

Principles of Joyful Living

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[0:00] John chapter 2, verses 1-11, the wedding at Cana.

! Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, They have no wine.

And Jesus said to her, Woman, what does that have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, Do whatever he tells you. Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons.

Jesus said to the servants, Fill the jars with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them, Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast. So they took it.

When the master of the feast tasted the water, now become wine, and did not know where it came from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew, the master of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine, but you have kept the good wine until now.

[1:24] Now, this, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory, and his disciples believed in him. May God add a blessing to the reading of his word.

Would you please be seated? My brother-in-law, Danny's youngest brother, his name is Canaan, and last week we received a call from him.

Right now he is in South Carolina. He is in the Navy, and he is a part of the nuclear program for the United States Navy. He is learning to be an electronic technician in submarines, and we are excited for him.

He is a very intelligent young man, and this is a perfect place for him because when he was in middle school, he would spend summers with us, and a lot of times we would play the game Risk, and he would wax the floor with us, and it was so frustrating back then to lose to a middle schooler, but now I can say, Well, you know, look at what he ended up doing, right?

I had no hope, and I am glad he was so good because I feel better about my safety in him being in that situation. But, you know, as he was telling us about his plans and as he went through boot camp, Danny, being the concerned older sister that she is, was concerned about, Well, what if something bad happens to you?

[2:45] How will we know? And so he said to her, Well, you know, just know that down in a submarine, if anything bad happens down there, it's going to be real bad.

We're not talking about loss of limbs. We're talking about loss of life. So if anything small goes wrong, it's going to be a really bad situation.

But what's interesting about a submarine is that it is the safest place to be in the midst of a storm at sea. Did you know that? While the waves are raging and the storms are circling, the most safest place to be at sea in a situation like that is well below the surface of the water.

And in fact, they're down there, the water is calm and it's peaceful. They wouldn't have any idea if it weren't for radar and things like that, that a storm was raging over their heads.

And so I share that with you because life oftentimes feels like a raging storm, doesn't it? We feel like all that could go wrong has gone wrong.

[4:00] And we feel like we're constantly being tossed to and fro, worried and fearful and anxious about what it is that we're having to face. On the surface, the storm is raging.

But for those who are rooted and for those who are grounded in Christ, the more submerged you are in Him, the less you will be tossed by those storms that seem to be raging against you without ceasing.

Of all the people in this world, then Christians should be the most joyful. Shouldn't we? Because we've been the recipients of God's amazing grace.

We've been set free from sin. We've been forgiven. We have new and everlasting life. We've been transformed as the woman we saw in the video. We have fellowship with God.

We have a past that's been redeemed. We have a present that makes sense. And we have a future to look forward to. However, if you look at many Christians today and churches today, it would appear to many, I believe, that there is a severe lack of joy when they go to church, when they look at the grim faces in the pews.

[5:23] I have a friend who, for a while, was attending a Bible study, but stopped going because every study became increasingly less about the Bible and more about the problems of the world.

And he, being a younger person, felt really uncomfortable because a lot of times the group would say, well, it's all the young people's fault. All the problems that we have in the world are the young people's fault.

And so it became more about complaining and blaming than it was about studying the Word of God. And so he didn't want to go anymore. It was a joyless place, an unfruitful place to be a part of.

So often we forget that though the battle rages, the victory has been secured for us. In John 16, verses 32-33, Jesus is in the upper room with His disciples.

This is on the eve of His crucifixion. And so there, He's preparing them for the events that are about to take place. The storm is about to rage. The tide is about to turn quickly.

[6:28] against Him. He will be beaten and He will be battered by waves of persecution. He will suffer and die on the cross as the torrent of God's wrath is poured out upon Him for our sins.

Things were going to get really bad. But ultimately, these bad things He shares with them at that moment would achieve a greater purpose.

In John 16, verses 32-33, Jesus says, Behold, the hour is coming. Indeed, it has come when you will be scattered each to his own house and will leave me alone.

Yet I am not alone for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart.

I have overcome the world. You'll have battles, but take heart. The victory has been won. Christians then can take heart because Jesus has overcome. We should be known for being joyful people.

[7:30] In fact, joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Psalm 16-11 says, You make known to me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy.

Not some joy, a little bit of joy. Fullness of joy at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

According to these verses, the life of the Christian then should be characterized by joy.

So here is the main idea for this morning's sermon. The life of the Christian should be characterized by joy. In John 2-11, we are given three principles for joy that if applied will result in joyful living.

Three principles of joy that if applied will result in joyful living. And so my hope is that you will be convinced this morning that a Christian should be marked by joy.

And I also hope that if you're lacking joy this morning, that this message will encourage you by reminding you of the joy that you have in Christ this very minute.

[8:41] First principle of joy is this. It's okay for Christians to be joyful. Verses 1 and 2. On the third day, there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there.

Jesus was also invited to the wedding with His disciples. So we're going to backtrack here to get an idea of where we're at in this first week of Jesus' earthly ministry. If you remember in John 1-19, John the Baptist marks that first day by giving testimony to the Jewish delegation who came to Him that He was not the Messiah.

On the second day, Jesus is there and John the Baptist gives testimony. Behold, there's the Lamb of God. There's the Messiah. On the third day, of Jesus' public ministry, Andrew and John follow Him, His first two disciples.

On the fourth day, Andrew tells Peter, His brother, that they found the Christ. Then on the fifth day, Jesus calls Nathanael to be a disciple of His.

Then the sixth day, they would have spent traveling. And now the seventh day, they're in Cana in the first week of Jesus' public ministry.

[9:56] They're at Cana on the seventh day at this wedding. And I think that that's important as you'll see later on. So the first question I think we ask when we read this story is what was Jesus doing at a wedding, right?

He had a lot of important things to do. He had come to seek and save the lost, right? To die for sinners, to be raised from the dead. So why is He spending time at a wedding?

Another question that I had is, or that some people have is, well, was He invited in advance? Did He know that this was going to take place? Obviously, He knew He was omniscient. But did the people expect that He was going to be there?

Or did He crash the wedding, right? All of a sudden, oh, there's Jesus and He's got six other guys. He doesn't have His full twelve assembled yet, but they think, oh, all of a sudden, you know, now we have six more people that we have to prepare for that maybe we weren't preparing or thinking about before.

We don't know for certain because John doesn't provide that information for us. However, we can try to read between the lines a little bit.

[11:06] Sometimes that's dangerous. Sometimes that's dangerous. Sometimes I think it helps. It could have been that Mary had a prominent role in this wedding.

Otherwise, why would she be so concerned that the wine was running out if she was just a guest? So maybe she did have some kind of a role there. Whatever the case may have been, what is important for us to understand here is that Jesus was welcome.

He was welcome among those who were celebrating a joyous occasion. They wanted Him there. They wanted Him to be there.

Otherwise, right? And He wanted to be there. Otherwise, He would have turned down the invitation. And He wouldn't have been a wedding crasher because He wouldn't do that to people.

He wouldn't put them in an awkward situation where now they had to provide for people that they weren't planning to provide for. They wanted Him there and Jesus wanted to be there.

[12:12] Jesus was welcome. He wanted to be a part of this celebration. He was comfortable being in a joyous environment. He didn't condemn them or avoid them.

He was in their midst celebrating this occasion with them. Probably enjoying the company that was around Him.

You know, for many Christians today, when they see a group of people enjoying one another's company, they are immediately suspicious. Thinking that the cause or source of their fun must be due to the fact that they are either full of illegal substances or engaged in some kind of immoral activity.

That's where their mind goes immediately a lot of time. But Jesus doesn't seem to have that concern here. He's not afraid of who might see Him there. He was welcome.

He felt welcome. And as a result of that, these people would listen to what He had to say later on. Do you feel like this is a place where you can express or feel joyful?

[13:30] Unfortunately for some, that isn't the case when they go to church. Especially for children. I remember growing up in the church and honestly, for me, as a child, church was one of the last places I wanted to go.

Because my parents would wake me up in the morning, right? My dad often ripping the blankets off of me and telling me, you have five minutes to get dressed and to get in the van or we're leaving without you and when we come back, you're going to regret it, right?

So there was that threat. Then there was being stuffed into uncomfortable clothes, being expected to act perfect, and receiving a lot of times dirty looks from people who it just seemed like they didn't want me or my friends to be in church.

Now I say that, but understand that there is a line that must be drawn, right? The answer then isn't to turn our church into a Chuck E. Cheese. I'll tell you, there's a lot of times that I drive through different towns and will drive by churches and I can't tell if it's a church or if it's a place where they have birthday parties for children, right?

Because it looks like a Chuck E. Cheese and we're not going to do that or we haven't ordered a ball pit yet, it's not on the way or anything like that, but I do feel like church is a place where kids know that they can express joy.

[15:05] Instead of seeing our kids as little mess makers, we should be glad that they are here.

You know why? Because they're the future of the church. And we want them to have fun, certainly, as long as the fun that they're having doesn't interfere with the greater message that we're trying to teach them, which is how to be more like Christ.

And you are an example of Christ to them. And if they get a feeling from you that you don't want them here, then I think in a way that's going to cause problems for them to wonder, you know, well, they say that Jesus loves me, but they don't love me.

So I think we need to be extra careful about that. James Boyce, a great pastor, he's long since been with the Lord, but once I heard him preaching a sermon and he shared a story about a friend that he had, a friend who was a professor of the University of Pennsylvania, an Ivy League school, right? And he was invited by a group on campus of young people to come and speak at an event that they were having. And so he went and he shared the gospel as part of his presentation and then afterwards, after the event was over and they ate dinner or whatever, they cleared the floor and they turned the music up loud and the kids had a party.

And so James Boyce said, you know, my friend's first reaction was, should I be here? You know, as a Christian, is this where I should be? And he wanted to leave, but he didn't. I think, you know what?

[16:44] At least for a while I'm going to stay. And during that first few minutes that he was there, one of the young ladies who was attending his talk and was a part of that party came over to him and they had a conversation.

She had questions about the gospel. And so he said they had to yell back and forth that they were standing right next to each other because of the music. He had to yell back and forth with her to be understood.

But at the end of that conversation, that girl became a follower of Jesus Christ. And she led many from that group to Christ as well.

And then she died when she was 25 years old of a brain hemorrhage. So, I say this because I think we need to be careful about our attitude when we're interacting with people that maybe we feel like or a situation where maybe we feel like we shouldn't be there.

Now, of course, I believe that there are environments where Christians just have no business being in because the temptations are too great and the sights are too graphic.

[17:57] So, don't get me wrong, but I think that instead of looking immediately for an exit, look instead for someone to share Christ with. faith. And let me tell you, if they know that you're a Christian, they will often seek you out in those environments where they feel more comfortable to ask you their questions.

And I know personally, I've been at a number of weddings, receptions, where I was, I had performed the ceremony and a lot of people would come to me because obviously they knew I was a pastor, I was a Christian, and I've had a lot of conversations with people about the Christian faith as a result of being in that kind of a situation.

All of this takes a great deal of spiritual maturity, right? Keep in mind that Jesus is a friend of sinners and that you are one of those sinners whom He has befriended.

Don't lose sight of that. Jesus felt no guilt for associating with these people who were enjoying a joyous occasion. He wasn't an ascetic, He wasn't a hermit, He didn't seclude Himself and keep Himself a safe distance from anybody who was having fun.

Jesus got a lot of flack as a matter of fact from the Pharisees. They couldn't believe that He'd be seen with some of the people whom He would keep company with. For example, Matthew 9, 9-13.

[19:24] As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth. And He said to him, Follow Me. And He arose and followed Him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and His disciples.

And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? But when He heard it, He said, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.

Now many people use this verse to justify sinful living as if Jesus didn't care at all about what the people He was keeping company with were doing.

That wasn't the case. He was there because He loved them, because He cared about them, because He wanted to share the gospel with them. And how else were they going to hear it unless it was Him who went to them to tell them?

[20:37] That they might know real and everlasting joy. His presence wasn't justifying their lifestyle, but seeking to save the lost.

it's okay to be joyful. It's okay to be joyful in church. It's okay to express your joyfulness when we worship.

If you're comfortable raising your hand, then raise your hand. Right? Express. It's okay to smile in church.

It's okay to laugh in church. In fact, I believe that we should. If we don't and people come in here, are they going to believe us when we talk about how great Jesus is and how much we love Him if they don't see that it's really affected us at all and we don't seem any more joyful to them than anybody else?

We know that we've been saved from our sins. We know that we've been forgiven. We know that we have eternal life. We know that we will one day be with God forever, totally free from sin and our consequences.

[21:51] What more reason do we need to be joyful? However, there are seasons in life when it's hard for us to be joyful. A diagnosis that you didn't see coming, a death in the family, a loss of a job, and we could go on and on, and in those moments, it is hard to be joyful.

So what, if anything, can we do when we're in that situation? Principle number two, when you're lacking joy, turn to Jesus.

It's okay to be joyful when you're lacking joy, turn to Jesus. Verses three and five, when the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, they have no wine.

And Jesus said to her, woman, what does that have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. His mother said to the servants, do whatever he tells you. Now, I fear being misunderstood in preaching through this passage.

I don't want your takeaway from this morning's message to be something like, well, Pastor Mike today just said, let the good times roll, right? Eat, drink, and be merry.

[23:06] Please don't have that takeaway. The message of this text, I believe, is that there is a superior joy. There is a superior joy in life.

And that joy comes from knowing Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. If I'm looking to find joy primarily in other things, then those other things will eventually disappoint me because they're not Christ.

They have limits. He does not. They can produce joy for a time, but not forever. He can produce joy for now and forever more. My favorite sports teams have brought me joy at times when they're playing well.

But unfortunately for me, many of my favorite teams are often the worst teams in their league. So, I have not received a whole lot of joy from watching my favorite teams throughout my life.

But there have been times when they've been in first place and that's been fun. But listen, let me tell you that whether or not my favorite team is in first or last, it doesn't affect my joy.

[24:25] Might be disappointed for a time, but ultimately it's just sports and they're just games. But because I know Jesus Christ, I don't need them to give me something that I don't already have.

You know what I'm saying? I don't look to them to bring joy to my life because I already have found the one who can bring me joy forever. And so, though I may be disappointed ultimately, I don't live or die with my favorite teams and whether they win or lose.

And the longer you know Christ, I believe the more joy he gives to you. The more you know him, the more joyful you become. Because it's a joy that is unmatched by anything else in this world, and that's what believers should sense from us.

If Oklahoma loses their game, you shouldn't go in on Monday as a Christian and stomp around and be angry, right? Because what's that going to say to your co-workers? Well, he doesn't seem very joyful, right?

Maybe that's his God instead of Jesus Christ. Christ. There is plenty of reason to be joyful because we can know Jesus Christ and I think that's the truth that is exemplified in the rest of this story.

[25:44] And so as the story goes on, this joyful occasion is threatened to be undone by a major problem. The wine has run out. And I'll confess to you, if I never did another wedding again, I'd be okay with that.

I mean, performing a wedding, right? And it's interesting too because, by the way, preaching about a wedding and it's Danny and I's anniversary today, that was a great wedding. I was happy to be there for that.

Thank you. I didn't do it for that. But, but, and I know Max is here and I'm looking forward to doing your guys' wedding.

I really am. Because there are weddings like that where I know the people and I love the people and I am so privileged and honored to be a part of that. So don't, don't let that be your takeaway this morning either.

Pastor Mike doesn't want to do it. I do. But I say that because I know, I know Max and Ashton and I've been in other situations where you encounter something called the Bridezilla.

[26:46] Have you ever heard of the Bridezilla? Weddings are very stressful occasions. A lot of planning, a lot of preparation and in those situations the smallest, most minuscule detail could go wrong and it's as if the end of the world was upon us.

You know what I'm saying? And so for those reasons, I'd rather be out watching somebody else do the ceremony though I'm pleased whenever it's wonderful people like Max and Ashton.

But you know what I'm saying? Weddings can be very stressful. Very stressful. And so put yourself in this position. This is a very stressful position for the bride and for the groom.

Everybody is here and the supplies are running out. Could you imagine in our culture the panic that would be going on behind the scenes? And so this is a very stressful situation.

In fact, back then wedding celebrations lasted for as long as a week. Could you imagine planning and preparing for that? All the work we put into a day for a number of hours?

[27:54] This lasted for an entire week often times. This also was a shame culture where your misbehavior or your shame would be brought upon your entire family.

And so in this time, the groom and his family would pay for the wedding. And if the supplies ran out, then the thought would have been something like, from the bride's family and from the guests, if he can't even provide for this ceremony, how can we expect that he's going to provide for her for the rest of his life?

How shameful. Who brought this boy up, right? Bringing shame upon the family as well. So this was a very stressful situation.

Wine was the staple drink in the ancient Near East. Due to the warm climate and the lack of means of refrigeration, grape juice tended to ferment. The result was an alcoholic beverage with the capacity of inducing drunkenness.

So wine was often diluted in this time with water to reduce inebriation. The Bible does not forbid drinking wine and in some cases it commends it.

[29:18] Scripture, as a matter of fact, often uses wine, especially in the Old Testament, as a symbol of joy. Psalm 104, 14 through 18. You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.

However, the Bible does condemn drunkenness. Proverbs 23, 29 through 35. Who has woe? Who has sorrow?

Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine. Those who try mixed wine.

Do not look at wine when it's red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end, it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things and your heart utter perverse things.

You'll be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. They struck me, you will say, but I was not hurt. They beat me, but I did not feel it.

[30:29] When shall I awake? I must have another drink. So, we see that drunkenness is a real problem in our culture. I've counseled with people who have lost children because their children were killed by drunk drivers.

I've counseled people who grew up with parents who abused alcohol in their homes and who abused them as a result of that. I've counseled with people who were alcoholics and who lost their marriage, they lost their job, they lost their relationship with their kids.

So, I don't want you to think that I take this matter lightly and see that this passage is justifying all sorts of behaviors. But the point of this passage isn't concerning alcohol.

alcohol. It concerns joy. It concerns being joyous. And this joyous occasion was about to be undone.

The wine, which the Bible uses to symbolize joy, was gone. The joy was gone. What could be done? Mary, who again may have had a prominent role in the preparation of this wedding, seems to know about the problem early on, while everyone else seemed to be oblivious to it.

[31:52] And so, she turns to Jesus with the problem and says to him, they have no wine. Now, don't misunderstand Jesus' tone of voice with Mary. She wasn't merely informing him about a situation also, but hoping that he'd do something about it.

And so, when he says to her, woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come. At first glance, it sounds like he's being kind of rude to his mother, but this word woman in the Greek and back in this time, it was more respectful than that, kind of like how we use ma'am or lady.

However, there is a gentle rebuke here in what Jesus is having to say. Mary was the mother of Jesus, but that relationship didn't put her in a spot to be able to order him around.

He couldn't be. He couldn't be manipulated. If he'd act, it was because it was his father's will to do so, which we know would eventually lead him to that hour he speaks of when he will suffer and die on the cross in place of sinners to secure their salvation.

And yet, Jesus had no desire to allow the lack of joy and embarrassment that would bring upon this family to happen.

[33:12] time, so he moved quickly. When joy runs out, turn to Jesus. Mary turned to Jesus.

There was a problem, and she entrusted that problem to his care, letting him know what had happened. And despite that gentle rebuke, she had faith to believe that the matter was now in his hands, and he knew what he was doing.

When you experience a time where joy seems to be lacking, you likewise must turn to Jesus. Entrust him with the matter.

And Scripture promises you that this is the best and really the only thing that you can do.

Philippians chapter 4, verses 4 through 7. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Again, I will say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

[34:19] Let your request be made known to God, and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Then on the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about being anxious and worry and how worthless it is to be either of those.

In chapter 6, verse 34, he concludes by saying, Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself, sufficient for the day as its own troubles.

It's okay to be joyful. When you're lacking joy, turn to Jesus Christ. And the third principle, Jesus is the source of everlasting joy.

So he turns water into wine, right? And it's not just wine. This is great wine, right? The head waiter hasn't tasted anything so good in all of his life.

For me, I think that's like going to McDonald's for Coke. Have you ever had Coke at McDonald's? I don't know what they do to the Coke at McDonald's, but it is so much better than the Coke that you get anywhere else.

[35:24] This is significant. The water in those six stone jars were used for religious purification reasons. And I believe that they symbolized the old order of Jewish law and custom and religion, which Jesus was replacing with something so much better.

Religious ceremony won't save you. It won't bring you everlasting joy. In fact, I think oftentimes it takes whatever little joy you had left away. And the fact that there were six of them and that this was the seventh day, I believe, is also important.

God doesn't do things for no reason. In Scripture, six is a symbol of incompleteness. And if you remember, seven is the perfect number. The perfect number of completion.

Jesus was the perfect completion of God's plan. He was the perfect Savior. He was the perfect sacrifice. He is the perfect one. He is the author and perfecter of our faith.

And listen, He doesn't just provide a little bit of wine for these people. He supplies them with an overabundance. overabundance. It wasn't like Jesus was doing the math in His head and He was looking around at all the different people and He thought, okay, to the very last drop, what do we need to get through this ceremony?

[36:50] No. No. He filled those jars completely full. Let me tell you, commentators say that there was about 180 gallons of wine that Jesus had turned from water into wine.

That's a lot. More to supply, not just for that ceremony, but was also in a way kind of a gift to the bride and groom as they went their way afterwards. He filled them abundantly just as He produced an abundance of loaves and fishes.

Do you remember those instances? He didn't just feed people enough. He oversupplied. Why does He do that? To remind us that for those of us who trust in Him, He will oversupply us.

We'll never go hungry because He is the bread of life. We will never thirst because He is the source of everlasting living waters. He is the true and living bread. He is the source of life.

He is the vine that gives life to the branches. And if you know Him and if you turn to Him, He will supply you with the joy that you are lacking.

[38:04] Religion is a joyless experience without Christ. It hardens people. Do you have religion?

Or do you have Christ? Let me tell you, many of you know my testimony. You know I spend a lot of time pursuing joy and other things, but I tell you from personal experience as my testimony, Jesus, those things run out eventually.

But Jesus never does. You'll never be quenched. You will always be oversupplied with the very best.

And now I'm not talking about material possessions that perish. I'm talking about the things that matter most to us when we do deep introspection, right? Why am I here?

What is the purpose of my life? What am I living for? What is the end goal in all of this? Why are we here? Jesus has an oversupply of answers for all of those questions.

[39:21] Giving meaning and purpose, truth and understanding, love and joy and peace in abundance. Jesus alone can give you these things and He will do so, let me tell you, without measure.

It's okay to be joyful. He wants us to be joyful. We should be joyful because of everything that He has done for us and everything He has given to us in supply.

So when life batters you and you feel tossed by the winds and the waves that take your focus off of Christ, that make you feel joyless, turn to Him.

Submerge yourself in Him. He is the source of our joy and my promise to you, backed by Scripture, is that He will supply.

Thank you.