



# THE TRUTH ABOUT JOY

*Alicia Britt Chole was an argumentative atheist when she was confronted with the truth of the gospel and accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior in 1983. Now a speaker and author, Alicia's latest devotional book, Pure Joy!, has just been published by Thomas Nelson. Chole recently spoke with Staff Writer Isaac Olivarez.*

**PE: Where do you find your greatest joy?**

**CHOLE:** In the knowledge that God is near. In practice, that truth is affirmed in stillness and silence. God is not only “first,” He is also “central” — my center of gravity in life. Keeping an accurate picture of His character anchors my joy whether I’m thinking in terms of being a mom or a wife or a minister or a neighbor. It forms the core of where I find joy in all of those different roles.

**PE: Had joy been pressing on your heart before writing this book?**

**CHOLE:** In a sense, yes. Over the last 20 years life has often been less than understandable, but through those times I’ve begun to realize that joy is not the fruit of circumstance; it is the fruit of faith. Joy is the fruit of being consumed with whom you’re following and not being distracted by where you’re going or what the scenery looks like.

**PE: How can parents encourage and equip their children to find joy?**

**CHOLE:** It goes back to the concepts about God that we’re giving our kids verbally and practically. Our kids are going to learn about God through our lives. They’re going to believe He’s generous or stingy by listening to our praise or complaints. They’re going to believe He’s near or far by listening to our confidence or worries. Our lives will either point our kids toward God as the anchor for discovering joy in life, or we will point them towards a false concept of God, forcing them to be tossed about in storms before they find the true anchor of God’s character.



**PE: How can people find joy in the midst of tragedy?**

**CHOLE:** We tend to think that joy is waiting for us — even hiding from us — in some far-off place that’s untouched by pain. But we can know joy in the midst of raw life — not because life is pure, but because God is pure. Once again, we return to where our true anchor in life is. If our center of gravity is how we feel about our circumstances, it might be impossible to know joy in the midst of tragedy. But if our center of gravity is who our God is, then even in pain we can know God’s peaceful intimacy and hope.

**PE: You were an atheist for several years before you accepted Christ. What was your definition of joy then, and how has it changed?**

**CHOLE:** As an atheist, joy was pleasure — being applauded academically, a man holding my hand, or enjoying a movie. Now, I’ve discovered this whole endless ocean called God. And God invites us to not just sit on the shore and be amazed at the waves, but to actually wade into Him and swim in Him.

**PE: How can Christians best exemplify joy?**

**CHOLE:** Whether we speak or whether we’re silent, our lives paint a portrait of God for a watching world. Regardless of what we say, people will see what we believe. If our concept of God is off-center, then our portrayal of God will be marred. But the more we expose ourselves to the Word of God and enthrone His truth in our minds — the more we align ourselves with the truth of God’s character — the more the portrait we paint for the world is going to be an increasingly accurate reflection of our Savior. ■

*E-mail your comments to [pe@ag.org](mailto:pe@ag.org).*