



Fruit of the Spirit



Lesson 2: JOY

INTRODUCTION

Non sequitur. That's Latin for "it doesn't follow (logically)." For instance, it's a non sequitur that a rich person would worry about affording her next meal. It's a non sequitur that an oil company executive would lobby against building more highways. It's a non sequitur for a Christian to be glum. That is arguably the strangest non sequitur of all.

Christians know they have escaped the searing temper of a perfect God. Christians know that the Son of God, who has forgiven their sins, is their brother. Christians know a loving and almighty Father directs their lives. How could there be room for brooding, sullen, or dour days?

Along with the Spirit's gift of faith in Jesus comes joy. In this lesson we'll remind ourselves why we have joy and how we live the Spirit's brand of joy in our lives.

STUDYING GOD'S WORD

Joy bookends Jesus' life. From the "good news of great joy" the Christmas angel proclaimed, to the "great joy" the apostles had as they returned to Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension, Jesus' time on earth radiated joy. Even Jesus' death march to Golgotha was prompted by joy: "For the joy set before him [Jesus] endured the cross, scorning its shame" (Hebrews 12:2). That joy belongs to every believer. So what is the source of real joy?

Psalm 32

- ¹ Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
- ² Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.
- ³ When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
- ⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.
- ⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
- ⁶ Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found;
surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.
- ⁷ You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.
- ⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.
- ⁹ Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding

but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

¹⁰ Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him.

¹¹ Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

1.) The Hebrew word for "blessed" is one of a number of Old Testament words for being glad, happy, joy-filled. In verses 1 and 2, who are the people David says are blessed? Why would people in those circumstances be blessed?

¹ Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

² Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

2.) To explain why those people are blessed, the psalmist uses himself as an example of someone who missed out for a time on the joy the Lord wanted him to have (verses 3-5). What changed in David's life to open the door to renewed blessedness?

³ When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"—and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

3.) Has unrepented sin ever robbed you and others of the joy the Spirit offers them?

4.) In verses 6-10, David lists some results of living in the blessedness of forgiveness. Note those results.

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surely when the mighty waters rise, they will not reach him.

⁷ You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.

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5.) David discovered that joy is based on who his Savior is and what that Savior would do for him. How does Jesus confirm that in John 17:13-19?

John 17:13-19 "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵ My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”

ENDURING JOY

The joy produced by our emotions, like a puddle on a hot day, quickly evaporates. The believers' joy, however, doesn't dry up and disappear. Not even in the desert-dry times of life. The believers' joy is based on a fact of history, on an event that will never change: the eternal God has provided us with a right relationship with him through Jesus. So the Christian's joy is also unchangeable. Regardless of the events happening in their lives, the Spirit enables Christians to demonstrate his joy.

1.) Why should we be careful about how we talk about what bring us joy? For example, why might we prefer not to claim, “My greatest joy in life is my children”?

John 16:20-22 “I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. ²¹ A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. ²² So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.”

2.) Since the joy the Spirit gives is based on the forgiveness and life Jesus won for us, what makes his joy better than the joy we might find in our success, our recreation, our family, etc.?

3.) Name things that get in the way of our experiencing the joy that Jesus has won for us. How might we overcome those roadblocks to living in that joy?

4.) Explain how it is possible for Christian families to experience joy even when they are not happy because someone died, a job was lost, a family member is in hospital. Why is this an important distinction to make?

THE FURTHER BENEFITS OF JOY

A gospel song shouts, “I've got joy unspeakable!” The reason for that is that our joy in Jesus spills over into many other areas of our lives. Basing your observation on the following passages, comment on what else God's joy brings us.

Nehemiah 8:10b The joy of the LORD is your strength.

James 1:2-3 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance.

1 Peter 1:8-9 Though you have not seen [Jesus], you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”

1 Peter 4:12-14 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial [persecution] you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.”

SUMMARY

The Christians' joy flows from the perfect relationship God created with us through Jesus. Since the almighty God pledges himself to be our loving Father, joy is ours even if we can't feel it. Christians live in that joy by drawing on the Word of God, where the Spirit of Joy resides.

PRAYER