

# “Who Am I Becoming? Joy”

## Believe Chapter 21



Has anyone ever heard of Vinemount, Ontario? Not Vineland, but Vinemount. Vineland is a small community located close to St. Catherines, but Vinemount is just three corners that sits on top of the Niagara Escarpment above and a bit to the south of Stoney Creek near Hamilton. The reason I know about Vinemount is because as a girl my mother went to Vinemount School and two of my uncle's had farms either at or very near Vinemount. My first memory of Vinemount is being at my Uncle Ned's farm which was right in

Vinemount. It was there that I first steered a tractor, sitting on his lap. I was probably 4 or 5 at the time. I don't remember his farm very well, because Uncle Ned sold it shortly after that.

I have stronger memories of the farm owned by my Uncle Bill and Aunt Emma, because I use to stay with them for a few weeks every summer and worked on the farm up until I was in my early teens. I took this picture, probably on a Brownie camera, in the orchard that was right behind the house. Uncle Bill and Aunt Emma were fruit farmers and so I spent time working among the apple and peach trees and between the long rows of grape vines. I have memories of us arriving back at the house in Port Credit with baskets of whatever fruit happened to be in season at the time.



I learned a little bit about pruning and spraying and fertilizing orchards and vineyards. I also learned that trees or vines that did not produce fruit didn't last very long on the farm. If they didn't produce, they were first pruned. If they still did not produce, then they were cut down. You may wonder why I am talking about fruit farming when our subject today is joy. The point I want to make is that there is another name for the virtues we are studying. It is very simply the "fruit of the spirit". In Galatians 5 we read: **22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.** I don't want you to get the idea that things like love, joy, peace and patience are virtues that you can attain just by trying harder. No, these are things that are produced in us as we allow the Spirit of God to work in us.

Jesus was very concerned that his followers be fruitful. In John 15 he speaks extensively about this subject. It is in this chapter that he presents his beautiful analogy of the Vine and

the Branches. He begins by saying: **1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.** So the end of every unfruitful branch is that it is cut off, while the fruitful branches are cut back so that they will be even more fruitful. Then Jesus makes a statement that is at the heart of fruitfulness. **4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.** Then Jesus delivers his crowning words in this argument. **5 I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.** Did you get that? So we know what we are in this metaphor. We are the branches and nothing more than branches. If we maintain in vital connection to Jesus, who is the vine, then we will be fruitful. But the truth is, apart from Jesus **we can do nothing!** You can screw up your determination and you can say through gritted teeth that you will be more loving and more joyful if it is the last thing that you ever do, but it will not have any effect. Unless Jesus is in your life, and unless you maintain a vital connection to him, there will be no fruit.

Well, enough about fruit. Let's talk about joy. Young children seem to be able to experience pure joy very easily. I know it is not a lasting thing and they can alternate back and forth between joy and bouts of screaming very easily. There is nothing like seeing the joy on the face of a child over the simplest of things. But joy is something that seems much more elusive as we get older. I think that it would be safe to say that joy seems to be an increasingly elusive thing amongst grownups. We may experience joy for a short time and then it seems to dissipate for long periods of time. You would never guess that joy was such a fragile thing from watching TV or reading magazines, because every ad that you look at promises joy. If you buy this house, you will find joy. If you drive this model of car, you will experience joy. Use Head and Shoulders, and once you have licked your dandruff problem, you will find the person of your dreams and you will experience joy. Just try Cialis – or get your husband to try it – and you will really experience joy!



Just about everyone promises joy. But how many deliver on that promise? Someone once asked me if I was aware of the new line of true-to-life jigsaw puzzles that had recently come out for children? I said “No.” The person replied that none of the pieces fit together. I am reminded of the jigsaw puzzles at my grandparent's cottage. There was a stack of them behind the fireplace on the screened-in porch. So many grandchildren had played with them that pieces were missing, pieces had gotten switched between boxes and some pieces were just mush from being forced into places they were not suppose to fit. You could start one of those puzzles, but you could never finish one. I tried those puzzles a few times on rainy days, but then I gave up.



Does God want us to be joyful? Many people have the idea that Christians are to be solemn, grim or even sad. Presbyterians are suppose to be “dour”, at least so I’ve been told. On the contrary, God wants us to experience a deep rooted joy. This is demonstrated by our Key Question today which is found on page 353 of your copy of Believe. **What gives us true happiness and contentment in life?** Is it owning a new Tesla? Is it getting that new house in the neighbourhood of your choice? Is it the result of using Head and Shoulders or Oil of Olay or even Cialis? The Bible provides this answer.

**Despite my circumstances, I feel inner contentment and understand my purpose in life.**

True joy is not to be found in the Rideau Centre or The Cataraqui Centre. God’s aim is not to put a temporary smile on our faces. Temporary joy soon fades. Temporary joy is provided by band aid solutions. God’s aim is to deposit an artesian well of joy in our hearts. What good is a joy that melts at the

## Key Idea



## Key Verse



first sign of adversity? God offers a joy which is anchored to a person – the person of Jesus Christ – and it is a joy that can last as long as we do. It is what we are going to refer to as **Authentic Joy**. Our Key Verse describes authentic joy in this way. Jesus says: **[11](#) I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.** Authentic joy is a complete joy. It is a lasting joy.

Think of it this way. You have a little job to do. It is a plumbing job. You go to the Canadian Tire or Home Depot and you buy a kit that offers you everything you are going to need to complete this repair job. You get home, turn off all the water in the house – because the builder cut a corner and never installed shut-offs on the water supply lines in the kitchen or the bathrooms. You tear the kitchen taps completely apart and begin to make your repair. Part way in you discover that the repair kit is incomplete. Several of the pieces you need are not included and so you start a little personal conversation that you are glad no one else at St. Andrew’s can hear. You are stuck and can’t go any further until you go and purchase more parts. When you get the job done, you discover that the two sets of parts don’t quite mesh and you can’t turn the taps fully into the off position. There is a persistent drip that you can’t stop. What was supposed to take an hour or two at the most has taken a full day. Your family is on edge after being without water all day and you ended up with an unsatisfactory result.



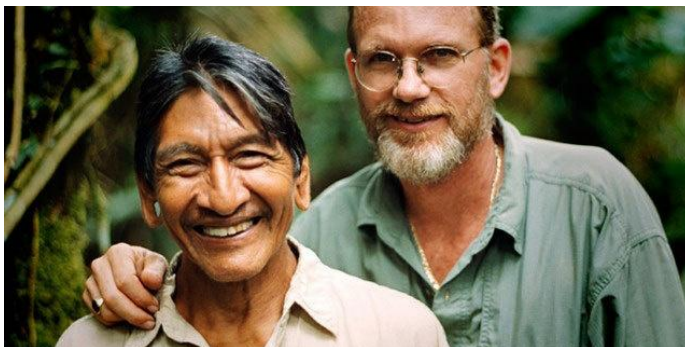
Now let’s think about joy again. I have referred to temporary joy or maybe we could call it incomplete joy. Actually, it would probably be better if we were to call it “circumstantial” joy. That is, it is a joy that depends on our circumstances. If our circumstances warrant it, then we feel joy. If our circumstances are good, then our cup of joy runs over. But if our circumstances are poor or downright bad, then joy is impossible.



Steve Saint was born in a mission hospital in Quito, Ecuador in 1951. His parents were missionaries and his father Nate was a pilot with Missionary Aviation Fellowship. In 1956 Nate was killed along with four other missionaries, including Jim Elliott, who were trying to make contact with a tribe of Waodani Indians. They were speared to death and their bodies left on a sandbank of the Curaray River. Steve's mother Marjorie was left to raise three children on

her own. They continued to live in Quito where Steve went to school. I can only imagine what it is like to grow up without a father. It was during this time that his aunt, Rachel Saint, and Elisabeth Elliot successfully made peaceful contact with the Waodani and lived with them in the jungle. At 10 years of age, Steve first went to live with the Waodani, staying with them during the summers. He learned about living in the jungle, and also developed relationships with many members of the tribe. In June 1965 he was baptized in the Curaray River by Kimo and Dyuwi, two of his father's killers who had since come to know Christ.

In 1973 Steve returned to the States where he and his family lived. Like his father, he became a pilot, but also a business entrepreneur. In 1994, Steve's aunt Rachel Saint died after spending 36 years working with the Waodani. Steve returned to Ecuador to bury his aunt. And it was then that the Waodani tribe who had known Steve as a child... they asked him to move his family down to live with them! After thinking the decision over with his family, he accepted the tribe's invitation, and he moved to the jungle in 1995. Steve worked closely with the Waodani to improve their living conditions. And he helped build a community center and develop a desperately needed economy. Steve left Ecuador in 1996, feeling that his continued presence with the tribe would hinder their progress towards self-dependency. He has, however, continued to work with the tribe. During one trip, he was helping a group of Waodani Indians put together their own airplane. A group of Quechua Indians approached him and asked why they could not build an airplane for their tribe. That's when Steve Saint realized the need for a global effort aimed at teaching practical skills to indigenous people. So, shortly afterward he founded the Indigenous Peoples Technology and Education Center, Inc. or I-TEC.



Steve has been especially close to Mincayani, one of the Waodani tribesmen who killed his father. He and Mincayani have made several appearances together in television interviews and at Christian concerts throughout the world. Steve now often visits churches to talk about his life.

So let's ask the question? What chance does a man like Steve Saint have for a life of joy? If joy is circumstantial, then the answer is "Not much." A boy deprived by the murder of his father at a young age; having to actually spend his summers living among his father's killers; having no role model of a father to serve as his own template for being a father. Oh, and there is one thing I forgot to tell you about. Steve was in an accident in 2012 that nearly left him a quadriplegic.

However, true joy is a supernatural gift of God that does not depend on our circumstances. Joy happens as our relationship with God is strengthened. Joy is a natural consequence of being connected with Christ. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. 1 Peter 1 (page 367 of Believe) expresses this truth in these words: **8 Though you have not seen him (Jesus), you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.** You have to realize that Peter is writing to persecuted Christians who have been scattered and driven from their homes. They had lost everything, but they had never lost their joy. In the midst of difficult circumstances, they experienced real joy. You see, you can lose everything but not lose your joy if you have not lost your Christ.

What have you lost? What has been taken from you? Have you lost your joy in the process? I said earlier that some people have the idea that Christians are supposed to be a sad, grim and dour people. Nothing could be further from the truth. And yet that does not mean that we cannot grieve in the face of death. It does not mean that we cannot be touched with anger in the face of injustice. It does not mean that we will not feel sadness when we are confronted with the pain of others. But what it does mean is that in the long run, the dominant emotion in our lives will be one of joy because of the presence of Jesus in our lives.

Philippians is the most joy filled book in the Bible, and yet it was written by an inmate. Paul was in prison when he wrote it. He, like Jesus, was falsely accused of things he did not do. Yet over and over he tells his readers to rejoice. **4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!** (Philippians 4; Believe page 366) Some of my favourite verses in this book are found in Philippians 4:10-13.

**10 I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**

Between the time I finished up my ministry at Strathcona Park Presbyterian Church in Kingston and we opened Barnabas House, I "camped out" in the book of Philippians for a number of months. At the time, I memorized large portions of the book. Don't ask me to recite it from memory now. But it had a huge impact on my life. This is one of the passages that I spent a lot of time on. If ever there was a recipe for joy, it is found in these



verses. Being discontented never led to joy, but Paul had discovered how to be contented regardless of his circumstances. What he discovered was the exact opposite of circumstantial joy. There were few conditions that Paul had not experienced in his lifetime. Yet he says here: ***I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*** Now that is real joy. I wonder how many of us can say that we have found that secret. But Paul goes one step further. **13 I can do all this through him (Christ) who gives me strength.** A life founded in Jesus is connected to the real source of joy.

### **Benediction**

Go now and follow the risen Christ.  
Love God and nourish the faith of God's little ones.  
Make Christ known to all people  
for God has chosen you as an instrument  
to lead others into the way of mercy and love.

And may God change your anguish into a joyful dance;  
May the joy of Christ mark every day of your week;  
And may the Holy Spirit fill you  
.....with light and love and purpose.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.