

The Fruit of the Spirit: Joy

How would you define “joy”?

The word “joy” is used over 200 times through the bible in various forms but with similar meanings: rejoicing, happiness, gladness occurring, delight, cheerfulness, calm delight, greatly, be exceeding.

Trying to define the word may have been difficult, an easier question to think on is: how do you use the word ‘joy’? When do we like to pull out the word joy?

Here are some questions with scripture to help you to really put into words what Christian Joy looks like. It is important to take time to grapple with and understand what it means when we say a fruit of the Spirit is joy. Joy is commanded of us in multiple scriptures. How can you expect it and look for it in your life if you don’t know how to define it.

Use these selected scriptures to see who and what our ‘joy’ is to come from:

Psalm 4:7

Psalm 35:9

Psalm 112:1

Psalm 48:11

Isaiah 61:10

In these scriptures we find that joy is to be rooted in **who God** is. This includes and is not limited to: God as our source of joy but also the object, His own laws and statutes, His judgments, character, sovereignty, work in our lives. There are also various scriptures that recognize the blessings that he provides in our lives as a source of joy but they are meant to refer us back to the one who provided them.

Isaiah 61:10 is a great verse that highlights, our joy is to be **in the LORD** based on the assurance of our salvation. The work God has done.

With the correct perspective of where our joy is to come from the next important question to ask yourself is when are we to be experiencing joy?

As mentioned above joy is experienced in many blessings from the Lord: marriage, children, weddings, land, provision. Consider the announcement of two births: John the Baptist and Jesus, both were heralded with joy!

Use these scriptures to check your own understanding of when we are to be joyful.

1 Thessalonians 1:6

James 1:2

2 Corinthians 6:10

Joy is also described as a “calm happiness” through faith in God. As we stated above our joy is to be rooted in who God is and the work He has done. If we believe this to be true we also can believe to be true that our joy is not based on circumstances, worldly possessions, accomplishments, or even our own health and lives.

We are commanded to be always joyful, including the hardships as God disciplines and grows our faith.

It is helpful to keep in mind that joy is an internal and intense delight that will transcend all circumstances. Joy is not meant to be a false bright yellow smiley sticker that you always slap on. Consider Jesus, he even cried when he was sad over the death of his friend. The joy of a Christian is always present, and it enables you to regain your balance as you experience the highs and lows of daily life and emotions. It enables you to choose how you interpret what is happening around you.

Study these scriptures to see some practical ways that you can practice “choosing joy”. How and where can we experience joy to fill us?

Psalms 16

Romans 5:1-5

1 Peter 1: 8-9

Consider Psalm 16, this is a wonderful Psalm to use as a practical declaration in our own lives. We see that joy is present in the fellowship we experience with God. Verse 2 and 5 are the affirmation and choice that the Lord is the one who will provide joy. Verse 8 is the mindset and perspective that with the Lord before and beside you, “I will not be shaken”. And the concluding affirmation of these truths in verse 9 and 11.

Right fellowship with God will come about when we believe and proclaim Jesus as Lord in our lives. This is something we experience in our heart and mind.

Joy is the by product of the Holy Spirit living within us (hence our study on it as a fruit). If you are finding yourself wrestling or doubting this idea that you can have joy in all circumstances it is good to go back up the chain. Find the cause for your doubts. Have a heart check. Is there a struggle or doubt in the Father's completed work through Jesus Christ? Do you truly know Jesus for who he is? Do you believe he is sitting now at the right hand of God and has given you the gift of the Holy Spirit which he received from the Father?

Only with God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit in their rightful place will you experience the blessing of joy in your life. Otherwise we may start to find we have set or placed something/someone in the place that God belongs and as a result we may be struggling with the feeling of fleeting joy, a joy that is easily overcome and not lasting.

What wonderful promise and truth do we see in these scriptures, take special notes of verse 11.

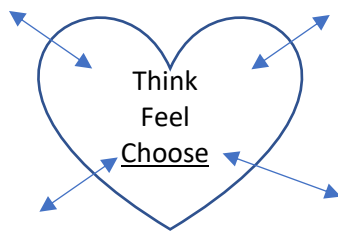
John 15:1-11

What a comfort to hear from our Saviors own lips that as a Christian we can experience not just joy but his joy! As we abide in Christ, he tells us that we will no longer be experiencing our own joy, but there is an intermingling of his joy into ours.

His Joy Will Be Full! This use of full is in the passive tense. We can be assured that the joy we have received is complete, it will always remain, it is enough and will never be changed. Here is a quote that I found helpful to visualize the promise Christ makes.

“The promise implies a state of heart which is never without sources of joy. Christians are subject to natural and more grief; but when the clouds obscure the light and make the atmosphere cold, the sun is, nevertheless, in the heavens.”

Another helpful illustration is that the truth of a Christians joy enables you to govern how you process and take in daily experiences. Our days are not without sadness all the way to happiness; the apostle Paul writes we are sorrowful yet always rejoicing. With the truth that Christs joy is full and complete within us we can **choose** to govern and protect ourselves from a sense of helpless despair. Consider Psalm 16 and the statements made.



Our heart experiences outside input but also has the ability to then **choose** the response which can be done based on truth.

With these truths in mind go back and think over how you like to use the word 'joy' in a sentence. Are there areas that some pruning and correction in thought and value may be needed.

The Meriam-Webster Dictionary defines joy as “the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires.

If this is what we have to count as our joy we can see why there are so many books written to help you find it. All the listed reasons for joy are fleeting and will not remain.

Take some time to use the provided tree diagram to write down what are some diseases that would hinder or harm the production of joy in a Christians life.

As you reflect on the scriptures and even spend time in extended study (I encourage you to do so as there are so many more 😊) Take time to assess how your fruit production of joy is looking?

1. Is my level of joy usually consistent, regardless of external circumstances?
2. Do people see the joy of the Lord displayed in my life?
3. What am I basing my joy off? Is it evident to those around me?

Remember we are studying the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5 and that at the beginning of the chapter we are told to keep in step with the Spirit! Put this into practice these upcoming weeks.

1. Check your perspective, acknowledge you have already received His Joy! Give thanks.
2. Walk in faith- keep in mind Hebrews 12. Many walked in faith, including Jesus who endured the cross for the joy set before him. We are called to walk forward with joy knowing we have received His Spirit and as a result His joy!. Practice looking with eyes of faith.
3. Identify any branches/disease/crowding in your tree that is limiting, competing, or harming the production of joy.

4. Confess (reference Becky's previous study: Week 8). Lay it all out before the Lord, receive the cleansing that God has offered. Abide in Jesus, confess and accept the pruning and cleaning that needs to be done and enjoy the new cleaned state of your mind and heart. Remember Psalm 16- CHOOSE

Song for thought: **It Is Well with My Soul**. Take time to look up the history of this hymn. It is a wonderful example of how a Christian can still choose Joy and state it is well in their soul amid upset and great grief.

Quote Source:

Exell, Joseph S. "Commentary on "John 15". The Biblical Illustrator. <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/tbi/john-15.html>. 1905-1909. New York