

Week of October 1, 2017 / Leader's Guide

Back to the Future: We will be joyful

It's important as we think about the biblical idea of **joy** that we consider it ought to be a "universal" among believers. Joy is by far not a New Testament concept alone. In the Old Testament, joy was associated with the true worship of God.

Wherever people know, love, and worship God rightly, His love for His people instills a joy that only He can give, into the hearts of His worshipers (1 Chronicles 15:16; Ezra 3:12, 6:16; Psalm 16:11, 32:11, 51:12 and many more).

In the time of King Hezekiah, the Israelites rededicated themselves to God and we read, *"So there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem"* (2 Chronicles 30:26). The people's renewed commitment to God reignited the joy in their hearts that only He can produce. Believers today can experience this same joy when they are committed and responding well to Christ and His Word.

Too, joy is one of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, Who resides in the heart of the believer, *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness..."* (Galatians 5:22). Since God is the author of all these good things, when one becomes a Christian, and is united to God through faith in Jesus, the Holy Spirit imparts these qualities to the believer. Joy is also an **integral part of the Kingdom of God** and will exist wherever believers are present, *"For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (Romans 14:17 ESV).

Quick Review

Why do you think people long for an experience of real joy?

How would you distinguish biblical joy from human experiences like...?

Happiness

Being upbeat

Staying positive

Being confident

My Story

If you could re-live the "best day of your life" which day would you select? Explain.

At what points in your spiritual life would you say you experienced the most joy (as the Bible describes it)?

Think about Christians you've known who've regularly exhibited real joy. What would you describe as the roots or sources of their joy?

Or.... fill in the blank..... "Joy flows from a _____ person/heart." (List as many as possible)

Digging Deeper

Read Galatians 5:19, 22-25 and Ephesians 5:18-21, John 15:9-12 and Philippians 2:17, 18

Describe what it looks like to **be filled with the Holy Spirit** in this passage. In practical ways what does it mean to "abide in Christ" and "walk in Him"?

Biblically, the command to "be filled" has to do with allowing the control of God's Spirit (Who lives in every believer). That happens practically when we consciously enter God's Presence, spend time (quality and quantity of time) in God's Word and praying. God's Truth, His Nature, His Wisdom and Principles are in His Word, so to the extent we base life on His Truth, to that extent, we will experience His filling – His permeation of each area of our lives.

Why should joy be identifiable in every Christian's life?

Biblically – (1) It is both an "overflow" of the Spirit's control of our lives and therefore God (Who wants to control our thinking, feeling and behavior) expects it, along with the other elements of the Spirit's fruit. Also, (2) Joy is commanded. Practically – True joy is an advertisement that something is different about us as believers, that even in the midst of struggles and hard times, God gives us this great gift.

What are some sources of joy mentioned?

What are the enemies of joy in your life?

There are a number of possible answers directly related to joy itself, like fixing our eyes on circumstances, being anxious, focusing far too much on physical and material things and people around us. There are also areas of sin and disobedience: operating "in the flesh" (Galatians 6), being unforgiving, lack of faith that God is in charge of the affairs of people and nations.

Life Group Homework

Which verse or passage mentioned in the message or discussion most stood out to you?

Beginning tomorrow, for 7 days write down expressions of gratitude to God for how He worked in your life and for your benefit and how He continues to do so. (You might include people who impacted your spiritually, ways He gifted you, promises He has made to you, the eternal life that cannot be taken from you and the like.)