

SPIRITUAL GROWTH REVIEW

The Fruit of the Spirit Is...



THE SECRETS OF BEING FRUITFUL

Memory Verse for this week: *"For the joy set before Him He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."* Hebrews 12:2b-3

1. Read **Proverbs 10:28**. What is a good definition of joy? Where does it come from and how do we get it? *Joy is an emotion of elation or well-being derived from the knowledge that God is in control, that He is good, that the outcome is certain and that we are loved. Our source of joy is the goodness and mercy of God, which He has lavishly poured out upon us through the cross.*
2. Where does the world find joy? Is it truly joy according to our definition? How is the world's joy different from biblical joy? *There certainly are people who are happy but may not have joy. Many people find happiness in success, relationships, pleasure, money, fame, or other means, but ultimately these things only bring temporary happiness because they themselves are temporary. Joy is eternal. It is available even when we are not happy.*
3. How is joy different than happiness? *Happiness is temporary, but joy is eternal. Happiness is conditional and is based upon our circumstances in the present. Our joy is established in what God has done for us in the past. Joy never wavers, but happiness may come and go.*
4. Look at **James 1:2-4**. Is joy a choice or not? *Many people would say that joy is a choice to embrace the truth of the gospel. If we abide in the Spirit and rest in God's peace, however, joy will be the natural response of a grateful believer. Joy comes when our hearts are in the right place. We can choose to reject the lies and we can choose to embrace the truth, but joy comes as the outflow of a heart that understands Who God is and what He has done.*
5. Do you know someone who bubbles over with joy all of the time? Is their constant smile fake or is it really possible? *People who overflow with joy can be such a blessing and can lift us up when we feel burdened or oppressed. Joy is always available when our spirit is in the right place. In reality, even bubbly people can experience sadness or depression, but it is possible to have a habit of overflowing with joy because we always have something to be joyful about!*
6. "Joy is certain about the future." How can anyone be certain about what will happen in the future. Is this some sort of empty optimism? *There is a lot that we don't know about the future, but God has revealed some aspects of the future to us. The victory has been won! We may feel like the world is falling apart around us, but we don't need to worry about the future because God is already there, He is always in control, and He is good. He promises to take care of us and to bring us safely home into His presence (2 Tim. 4:18; Rom. 8:38-39). Consider **Revelation 21:1-4**.*
7. Read **1 Peter 1:6-9**. What is the key to finding joy in the midst of difficult circumstances? Can you think of any examples of people who had joy despite challenging trials? *In theory,*

having joy regardless of our circumstances makes sense in light of what we read in scripture. In reality, however, it's really hard to keep our hearts joyful when we are hurting, fearful, frustrated, or angry. The testimonies of others help us to realize that joy in our struggles is possible and it is also the appropriate response of someone who's heart is aligned with the Spirit of God.

8. How does a lack of joy typically affect our spirit? How might it manifest in our daily life? *If we do not embrace joy (because it is always available), we might become depressed; we might doubt our faith; we can become discouraged; we may give up on the work that God is doing in our lives. Being without joy can kill our spiritual growth and hinders our faith in God. Without biblical joy, we are literally without hope.*
9. Consider **Philippians 4:4**. Should a Christian be joyful all of the time? Is this realistic? *A Christian can be joyful all of the time because joy is not based upon our circumstances. Of course, a Christian may be sad or angry, but this conditional emotion does not mean that joy is not present in their life. Joy is rooted in our hope which never changes. Happiness will change with circumstance.*
10. Read **Romans 15:13**. Why is it so important for Christians to have a habit of overflowing with joy? *We are to be characterized by joy because we are testifying to the work of God in our lives. Our lives are to make God attractive to the world. If we don't have joy, then why would anyone want to worship the God we serve? Our joy is what people thirst for in their own lives, and it is what brings fulfillment in our own. Joy is peculiar because it stands in contrast to the response that we might expect.*
11. Do you find it difficult or easy to find joy in your life? What helpful practices do you exercise to refocus your spirit on joy? *Helpful practices might include taking time to thank God for His blessings. Having an attitude of gratitude. Reminding ourselves of what God has done for us through Christ. Reflecting upon what God has done through our lives. Sharing our testimony of God's faithfulness with others. Reading scriptures on the topic of joy.*
12. Are we able to pass on the joy that we have to others? How do we do this? *We can model joy to those around us, making people hunger for joy. We can tell them where our joy comes from and point them to God. Joy comes from believing the Good News. When we pass on the story of the gospel, we are offering people to embrace biblical joy. Ultimately, a person can only receive joy if they embrace the gospel for themselves.*
13. Read the memory verse for this week from **Hebrews 12:2b-3**. If our joy comes from the work that Jesus did on the cross, from where did Jesus receive His joy? *Because of His finished work on the cross, Jesus opened the door for a restored relationship with God. Knowing that we would have the opportunity to spend an eternity with Him, He counted us worthy of His own death and rejection by the Father. Amazing! His joy came from the same place; the hope of being together in a mutual, loving relationship for eternity.*
14. What do you need to change so that you live a life characterized by joy?

For this week: Take a look at your joy. Do people see you as a joyful person? Consider the insights from our discussion and make it your goal to overflow with joy to those around you. Reflect on God's love, and allow it to fill your heart with joy!