

JOY AND HOPE

"Joy Comes in the Morning"

Key Passages

Psalm 30:5 — "For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."

Psalm 16:11 — "You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

Study Focus

At the end of last school year, Maria pulled out a journal she'd kept since her son's first diagnosis. She flipped through the entries—the terror of early evaluations, the loneliness of the first years, the anger of the IEP battles, the slow accumulation of small victories. There was an entry from four years ago that said: "I don't know if I can keep doing this." Reading it now, she felt something unexpected: pride. She had kept doing it. And something in her had changed in ways she could not have predicted.

The end of the school year holds a different weight for special needs families. It is not just summer vacation—it is a moment of reckoning, a chance to look back over ground that has been hard-won. Progress may be measured in inches instead of miles. Growth may have looked different than hoped. But for families who have survived another year, there is something real to celebrate, even if the celebration is quieter than the world's.

Psalm 30:5 speaks in two movements: the night, and the morning. "Weeping may stay for the night"—not denied, not minimized. The night is real. But the psalm is built on the confidence that night is not the final word. "Rejoicing comes in the morning" is not a promise about timing—some nights are long. It is a promise about trajectory: the arc of God's dealings with His people bends toward joy.

Psalm 16:11 grounds that joy not in resolved circumstances but in God's presence itself: "you will fill me with joy in your presence." This is perhaps the most important thing special needs parents can carry forward—joy that does not depend on outcomes, healing, or ease, but that flows from proximity to God. Maria's joy at the end of the year is not that everything is fixed. It is that she is still standing, still in relationship with the One who has walked every step with her.

Discussion Qs

Couples

1. As you look back over this year, what are you most grateful for about how you have faced it together?
2. Where have you seen morning come after a long night—a moment of joy or breakthrough after a season of grief?
3. How do you celebrate together as a couple when progress is hard-won and others might not understand what you're celebrating?
4. What does it mean to you that joy can be found in God's presence even before all your circumstances are resolved?
5. What hope do you want to carry together into the next year, and how will you nurture it this summer?

Dads

1. When you look back over this year, what are you genuinely proud of—in your child, in your family, and in yourself?
2. Where have you experienced unexpected joy this year—moments that surprised you with lightness or delight?
3. How do you cultivate hope when you've been in the "nighttime" for a long time and morning feels far away?
4. What does it mean to you that the path of life is made known by God—that you don't have to navigate it alone?
5. What do you want to do differently next year, and what strengths from this year do you want to carry forward?

Moms

1. What growth have you seen in yourself this year that you wouldn't have seen without this journey?
2. When has joy surprised you this year—arrived unexpectedly in a hard season?
3. How do you hold on to hope for your child's future when the morning you're waiting for is taking longer than expected?
4. What does the promise of being "filled with joy in God's presence" mean to you at this point in your journey?
5. As you look toward a new year, what is one thing you want to release, and one thing you want to hold onto?

Application: Write a letter to yourself from one year ago, telling that version of you what you now know about God's faithfulness, your own strength, and the morning that has come.