



# The Brain Thrives on Joy

[prayingforthebrain.com](http://prayingforthebrain.com)



Many of the exercises and information in this presentation came from the resources listed below.

- The Other Side of Church, Jim Wilder and Mark Hendricks, Moody Press, 2020
- Joy Starts Here, E. James Wilder et al, Life Model Book printed by Shepherd's House Inc., 2014



# Joy is Serious Business to God

- Joy and its cognates (words derived from the same root word) are mentioned 476 times in the Bible. More times than “eternal life.”
- In the Greek language, joy and grace are forms of the same word. Joy is our response to grace.
- Grace is “unmerited favor,” but a better translation is “special.”
- Grace is being very, very special to someone without having to work for it. Joy is the response to being the special one



- Joy is experienced when someone is glad to be with me.
- “The foundation of joy that is built in our first years of life profoundly influences our identity and relationships throughout our lifespan. Without joy as a foundation, many of the God-given capacities we receive at birth will not develop, not become strong and will not be retained.” Dr Jim Wilder, Joy Starts Here
- Good news! If you didn’t grow up in an environment of joy and appreciation and gratitude, you can develop this with intentionality and practice.



Look at this  
image for 10  
second.

Joy is high energy to the brain.  
It's when we look away and let  
the brain rest that we experience  
a release of dopamine.









# Joy - Quiet Cycle

- The practice of joy builds brain strength and the ability to handle difficult circumstances.
- Joy is how we practice the need to quiet. It's the quieting afterwards that actually builds capacity and resilience.
- The ability to self-quiet is the strongest predictor of mental health over a lifetime.
- Your joy-center can grow throughout your lifetime.



# Growing Joy With God

- Good news! Throughout our lives we can acquire joy skills and bonds as well as strengthen joy bonds we currently have.
- One place to start is our relationship with Jesus. We receive His love and Shalom. God is our Protector.
- When we connect with God, who never leaves us or forsakes us, who is always with us, that pulls our brain into the most stable of all configurations — best for learning and problem solving.



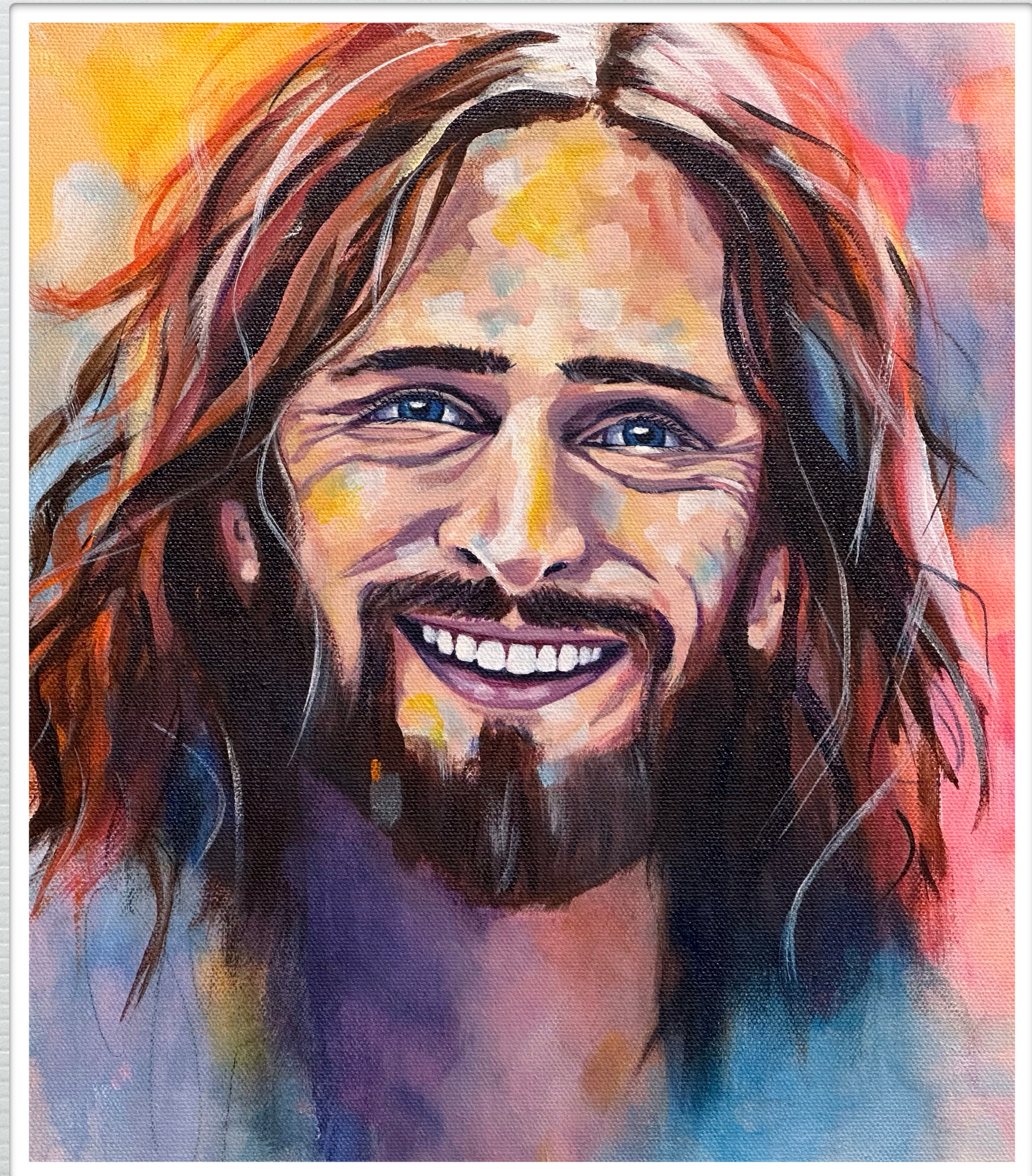
- With God guiding us, we can be confident He won't overwhelm our capacity. (In Sozo, our safest approach is to have the client talk to God)
- Relationships are memory mapped so that when we engage in a memory associated with a particular relationship, the memory activates the effects of that relationship. Memory works that way with both positive and negative relationships.



# Activating a Jesus-Memory

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image.

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[Claudia@claudiaklann.com](mailto:Claudia@claudiaklann.com)

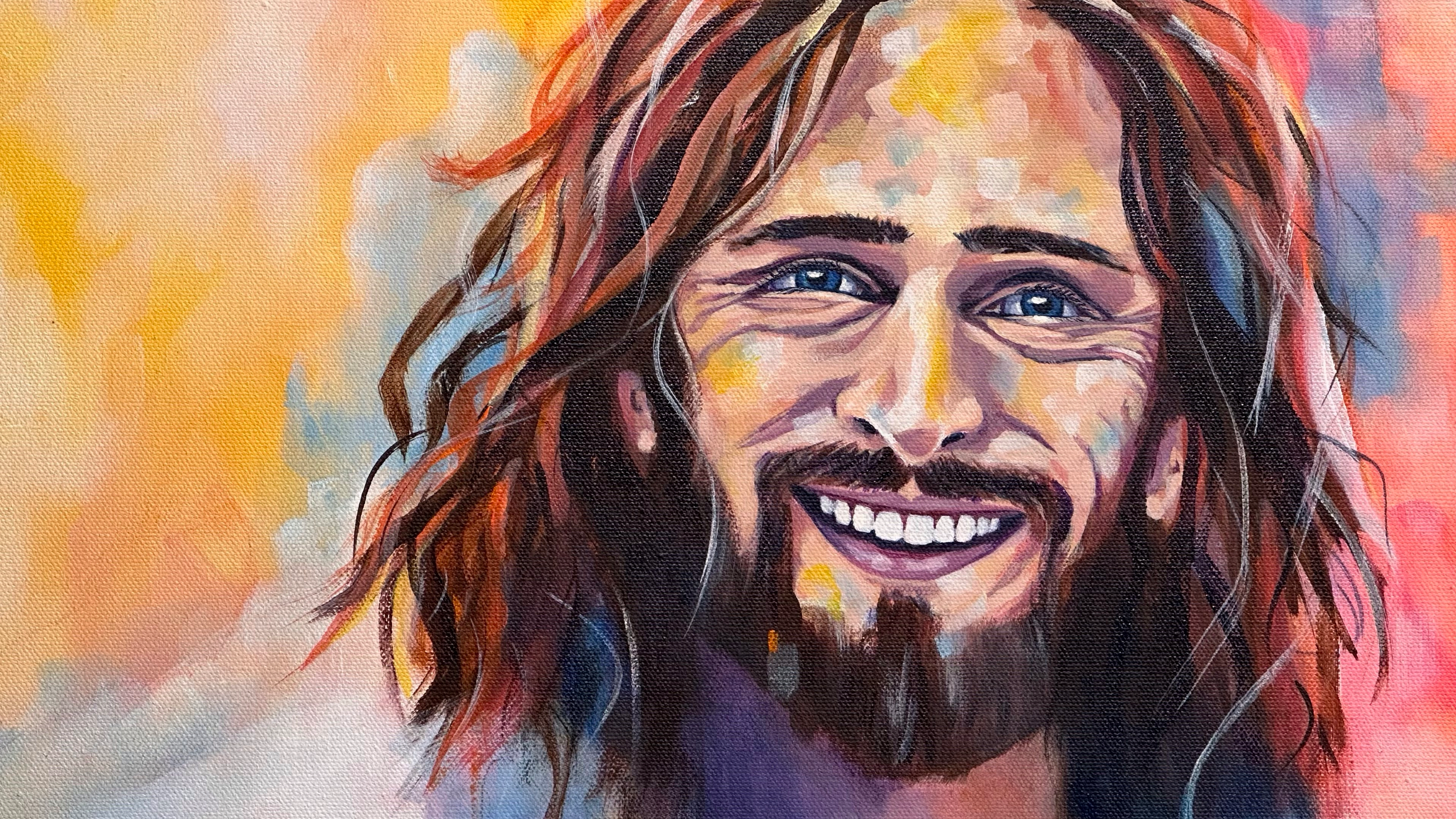




# Activating a Jesus Memory

- “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” 2 Cor 4:6
- When we activate a positive Jesus-memory, it helps to stabilize the brain. The time to practice is in a non-stressful time.







# Shalom Building

- As we've discussed, it's the cycle between joy and shalom that builds resilience - learning how to find peace.
- Take a moment to think of a time in your day today or yesterday when you felt peace was lacking.
- Now use the appreciation memory you just experienced. After you've settled into the positive Jesus-memory, ask Jesus, "What do you want me to know that will give me Shalom?"
- Can you think of a time in the rest of the day or tomorrow when Shalom-building might be needed? Talk with God about your thoughts and possible strategies.





*Joy Grows in Community*



# Hessed Love

- Hessed is a Hebrew word that denotes love that wants good for another.
- Hessed is the love God shows for us.
- “Who we love has far more influence on our character than what we believe.” Dr. Jim Wilder
- This is because of group values and identification - example: “We care about the poor.”



# Weakness as Part of Joyful Identity

- Every area of growth first appears as weakness and vulnerability.
- Build a tender heart toward weakness in others and ourselves.
- If weakness is considered “bad,” we will hide from people and tend to hide from God.
- Our responses to weakness separate the predators from the protectors.
- Joy increases around those who are trustworthy in our weakness.



# Joy grows in Community

- Joy is being the “special one.” One mistake is that we can think that there’s only one “special one,” when in fact, we can all appreciate one another on some level.
- Things to think about when considering with whom you will practice your joy skills are: Who has permission to correct you? Whose feedback or opinions do you value? Why? How does your presence, personality and character bring other people joy?



# Joy Grows in Community

- Think of three people you consider peers. Write down three to 5 personality or character traits you admire in them.
- Find an opportunity to tell them. The best is to tell them face-to-face. When you are face-to-face, you have the opportunity to see their joy response. If that's not possible, then write them a note. Try to avoid using text or email.
- Rehearsing the good you see in others helps us practice *hesed*, translated “agape” in the New Testament, which is love that wants good for another.



- Repeat this exercise with three people you consider farther along than yourself, and 3 people who are not as far along as you.



Gratitude is a  
game-changer





# Gratitude as a Game Changer

- Our brains have a default emotional state that's often determined within our first 18 months of life. It can be any of the six unpleasant emotions our brains recognize (sadness, fear, anger, shame, disgust, or hopeless despair) or joy.
- It's set according to what was happening in your life during you infancy.
- Good news! We can reset our default emotional state to joy with repeated exposure to joy.



# Gratitude Memories

- Think of a memory in your life for which you are grateful
- Relive that memory for a moment reliving it as fully as you can.
- Questions: What did you feel in your body? What is God communicating through this memory and the way you feel?



# Gratitude Memories- Phase 1

- Compile a list of grateful memories. Each memory should have two characteristics: 1)you feel gratitude in your body or can connect sensorially, and 2)you feel a connection with God in the memory.
- You want a list of ten that you can access easily.
- Once a day, spend 5 minutes residing in gratitude using your list. This will be challenging at the beginning.
- Don't focus on the verbal connection. Let your body experience it.



# Gratitude Memories- Phase 2

- Spend five minutes of gratitude 3 times a day - morning, midday and the last thing you do at night before going to sleep.
- Do this for 30 days. Consistency is key.
- During the 30 days, your brain will respond to this repeated exposure to gratitude. This will reset your default emotional state to joy.
- Maintenance: Spend 5 minutes each day in joy.



