

Fruit of the Spirit – Joy

Read Galatians 5:22-23

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Leader's Note: The words "joy" and "rejoice" are used hundreds of times throughout the Bible, meaning there is no one definitive passage to help us understand the meaning of the word. Instead, we will look at a number of passages that highlight the unique characteristics of joy as a fruit of the Spirit.

I. Joy in the World

Icebreaker Question: Share a time where you experienced joy. What happened?

What is Joy?

According to Webster's Dictionary—(noun)

: a feeling of great happiness

: a source or cause of great happiness: something or someone that gives joy to someone

: success in doing, finding, or getting something

? How does Webster's definition of joy compare or contrast with how you typically think of joy?

Possible Answer: Joy is not merely material, but comes from relationships. Although we often think of feeling joy as including happiness, we think it includes more than that.

? Do you think there is a difference between happiness and joy? Why?

Possible Answers: Joy has a sense of permanence and internal sourcing vs. happiness which can seem external.

Check out the link below for a small group dance party, Pharrell Williams--"Happy":

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6Sxv-sUYtM>

II. Joy to the World, the Lord has Come! (Obedience)

Jesus demonstrated joy in circumstances that are quite different from what we typically think of as joyful.

Read Hebrews 12:1-3

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ² fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. 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. ³ Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

? What does this passage refer to when it says “for the joy set before him”?

Possible Answer: The cross was joyful to Jesus because He was being obedient to the Father, and because He was drawing in new believers.

Now we'll see how we can follow in Jesus' example.

Read James 1:2-4

² Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³ because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. ⁴ Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

? How do we receive joy from hardship?

Possible Answer: Joy comes from our obedience to God, and showing faith in difficult times helps to strengthen our relationship and obedience.

? How does this differ from the secular definitions of joy?

Possible Answer: The secular definition limits joy to feelings of happiness, and happiness is a temporary emotion. The Bible's definition shows that happiness can accompany joy, but that it's more rooted in our eternal relationship with God and the grace he has shown.

III. Joy with the World (Relationship)

Let's look at some other passages relating to joy in the New Testament.

Read the following passages:

Luke 15:7

I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

John 15:10-11

¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

John 15:23-24

²³ In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

? What do these passages teach about joy?

Possible Answers: It is based on relationship and obedience. Both elements are critically important for joy, both for the one giving commands and for the one who is obeying them.

? Think about a situation in your life where you struggle to have joy. Why do you think this is?

? How could the walking with the Spirit lead to increased joy in your life?

? What is the community application of this passage?

Leader's Note: You may choose to create your own application question as a group based on your discussion, or highlight a question from this study.