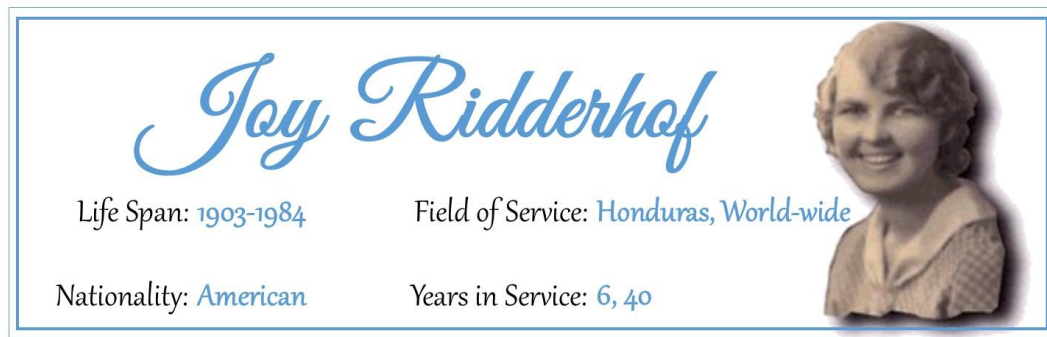


# Her Story Silhouette by Shari House

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## Silhouette:

Joy Ridderhof went to Columbia Bible College at the age of 20. While there she learned two important truths that would stay with her for the rest of her life. (1) To worry was a sin. (2) Rejoicing was always God's will no matter what.

At the age of 27 Joy went to Honduras as a missionary. While there many villagers came to know Christ through her faithful witness. As with most missionaries she had planned to spend her life there, but God had other plans. While on the field her body was battered from bouts of flu, malaria, and small pox. After six short years, during one particular time of illness, she came back to the States in hopes that she might have a quicker recovery. When the illness would not go away, she realized she would not be able to return. In her own words, "I returned from Honduras ill in body, disqualified for future missionary service and without financial support. It was a dark picture indeed...Then God's Word spoke to my heart, 'Rejoice, Joy, Rejoice'...And I answered, 'Lord, I will believe...'" Confined to her bed, Joy still desired to encourage those she had left behind. Wanting desperately to communicate with her converts but knowing that many of them could not read, she thought to herself, "If only I could have left my voice behind to repeat the verses again and again."

With that thought, the Lord called her to a new ministry. In 1938 at the age of 35, she made her first recording of the Gospel in Spanish on a record that used the thin box it was sent in as the player. Soon requests began coming in from missionaries in other countries for recordings in their native languages. Two women, Ann Sherwood and Sanna Barlow, joined her in her endeavor, and by 1941 Gospel Recordings had been well established as they told and retold the Gospel story of salvation. Eventually Joy was able to leave her sick bed and began traveling all over the world "catching" the voices of native speakers telling the Gospel story.



Over the next 40 years she remained faithful to God's calling ever pushing the bounds of technology to reach more and more people groups who had no written language and had never heard the Gospel. Joy's intense desire to be used by God to see that everyone in the world had a chance to hear the Gospel and her unwillingness

to believe that that feat was impossible can be seen by her statement, "The need of those lost millions breaks my heart, but we don't have to stand and weep, but believe that God has put in our hand that which when blessed and used by Him can 'thresh the mountains and beat them small...' For what period of history is God referring to when He speaks of the great things He will accomplish in the earth? If it is not for now, for when is it?"



Her tenacity, to go where the Gospel had never been, served to spur other missionaries to reach out to unreached tribes. To her testament Dr. George Cowan of Wycliffe said, "It was Joy, specifically Joy who coming back from her trip to the Philippines, challenged us--the Wycliffe Bible Translators--to go to the Pacific part of the world." Another report tells of a missionary couple in Africa who were assigned to go to an unreached tribe in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso). When they arrived they were amazed to find that this "unevangelized" tribe already knew about Jesus. Fifteen years before, they had been given the recordings in their native tongue. The people had memorized all the stories they had listened to and had known about the way of salvation for years before any missionary arrived.

By the time Joy died in 1984 at the age of 81 Gospel Recordings had records in over 4,000 languages. They currently have over 60 recordists and 30 distribution centers around the world with over 150 workers. To date Gospel Recordings has enabled nearly 6,000 ethnic groups to be reached with the Gospel of Christ, and it all began with one lady's desire to serve the Lord and save the lost. She is a true example of a lady of whom it can be said, "**She hath done what she could**"!

## *Her Story/My Story:*

Joy felt sure God's plan for her was to go into missions, but upon completion of her college course, He had not opened any doors for the mission field. While serving in a ministry in Miami, she received the shocking news that her mother had passed away. As all of her other sisters were married, she felt God's plan was clear for her to return home to care for her widowed father. Upon arriving home she discovered that an old beau of hers, Francis, had not yet married either and was still interested in her. He began paying her visits, and on one particular visit, he spoke to her about marriage. Whatever exchange happened between the two, Francis left thinking Joy was refusing him, and Joy was left not understanding that he wanted to marry her or, at the very least, not being sure he meant it. She decided that she did love him and wanted to marry him, and that she would tell him the next time he brought it up. A short time later they both attended a Christian camp, and Joy anxiously waited for Francis to approach her. To her dismay he spent the entire weekend avoiding her and keeping company with another girl. She was devastated and confused. Around the same time her father announced that he was remarrying. Reeling from the shock, Joy found that what she thought had been God's plan for her life, being a wife to Francis and a nursemaid to her father, was not His plan at all.

I don't know about you, but I am a planner. I live by the creed, "Plan your work and work your plan." Being able to plan and break things down into bite-sized pieces has served me well in my years of ministry. I remember one particular banquet where we had everything planned to the "nth" degree and some of our college girls were helping me set everything up. I can't remember the exact details, but something wasn't working, and at the last minute, I had to make some changes on the spot and started dictating orders for this girl to do this and that one to switch that. One of the girls said to me, "How can you do that?" I said, "Do what?" She said, "Have to change everything without a moment's notice and not be freaking out?" My response was that I'm a problem solver. I look at a situation, consider the tools and resources I have available to me, determine what the best possible outcome is with what is available, and then plan the steps that need to happen to get me from point A to point B. Although this trait works great for most instances, I have found it has not been of service to me in my personal life.

I have been guilty of this thought more than I care to admit, "If such and such is in fact God's will, then surely this, this, and this is what He will do to accomplish His plan." More often than not, my plan includes steps that are good things and easy ways to accomplish the plan. In reality God's steps often include hardship, frustration, and sometimes even disappointment to accomplish the plan. These changes in the steps can make it seem sometimes like God is changing the "Game Plan." Like most people, I don't do well with change. When change is in the air I feel insecure and apprehensive, and it is easy to begin worrying. To illustrate this point, here is a journal entry from quite a few years ago when I was home on furlough, between ministries, and was under the impression that God was directing me to possibly marry someone I had met and had had some correspondence with. A few weeks before I was to return to the field I found out he had proposed to someone else.

*"Lord, I can't believe I have to go back to the field without a job, a husband to be, or a plan. It seems as though all is lost. Lord, I know You have either planned this or at the least allowed it. Help me to accept my circumstances and find happiness in the joy of my salvation. Joy is never gone, but happiness seems to elude me right now.....Lord, I feel my world crumbling around me, although I know that it isn't because You are my world...."*

Sometimes I read my journal entries and have to shake my head at how "in the depths of despair" I can get. At that time it surely felt like God was changing the plan I thought He had laid out, but little did I know what He had right around the corner for me. In less than a month from that writing the Lord placed me in a ministry that for years brought me great fulfillment and joy beyond what I thought was possible as a single lady missionary.

## **Bible Study:** Game Plan Changes

You know, it is funny how we don't mind the drama in story books because we know the plot will clear up in the end, but when it comes to our own stories, we hate the drama and the feeling of being out of control. I try to remind myself that a book without twists is indeed boring and not one that will be a classic.

I have found that when a little drama or turmoil comes into my life, it is best not to worry and despair but to instead focus on four things the psalmist teaches us in Psalms 27:3-7.

vs. 3 - **"Trust in the LORD..."**

The word **"trust"** in this verse means **"to helplessly lay face down."** Have you ever tried to do anything while laying face down? It is quite difficult to do anything in this position with your face on the ground. At the first sign of worry we need to "lay face down" and silence our thoughts and plans on the matter.

vs. 4 - **"Delight thyself also in the LORD..."**

The word **"delight"** in this verse means **"being pliable or sensitive"** or **"being dependent upon God/deriving one's pleasure from Him."** In times of turmoil we need to find our security in Him before we find it elsewhere. This means getting alone with Him, reading His word, praying, etc. This takes time and the ability to still our thoughts. I'm afraid, more often than not, we seek instant gratification to calm us. How many of you have ever said, "I just need to talk to friend" or "I just need a hug from my husband" or "I just need a coke" and then I'll be able to make sense of the situation and deal with it."? God has given us many good things in our life like husbands, children, friends, food, shelter, etc., but it is not good when we run to them before we run to God to calm and still us and gain strength for the trial.

vs. 5 - **"Commit thy way unto the LORD..."**

The word **"commit"** in this verse means **"to roll something away."** I often think of the word "commit" as a forward action like "I commit to make something happen." But this idea of rolling something away leans more towards the action of letting go. When we begin to worry about something, we must commit it to the Lord and let it roll off of us and onto Him.

vs. 7 - **"Rest in the LORD..."** · The word **"rest"** in this verse means **"to be silent"** - the fourth and final step is to rest in the Lord. Even in music we know that a rest means to be silent. We need to hush our spirit and wait in holy patience for the Lord to reveal His will in the matter. I love the statement, "A silent tongue not only shows a wise head but a holy heart."

Since I like acronyms I thought a catchy statement might help me to remember these four steps the next time I found myself upset or beginning to worry. My first thought was that I could tell myself, **"The Deed Can Roll."** My next thought was, **"The Day Can Ride."** Having not yet come to grips completely with the fact that I was not going to be getting married to this man, I'm afraid my next thought was, **"The Dog Can Roast!"** Hahaha. I decided maybe I should just remember these four steps by their words - Trust, Delight, Commit, and Rest.

Next time you find yourself getting upset or worrying about something or feeling like God is changing the "Game Plan," just say to yourself, **"Trust, Delight, Commit, and Rest."**