

REVIEW: The Holy Spirit is...

- ...not an invisible force. He is a person who can be grieved, lied to, insulted, etc.
- ...not a lesser part of the trinity, but rather fully God and an equal part of the trinity as the Father and Son are.

Last week: Love is primary in Galatians 5, and the all other fruit flow out of love.

James 1:2-4 (NLT) ²Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. ³For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. ⁴So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.

1. JOY ISN'T CIRCUMSTANTIAL.

- The Merriam Webster dictionary defines joy as “the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires.” The world’s definition is very different from the Joy of the Lord.
- Joy - *chara* - means experiencing love and calm delight for God, for who He is and not solely for what He does. Joy is based on the giver of blessings and not just the blessing.
 - o Joy is a response to our hope, our certainty in our future based on the goodness of God.
 - o True joy is God-given **and** yet a choice we make!

John 15:10-11 (ESV) ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

2. GOD IS THE SOURCE OF OUR JOY.

Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV) ¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

- Jesus’ joy was grounded in love and His contentment and certainty of His relationship with the Father. God’s joy flows from the love that the Father has for the Son.
- God wants us to have and experience this same love relationship with Jesus that is between the Father and Jesus. We experience joy from this love, freely through the Holy Spirit.

James 1:17 (NIV) Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

- God is love. He doesn’t change. He keeps His promises. He saves us, walks with us, encourages us, disciplines us, gives us hope for our future, and loves us as His children.

JOY BEGINS WITH A CONSCIOUS AWARENESS THAT GOD IS AT WORK IN OUR LIVES AND THAT HE HAS A REAL PURPOSE, A GOOD PURPOSE FOR US, EVEN WHEN WE EXPERIENCE VARIOUS TRIALS.¹

Joy rises from the confident assurance of God’s goodness both now and in the future.

Philippians 2:13 (NIV) for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

3. JOY IS A BAROMETER OF YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Traps we can fall into:

- Keeping our eyes on ourselves and our circumstances will leave us dry and hopeless and void of joy.
- Focusing on the blessings and not the Giver of blessings produces entitlement and consumerism.
- Working hard for Jesus without joy will wear you out! Joy helps us serve with a right heart.
- **1 Corinthians 13:3** illustrates how joy flows out of love.

- Without joy, we can fall into the worship of idols and not Jesus. We become dissatisfied with life instead of being satisfied with Jesus.

Psalm 51:10-12 (NIV) ¹⁰Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. ¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

- o David understood the pitfalls of this life when he lost focus, became bored and dissatisfied with the life God had blessed him with.

When our eyes are fixed on the author and perfecter of our faith, we experience the joy of the Lord.

- Joy produces a grateful heart to worship.
 - Joy evokes thanksgiving.
 - Joy brings us God's perspective.
 - Joy drives us to be others-centered, and thus we want to serve and bless others.
-
-
-

PRACTICAL STEPS

If you find yourself wrestling with joy, spend some time meditating on this verse:

Philippians 4:8 (NIV) Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

- Get with a trusted friend or loved one and discuss these thoughts:
 - o Talk about what is true about God, His love for you, and His promises for your future.
 - o Reflect on what you respect and revere about God and His people.
 - o Think on whatever is just and righteous about God.
 - o Think on pure thoughts in your heart and mind, things that are holy and uncontaminated.
 - o Focus on whatever is pleasing and acceptable to God.
 - o Express your praise for and to God!
- Make Christ lord of your life. If you've already done this, recommit yourself to His lordship.
- Surround yourself with spiritually mature people who will sit with you in your sorrow, but also remind you of God's faithfulness.

QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

Passages to consider: Galatians 5:16-26; Romans 15:13; James 1:2-5

Icebreaker: What brings you delight and pleasure in the summer season?

1. Share something significant to you from this week's sermon.
 2. Read Romans 15:13 and James 1:2-5. Retell one of the passages to someone. What do you learn about God and joy in these passages?
 3. How would you describe joy? or How are joy and happiness different/similar? A) Share some of your experiences that remind you of joy.
 4. Nehemiah 8:12 says, "... the joy of the Lord is your strength." How has that played out in your life?
 5. When circumstances are not great, what helps you return to an attitude of joy?
 6. What will nurturing joy look like for you and the relationships you influence this summer?
- Bonus! Try memorizing Galatians 5:22-25

Passages to prepare for next week, Cultivate! Week 4: Peace

This week, read Galatians 5:16-26; Philippians 4:6-8; Romans 5:1-5

As you read, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the passage saying about God, mankind, and how the world works?
- What do I learn about myself from this passage?
- What response does this require of me in my thinking, believing, and doing?

¹Quote adapted from "What is Joy in Christianity?" by Mel Walker on *Christianity.com*, Nov 7, 2019.

Scripture quotations marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright 1996, 2004, 2007. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked ESV are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.