*Faith and Joys May 18, 2023 Martha Rodman*

*You have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and new wine. Psalm 4:7* NLT.

My daughter, Elizabeth, gave me a book for Mother’s Day. It is called “*Women at Halftime*“, by Shayne Moore and Carolyn Castleberry Hux. She informed me, “Mom, you need a journal to read this book”. So I went a purchased a journal, separate from my current one. As I read this book, it became very clear why I needed a journal. The sub title is: *A guide to Reigniting Dreams and finding Renewed Joy and Purpose in Your Next Season.* Throughout the body of the chapters are myriads of suggestions on how and what to observe and journal about your life. Then at the end of the chapter are even more questions to answer! I may be done by next year! However, one of the suggested assignments was to observe and journal for five to seven days what brings you joy. Will I really write them all down? Probably not! But I am trying to write enough to make a difference.

The amazing thing is, before I read that in the book—I had already begun noticing certain joy givers in my life. I love it when the Holy Spirit works with so many aspects of our life. I looked intentionally for the joy-givers, because when there are a lot of challenges and struggles around me, I have a tendency to focus on them. And of course I found them! David, in this verse, *you have given me greater joy than those who have abundant harvests of grain and new wine*realized that God was his source of greater joy than abundance of things. So why joy? What is it about that part of the fruit of the Spirit that is so important? Remember Nehemiah 8:10? *The joy of the Lord is my strength.* There is something about joy that helps sustain us. It gives us the strength to endure and helps lift us above them so we see things from God’s perspective.

*A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. Proverbs 17:22 NLT.*Life can be difficult. It can dry up and crush our spirit. Learning to acknowledge and receive the joy-givers in our hearts helps counteract these joy-crushers. Developing a heart of gratitude helps us spot our joy-givers. But we must not just acknowledge they are there, but we must allow that joy to re-vitalize our spirits. If we are honest, it often comes down to our choice. Please understand, I don’t think God ever intends for us to walk around like fake Pollyannas when we get hit with major storms. We take those concerns to Him and then, after we process them with Him, begin rejoicing, knowing that weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. Or lean on the promise, “all things work together for good to those called to his purpose”. I know these thoughts are not new thoughts, but we all may need to be reminded of them.

Find your joy-givers, even amid any difficulties. Let them touch your spirit and your soul. It will also be good for your body. Sometimes joy seems to be an expendable fruit, but trust me, it isn’t. We all need it. Ask the Lord to help you learn to cultivate it, it will change your life and your influence.

*Father, I thank you for opening our eyes to the joy-givers in our lives. Help us to cultivate even more joy. Forgive us for ignoring this necessary aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. You truly are better than abundant harvests of grain and new wine. In Jesus’ Name, amen.*