



TIM CHESTER



# REFORMING JOY



AD 60



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TODAY

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN PAUL,  
THE REFORMERS, AND THE CHURCH TODAY

“This concise and vigorous book commends gospel joy. It is also, fittingly, a joy to read. Each hard-hitting chapter engages our cultural moment, opens the biblical text, references Reformation wisdom, and points to God in Christ. This energetic manifesto will be of value for personal study, small-group discussion, and classroom reading at a beginning-college level.”

**Robert W. Yarbrough**, Professor of New Testament,  
Covenant Theological Seminary

“I am thrilled that Tim Chester has addressed this neglected fruit of the Spirit. When the Reformation happened, it was, among other things, a rediscovery of true Christian joy. This joy had suffused the Christian world of the New Testament but throughout the medieval era had been largely forgotten as being central to the Christian life. Thus it is no wonder that when, in the eighteenth century, the Reformed author Andrew Fuller was seeking a revival among his fellow Baptists in England, he asked the ever-pertinent query, ‘Why is it that Christians in the present day come so far short of the primitive Christians in the possession of joy?’ He knew, as did the Reformers, and Paul before them all, that whenever a renewal or revival of the Christian faith takes place, joy will abound!”

**Michael A. G. Haykin**, Professor of Church History and  
Biblical Spirituality, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary;  
Director, Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies

“Charles Spurgeon once told his congregation, ‘It is a great privilege to meet a truly happy man, a graciously happy man.’ Let it never be said that *Reformed* and *joy* are uneasy cohabitants in the heart of a Christian. Tim Chester’s work is a much-needed reminder for Reformed Christians that because we have been saved by grace alone, we of all people have reason to live out our days with deep exuberance over such a great salvation. In this volume, you will meet some truly happy men from the past—happy because they recovered a glorious gospel and happy because, in so doing, they restored to the church deep and lasting joy in Jesus. Read, remember, and rejoice! People of grace should be a graciously happy people.”

**Jeff Robinson Sr.**, Senior Editor, The Gospel Coalition;  
Pastor-Teacher, Christ Fellowship Church, Louisville, Kentucky

“Tim Chester has a well-earned reputation as a writer of clear, accessible, and helpful books for Christians. This is no exception. In a remarkably short space, he moves repeatedly from Luther to Galatia to Paul and to the present day, offering an account of numerous facets of the gospel, a plea for the Reformation understanding of faith and justification, and a vision of what the church is. And at every step of the way, he presses home the importance of joy as part of the content and the goal of the Christian life—though not joy as the world understands it but that which comes from knowing and resting on Christ. A great read!”

**Carl R. Trueman**, Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies,  
Grove City College

“We live in a world that tells us to look within ourselves to find joy and lasting happiness. The problem is, looking within leaves us empty-handed, hopeless under the weight of our own unrighteousness. But Tim Chester has a message of remarkable hope. True joy is found in Christ and Christ alone. With help from the apostle Paul and the Protestant Reformers, Chester challenges the church today to return to the Scriptures, for they are the swaddling cloths of Christ. There we will hear the call from Christ himself to put aside our worthless merit and trust in him alone for a righteousness he alone can provide. Only then will we rediscover joy that will not disappoint.”

**Matthew Barrett**, Associate Professor of Christian Theology,  
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; editor, *The Five Solas Series*

“Tim Chester brings the core truths of the Reformation—‘by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone’—to life. This is not a dry tour of history but rather an invitation to rediscover the joy that Paul unpacks in Galatians and that brought Luther to lead a gospel revolution 1,500 years later. If *joy* is not the first word that comes to your mind when you think about the Reformation, you need to read this book! You could read it in a day, but its impact will last long beyond that.”

**Jeremy McQuoid**, Teaching Pastor, Deeside Christian Fellowship  
Church, Aberdeen, Scotland

# Reforming Joy

## **Other Crossway Books by Tim Chester**

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*Good News to the Poor: Social Involvement and the Gospel*

*A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission around the Table*

*Total Church: A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community* (coauthored with Steve Timmis)

*Why the Reformation Still Matters* (coauthored with Michael Reeves)

*You Can Change: God's Transforming Power for Our Sinful Behavior and Negative Emotions*

# Reforming Joy

*A Conversation between Paul, the  
Reformers, and the Church Today*

Tim Chester

*Reforming Joy: A Conversation between Paul, the Reformers, and the Church Today*

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## Introduction

# LET'S TALK ABOUT JOY

This book is a three-way conversation. We'll start in sixteenth-century Europe with the Reformation. We'll travel back to first-century Galatia and the foundations of the Reformation in the message of Paul. And then we'll come home and explore their relevance in the twenty-first century.

It's going to be a conversation about joy.

Suppose someone asked you what it feels like being a Christian—not what you *do* or what you *believe* but what you *feel* as a Christian. Would you say, “It’s a life of joy”? In Galatians 4:15, Paul asks, “Where is that joyful and grateful spirit you felt then?” (NLT). When Paul first knew the Galatians, they were full of joy. But now their joy has gone. Maybe when you first became a Christian, you were full of excitement. You couldn’t quite believe your sins were forgiven; you were part of God’s family; you had confidence for the future. But now your joy has gone. It all feels routine. Now you speak of duty, responsibility, obligation. You speak of getting on with it or knuckling down. All good stuff, but it’s not animated by joy. So the Christian life feels like hard work. Or maybe you look with suspicion on those excitable Christians.

The cheesy smiles. The unremitting enthusiasm. The hearts on sleeves. You've grown cynical and detached.

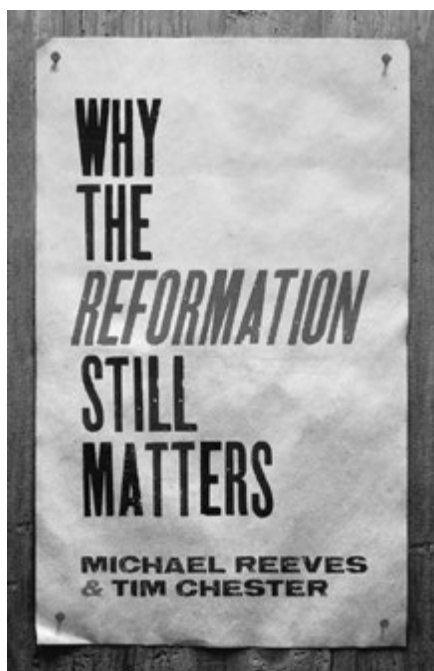
This letter of Galatians was written to Christians who had lost their joy. False teachers had turned up saying something like this: "It's great that you've been saved by faith in Jesus. But the real mark of God's people is keeping God's law. That's what will keep you on track." It sounds very plausible. But the result is lost joy. Stolen joy. It's a message that "pretends to be the Good News," says Paul, "but is not the Good News at all" (Gal. 1:6–7, NLT). So Paul brings the Galatians back to two fountains of joy: faith in Christ and life in the Spirit.

It was these same issues that fueled the Reformation. The year 2017 marks the five hundredth anniversary of one of the key moments that launched the Reformation: the nailing of the "Ninety-Five Theses" to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, by Martin Luther. The letter to the Galatians was one of the driving forces of Luther's rediscovery of gospel joy. In his early life he had been an Augustinian monk. In 1512, when he was twenty-nine years old, he was sent to teach at the new university at Wittenberg. So Luther began to lecture on the Psalms, Romans, and Galatians. It was through immersing himself in these books that he came to realize that the message of the medieval Catholic Church didn't match the message of the Bible. What he heard from the church brought condemnation. In contrast, what he heard from the Scriptures was good news. The Reformation was a rediscovery of joy.

I hope this conversation will give you a better understanding of the Reformation and its roots in the message of the New Testament. But above all, my prayer is that, together, we'll rediscover and be reformed by joy.

Think of this book as a time machine. Hop on board, and to start, we'll set the dial for October 31, 1517, in the town of Wittenberg . . .

Also Available from Tim Chester



This accessible introduction to the Protestant Reformation answers eleven key questions raised by the Reformers, arguing that the Reformation remains vitally important for the church and is still relevant to our lives today.

For more information, visit [crossway.org](http://crossway.org).

## HAVE YOU LOST YOUR JOY?

Do you feel like you have to prove yourself? Does your Christian life feel routine and performance oriented, driven by duty and obligation?

The letter of Galatians was written to Christians who had lost their joy—confronted with false messages about rules and regulations they needed to follow. Similar false messages provoked the start of the Protestant Reformation, and have continued to threaten the joy of Christians ever since. Exploring how the sixteenth-century Reformation was a return to the gospel joy originally preached to first-century Galatia, this book was written to help today's Christians rediscover the path to true freedom and lasting joy in Jesus.

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**TIM CHESTER** (PhD, University of Wales) is a faculty member of Crosslands and a pastor with Grace Church, Boroughbridge, North Yorkshire. He is the author or coauthor of over thirty books, including *Total Church*; *A Meal with Jesus*; and *Why the Reformation Still Matters*.

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