

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT 2

Joy: Made Complete

“Joy is the serious business of heaven.”¹

The Bible contains over 200 verses on this critical topic. Christ affirms the importance of joy when, in the last moments before His betrayal, He was discussing with His disciples how to have His fullness of joy, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my

love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”² Do not make the mistake of thinking a joyless life as a follower of Christ is normal. It is not. Christians are called to joy; a full measure, all joy, or complete joy. This is part of our inheritance as followers of Jesus Christ and a sure fruit of His indwelling Spirit.

As with the other fruit that the Spirit gives us, this is not transient, like an emotion, happy feeling, or burst of exuberance that comes and goes. The joy the Bible is referring to over and over again is a Spirit-given expression and grace that is supernatural. This “joy” in the Greek is chara. Interestingly enough this word is derived from the Greek word for “grace” charis. In essence, “joy” or chara is produced by the “grace” or charis of God. God’s Spirit graces us with supernatural joy that the world can neither give nor take away, despite our circumstances. The first experience of this type of spiritual joy is at salvation.

In Matthew 13, Jesus tells a parable of a merchant who finds a fine pearl in a field and was so full of joy at the finding, that he sold all he had and bought the field. When the weight of sin comes off of us and Christ comes into our lives, the joy that we are filled with is inexpressible, but it doesn’t stop there. Our joy continues to grow as believers when we share our faith with others and when we serve Christ with others at our side. John and Paul’s joy was made complete when other believers were living for God. Joy is at its pinnacle when it is shared.

One of the deepest joys we can experience as believers is one we find in God Himself. We are filled with joy in his presence: “You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”³ We are filled with joy because we believe in who He is and love Him, “Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.”⁴ Our joy is in Him, through Him, and because of Him.

When our Savior died on the cross, the Bible states it was because of the joy set before him that he was able to endure it all. He hung there thinking about you and me, thinking about the eternal relationship that would be made possible by his death. He suffered, but was sustained by the supernatural joy God’s Spirit gave Him, knowing a day was coming when Satan would be permanently defeated and there would be no more tears or

Pre-Article Questions:

1. How would you rate your level of joy on a day to day basis on a scale of 1 (none) to 5 (full)?
2. Can you talk about a person in your life who is full of joy and how that person has impacted you?

1. Lewis, C.S. excerpt from Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer, by C.S. Lewis, (San Diego: Harvest, 1964), p. 92-93

2. John 15:9-11, NIV

3. Psalm 16:11, NIV

4.1 Peter 1:8, NIV

pain. When our circumstances and pain seem too great and overwhelm us, we cannot forget there is a day coming that will be an end to it all, One who will wipe away every tear, a place we were made for.

While we can have pure joy here on earth through the power of the Spirit, may we always hunger for more of the source, the well from which all joy comes: Jesus. A.W. Tozer writes, "What I am anxious to see in Christian believers is a beautiful paradox. I want to see in them the joy of finding God while at the same time they are blessedly pursuing Him. I want to see in them the great joy of having God yet always wanting Him."⁵

Matthew 13:44-46, NIV

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.

Luke 10:17-21, NIV

17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." 18 He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." 21 At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

Matthew 27:27-31, 39-44, NIV

27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. 28 They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. 30 They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. 31 After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.... 39 Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads 40 and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!" 41 In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. 42 "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the king of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" 44 In the same way the rebels who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

Study Questions:

1. Re-read Matthew 13:44-46, what do these two stories have in common? How do these two stories relate to our salvation in Jesus Christ? What do these stories teach us about joy?
2. In Luke 10:17-21, what does Jesus say our joy should be found in? Why do you think Jesus corrected the disciples?
3. In Luke 10:21 The Holy Spirit filled Jesus with joy and He praised God about how his Kingdom is revealed and works. What does this passage teach us about the relationship between joy and praise? (Thought: Joy produces praise when God reveals truth to our hearts and minds; people who are full of joy are quick to give God praise and glory when it is due).
4. Read Hebrews 12:1-2, Jesus despised the shame he felt on the cross, but was able to endure the shame and pain for the joy set before Him in us, in our Matthew 27 passage, discussing all the moments in these verses he must have felt shame. What does this passage teach us about the power of finding our joy in Christ?
5. After reading the Hebrews 12:1-2 passage, how does Jesus' moments before the cross and death on the cross impact your thinking and understanding of fullness of joy and its power? How does it impact your heart knowing he was thinking of you?
6. How has finding Jesus Christ, our greatest treasure and pearl, made a difference in your life and level of joy?
7. How do our choices affect the growth of this fruit in our lives? What role does the Holy Spirit play in the growth of this fruit?
8. In what areas of your life would you like to see more joy manifested? How can our small group help?
9. If Christians are more full of joy, how will this impact our world, specifically non-Christians?

Prayer Partner Assignment:

Meet with a brother or sister from your small group this week to pursue the Lord together and deepen your relationship as brothers or sisters in Christ.

Memorize Hebrews 12:1-2

1. Read 1 Peter 1:8, What about Jesus fills you with joy and causes you to love Him more? Re-Read Matthew 13:44-46, what have you "sold" or "let go of" since becoming a follower of Jesus Christ that was difficult but worth it for the joy of knowing Him?
2. How do these scriptures on God's love impact you? How does 1 John 4 says about our love as His followers challenge you?
3. Discuss how important you think having joy is as a believer and how it makes a difference in our relationship with God and others and day to day routines. Discuss some areas in your life you would like to joy increase in.