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CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Looking Ahead - Unshakeable Joy

August 3, 2025

1 John 1:4

We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.

In this verse, John makes something beautifully clear: the goal of the message is to help us find joy. Not shallow cheerfulness, but complete joy. The kind of joy rooted in a relationship with God that doesn't collapse under the weight of stress, loss, or uncertainty.

I don't know anyone who wants less joy. Most of us want more of it, but not just fleeting, circumstantial happiness. What we crave and deeply long for is unshakeable joy.

If we're being honest, the truth is - as we unpack and discover what it looks like to find joy in our complicated lives, the process might stretch us. Because as we search for joy and ask God to shine his light on us, it can reveal things we'd rather keep hidden. But on the other side of discomfort is a joy that doesn't fade when life gets hard or when we find freedom from the hurts or habits that have left us feeling stuck.

As we move forward into the week ahead, let's come with open hearts and a hopeful posture, because true, unshakeable joy isn't just a concept. It's a gift waiting to be fully shared by our loving, gracious, and forgiving God.

Discussion Questions:

Ice breaker: Think back on a time and share something that brought you unexpected joy?

How can we encourage one another in our group or church to pursue unshakeable joy by living in honesty and light together?

Read 1 John 1:5-10: What stands out to you about the nature of God and our relationship with him? How does the promise of forgiveness in verse 9 affect your understanding of God's grace and your ability to live joyfully and freely?

How do you respond when your sin and mistakes, or the sin and mistakes of others, hurt you?

Reflect and Respond: What does it look like for you, practically, to walk in the light this week in your family, friendships, and workplace?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, I'm incredibly thankful to you for pulling me out of the darkness and into your light. I know I still have places where I haven't fully surrendered to you, but I come today and ask you to help shine light on these sins so that I can focus solely on growing in fellowship with you and those around me. I love you, I trust you, and I worship you. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:**Psalms 16:11**

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

This post was written by Lori Tuckerman, Director of Content for the Daily LivingItOut.

God is Light - Unshakeable Joy

August 4, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: Mark 1**1 John 1:5**

This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all.

I had to start with the main verse from our weekend message because it is a beacon of hope amidst the chaos in the world.

To demonstrate the unshakable joy that comes from this truth, think about a time when you were at the ocean, watching the waves coming in and out. I bet it didn't take long for the sounds of the sea to drown out all your worries. Or maybe you were walking along a path at your favorite park when, all of the sudden, a fawn popped out. Just seeing that wonderful surprise replaced whatever else was on your mind.

I don't know about you, but when I spend quality time in nature, just gazing on what God has created, I don't find fault like I do in everything else. The birds fly and are fed. The rain waters the plants that grow. God has it handled.

So why is it so hard to trust God to do the same in our lives?

These words that John wrote so many years ago are a foundation we can stand upon, especially when life feels uncertain. God is perfect, and he sees it all. He has promised to provide us with all that is necessary to carry out his will and to deal with every injustice we encounter.

When we try to control our surroundings, friendships and situations to produce our own controlled outcomes, not only does it rarely work, but it's also a sure way to become overwhelmed. Jesus offers us a better way.

We're invited to surrender to Jesus, trading our ways for his.

After we accept Jesus' forgiveness and begin our adventure with him, we get to experience the powerful truth that he is the perfect light. As the bottom line states, we find *real joy* when we live *in* and *from* God's light.

When we live from this light, we can trust God with all that burdens us. In exchange, we get unshakable joy!

Questions:

Has there been a time when you've experienced God as the light?

Is it hard for you to believe there is no darkness in who God is?

Next Steps:

Spend some quality time in nature. Look for the ways God takes care of his creation.

Write down how God has surprised you with his timing in the last year, and express to him how this made you feel.

Prayer: 21 Days of Prayer - Day 1

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for your great love for us, that you sent your son Jesus to die for our sins and to reconcile us to you. We praise you for your grace and mercy that are new every morning. We pray for our cities, Lord, that they may be places of peace, justice, and righteousness. We pray that you would protect the innocent, comfort the grieving, and restore the broken. We ask you to fill us with your love, Lord, that we may love one another as you have loved us. Help us to overcome evil with good, to forgive as you have forgiven us, and to serve one another in humility. Help us to be salt and light in this dark world, to shine your truth and grace to those who do not know you. We pray all these things in the name of Jesus, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Psalms 16:11

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

This post was written by April Willer, a Perrysburg attendee and regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.

Joy Down in my Heart - Unshakeable Joy

August 5, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: Mark 2

JOY! Just what is it, really?

I remember when I was a kid, we would sing “I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart” in Sunday School. We also learned the word J.O.Y. could be an acronym for “Jesus first, Yourself last, and Others in between.”

Throughout my life, I have struggled to understand what true joy is. Is it overwhelming happiness, the feeling of love, or maybe, having everything you ever wanted? Maybe those things are true in the physical sense of joy, but I have since learned that honest, true joy can only be found in Jesus.

The truth is earthly joy is always temporary, but spiritual joy is eternal. Living a strong spiritual life is the one true path to real joy.

So, real joy is just about praying more, reading the Bible more, and going to church regularly, right? Not exactly.

While all those things are good, we cannot have a true spiritual life without Jesus. He promises a rich and full life to those who follow him. Yet, many of us hesitate to trust him. We falsely believe that following Jesus would be a “buzz kill” - too many rules, no fun, and a boring life.

John 8:12

Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”

If you don’t have Christ in your life, you are living in darkness, totally blind. Jesus is the light, and his light helps us see clearly. Whatever is holding you back from truly following Jesus, know this: life with Jesus is abundant. Maybe it won’t be abundant in material things, but you will find neverending assurance, peace, and a deep joy that surpasses all understanding.

Is having a strong spiritual life with Jesus a ticket to an easy road here on earth? No, but it is a 100% guarantee that whatever life may bring, you have the power in Christ, through the Holy Spirit living inside you, to get through it.

And to me, that is true JOY.

Questions:

What is keeping you from experiencing the joy of Jesus?

Has your spiritual walk with Jesus been a life-changing experience, or are you just going through the motions?

Next Steps:

Examine ways you can draw closer to Jesus. Prayer and Bible reading are helpful, but many followers of Jesus feel closest to him when they serve others.

Look for ways you can serve in your local church or neighborhood.

Prayer: 21 Days of Prayer - Day 2

Dear God, today, we lift up each city in Northwest Ohio and Southeast Michigan. We come to you asking to see lives healed, people drawn to Christ, and your Spirit poured out in our communities. We humble ourselves, seek your face, and turn away from anything that draws us away from you, believing that you will heal families, communities, and people's hearts. Lord, give us the wisdom necessary to unite us, and lead us in the days ahead so our cities can be a light to our nation and a testament to you, the only one who saves. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Psalm 16:11

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

This post was written by Ned Miller, a Findlay attendee and regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.

Joy vs. Happiness - Unshakeable Joy

August 6, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: Mark 3

How do we distinguish between happiness and joy? I think we often confuse the two.

Happiness is situational. Joy is deep, unshakable contentment.

Happiness depends on circumstances. Joy, for me, comes from the certainty of my inheritance as a child of God.

We have a Heavenly Father who loves us, a Brother who died to free us from the bondage of our sin, and a Spirit who lives in us to remind us of all of that.

I find joy in that truth, whether things in my world are hitting on all cylinders, or I've just had a close encounter with a cement parking lot post! I definitely wasn't happy with the thousands of dollars in damage, but I found joy in the fact that no one was hurt, and my truck was still drivable.

Just last year, my word focus was "joy," and these were my supporting verses:

Habakkuk 3:17-19

Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty, yet I will rejoice in the Lord!

I will be joyful in the God of my salvation! The Sovereign Lord is my strength! He makes me as surefooted as a deer, able to tread upon the heights.

When God is the source of light in our lives, we can be content and joyful in all circumstances. But we can't live IN and FROM God's light without learning who he is.

1 John 1:7

But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

Spending time with God in Scripture reading, prayer, journaling, or participating in a Group with other Jesus followers are all ways we become more personally connected to God. As we begin to understand his heart for us, his will shapes us and molds us into the people he created us to be. We become more alive and attuned to his voice as we invite him to guide and direct our paths.

Walking with Jesus in his light gives us the freedom to flourish, regardless of our circumstances.

Questions:

Do you have any verses of Scripture written on a card (or in your heart) to remind you of who God is, how much he loves you, or who he says you are?

Do you regularly spend time with God to learn more about him?

Next Steps:

Search for Bible verses that apply to your current situation. When you find the one you like, write it down on an index card and carry it with you until you have it memorized. Then do another one. Writing God's Word on your heart through

scripture memory is one of the best ways to let the truth of God's Word take hold of your heart.

Prayer: 21 Days of Prayer - Day 3

Dear Heavenly Father, I come to you with a grateful heart for your love and grace. I pray for the life-giving message of Jesus to spread throughout our nation, and for the power of your Holy Spirit to convict and transform hearts. I pray in each community, people would turn to you for direction and answers, and seek your will and wisdom in every situation. May they know you as their Lord, savior, healer, and provider, and experience your love, peace, and joy in their lives. I ask this in the name of Jesus, who died for our sins and rose again to give us hope. Amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Psalm 16:11

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

This post was written by Lauri White, an Oregon attendee, and a regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.

Inviting Others into the Mess - Unshakeable Joy

August 7, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: Mark 4

I've been having a lot of conversations over the past two weeks about vulnerability and being known. Not intentionally - the topic just keeps coming up.

There can be so much joy in being fully known - by family, friends, and God. It's a wonderful feeling to be seen and accepted just as you are. But getting to that place can be deeply challenging. It requires showing our whole selves, including the parts we'd rather others not see.

It reminds me of my house. Lately, I've been afraid to have people over because of its current state. July was a busy month, and I haven't had much time to clean. The floor hasn't been vacuumed, weeds are overgrown outside, the bathrooms need to be cleaned, and there are piles of laundry scattered around - washed, mind you, but not yet folded or put away.

Honestly, it embarrasses me to admit all of that here in a devotional, so you can imagine how I felt hosting friends over for my Group. I warned them ahead of time, to which one friend replied: "Invite us into the mess! We just want to spend time together!"

Isn't that what we all want from our relationships, with God and with others? To feel safe inviting them into the mess? It doesn't magically clean itself up. Sin - like the dirt in my shower - shouldn't be left unattended long-term. But once we overcome the fear and shame enough to admit something's wrong, we can get the help we need to start making it right.

It's tempting to keep our sins and shortcomings hidden, but when we confess them to God and others, it brings them to the light. Then we can begin to experience the freedom God intended for us, and the unshakeable joy that comes with it.

1 John 1:9

But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

Questions:

Is it hard for you to show your whole self to others - the good and the bad?

What keeps you from confessing sins to God or trusted friends?

Next Steps:

Take time to pray honestly with God, confessing any sins you've been struggling to open up about. (He already knows.)

Then, talk with a trusted friend you can be open and honest with.

Consider joining a Group, if you haven't already, where you can grow authentic relationships with other Christians who are happy to be "invited into the mess."

Prayer: 21 Days of Prayer - Day 4

Dear God, you alone deserve all honor, glory, and praise. You are our refuge and strength in every storm we face. You are the only true solution to the problems that plague our world today. Fill our world with your love and empower us to share your love with others. I also pray that you would ignite a deep passion in the church for your mission and for your message to reach every corner of the earth. We pray this in Jesus' name, amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Psalms 16:11

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

This post was written by Payton Lechner, a Perrysburg attendee, and a regular contributor to the Daily LivingItOut.

Freedom in the Light - Unshakeable Joy

August 8, 2025

New Testament Reading Plan: Mark 5

1 John 2:1-2

My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins - and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

With these words, I'm reminded that God's heart for us is not aimed at condemnation but is focused on love and care. He doesn't shame us into change; instead, he draws us in with grace.

Still, we stumble, and we can fall short. When we do, shame often tempts us to hide or to keep our struggles tucked away in the dark. But here's the beautiful truth: we don't have to pretend we're perfect to be loved by God. It's the very act of bringing our brokenness into his light that leads to freedom and healing. Ultimately, the goal of walking in the light Jesus offers isn't about achieving perfection; it's about growing in connection.

1 John 2:1 tells us that "if anyone does sin, we have an advocate." Jesus doesn't abandon us when we mess up. He stands beside us, pleads our case, and reminds the Father that the debt has already been paid. He's not just a helper; he's our righteousness, our atonement, and our hope. Jesus' sacrifice covers not only our sins but the sins of the whole world.

That kind of love changes us.

God calls us into the light not to expose us in shame, but to restore us in love.

So today, let go of hiding or fear, and bring your whole self—struggles, scars, and all—into the light of God's presence.

The goal is not to become sinless, but to *sin less*, and live in true fellowship with God. You have an Advocate, and by his power, you can walk in freedom.

Questions:

Where are you tempted to hide from God?

What would it look like to bring what you have been hiding into the light, trusting Jesus as your Advocate?

Next Steps:

If you need to bring something into the light and would benefit from a group of supporting people to walk alongside you, check out [Celebrate Recovery](#). Celebrate Recovery is a Christ-centered program that happens each week for adults struggling with a hurt, a habit, or a hang-up.

Prayer: 21 Days of Prayer - Day 5

God, I pray for the leaders you have appointed in every sphere of life — in our government, churches, communities, businesses, schools, and families. Give each leader wisdom and discernment to make good choices. Protect and guide them as they face challenges and pressures every day. God, help me to support and respect them with grace and confidence. Thank you for the opportunity to be a positive influence to the leaders in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Series Theme Verse:

Psalms 16:11

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This post was written by Lori Tuckerman, Director of Content for the Daily LivingItOut.

Reflections - Unshakeable Joy

August 9, 2025

Psalms 16:11

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

When you visualize living in the presence of Jesus forever, what joy-filled image comes to mind?

Have you ever considered that once you accept Jesus into your heart, this version of forever has already started?

Psalm 16:11 is the theme verse for the *Unshakeable Joy* series. It's not listed here twice because it's a typo in today's reflection. It's listed to give you an opportunity to read it again, slowly if needed, to allow its truth to settle into your heart.

Psalm 16:11

You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

Depending on the circumstances, it's not always easy to identify life on earth as a place where unshakable joy can be found. To be honest, there have been moments when I've longed for heaven. Not just for the promise of eternity, but simply, to escape the weight of the pain, brokenness, and negativity that can feel so constant in this world.

But the truth is, I don't have to wait to find unshakeable joy until I get to heaven's gates. And neither do you!

We can experience this kind of joy right now, right where we are here on earth. Why? Because we are already in the presence of the one who, when we believe in him, makes all things possible (Mark 9:23).

With Jesus by our side, we're not defined by our limitations. Instead, we're empowered to rise above them. His presence gives us the strength to clear the hurdles that often stand in the way of experiencing the kind of unshakable joy only he can offer.

Let that truth settle into your heart today, reflect on it, and invite him to lead you into the life he designed, a life marked by purpose, peace, and lasting joy.

Prayer: 21 Days of Prayer - Day 6

Heavenly Father, you have taught me that the greatest way to honor you is to love you with all my being. As I seek you in these 21 Days of Prayer, deepen my faith in you and my passion for you so that I will love you more. Then, as my love for you overflows, help me to love others as you loved me every day. Amen.

This post was written by Lori Tuckerman, Director of Content for the Daily LivingItOut.