



Fruit of the Spirit: Joy

Greet:

- Spend a minute getting a 30-60 second update from each student on what they are doing with their time, how they are feeling, etc. Within reason, be strict with the 30-60 seconds!
- Set proper expectations of how the group needs to operate so everyone can have a chance to talk and to not talk over each other.
- Ask someone to pray as y'all begin.

Opening Question/Thoughts:

- Ask your small group: what are the things that make you most happy in life? Make a list of your group's answers.

Happiness and joy can oftentimes feel like the same thing. But we want to make a distinction between these things.

- **Happiness = good feelings/emotions from circumstances or pleasures.** (ex. Watching your favorite movie, your team winning, eating your favorite food, someone complimenting you, etc.)
- Ask: what are the kind of things that take your happiness away?
- Is it easy or difficult for you to lose your happiness? Why do you think that is?

So is there a difference between happiness and joy? Is joy just happiness on steroids, like when we are really, really happy? Or is it something bigger than just extreme happiness? What is joy?

Let's look back at the Galatians 5 from last week about the fruit of the Spirit. Joy is the second thing Paul lists as fruit and evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives:

*22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, **joy**, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control.*

The first thing we see is that the Holy Spirit produces joy. It is not something that comes from our circumstances or by following some set of rules. Remember, following Jesus and walking by the Spirit is not about following rules. It is about new desires and a new heart that takes root in your life and changes the way you live.



Joy is something new that you do not have apart from the Spirit's presence in your life.

- **Joy = good feelings/emotions given by the Holy Spirit from God's work and word.** (salvation, His presence in our lives, His provision and gifts, etc.)

Joy is a feeling, but it is not a feeling that comes from circumstances or things we like. It is a spiritual feeling that comes from the Holy Spirit as we join in the Kingdom of God and join him on his mission.

- Have you ever experienced this kind of joy?
 - *Leaders: share a time that you have felt Joy from being a part of the Kingdom of God.*

Dive In:

After Jesus died and rose from the dead, the apostles started the church in Jerusalem. It was a time that they were filled with the Holy Spirit and joy was present in their lives even though they were being persecuted and having to give up their possessions to help other people. Let's read two stories that we see the believers being joyful.

Acts 2:42-47

42 All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper), and to prayer.

43 A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. **44** And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. **45** They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. **46** They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great **joy** and generosity—**47** all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved.



Acts 5:40-42

40 The others accepted his advice. They called in the apostles and had them flogged. Then they ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus, and they let them go.

41 The apostles left the high council **rejoicing** that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus. **42** And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: “Jesus is the Messiah.”

- What stands out from these two passages to you? Is there anything interesting about why these people can be joyful in times like this?
- **Observe:** make a list of some of the things people were doing or things that were happening to them that contributed to their joy.
 - Compare this list to the list you made at the beginning of group about what makes you happy.
 - Are there any similarities? What are the differences?
- The believers were joyful to give their possessions away. What does the idea of giving your stuff away to other people make you think and feel?
- After the apostles were flogged and whipped, they left joyful that God allowed them to suffer. What do you think about that? Is that weird to you that someone would be joyful despite getting beat up?

In both of these stories, the believers are joyful because they are caught in the middle of participating in God’s work and plan. Their circumstances did not matter at all in their ability to be joyful. They did not find safety, security, satisfaction, or fulfillment in this world.

One of the reasons most of us have never experienced this kind of joy or even struggle to understand what it is is because we are looking for this world to bring us fulfillment, satisfaction, and security. It might be able to sometimes, but overall the world cannot give us these things - which means our happiness will only be momentary and we will not have joy.



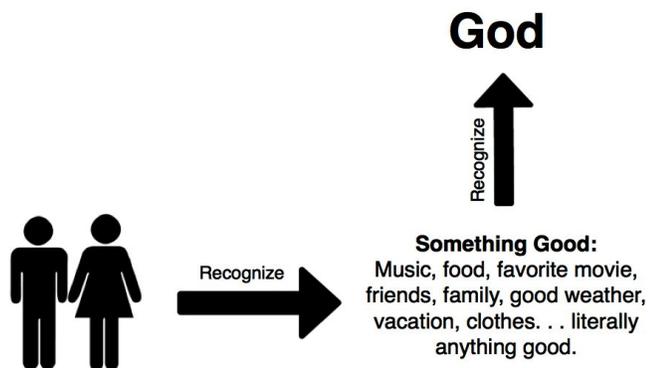
Apply:

The only way to have Biblical Joy is to fully say “yes” to God and fully say “no” to the world. He alone can bring you joy, which satisfies your soul no matter what else is going on. Everything good comes from God.

- How does this definition of joy change the way you think about yourself?
- How does this definition of joy change the way you think about God?
- What are the things that keep you from fully saying “yes” to God?
 - Does it seem silly to think that that thing is better than God himself?
- What does it look like for you to move away from that thing this week?
- Have you trusted Jesus to be your savior and experience the joy of salvation he brings?

Practice:

One of the ways we can cultivate a joyful spirit is by recognizing that good things come from God. We can call this a *double movement*. This is where you recognize something as good and then move to recognize that the good thing comes from God and thanking him for it.



- Challenge your group to record things they notice as good and then how they can thank God for them throughout the week.

Pray:

- Pray for God to expose your desires so that you can see them the way he sees them.
- Thank God that he can provide joy no matter what the circumstances are.
- Ask God to expose the things we try and find happiness in instead of Him.

