**

Fear that God is not pleased with you. Fear of not being saved. Fear that God is out to get you. Fear of facing God. Fear of God's opinion of you. Fear of having to give an account for your life. Fear that God won't love you.

Don't confuse this with the healthy and proper "fear of God". That is a reverent proper fear that understands the gulf that separates frail and finite man from a perfectly holy and infinite God.

The kind of fear here is a fear that is produced from knowing that you are not living a holy life sacrificed daily to God, exchanging your will for His.

It's the same fear you had when you hadn't done what your parents told you and then had to face the music. It's the same fear that comes with doing a half-hearted job at work then being called on it by your boss. It's the same fear you have when you are confronted with an

opportunity to share the Gospel but your neglect of God's Word leaves the poor victim with more questions than answers.

*If you fear meeting God on judgment day to account for your life, you should pray and ask God to reveal where love is lacking in you.*

John finishes the thought by giving us the reason we are to love: because God loved us first. Now think about that a minute. Why is that a big deal? God loved us first. So what? I thought you'd never ask...

- God gives us life and we deny Him
- God blesses us daily and we shame Him
- God cares for us and we take it for granted
- God created us in perfection and we ruined it with sin
- God sent His Son to save us and we killed Him
- God draws us to Himself, saves us, secures us eternally... and we thank Him by being worldly, lukewarm and wishy-washy

God loved us when He had no reason to, no obligation to and no real need to...

**Accept for the fact that God is love.** And the essence of true love is to love the unlovable; love the undeserving; love for the sake of love. We are unlovable before God transforms us into the image of His Son. But God loved us anyway.

God loves us first and calls us to love others. It's a good thing God chose to love us first because we are utterly incapable of loving Him or anyone else FIRST without God Himself giving us a heart transplant and infusing us with the ability to do so.

So let's put it all in a logical summary:

- We are to love because God loved us first and Jesus is our example.
- Love is the evidence of true salvation.
- Love casts out fear and allows us to be confident to stand in front of God.
- This confidence translates into assurance of our salvation.
- Assurance of salvation results in a life of "full joy".

Thanks John.

*Heavenly Father, thank You for loving us first and showing us what love is so that we can love our way into a life void of fear and full of assurance. In Jesus name, Amen.*

**Contemplation:** Do you know that difference in the “fear of God” and the fear we are discussing in this book? Do you have a fear of facing God and having your life examined? Does it correlate to a lack of Godly love in your life? What does this kind of love look like? How do you identify it?

**Application:** God loved us first when we were unlovable. Then He shows us how to love by giving Jesus as our example. When we imitate Jesus and our lives are marked by love, we can stand in confidence before God with no fear. If that isn't full joy, could someone please tell me what is?

- What is the most obvious Bible truth you have learned?
- What change in your life needs to be made concerning this truth?
- What specific thing will you do today to begin that change?

# **Chapter 9: 1st John**

## **Full Joy in Obedience & Victory**

### **1 John – Full Joy in Obedience and Victory**

1 John 1:4 – And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. (NKJV)

The Apostle John writes “these things” in 1st John that your joy “may be full” (v.1.4) What things?

- Full joy comes from fellowship with God, walking in the light. (1.5-7)
- Full joy comes from confessing our sin (1.9)
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- Full joy comes with knowing God; evidenced by our obedience and love (2.3-11)
- Full joy is obtainable for all Christians in every stage of maturity (2.12-14)
- Full joy through loving the things of God and not of the world (2.15)
- Full joy is cultivated by righteousness (2.28) and purity (3.3)
- Full joy comes from loving in deed and truth, not just words (3.18)

- Full joy is the result of loving as Christ loved which casts fear from our lives (4.18)

John writes “these things” all through the book of 1st John. These “things” give us assurance of our salvation and confidence that we are in right standing with God. Assurance of salvation is the height of “full joy”, for what it in this life can steal your joy when you are assured of an eternity in Heaven?

In closing, I want to give you a list of “these things” so that you can reference them when your joy seems to have taken a vacation. You can be assured and joyful when you:

- **Walk in the light**

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son **cleanses us from all sin.** (NKJV, emphasis mine for all following verses)

- **Confess your sins**

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to **cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

- **Keep God’s commandments**

1 John 2:3 Now by this we know that **we know Him**, if we keep His commandments.



- **Love your fellow Christians**  
1 John 2:10 He who loves his brother **abides in the light**, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.
- **Do not love worldliness**  
1 John 2:15 **Do not love the world** or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
- **Let truth abide in you**  
1 John 2:24 Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, **you also will abide** in the Son and in the Father.
- **Practice righteousness**  
1 John 2:29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness **is born of Him**.
- **Purify yourself**  
1 John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope in Him **purifies himself**, just as He is pure.
- **Practice righteousness and love your brother**  
1 John 3:10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil **are manifest**: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

- **Lay down your life for others**  
1 John 3:16 **By this we know love**, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.
- **Love in action not just words**  
1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but **in deed and in truth**.
- **Obey God**  
1 John 3:24 Now he who keeps His commandments **abides in Him**, and He in him. And by this we know that **He abides in us**, by the Spirit whom He has given us.
- **Love one another**  
1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves **is born of God and knows God**.
- **Confess Jesus Christ**  
1 John 4:15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, **God abides in him**, and he in God.
- **Love your brother**  
1 John 4:21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.
- **Believe in Jesus**  
1 John 5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is **born of God**, and everyone who loves

Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

- **Pray according to God's will**

1 John 5:14 Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, **He hears us.**

- **Keep yourself from sin**

1 John 5:18 We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

The Apostle John opens the book giving the reason for writing it: that we may have full joy. What a blessing to be able to evaluate our spiritual lives against such a straightforward and easy to understand set of truths.

When your life lacks joy it may be because of fear, worldliness, disobedience or a lack of love. Turn to the book of 1John and prayerfully ask God to reveal what could be stealing your joy.

*Heavenly Father, thank you for showing us how to have a life of full joy. Help us to love, to obey and to practice righteousness so that we can have confidence and assurance in our salvation. In Jesus name, Amen.*

**Contemplation:** Is your life characterized by joy? If no, can you identify any areas that don't match up to the commands and instruction in 1John? Do you even believe that "full joy" is possible? If not, which other parts of the Bible do you not believe?

**Application:** Full joy. Elusive for most, possible for all. Full joy comes on God's terms not our whims. But full joy from God is immune to the circumstances of this life. John lays it out in terms we can all understand. Love, obey, believe, confess.

- What is the most obvious Bible truth you have learned?
- What change in your life needs to be made concerning this truth?
- What specific thing will you do today to begin that change?