

Joy

Fruit of the Spirit--part 2

April 12, 2015

*Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*

DAY 1: Joy vs. happiness'

1. Ask almost anyone what joy is and you will get one of two responses. Either you will get an answer that resembles what we call happiness or you will get a puzzled look.
2. Paul says in Galatians 5 that there is a kind of joy that will never happen unless the Holy Spirit grows it in you.
3. Most people assume joy is the same as happiness. Human happiness involves the following:
 - a. Something in this life goes as we want, and we like it.
 - b. Someone loves us, pays attention to us, etc., and we feel better.
 - c. We feel the way we want to feel.
 - d. How we define happiness is **how** happiness happens. In other words, we are not happy unless we become happy in the manner we want to become happy.
4. What differences do you see between human happiness and the joy only God can give?

*James 1:2 **Count it all joy**, my brethren, when you meet various trials,
³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*

⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

5. Why do you think James associates joy with trials?
6. This kind of joy is not a feeling. It is a settled inner assurance that enables us to persevere well through trials and pain.
7. Does the joy God offers come more as the solution to a problem, better feelings, or the assurance we need in order to endure well through a trial?

DAY 2: Joy and feelings?

*James 1:2 **Count it all joy**, my brethren, when you meet various trials,*

³*for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.*

⁴*And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*

1. When we define joy by relief from problems or the end of suffering, we will miss out on the deepest joy God offers us. Instead of seeing God **at work through our trials**, we will imagine that God has abandoned us, probably because we have done something wrong. Instead of joy we will experience discouragement or worse! What strikes you about this?

2. If "joy" is defined by good feelings, we will wonder "What's wrong with me? How come others have joy and I don't?" Have you wondered this? What conclusions did you draw about God, yourself, or joy?

3. Perhaps God is building faith and a godly perspective that gives us reason(s) to go on in spite of trials. How does this square with what James says?

Romans 5:3 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

⁴*and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,*

⁵*and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.*

4. What concepts are similar in Romans 5:3-5 and James 1:2-4?

5. What does Paul add in this Romans passage that James does not mention?

6. How does hope give us joy?

DAY 3: How we torpedo our own joy

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⁵ and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.

1. Our human nature is fallen. One way of seeing it is in this issue of joy.

2. Instead of finding our joy in God, we demand counterfeit joys. We demand:
 - a. A satisfaction that life work well, like we want.
 - b. That our problems get fixed.
 - c. That our discouraging feelings be replaced with pleasant feelings.

3. We refuse to recognize how God uses our trials to draw us to Himself as our primary relationship and primary source of joy. Instead of pursuing God we're in a mad scramble, running away from Him to anything we consider a quick fix or change of feelings.

4. This is where Romans 5:3-5 and trials come in. They play a vital, NECESSARY and UNAVOIDABLE role in our Christian lives!

5. How are trials a gateway to discover afresh, experience and enjoy the love of God?

6. Paul outlines four important things God is doing through our trials. Next to each of them, jot down what strikes you about each one:
 - a. Endurance-

 - b. Character-

 - c. Hope-

 - d. God's love poured into your heart-

7. Have you had any shift in how you think about trials and what God is doing through them?

DAY 4: Where is joy found?

Matthew 6:33 ...but seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be yours as well.

1. When most Christians think about finding joy in their relationship with God, they mean something like having a great time over a cup of coffee with a friend. The "relationship" has these elements: one-on-one, centered around me and how I'm doing, how I'm feeling, pleasant feelings, and then I go back into "real" life.

2. But the joy God wants to give us isn't only found in brief minutes spent with God before we go off to work.

3. God implanted longings in our soul that are deep within us. Though we have "covered them up" pursuing lesser desires the deepest longings remain. It is the pursuit of these deeper longings where joy is found! What are they? Below, jot down how we might find joy next to each one:

a. Knowing you are a part of God's eternal plan-

b. Being engaged in furthering His kingdom in the people around you, or in some cases in people halfway around the world-

c. Having the opportunity to bring pleasure to the heart of God today-

d. Relating to others today in ways that represent how Jesus would relate to them. Giving people a taste of joy, your delight in them, loving them, the sharing of your real life with them, etc. -

e. Stepping out in faith by taking the initiative with people, sharing a little piece of your faith story as God gives opportunity, serving someone, being a blessing, etc.-

4. Though God meets us in the morning as we read the bible and pray, joy comes as we engage with the mission He gives us, and as we engage with the people He has put around us. Joy is found in the adventure of stepping out as His representative, engaged in His kingdom! What's your biggest take away from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Finding joy in strange places

1. If we don't seek God as our central joy, joy will always remain elusive.

Psalms 34:8 Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

2. But joy is, except on rare occasions in not the feelings of joy!

3. The psalmist tells us to take a "taste" of the Lord. What's the difference between expecting a taste and expecting to eat a banquet?

4. God does not offer the banquet of the joy of His full presence until heaven, but He does offer tastes now. What are some purposes of getting only a taste now?

5. God gives us just enough of the feelings of joy in order to keep seeking Him!

Jeremiah 29:13 ... you will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart.

6. Underneath each of the following verses jot down how we can experience joy.

*Psalm 4:7 You have filled my heart with greater joy **than** when their grain and wine abound.*

Psalm 5:11 Let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you.

*Psalm 16:11 You have made known to me **the path of life**; you will fill me with joy in **your presence**, with **eternal pleasures** at your right hand.*

7. We err when we inadvertently live with the priority of making our life as "good" as we can make it and making feeling better a high priority. Put a check next to higher priority items:

___ Joy is sometimes the anticipation of greater blessing or closeness.

___ Joy is more a settled assurance that God has me on the right path toward joy.

___ Joy is more discovered through trials as I connect with God deeper and reflect Him well to others in spite of my trials.