



# Shepherd's Path

## A Shepherd's Personal Devotions Seeing God Through Suffering Series, Lesson 14

**Lesson Title:** Joy in the Midst of Suffering

**Take Home Point:** You can choose joy even in times of suffering.

### Warm-Up:

The longer I live, the more I am aware of a phenomenon that really shouldn't be too surprising to me. As I converse and work with elderly people, I see their general attitudes of life becoming more and more pronounced. While, of course, there are exceptions, those with a tendency to be judgmental grow to be even more critical of their circumstances and other people as they age. They become angry and bitter at the world in general and see only the bad in people and life. Those with more of a forgiving, joyful spirit typically retain that spirit. And it's easy to decide which type of person I would rather spend time with. No one wants to be around someone who is constantly complaining and criticizing, whether young or old. A positive outlook on life tends to be contagious, and it's the kind of contagion Christians can and should have.

**Read:** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; Philippians 4:4-7

### Observation (What happened?):

During what times are we told to rejoice and be thankful?

What do we get and what does it guard as a result of turning to God in all things?

### Interpretation (What does it mean?):

What does it mean that "this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" even during hard times?

How does God's peace guard our hearts and minds?

### Insight:

It is clear from Scripture that it is not circumstances that determine our perspective, but that our perspective determines how we go through whatever circumstances we encounter. Simply put, joy is a choice. And it is closely linked with our security and contentment in knowing that God is in control. That is what Paul meant when he said God's peace would guard our hearts and minds. We are absolutely secure in him no matter what happens to us in this world. We can have complete peace in our heart, soul, mind, and body because we are in the hands of the God who knows all about what we are going through and has promised to never leave or forsake us, no matter what. But we have to choose that attitude, that perspective. God offers it to us, but we must choose to accept it. That is why Paul was so insistent as he wrote to the churches in Philippi and Thessalonica. He knew we gain nothing by anxiety, doubt, and anger toward life's turmoil. Quite the opposite, it opens us to accusations and temptations by Satan. We don't have to live that way. Rejoice in the Lord always!

### Application (What does it mean to me?):

What are you praying continually about? How is God's peace helping you as a result?

What circumstances make you anxious? Why? Talk to the Lord about your anxiety.

## Kingdom Quest Year 2 – Lesson 14