

CHOOSE JOY

BECAUSE HAPPINESS
ISN'T ENOUGH

By Kay Warren



SIX-WEEK LEADER'S GUIDE

Is joy always a possibility? Author and speaker Kay Warren says yes—a yes that she has discovered during her journeys through her own “wilderness” experiences. An ideal choice for a small group or for a personal study, the *Choose Joy* book and leader’s guide provide the tools for you to uncover soul-satisfying joy that is available now, regardless of the circumstances that you or your group members may be facing. We are delighted that you will lead the flexible six-week study of this life-changing book. As you facilitate your group’s interaction, you will find that the study offers a roadmap for accessing the joy that Christ came to bring to us. *Together, let’s choose joy.*

SUGGESTED PREPARATION

Begin with prayer. Prayer is your most powerful tool—make it a point to pray before you form a group, before each meeting begins, and during the week for each group participant.

Develop relationships. Remember to show love to your group members. A suggestion is to contact each woman at least twice during the study to encourage and love her. You can do this via phone, social media, email, or in person.

Lead with a humble and caring attitude. Ensure that each group member has a copy of *Choose Joy*, and ask each to read the introduction before the first meeting. When someone answers a question, make an encouraging or affirming comment. Refrain from using your time as “group therapy” and instead focus on allowing each individual to discover her own personal insights. Finally, expect that everyone in the group will be significantly impacted by their experience through this study of *Choose Joy*.

GROUP GUIDELINES

Creating a Safe Environment

Confidentiality. Confidentiality is the most important guideline. Under no circumstance should shared personal information be mentioned or discussed outside of the group.

Group-Member Responsibilities. All members of the group must read the designated chapters each week. Encourage members to actively participate. Also, each member should commit to attending at least four of the six group meetings. (Some may need child care, and you might consider providing this as a service through your church, or consider hiring qualified teens to care for the children who accompany their mothers.)

Group Dynamics. Since your meetings will last no longer than two hours, consider a group size of eight to ten members and allow time for each member to offer something that she would like to discuss from the reading. Your challenge will be to prevent any individual from dominating the discussion and ensure that everyone is included. Finally, keep advice general—refrain from giving advice to specific individuals.

GROUP MEETINGS

The First Meeting. The first meeting serves as a “get acquainted” time. At the beginning of the first meeting, read aloud the guidelines for the group regarding regular reading, attendance, and confidentiality. As needed, briefly refer to those guidelines over the course of your next five meetings. Take a look at the *Choose Joy* introduction and perhaps ask a member to read it aloud, so as to take the first steps together into the boldness of *choosing* joy!

Successive Meetings. Begin your discussion time by asking the group what point in that week’s reading is significant for them and why, giving each the opportunity to respond. Then read and discuss the questions indicated for the current week’s assigned chapters. A suggested approach is to ask that each question be read aloud by a different person, and then give all the opportunity to respond. As the leader, please feel free to answer a question, to skip a question to spend more time on another, or to encourage group members to ask questions not listed in the book.

LESSONS

WEEK ONE. Introduction

1. Share your reasons for joining this book club or small group. What do you hope to discover by week six?
2. Describe one of your life's sweetest moments—a time when your heart was overwhelmed with happiness. What feelings and thoughts do you remember?
3. Write your personal definition of the word joy and share it with the group. How are your definitions of the word different?
4. Read 2 Timothy 6:17–19 together. How do you think the author, Paul, would define joy? Discuss.

Takeaway Truth: Kay promises to be candid with you about her journey into joy, to expose her own doubts, failures, sins, and middle-of-the-night wrestlings with God. Pray this week, asking God to help you enter this study with the same kind of transparency.

WEEK TWO. Joy Is My Inheritance (Chapters 1–3)

1. What is your response to this week's reading? What has encouraged and inspired you?
2. Do you tend to be a glass-half-full or a glass-half-empty kind of person? What do you allow to keep you from living a life of joy?
3. Answer honestly the questions Kay asks on page 43: Do you believe God smiles? Does he smile at you? What could your answers reveal about you?
4. Describe Bible stories that present Jesus as a man of joy. Which is your favorite story and why?
5. Imagine Jesus—a man of sorrows and joy—walking through life with you today. What might he laugh about with you? What would he cry over with you?

Takeaway Truth: Kay asks that before all else, you remember this: “Joy is a choice.” This week, how will you choose to experience the joy that God created you for?

WEEK THREE. Joy Is a Conviction of My Mind *(Chapters 3–6)*

1. What is your response to this week’s reading? What has encouraged and inspired you?
2. Is it a surprise to read that you can choose to think joyfully before you feel joyful (p. 72)? What does it mean to “count it all joy,” as stated in James 1:2–4?
3. Have you experienced searching for joy and still remaining dry? Describe the “broken cisterns” or “false sources of joy” that have failed to satisfy in your life (p. 78).
4. Imagine and discuss a day in the life of a woman who believes that God is the only true source of her joy. How might she respond when her car won’t start, when her child brings home a bad report card, and when she gets passed over for a promotion?
5. Are you surprised to learn that God offers us treasures in our darkest moments (Isaiah 45:3)? Think about a time of deep sorrow in your life. What treasures did you find?

Takeaway Truth: Choose today to start thinking differently. Meditate on who God is—his worth, Word, works, ways, and will—journal a few paragraphs about how these thoughts lead to joy.

WEEK FOUR. Joy Is a Condition of My Heart *(Chapters 7–8)*

1. What is your response to this week’s reading? What has encouraged and inspired you?
2. On page 139, Kay says that if we want joy, we have to fight for it. In what specific ways can we experience joy if we choose differently, think differently, behave differently, feel differently, respond differently?
3. Is it difficult to believe that God delights in you and adores you? Why? Turn to the woman to your left and tell her something about herself that delights the heart of God. (Examples: “Your smile lifts up others around you even when you don’t realize it,” or “Your commitment to this group reflects that you are a joy-builder.”)
4. Read the paragraph near the bottom of page 158, written by Kay’s friend, Lynnda. Discuss what would change if you chose “peace instead of the rat race” in your life.
5. Share an experience in your life when someone genuinely heard you, validated you, and appreciated you. What feelings did the affirmation bring about?

Takeaway Truth: Mother Teresa said, “There is more hunger for love and appreciation in this world than for bread.” Determine three ways that you will nurture joy in someone else this week—watch the joy return to you as you bless others.

WEEK FIVE. Joy Is a Choice of My Behavior *(Chapters 9–11)*

1. What is your response to this week's reading? What has encouraged and inspired you?
2. Kay's definition of joy includes a settled assurance about God, a quiet confidence in God, and a determined choice to give our praise to God in all things. Which of these are easy for you to embrace? Which are difficult? Why?
3. Sometimes we end up last on our own priority lists. In what ways can you begin to nourish your bodies, souls, and spirits as pathways to joy?
4. What does it mean to live "in" and not "for" the moment (p. 239)? Describe the moment during this group study that has brought you the most joy.

Takeaway Truth: Reread the story of Corrie and Betsie ten Boom on pages 242–43. Then list the ways in which you will make "the choice to rejoice" in your life this week, regardless of the circumstances.

WEEK SIX. Celebration of Joy

1. Use your five senses to create a celebration of joy for your final week! Plan a dinner or a dessert night for your study group and ask the members to be prepared to share the following:
2. As we end this study, what is your perspective—is soul-satisfying joy always a possibility?
3. What are your top three joy-builders, for yourself and for others?
4. Spend time praying for each member of your group, and ask God to help you choose his joy no matter what life brings.

“Joy is the settled assurance that God
is in control of all the details of my life, the quiet confidence
that ultimately everything is going to be all right,
and the determined choice to praise God in all things.”

—KAY WARREN

This Leader's Guide is courtesy of Kay Warren, author of *Choose Joy: Because Happiness Isn't Enough*, © 2012, Revell. Kay's website is www.kaywarren.com and she is on Facebook and on Twitter at KayWarren1.