

Love, Joy, Peace

Connect Group Guide - 7.19.26

Opening Prayer

Key Scripture

- Galatians 5:22-23
- 1 John 4:8
- Romans 5:5
- John 13:35
- Hebrews 12:2

Message Recap

This message explores the first three expressions of the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, and peace. The Holy Spirit does not simply modify our behavior — He transforms our nature until the character of Jesus becomes visible in us. As we examine these three fruits, we will consider what it means to move from self-driven living to full surrender to the Holy Spirit.

Key Takeaways

1. The Holy Spirit Is a Person, Not a Power

- The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. He loves us, He can be grieved, and He desires a genuine relationship with us — not a transactional one. Our goal should shift from asking "How can I get more of the Spirit?" to "How much more can I give myself to Him?"

2. The Gifts Reveal What God Can Do Through You. The Fruit Reveals What God Has Done In You.

- Anyone can imitate a spiritual gift for a season. No one can manufacture genuine fruit without the Holy Spirit working from the inside out.

3. Love Is the Foundation

- The word Paul uses in Galatians 5 is agape — a love that chooses before it feels, gives expecting nothing back, and loves the unlovable. This is not natural. It is supernatural. It flows from the Holy Spirit living inside of us.

4. Joy Is Strength, Not Happiness

- Happiness depends on circumstances. Joy depends on Jesus. As Nehemiah 8:10 reminds us, the joy of the Lord is our strength. Joy is not the reward after victory — it is the strength that carries us into victory.

5. Peace Is Rest in the Middle of the Storm

- The peace Jesus gives is not the absence of storms. It is confidence that He is in control while the storm is still raging. When we stop trying to fly the plane ourselves and trust the One who sees the whole radar, peace becomes possible.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question:

6. When you hear the phrase "fruit of the Spirit," what has that meant to you in the past? Has your understanding of it changed or grown over time?

On the Holy Spirit as a Person:

7. The message drew a distinction between viewing the Holy Spirit as a power we need versus a person we can know. How has your own view of the Holy Spirit shaped the way you relate to Him?
8. Have you ever found yourself in a transactional relationship with God — connecting with Him primarily when you needed something? What does a more personal, surrendered relationship look like in your daily life?

On Love:

9. The message described agape love as love that "chooses before it feels." Think of someone in your life who is genuinely difficult to love. What would it look like to love that person with agape love this week?
10. The message used the image of squeezing a rock — you cannot get orange juice from something that does not contain it. What does this tell us about the importance of staying connected to the Holy Spirit when life puts pressure on us?

On Joy:

11. The message contrasted being a thermometer (reporting the temperature around you) with being a thermostat (setting the temperature in the room). Which one more accurately describes how you typically respond to difficult circumstances?

12. Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus endured the cross because of the joy set before Him. How does this reframe the way you think about enduring hard seasons in your own life?

On Peace:

13. The sermon described the peace of Jesus as confidence that He will get us to the other side, even if the journey is stormy. Is there a current situation in your life where you are struggling to trust the pilot? What would it look like to release control of that situation this week?
14. What is the difference between the counterfeit peace the world offers and the peace described in John 14:27?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

- **Practice Agape Love Intentionally.** Identify one person in your life who is difficult to love. Commit to one specific act of love toward that person this week — not because of how you feel, but as a choice rooted in the Holy Spirit inside of you.
- **Shift Your Language in Prayer.** Pay attention this week to whether your prayers are primarily requests for more of the Spirit's power or expressions of surrender and service to Him. Try beginning each day with a prayer of surrender rather than a list of requests.
- **Respond as a Thermostat, Not a Thermometer.** When a difficult moment arises this week — a conflict, bad news, frustration at work or at home — pause before reacting and ask the Holy Spirit to let His joy and peace set the temperature of your response.
- **Memorize One Anchor Verse.** Choose one of the following passages to memorize and return to throughout the week when circumstances threaten your peace or joy:
 - Nehemiah 8:10 — the joy of the Lord as your strength
 - John 14:27 — the peace Jesus gives that is unlike the world's peace
 - Galatians 5:22-23 — the full list of the fruit of the Spirit
- **Examine What Comes Out Under Pressure.** Reflect honestly on a recent moment when life squeezed you. What came out? Bring that observation to God in prayer and ask Him to fill those places more fully with His love, joy, and peace.

Prayer Requests & Closing

Leader Notes

- Be sensitive to different perspectives on Israel; focus on biblical teaching rather than politics
- Encourage participation from everyone, but don't force anyone to share
- If someone wants to give their life to Christ during discussion, be prepared to pray with them
- Keep the discussion focused on personal application, not just theological debate
- Consider inviting someone knowledgeable about Israel or Jewish culture to a future meeting