

Equipped to rejoice

It was a day they would never forget. Two women were on their way to visit the tomb of their beloved Jesus. The one who had taught them the truths of eternal life appeared to be in the grip of eternal death. The immense sadness and bewilderment that must have hung over them quickly turned to fear as the earth quaked and one of God's angels rolled back the heavy, sealed stone that guarded the entrance to the tomb. Even the men guarding the tomb collapsed in fright. Then, the angel spoke to the women. His words must have stayed in their memories for the rest of their lives¹. We read that mingled with the women's fear was joy. This joy motivated them to tell Jesus' disciples of what they had witnessed, but before they got as far as this, they met the risen Jesus in person! The natural response of their joy was worship. As you approach Easter this year, here are some suggestions which might help you to **R-E-J-O-I-C-E**.

Recognize the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. The seed of sin had been sown thousands of years ago in the Garden of Eden - not in the ground, but in the human heart of Eve and then Adam. With the birth of sin came the death of fellowship with God. God's justice demanded a perfect sacrifice to absorb his anger at sin, while his love provided that sacrifice by giving his own Son, Jesus Christ. We who believe are saved from the penalty of sin through his death, but also through his life². Jesus' resurrection from the dead was just as necessary as his death in dealing with our sin problem³. We worship a *living* Saviour who will never die again⁴. What a great reason for rejoicing!

Exalt his name in praise. One way of doing this is to use the names by which he described himself. The following are all found in the gospel of John: *The bread of life*⁵; *the light of the world*⁶; *the door/gate*⁷; *the good shepherd*⁸; *the resurrection and the life*⁹; *the way, the truth and the life*¹⁰; and *the true vine*¹¹.

Join with others in celebrating his resurrection. Why not meet up with some Christian friends and encourage each other as you spend time focusing on the fact that Jesus once was dead but is now alive for evermore!

Offer yourself to him afresh. In all the busyness of your daily life, as well as any Easter preparations you might be involved in, it's a good idea to deliberately take some time out to recommit yourself to his service.

Include others in your reason for rejoicing by inviting them to any outreach activities at your church. Who knows? Perhaps this will be the time when they turn to the Lord Jesus in faith and repentance.

Choose to rejoice. We have the capacity to rejoice, even if we don't feel like it, because the decision to rejoice is an act of our wills and isn't based primarily on our emotions. So, regardless of what's going on in your life at present, make it a conscious choice to rejoice!

Experience the life-changing power of the risen Christ. We worship and serve a God who is alive! The power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power working in us today¹². Allow his power to work in and through you by staying close to him, like a branch connected to a fruitful vine¹³. How good it is that we are equipped to rejoice!

¹ Matthew 28:5-7

² Romans 5:10

³ 1 Corinthians 15:17

⁴ Revelation 1:18

⁵ John 6:35

⁶ John 8:12

⁷ John 10:7

⁸ John 10:11

⁹ John 11:25

¹⁰ John 14:6

¹¹ John 15:1

¹² Ephesians 1:19, 20

¹³ John 15:5