

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: JOY

Joy, as a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), is far more than simple happiness that depends on your circumstances. It is a deep, settled confidence and delight that comes from knowing God, who He is, what He has done, and the sure hope of what is to come. Unlike the world's happiness, which rises and falls with your situation or circumstances, this joy is rooted in the unchanging grace of God through Jesus Christ. It is produced not by your own efforts but by the Holy Spirit working within you as you walk with Him. You can experience this joy even in the middle of trials and suffering, because it is anchored in Jesus and His truth that can never be taken from you.

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

Nehemiah 8:10 — "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Your joy is not self-generated; it comes from the Lord Himself and actually strengthens you to face life's challenges.

Psalms 16:11 — "In your presence there is fullness of joy." True joy is found in closeness with God, not in the comforts this world offers.

John 15:11 — Jesus says, "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." His joy, the joy of the Son of God, is the very joy He wants to fill you with.

Romans 15:13 — "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." Joy comes through faith trusting God's promises and resting in His goodness every day.

James 1:2-4 — "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds." This is not pretending suffering doesn't hurt; it is trusting that God is using every trial to shape you into the image of Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 1:4-6 — Paul commends the Thessalonians for receiving the Word "in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit." This is an amazing picture: joy and suffering arriving together. The Spirit-given joy you have is not fragile; it holds up even when life is hard, and it becomes a powerful testimony to everyone in your life.

Philippians 4:4 — "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice." Paul writes this from prison, which means the command to rejoice is not dependent on your comfort or your freedom. The key phrase is "in the Lord." Your joy is grounded in who Jesus is and what He has secured for you, not in what your day or circumstances looks like.

1 Peter 1:6-9 — Peter describes believers as those who, though they have not seen Jesus, love Him and "rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory." This joy runs so deep that human words can barely contain it. It is the joy of a soul that has tasted salvation knowing your sin is forgiven, your future is secure, and nothing in this world can snatch you from the Father's hand (John 10:28-29). Hallelujah!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How is the joy of the Spirit different from the happiness the world offers? *Possible answer:* the world's happiness depends on pleasant circumstances: good health, success, relationships and disappears when those things sour. But Spirit-given joy is rooted in God's unchanging character and the finished work of Jesus. Paul wrote from prison, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4), showing that this joy survives even suffering. It is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), not a product of favorable conditions or a comfortable lifestyle.

2. Why is joy listed as a fruit of the Spirit, and what does that tell us about how we receive it? *Possible answer:* a fruit grows naturally from a living, healthy branch; you cannot force it or manufacture it. Jesus says in John 15:4-5 that apart from Him you can do nothing. Joy is the overflow of a life connected to Jesus through the Spirit. This means you pursue joy by pursuing God: through prayer, His Word, worship, and community and not by striving harder in your own strength

3. Where do you tend to look for joy outside of God, and how has that left you feeling empty? *Possible answer:* many people chase joy through achievement, approval, comfortable circumstances, or relationships and these gifts are good, but they were never meant to be the source. Augustine wrote, "Our heart is restless until it rests in You." Ecclesiastes 2:11 echoes this: Solomon tried everything under the sun and found it "vanity and chasing after wind." Honest reflection here opens the door to real repentance and reorientation toward God. Be honest with yourself and the Lord.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

If you are a believer, you know this truth: your joy was bought at the cross. Jesus endured the cross "for the joy set before him" (Hebrews 12:2) and that joy included you. Yet how easily you drift from that anchor, trying to fill yourself with lesser things. Today, turn away from the things you have been chasing that never truly satisfy and are never really guaranteed, and come to Jesus. Confess where you are seeking joy apart from Jesus, and by faith receive the fullness of joy He freely gives.

If you have never trusted Jesus, this joy is not yet yours but it can be. The good news is this: Jesus Christ died in your place, bearing the penalty for your sin, and rose from the dead so that you might have life and life to the full (John 10:10). Repent of your sin, believe in Jesus, and receive the unspeakable, full-of-glory joy He promises to everyone who comes to Him.

DAILY DEVOTIONS

MONDAY — JOY THAT CANNOT BE SHAKEN

Key Verse: "The joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

Reflection: When Israel wept over their failure, the leaders called them to celebrate because the joy of the Lord, not their performance, was their strength. Your joy today rests not on how well you have done, but on the unchanging grace of God toward you in Christ.

Application: Where are you tempted to let your failures or shortcomings steal your joy, and how does today's verse reorient you?

Possible Answer: Nehemiah 8:10 reminds you that joy is a gift flowing from the Lord Himself not a reward for your effort. So, when you feel weak or discouraged, return to the cross and remember that God's grace over you has not changed (Romans 8:1).

Prayer: Father, forgive me for seeking joy in my own performance, and fill me today with the strength that flows only from Your joy, in Jesus' name, Amen.

TUESDAY — JOY FOUND IN HIS PRESENCE

Key Verse: "In your presence there is fullness of joy." (Psalm 16:11)

Reflection: David set the Lord always before him, and the result was a heart overflowing with gladness because fullness of joy is not found in the right circumstances or achievements, but in the presence of God. The invitation for you today is simple: draw near to Him, and He will fill you with something the world cannot give and cannot take away.

Application: What tends to pull your attention away from God's presence throughout the day, and what would it look like to intentionally return to Him? **Possible Answer:** James 4:8 promises, "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you." So, returning to His presence might look as simple as pausing to pray, reading a verse at lunch, or ending the day in gratitude rather than scrolling.

Prayer: Lord, quiet my heart today and teach me to find my fullest joy in Your presence alone, above every distraction the world offers, in Jesus' name, Amen.

WEDNESDAY — JOY IN EVERY SEASON

Key Verse: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, rejoice." (Philippians 4:4)

Reflection: Paul wrote "Rejoice in the Lord always" from a prison cell, chained and uncertain of his fate, because his joy was anchored not to his comfort, but to the person and promises of Jesus. Because Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8), the command to rejoice is not naive optimism; it is a battle cry of faith.

Application: What difficult circumstance in your life right now feels like it is robbing you of joy, and how does Paul's example challenge you to respond? **Possible Answer:** First Thessalonians 1:6 describes early believers receiving God's Word "in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit." The Spirit lives in you and is able to sustain the same joy through whatever you are facing today.

Prayer: Jesus, I choose by faith to rejoice in You today not because life is easy, but because You are good, Your promises are sure, and Your Spirit sustains a joy no circumstance can steal, in Your name, Amen.

THURSDAY — JOY THROUGH THE REFINING FIRE

Key Verse: "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds." (James 1:2)

Reflection: James does not say "if" you face trials, he says "when," because hardship is part of following Jesus in a broken world. The call to count it "all joy" is not a command to pretend suffering does not hurt; it is an invitation to trust that God is purposefully shaping you into the image of Jesus through every difficulty.

Application: How have you seen God use a past difficulty to grow your faith, your character, or your dependence on Him?

Possible Answer: Romans 5:3–4 teaches that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. So, the trials that felt most devastating have often been the places where God grew your faith the deepest.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank You that You waste nothing in my life, give me eyes of faith to see Your refining hand in every trial and trust Your purposes even when I do not understand them, in Jesus' name, Amen.

FRIDAY — INEXPRESSIBLE AND GLORIOUS JOY

Key Verse: "Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory." (1 Peter 1:8)

Reflection: Peter wrote to believers who had never seen Jesus with their eyes, yet they loved Him deeply and rejoiced in Him with a joy so full that human words could barely contain it. This is your story too: the Holy Spirit has made Jesus real to your heart, and the joy of knowing Him is a foretaste of the eternal delight you will have in God's presence forever.

Application: How does the reality of your salvation, forgiven, adopted, and secure in Jesus, stir joy in you today, even on an ordinary Friday? **Possible Answer:** Let the gospel be fresh to you today: your sins are forgiven, you are a child of God, nothing can separate you from His love (Romans 8:38–39), and Jesus endured the cross "for the joy set before him" and that joy included you (Hebrews 12:2).

Prayer: Lord Jesus, let the extraordinary truth of the gospel that You saved me, adopted me, and secured me forever fill my heart with inexpressible joy on this ordinary day, in Your name, Amen.

Sources: Packer, J.I. *Knowing God*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press; Sproul, R.C. *The Fruit of the Spirit*. Lake Mary: Reformation Trust; Stott, John R.W. *The Message of Galatians*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press; Bridges, Jerry. *The Pursuit of Holiness*. Colorado Springs: NavPress.