



Bible Study Guide



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Introduction

Fruit of the Spirit



Galatians 5:22-23

“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.”

There are not nine different fruits—it is a nine-part Fruit. The Fruit is like an orange; inside the orange, there are numerous slices. So, imagine that each slice of the orange is one of the aspects of the Fruit of the Spirit.

The Spirit-fueled development of Christ-like character is liberating because it brings us closer to being the people we were designed to be, the people our Spirit-renewed hearts want us to be. – Tim Keller

The original word for “fruit” in Galatians 5 is karpos, and one definition means "a result of something." So when the Fruit of the Spirit is displayed in our lives, it is a sign, or result, that the Spirit of God is leading us. Just like the branches of a grapevine have to be connected to the vine to bear grapes, the Fruit of the Spirit is evidence of being connected to Christ.

Why was the Fruit of the Spirit mentioned? Due to the five verses preceding it. They mention sinful acts, including sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, hatred, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, and drunkenness. We have this thing called the flesh, and it is all of our human desires. It is weak. Our flesh wants things that prevent God's Holy Spirit from leading us entirely. Galatians 5:17 says, "the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh." Bottom line: you can be led by the flesh, or you can be led by the Spirit of God, but you can't be led by both—they are in constant conflict.

The most beautiful part of the passage in verse 23 is that we are told there is "no law against them." In fact, it would be accurate to say that we can exhibit the Fruit without any limits or restrictions. We can never show too much love, joy, peace,



patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Indeed, that's a goal to strive for!

As we grow in our understanding, of the “Fruit of the Spirit,” we’ll recognize how the Fruit is manifested in our lives and in the lives of others as well.

So today, we focus on Joy.

Defining Joy

A. What is Joy ?

Joy is a deep and enduring state of our soul that no circumstance, event, or human can steal away from us. It's delighting in God and choosing to rejoice in all things. Because our circumstances don't rule us, our mood swings are nonexistent. It doesn't mean we are always in a "good mood," but we can remain in an unexplainable place of contentment. Joyful people won't allow sorrow, misery, sadness, or despair to rule their thoughts or direct their actions.

B. Review - Five qualities of Joy

1. Joy is constant - When people tune in to the feeling of joy, what often emerges is an awareness that this joy is somehow always with us. Joy is quietly, invisibly ever-present. It is not “out there,” and it is not “in here”; rather, it is simply everywhere we are. Joy feels somehow beyond space and time. Joy does not come and go; what comes and goes is our awareness of joy. Ironically, we often feel the presence of joy the most when we stop chasing pleasure and we stop trying to satisfy our ego.

2. Joy inspires - Upon discovering this joy, many people experience a greater sense of creativity that rushes through them. Your ego may get the byline, but really joy is the author. Joy is the doer. Joy is the thinker. Joy is the creative principle.

3. Joy is often unreasonable - We can describe joy as “unreasonable happiness” because it doesn't seem to need a reason. It is a happiness that is based on nothing. In other words, it doesn't need a cause or an effect in order to exist. Certainly good things, favorable circumstances, and a happy state of mind can make you more receptive to joy; but joy still exists even when you are not receptive to it. Joy needs no reason. And this is why we can be surprised by joy even in the most ordinary moments.

4. Joy is untroubled - Unlike pleasure and satisfaction, joy does not have an opposite. It does not swing up and down, as our moods do. And it does not wrestle with positives and negatives, as our mind does. Joy does, however, have a twin. If pleasure's twin is

5. Joy is enough - Many people describe a sense of emptiness and a "fall from grace" that follows an encounter with great pleasure and satisfaction. This is not the case with joy, however. One of the most beautiful qualities of joy is the abiding sense of "enoughness." Unlike the ephemeral states of pleasure and satisfaction, joy does not induce a craving for more, because joy is enough. If ever we feel joy is missing, it is because we are absent-minded-caught up, probably, in some grief over a passing pleasure or preoccupied with a new object of des

II. Finding Joy in Scripture

A. The joy of the Lord is our strength

"Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

In the Old Testament, the context of the verse is that Ezra is reading the law to the people after they returned from being exiled for years. The hearing of the law produced sorrow in the hearts of the Israelites, for they realized how far they were removed from God's ways. Instead of rebuking them, Ezra encourages the Israelites to celebrate and to have a feast with rich foods and sweet drinks. Ezra finishes the verse by saying, don't be grieved, don't be sad, don't be discouraged, because the joy of the Lord is your strength. The joy of the Lord is the reason for their feast! This doesn't seem to make sense. So, what does it mean, and how does it work?

Do you remember the moment you gave your life to the Christ? When you were saved? At that very moment, you felt grief because you felt your sinfulness, and most probably, at the same time, you felt the joy of receiving salvation through Christ.

Receiving salvation is receiving the identity God sees in you and gives you.

That joy is an expression of God about who you are.

It is accepting the joyful songs the Lord sings over you (Zeph. 3:17)

In Luke 15, we read the story of the lost sheep. When the shepherd finds the sheep, he throws a party! That speaks to us about the Lord's joy when He reconnects with the Israelites, like He did in the time of Nehemiah, and how He does today with every person who comes to Him.

When we look at the Fruit of joy, we see this in the heart of God. We can become part of it through His Son Jesus, who empowers joy in us through the Holy Spirit.

B. The joy of Jesus filling us to overflowing when we are part of Him, His sacrifice.

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

John 15:11 NIV



The chapter begins with the well-known passage of the vine and the branches, which sets the basis of the verse. Joy is rooted in our relationship with the Father, Son, and Spirit, as their joy becomes our part.

We should recognize that Jesus spoke these words on the night before he was arrested to be crucified. He knew what would happen to Him in the coming hours, but still, He spoke to the disciples about His joy even at this moment of sorrow.

It has to do with what we read in Heb. 12:2 (NLT) ... Because of the joy

awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he has honor...seated beside God's throne.

Jesus' joy is derived from knowing that the price of dying would lead to the triumph of bringing sons and daughters into fellowship with the Father. That's joy!

Jesus asks us to have the same obedience to the Father that He has. We see this earlier in the chapter, where Jesus speaks about Him being the vine, and we are the branches. We are to remain in Him; meaning, in a relationship. These verses lead up to verse 10 of John 15, where we read,

"When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love."

Jesus told us all these things so that we would be filled with His joy.

Our joy is rooted in being in a relationship with the Father, through the Son, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

C. Living a life of goodness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit

"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,"

Romans 14:17 NIV

The Kingdom of God is based on His character. We see who He is in His Kingdom. In Acts 8:8, we read: "So there was great joy in that city." This happened because Philip preached the Gospel in Samaria, and the Holy Spirit confirmed his message by miracles, signs, and wonders (Mark 16:20). The result of this manifestation of the Kingdom was a great joy! The way we read this is

that there was celebration and happiness. But in the long run, we cannot keep up with that. We cannot be in a party state every day of our lives. When someone passes away, it makes us wonder about joy in such times of difficulty. To understand how this works, we need to see what joy is based on and what it looks like to be full of joy.

So, the Fruit of joy is based on who God is, the work of Jesus Christ, and is found in the Holy Spirit. God never changes, the work that Jesus did never changes, and the Holy Spirit never changes. That's a solid base for our joy!

What does joy look like? The Greek dictionary gives a good view of the word. It moves from cheerfulness, which is an outward expression of joy and happiness. We find these in moments of celebration. The other description is a calm delight that has to do with an inner state of mind. Even in the most challenging circumstances, we can experience joy as the Fruit of the Spirit. Remember that Jesus spoke about joy on the evening He was arrested.

D. Regarding your past

Paul had a lot of imperfections in his past. He was once an enemy of Christians, even to the point of killing them until Jesus revealed Himself to Paul on the road to Damascus. It was then that Paul converted to Christianity. The Paul we know planted much of the early church and wrote much of the New Testament. However, when he first converted, not everyone was convinced. Paul actually faced many opponents that constantly used his past to discredit his apostleship.

Had Paul focused on his past, he would have every reason to wallow in self-pity. Instead, he's able to move forward because he does not waste time focusing on something he cannot change.

In 1 Timothy 1:15-17, Paul explains it this way:

"The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen." (1 Timothy 1:15-17 ESV)

If we want freedom from our past, we can't focus on our past mistakes. Instead, we should focus on God's relentless mercy. Paul is not focused on his imperfection, but rather on God's perfect patience with him. We can look behind, but we won't find joy there. Or we can look up to the God who redeems and restores. This is where we will find true joy.

Being free from our past isn't acting like it never happened. It's not looking back on the situation with fond memories. Freedom from our past is to look back and still see God is with us, holding our hand through the darkness when at the time, it didn't feel like He was there. Maybe you're not there yet, and that's okay. Still, I know that regardless of how we feel today, or what we did yesterday, God was with us even in our darkest moments. How do I know this? Because we're still here today. You may have been through such dark seasons where you should have lost your life, or you should have lost your mind, but still, you're right here because God never let you go no matter how great the mistake, how harsh the rejection, or how dark the valley was. You are still

here because God was with you. If that is the only redeeming aspect you can think of today as it pertains to your past, that God was with you, then let me tell you this Beloved- that's all you need!

Four Ways and Thoughts to Mediate and Reflect On

A. Don't Take Life Too Seriously

I have fond memories of my brother playfully joking with my sisters and I around the house. It's memories like this that have stuck with me for a lifetime as a reminder to never take things too seriously. It's not that my brother wasn't empathetic to whatever we were dealing with; he was simply reminding us that, whatever the situation, it was temporary and could be passed even more quickly by being playful and less serious. When he passed out away. It was rough. But we still have joy from his life.

As we grow our relationship with God, our Heavenly Father, we can see All throughout the Bible, that we're reminded to find delight, even when we're facing hard times, God wants us to find joy amidst the suffering and seriousness.

Key Takeaways:

- Remember your situation is temporary, but God's goodness is everlasting
- God is a Father who wants us to have joy
- While we'll face hard times, God shows us that we can have joy amidst grief

B. Live with the Humor

Another fond memory I have is of my deceased sister posing for the camera on several occasions. My siblings and I had lots of humor with my sister, who everyone thought was the prettiest thing ever. Keep in mind that this was in the 70's-80s before posed selfies. Clearly my sister loved us so much that with her image, she would still make crazy faces and poses. But, her pose wasn't one of self-consciousness or perfection: it was one of silliness.

My beautiful sister captured with mischievous gleaned crossed eyes, shared that she found humor in an everyday moment. That photo has a timeless energy that keeps bringing the humor from that moment into each new decade that greets us.

That is God's invitation to us as well. He invites us to be joyful and find celebration whether it's a regular day playing with your kids on the floor, tension in the boardroom, or a personal letdown. While suffering is inevitable, it doesn't have to shut out the joy.

Key Takeaways:

- What is your favorite funny memory? Can you see God at work?
- How can you take the stress of today and flip it to something funny or silly?
- Is God calling you to turn on the praise music to worship through song or dance “ regardless of your perception on the quality of your voice or dance moves. God made you as you are; He's calling you to worship Him!

C. Never Grow Up

"You're never too old" is a sentiment I often hear from mom. She reminds me often to remember my that I'm always her child and to never tell myself that I'm too old for her. She reminds me of my inner child. It keeps me from continuing to grow. It's this inner child that we can remember to help us find joy and wonder. Kids have the best wonder, and we all still have an inner child. For some of us, it's buried deep but reachable. Allow yourself to be a child of God. See yourself as God's child and begin bringing that into your everyday life.

Once you let your inner child free, you may find yourself pursuing activities you once enjoyed as a child and flipping through the pages of a Bible with the same wonder that only children possess.

Key Takeaways:

- You're never too old
- You're a child of God
- Find your inner child

D. Be Extra

In a world so focused on seriousness, we've likely all been told at some point that we must grow up, to stop being silly, to be quieter, and that it's not a time for joy. Today, the description of all that can sometimes be captured in a negative connotation with the word, "extra." Perhaps you've felt shame for being "extra."

God invites us to be extra for Him. He invites us to share our delight, to sparkle, to shine, and to jump for joy!

In a world that is often shadowed by too much darkness, I invite you to listen to your Heavenly Father:

Get silly.

Get loud.

Get sunny.

Leap for joy because God is good. God loves you. He will never leave you.

He wants you to have joy.

And, for all of that, we give a RESOUNDING YES!

Key Takeaways:

- God gives immeasurably more and invites us to be immeasurably more in shouting His praises
- God didn't make you to be small; God created you for good works He prepared in advance
- Jump for joy for the goodness that God has created for us

Conclusion - Final Thoughts

Sometimes the opposition, failure, lack, weakness, hurt, suffering, detours, and disappointment that we face in life are not signs that we're doing something wrong, as we're commonly led to

believe. They are not signs that we need to stop or quit while we're ahead. Sometimes our suffering means we're doing life right! It's the very sign that we should keep going and keep fighting for our joy.

So many times we place unnecessary demands, pressure, and obligations on ourselves. We tell ourselves what we need and have to do. We run around frantically trying to keep all the pieces of our lives together, keeping balls in the air with the pressure on our shoulders to ensure everything doesn't fall or fall apart. This pressure does not come from God. Free yourself with this truth: Do your best, and let God do the rest. Do your part, but don't forget God is faithful to do His. Paul didn't just think this was true, and he didn't simply hope this was true. He was sure of it. Are you?

We all have this idea of what we think will make us happy, and we're tempted to spend our entire lives working toward that happiness. But true joy is not found in seeking happiness. True joy is found in seeking God.

Many times, it's our trying to make ourselves happy that's stealing our joy, harming our relationships, and getting us off focus. We don't need to find joy when joy has already found us. A selfishly ambitious life will not lead to joy: a life spent seeking the One who gives joy- will!

Activity - If these object were alive, why would they have joy; Moses staff,
Jesus' Manger, Ark

Joy in Scriptures

Galatians 5:22-23

Nehemiah 8:10

Hebrew 12:2

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

2 Corinthian 4:18

Psalms 23:6

Psalms 126:3

Psalms 30:11-12

Psalms 118:24

Romans 8:6

Romans 14:17

Philippians 4:4

John 15:11

1 Thessalonians 5:17-18

Psalms 126:2

Ephesians 2:10

Ephesians 5:1-2

John 1:12

Romans 8:16

Zephaniah 3:17



Bibliography

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Eyes Wide Shut

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