

Week 12 Day 2 | *Fruit of the Spirit: Joy*

Joy is often misunderstood. It seems simply like a decision one makes to be happy or to find the good in one’s circumstances. Yet a quick examination of Scripture shows us something different.

Look what Nehemiah told the Israelites as they were weeping while listening to the words of the Law:

“Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”
—*Nehemiah 8:10 (NIV)*

The Jews stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13, banning them from the region. What was the response from Paul and Barnabas? Verses 51 and 52 say, “So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.”

Peter writes in reference to Jesus, “Though you have not seen him, 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 end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:8–9).

What do you notice about joy in these passages? Never once is it presented as a choice. In fact, never is it something we do on our own. For joy to be our strength, as mentioned in Nehemiah, it’s the “joy of the Lord.” In Acts, Paul and Barnabas were filled with joy in spite of being poorly treated. Similarly, in 1 Peter, joy came into the lives of the church . . . as the church believed in Christ. In other words, joy was a byproduct of something the Lord did. Joy was not something that simply came from anyone’s own choosing.

Did you ever sing the song “Down In My Heart” in Sunday school, youth group, or maybe at church camp? If not, believe me, it’s a classic children’s Bible song. The first verse goes:

I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy
Down in my heart.
Where?
Down in my heart.
Where?
Down in my heart.
I’ve got the joy, joy, joy, joy
Down in my heart.
Down in my heart to stay.

Now joy is one thing to sing about, but it’s quite another to live it. Perhaps your joy is buried so far down in your heart, you have a hard time digging it out. Instead, you’ve got the *gloom, gloom,*

gloom, gloom, down in your heart. Or maybe it’s *grief, grief, grief, grief,* or *fear, fear, fear, fear?* Whatever restrains your joy, it weighs heavy like an anchor rather than guiding you like the wind.

However, living a joy-filled life is incredibly powerful because your circumstances become peripheral rather than dominant. The trials in your life may not get any better. In fact, they could get worse, as they did for Paul and Barnabas. Yet your reaction to your circumstances gets better because the Holy Spirit is in control and the joy of the Lord becomes your strength. Joy can be your response regardless of what’s going on in your life.

The Holy Spirit can bear the fruit of joy in your life, including your fitness journey. The scale may not change. You may not get faster. You may not get as strong as you were hoping. Your clothes may not fit the way you’d like. Nevertheless you can still have joy.

It’s not the results of your fitness that brings God glory. It’s the process of depending on the Holy Spirit that brings God glory. That same process, consequently, results in experiencing more joy.

You must rely on who the Holy Spirit is and what He can do, rather than who you are and what you can’t. When you rely on the Holy Spirit, you are relying on His strength. When you rely on His strength, you will find you not only enjoy life more, but you enjoy God more. Enjoying God naturally culminates in experiencing more joy.

Prayer

Father, thank You for the incredible gift of joy. Will You forgive me when I try to manufacture it myself? Please help me to rely solely on Your perfect Holy Spirit to bear much fruit in every area of my life. Amen.

Meditation

I can be joyful because of your joy in me.

Daily Spiritual Exercise

Today you will focus on the fruit of joy. Remember, these are not “fruits of ourselves.” These are the outcomes of the Holy Spirit working in and through our lives.

As you are focusing on the fruit of joy, pray for wisdom. You may need help in discerning whether you’re working out of your efforts or allowing the Holy Spirit to work.

Also, be sure to be teachable. Sometimes we are being taught a lesson we don’t want to learn. If we are truly open to the Lord working in our lives, however, we need to humbly receive all He wants to teach us.