

## The Fruit of the Spirit - JOY

The gifts are free, the fruit you have to grow. How do we increase the joy in our lives? We need to ask the Holy Spirit to help us grow the fruits in our lives.

### Joy through obedience

**John 15:10** *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. I have spoken these things to you so that **My joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.***

If we follow in God's way we will be the people that He designed us to be and joy will flow within us. We will be experiencing more joy than if we decided against Him.

But Jesus has not promised us a rose garden.

### John 16:20-22

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, **but your grief will be turned into joy.**" Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. "Therefore you too have grief now; **but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.***

We live in a fallen world. Jesus is not expecting us to be unreal within it. But He does expect us not to get stuck in cycles or spirals of negativity. Negativity should not become a habit pattern.

Sometimes we need to be delivered from a critical, bitter or angry spirit.

**Neh 8:10** Nehemiah said, *"Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to our Lord. Do not grieve, **for the joy of the Lord is your strength.**"*

Joy, happiness and pleasure can come from the world around us. There are things that God has given us to enjoy. However there is a joy from the Holy Spirit which keeps going when things get tough because our hope is in Him.

Joy from the Holy Spirit gives us a deep awareness of release into security. It comes through faith, as we give ourselves entirely over to the love of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Joy comes to us in the same measure in which the Holy Spirit has access to our lives.

Society, especially the media, teaches us that if you change your circumstances and look after your desires you will be happy and have joy. Go shopping - get new clothes and you will feel better, you will feel happy, 'shop until you drop', 'retail therapy' - these expressions are not related to the joy of the Lord. Loose weight and then you will feel confident and happy - get a bigger house - more influence at work. You will feel good about yourself, etc! This is far from the truth. As our material possessions and our living standards have increased over the last 25 years so have the number of suicides - especially amongst young people. More depression, people live on antidepressants more than ever. More marriages are failing. Mental illness, alcohol and drug abuse has increased.

**Luke 12:15** *"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."*

**Job 1:21** *Naked I came naked I shall depart*

### **JOY from Community**

**Deut 16:15** *"For seven days celebrate the Feast to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and **your joy** will be complete."*

We need to be careful that when we meet together, we celebrate and do not complain. We must deal with attitudes that tend to be negative rather than positive.

**Neh 12:43** *"And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing (thanksgiving) because God had given them **great joy**. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away."*

### **Maintain the 'attitude of gratitude'**

The 'joy robber' is always telling us what we do not have – we need to acknowledge what we **do** have. We need to give thanks – the 'attitude of gratitude' attracts the presence of God and then allows us to be filled with JOY. Some things work out in our lives some do not, we have the choice to see the glass as half empty or half full. So easy to be focussed on the rear view mirror.

### **Joy through generosity**

Joy is connected to generosity. The word BLESSED in the Bible basically means 'happy in life' – fulfilled in your soul – blessed in your Spirit; at peace in your circumstances and satisfaction in your Spirit. Compassion and generosity attract the blessing of God.

Joy is developed from within not controlled from without.

Obviously circumstances make it easier or harder to find this JOY but they should not control the end result.

**Psalm. 37:26** *"They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed"*

**Psalm. 112:5** *"Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice."*

**Prov 11:25** *"A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed".*

**Acts 20:35** *"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: '**It is more blessed to give than to receive.**'"*

We need to recognise there is more joy in giving than gaining. As we release an atmosphere of generosity JOY is released.

Too many of us live with a poverty mentality. We are controlled by the fear of our finances. The poverty atmosphere crushes JOY. You are never able to be satisfied with what you have today, as you always live in fear of what may happen tomorrow! Work may not honour you today, God honours those who honour HIM!

**Deut 8:18** “*But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers, as it is today.*”

**James 1:2** “*Consider it **pure joy**, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*”

This JOY is supernatural – it does not make sense, but it works. It has the power to break depression. Before we are overwhelmed with our circumstances and begin to drown: **IT IS TIME TO CLAIM ‘THE JOY’.**

### **Examples**

The Apostles flogged but rejoicing. **Acts 5:40-42** Paul and Silas in prison. **Acts 16:22-30**

**John 16:24** “*until now you have not asked for anything in my name. ask and you will receive, and your **joy** will be complete.*” When we ask for things in line with His will and we are given them our joy is increased. If you don't ask you don't get.

This is where our faith can hold us...whatever the circumstances, we can rejoice that we have salvation. This does not overrule the grieving of death, but it puts it in the right perspective of who we are, **CHILDREN OF THE ALMIGHTY GOD.**