

Fruit of the Spirit - Joy

Small Group Guide: Joy -- Fruit of the Spirit Series

Overview

This week's sermon focused on joy as the second fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22. The central message is that joy is not the same as happiness, and unlike happiness, joy is a choice that comes from a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is sustained not by circumstances but by the Holy Spirit working on the inside of every believer.

Key Takeaways

- 1. Joy is a choice, not a feeling.** Happiness is based on happenings -- things that occur around us. Joy runs deeper. It remains steady even when circumstances are painful, disappointing, or uncertain.
- 2. The Holy Spirit is already inside you -- it just needs to be stirred up.** Every believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling within them. Sometimes that presence simply needs to be activated and allowed to work outwardly in visible ways.
- 3. You have complete joy in Christ.** John 15:11 reminds us that Jesus spoke so that his joy would be in us and our joy would be complete. Because of the finished work of the cross, nothing else needs to be added. Believers are complete in him.
- 4. Joy allows you to endure problems.** Hebrews 12:1-2 describes how Jesus endured the cross because of the joy set before him. In the same way, the joy of what God has promised on the other side of our trials gives us the strength to press through.
- 5. The joy of the Lord is your strength.** Nehemiah 8:10 makes it clear -- the strength to get through life does not come from our own ability or the people around us. It comes from the joy of the Lord himself.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

- On a scale of one to ten, how would you honestly rate your level of joy right now -- not happiness, but deep-down joy? What do you think is influencing that number?

Digging Deeper

1. The sermon drew a clear distinction between happiness and joy. In your own words, how would you explain that difference to someone who has never heard it before?
2. Think about a time in your life when you were going through something difficult but still managed to experience a sense of joy or peace that surprised even you. What do you think made that possible?
3. The illustration of the chocolate syrup and milk was used to describe how the Holy Spirit is already present inside every believer but sometimes needs to be stirred up. What are some things in your life -- habits, practices, relationships -- that tend to stir up the Holy Spirit in you? What are some things that seem to suppress it?
4. Hebrews 12:1-2 describes Jesus enduring the cross because of the joy set before him. The sermon challenged us to zoom out and see the bigger picture beyond our present circumstances. How difficult is it for you personally to do that when you are in the middle of a hard season? What helps you gain that wider perspective?
5. The sermon said, "The obstacle or the problem in front of you is not your destination." How does that statement challenge the way you typically respond to difficulties?
6. Nehemiah 8:10 says the joy of the Lord is our strength. What does it look like practically to draw strength from joy rather than from willpower, other people, or favorable circumstances?
7. The pastor shared that he has reached a point where he tries to choose joy regardless of what others say or do, because his trust is anchored in Jesus rather than in people. How does being people-centered rather than Jesus-centered affect our ability to maintain joy?

Practical Applications

This week, try one or more of the following:

- **Start a joy journal.** Each morning, write down one thing that reminds you of the joy set before you -- a promise from Scripture, a hope for the future, or evidence of God's faithfulness in the past. Let it anchor your day before circumstances have a chance to dictate your mood.
- **Identify your joy robbers.** Make a short list of the people, situations, or thought patterns that most consistently steal your joy. Pray specifically over each one and ask God to help you choose joy in those moments rather than react out of emotion.
- **Stir up the Holy Spirit intentionally.** Identify one spiritual practice -- worship, prayer, Scripture reading, community -- that consistently activates the Holy Spirit in your life. Commit to doing it daily this week, even if only for a few minutes.
- **Reframe one current struggle.** Take something you are walking through right now and write out what God might be doing on the other side of it. Practice zooming out. Ask yourself what the bigger picture might look like and how this trial could be part of a larger story God is writing.
- **Be the joy in someone else's room.** Think of one person in your life who might be struggling. Reach out to them this week not to fix anything, but simply to bring some encouragement and reflect the joy of the Lord to them.

Closing Reflection

Close your group time by reading Nehemiah 8:10 together, noting that the joy of the Lord is described as strength -- not comfort, not a feeling, but strength. Pray together as a group, asking God to stir up genuine, lasting joy in each person's life. Invite anyone who wants to share a specific area where they need that joy to speak up so the group can pray over them by name.

Coming Up Next Week

The series continues with the next fruit of the Spirit: **Peace**. Consider reading Galatians 5:16-23 again before next week and reflecting on what peace means in the context of a Spirit-led life.