

EXCERPT



Longing for Joy *An Invitation into the Goodness and Beauty of Life*

October 29, 2024 | \$18, 224 pages, paperback | 978-01-5140-0898-0

“Alastair writes with the familiar tone of a friend who eagerly invites us to discover what he already has: joy is different from and so much better than anything we thought it to be. Through masterful storytelling, sage-like insights, and a genuine humility, Alastair has reintroduced me to joy and the face of a happy God who laughs. I am so grateful for that. We need this book and its inspiring manifesto, perhaps now more than ever.”

Joshua Luke Smith, poet and author of *Something You Once Knew: Waking Up to the Extraordinary in Your Ordinary Life*

The Joy of a Well-Placed Bench

When it comes to having children, someone once said, “You’ll have less fun but more joy.” I’m not sure I agree with the former but I wholeheartedly agree with the latter—being a father has amplified my joy. Indeed, it is among my greatest joys.

My eldest fractured her wrist yesterday. And today, we figured that out. Oops. It’s a relatively minor fracture (compared to her broken arm five years ago). She’s casted up and ready to go. I can’t say it was fun to be in the emergency room for hours on end. But there was nowhere else I’d rather be than by her side . . . even though she was mostly engrossed in a movie or book.

On my run this afternoon (my ankles are getting stronger, thanks be to God), I came across an intriguing bench. A rather idyllic path leads to it. The plaque reads: “A place to rest, reflect, and remember in loving memory of our grandmother, mother, sister, and daughter.” But when you sit on the bench, the view is rather, well, uninspired. A beautiful lake resides just around the bend, but this bench is positioned to look at . . . bushes.

But should you sit, rest, and reflect, you will see more than bushes. You will see the beauty of the ordinary. The unremarkable transfigured into glory. I won’t pretend to be able to name all the species of plants and trees. As I stood there, no longer perplexed by the position of the bench, I was enamored by the gift it offers: the beautiful ordinary.

Back to being a father: most days are ordinary. And if I’m careless, they can even feel unremarkable—a compilation of repetitions. But then moments poke holes in the veneer of banality, like hospital waiting rooms for relatively minor injuries. You look at life with a renewed thankfulness and your heart becomes a little more sensitive too. When I sit, rest, and reflect, I find that joy often abides somewhere between thankfulness and a sensitive heart.

Would it have been more fun to play hooky from school and go on a walk in the woods with my daughter rather than wait, and wait, and wait among the injured and sick? Of course. Nevertheless, joy sat quietly with us as we waited.

The joy of fatherhood and the joy of a well-placed bench.

Read more of Alastair Sterne’s posts on joy at [Facebook.com/asterne](https://www.facebook.com/asterne).

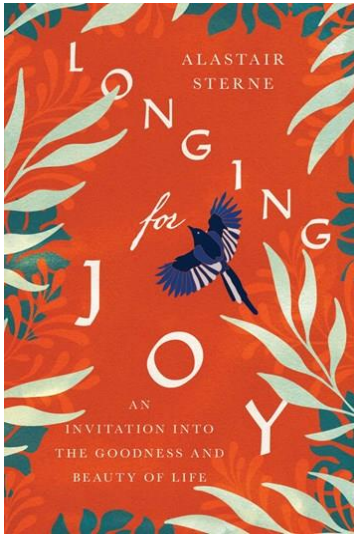


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Q & A



Longing for Joy

An Invitation into the Goodness and Beauty of Life

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Can we still have joy in a world where hopelessness and despair are the norm? Offering theologically grounded and research-based practices, Alastair Sterne explores pathways to joy and shows us how to gradually cultivate the deep, abiding joy that we were created for and that enriches the world around us.

Taking Joy Back from “Joy-Mania” Authors

Describe the experiences that led you to write *Longing for Joy*.

Alastair Sterne: *Longing for Joy* was born from two experiences. First, I confronted my joylessness. The cultivation of joy became the focus of my learning, research, and practice over the past decade which culminated in a doctorate. At this point of my journey, I want to share what I have discovered and the joy I now embody with a wider audience. Basically, I want to help people open up to the possibility of joy.

Second, when I released my first book *Rhythms for Life*, many of my non-Christian friends and acquaintances read it. But I didn't write *Rhythms for Life* with this audience in mind. Most notably, my physiotherapist engaged with *Rhythms for Life*. Her perspective on the book made me wish I had written something else that could winsomely introduce her to the goodness of God in the good news of Jesus Christ. The result of these two experiences inspired my vision for *Longing for Joy*.

What is the message you hope to convey to readers?

Alastair: The central thesis of my book posits that the presence of God embodies boundless joy, and that his companionship assures us of the inherent possibility of experiencing profound joy in our lives. Throughout the book, I try to humanize joy and spiritualize joy. On the one hand, I try to take joy back from the “joy-mania” authors who think we can be joyful nonstop and from others who over-spiritualize joy (i.e. pitting joy in Christ against “common” joys). On the other hand, I try to spiritualize joy because joy does not just originate in our hearts but in the divine life of God. While I offer practical steps toward joy, I regularly emphasize that I'm talking about opening ourselves up to the possibility of joy and not life-hacks to become more joyful.

How do you hope readers are impacted by *Longing for Joy*?

Alastair:

- I want readers to see that the story of God (and its climax in the gospel) is the story of joy.
- I want readers to see the breadth of possibilities for the presence of joy in their lives.
- I want readers to become intentional in their pursuit to cultivate their receptivity to joy.
- I want readers to have experienced small moments of joy as they read the book.
- I want readers to experience the outward momentum of joy—flowing from God to us and toward others.



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