Lesson 13 – The Holy Spirit’s Gift – To Bear the Fruit of Joy

What is Joy?
What is the difference between Happiness and Joy?
What gives us a deep and lasting joy?
How can we maintain our Joy in times of trial and suffering?
How do we recapture and maintain our Joy?
How can we nurture and grow our Joy?
(Scripture references are provided at the end of this lesson so you can answer the questions.)

The Fruit of the Spirit Is Joy
When we are experiencing real love, it produces real joy in us. Blessed Mother Teresa, who gave her life to serving the poorest of the poor, and herself lived a life of poverty, discovered that, "Joy is prayer, joy is strength, joy is love, and joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls." Mother Teresa bore this fruit of the Spirit by radiating her joy in the Lord to others.

The Greek Translation
The Greek [for joy] is chara, and the characteristic of this word is that it most often describes that joy which has a basis in religion... It is not the joy that comes from earthly things, still less from triumphing over someone else in competition. It is a joy whose foundation is God.

William Barclay, The Daily Bible Study Series

All Christians can radiate joy. Repeatedly St. Paul admonished the community of believers to "rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4; see also 1 Thessalonians 5:16 and 2 Corinthians 13:9). These words imply that some New Testament believers needed to be reminded to avoid a long-faced, gloomy disposition and pursue glad-hearted, exuberant living. For St. Paul, joyous living was not only possible but expected, because Jesus had truly transformed their lives.

When people pursue mere pleasure instead of true joy, they are climbing a ladder that's leaning against the wrong wall. Scripture tells us that Jesus endured the pain and sadness of crucifixion "for the sake of the joy that was set before him" (Hebrews 12:2). If real joy could provide such strength and motivation for Jesus, is it not critical that Christians discover and pursue the way of joy themselves?

What Gives Us a Deep and Lasting Joy?
1. Joy seems to be present in the lives of those who are able to view earthly realities in the light of a heavenly perspective. The following passages reveal several factors that can give us a deep and lasting joy. Read each passage and then answer the question:

Psalm 9:1-2: Why does recounting to others how God has worked bring us genuine joy?
Luke 10:17-20: Why is it important to know where our names are written?

Luke 15:4-10: Why do you think Jesus links repentance with joy?

Philippians 1:12-18: How does doing God's will, in this case by preaching the gospel, bring us joy?

I Thessalonians 1:4-6: Who is the source of our joy?

Joy Even in Suffering

Claiming God's promises when we are suffering is the best way to find the joy of the Spirit. In the midst of turmoil, we can hold on to the truth that God is forming us as his disciples through suffering, and that he disciplines us because he loves us (Hebrews 12:6). We can be confident of our eternal inheritance in heaven and acknowledge that Jesus suffered as well, and that we are not alone.

2. The writers of the New Testament often link joy to persecution and trials. According to the following passages, how can we maintain a spirit of joy during difficult times

James 1:2-4:

1 Peter 4:12-14:
The great hymn writer Fanny Crosby, who lost her sight when she was just six weeks old, demonstrates what it means to maintain an eternal perspective in the midst of difficult current realities:

Oh, what a happy soul am I,
Although I cannot see
I am resolved that in this world Contented I will be.
How many blessings I enjoy
That other people don't!
To weep and sigh because I'm blind I cannot nor I won't.

3. You have discovered many reasons to be a joyful believer, yet you may still find yourself getting spiritually down, even depressed. According to the following passages, what did the psalmists do to recapture and maintain joy?

**Psalm 16:8-9, 11:**

**Psalm 28:7**

**Psalm 51:8-13**

May the God of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in believing, so that you may abound in Hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. – Romans 15:13
Fruit of the Spirit - Joy

Do you know anyone who always seems to be happy? They never get over-anxious or carried away with negativity. They always seem to be calm. They see the bright side of every situation.

These people do exist. Some call them optimists. We should call them Christians.

As Christians, people created in the image of God, baptized in water and the Holy Spirit, we are called to live and express JOY.

Joy grows deeper than happiness. Happiness comes from outside of us and is fleeting. We are happy when good things happen to us, but when we're faced with trials, happiness eludes us. Joy, on the other hand, comes from within. Joy is rooted in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. When we recognize the Spirit within us, joy bubbles up and flows out from us. Joy is more than expression, it is an attitude.

So how do we nurture JOY to blossom and grow in our lives?

- One of the best things you can do to nurture joy in your life is to count your blessings. Everyone needs an "attitude of gratitude." Try this practice: At the end of each day, name three blessings you received from God that day. Three is a good number because it is the number for the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Spirit. Name three ways you experienced, felt, or were gifted by the Trinity. How did the Father bless you? How did you feel the Son with you? How were you empowered by the Holy Spirit? What three blessings, or gifts, did you experience sometime during the day?

- Tell God "Thank you!" As you recognize your gifts and blessings, express your gratitude to God. As you vocalize your thankfulness, you will be drawn deeper and deeper into the Joy of the Holy Spirit.

- As you experience struggles or feel negativity, ask the Holy Spirit to enfold you, to wrap you in the warmth of God's love. As you do this, you will begin to experience your trials not as negative issues to be dealt with, but as opportunities to call on God. The more you call out to God, the more you will feel God's presence within you, and the more joyful you will become. When you recognize God holding and empowering you, you will naturally feel the Joy of the Spirit bubbling up within you.

Yes, these actions are simple, but practiced regularly; they will nurture fruit of JOY in your heart, which will in turn be reflected in your attitude and life.

FRUITS

ANY individuals who seek to live a holy life, and who therefore want to make prayer a more important part of their lives, wonder how they can tell if their experiences in prayer are truly inspiration from God or whether they are mere psychological delusions.

Well, the best approach here is to look to the “fruits” of the prayer—that is, the effects that prayer produces in your life—and ask if those fruits are the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Let’s look, then, at how each of these fruits might manifest in a soul that receives divine graces through prayer. Note carefully, though, that your spiritual life will not produce fruits unless it has strong roots growing in the good soil of detachment from the world, and dedicated contemplation of the Mysteries of the Faith, and constant prayer for spiritual purification.
THE FRUIT OF JOY

In the Letter of James we are told, “Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.” (James 1:2–3). Moreover, Saint Francis of Assisi said that “if we accept such injustice, such cruelty and such contempt with patience, without being ruffled and without murmuring” and “if we bear all these injuries with patience and joy, thinking of the sufferings of our Blessed Lord, which we would share out of love for him . . . here . . . is perfect joy” ([The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi]).

Real spiritual joy, therefore, refers to the ability to tolerate insult and injury from someone without hating him, in the hope that he might eventually repent his sins and attain the everlasting joy of Heaven, wherein there is no hate.

If YOUR PRAYER is truly effective, then, it should be strengthening you to tolerate joyfully the trials and tribulations necessary to cleanse you of all that is not love.

Personal Meditation: How often do you mistakenly believe that joy is a matter of feeling good about yourself and having everything go smoothly and pleasantly? How often do you think only of “your way,” rather than thinking of God’s way: not triumph and control over your enemies and the pain they cause you but the willingness to endure suffering, as Christ did, in the hope of saving your enemies from their own sins?

Joy

St. Paul recommends that we rejoice in the Lord always, [Philippians 4:4] and again He says rejoice. Joy is a gift to keep even in the middle of our trials and sufferings, because joy is the anticipation of the greater gift of eternal bliss.

We have good times when we naturally rejoice, but this joy is perfected when we appreciate that it comes from God and we thank Him. Whenever we suffer, we must be also thankful for the crosses we are receiving and rejoice spiritually because the reward for our crosses will be our crowns.

Do we thank God for all the joys we receive? Do we take it all for granted or do we realize that God is the source of our joy?

Advent Meditation – Waiting for our Joy

Beloved:
Our souls need constant care, but caring for the soul is not easy in a confused and conflicted world filled with noise and perniciousness. The noise of distraction and deceit, the noise of power and greed, and the perniciousness of competition and hatred make caring for the spirit, our inner self, increasingly difficult. Nourishing and caring for the soul amid different noises and pernicious activities make receiving the blessings that give joy to the soul hard to conceive as a vital part of our conscious and personal reality. Neglect of the soul robs us of life’s joy and peace. The soul as the heart of our spiritual life hungers for something more substantial than control, something far different from arrogance, and something simply close to the heart of God.
Yet there is hope in God. The joys of the soul, however, can be restored if we drum up and discover the
courage to go beyond ourselves and desire what the Psalmist prayed:
Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a
new and right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence, and take
not your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of thy salvation and
uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm
51:10-12)
The soul also needs silence. Caring for the soul is difficult in a fast moving world devoid of silence with
God. Some of us may not even know how to begin to find such a sacred space in our lives. We may already
find ourselves dragged and deceived by the comfort of personal pursuits or goals that lead us nowhere. The soul
is adversely affected by the lack of intentional reflection on the work of our lives, the distorted decisions we make
and the ways we participate in assaulting the silence and sacredness of the soul. It is often bruised and needs the
care of silence that is found only within the heart of God. Moreover, the superfluous ways in which we engage our
lives reject the claims of God on us as God’s people. Our actions, judgments and decisions are influenced much
more by our personal interests and concerns and less by the example and ethics of Jesus. We continue to shut the
door on the teachings of Jesus that we are known to be his disciples by our love for one another. Too many of us
are afraid to lose ourselves in order to find ourselves constantly cared for by a faithful God. We treat the
circumstances we face in our lives as a game of winners and losers, the triumph of the strong prevailing over the
weak, the sufficiency of the self against our need for God. We are indifferent to God’s call to out do one
another in showing love and honor. Commitment to what is best for the soul and good for our spiritual community
is often ignored and diminished by values that distort our sense of God’s presence in our lives. The belief that the
soul needs time to commune with God, a wait in silence, may never occur to some as a necessary and constant
spiritual practice. As the Psalmist reminds us, “for God alone my soul in silence waits.” But with God, there is
always hope. Having and developing a rhythm of disciplined prayer is a good place to begin. It is the place
where truth speaks to our souls. Times of silent reflection enables us to also encounter the truth about ourselves
before God.
My prayer is that we all will find the way and the time to care for our souls, know the joy of Christ, live
peaceably with ourselves before God and seek the voice of God beyond the noise and perniciousness that fill our
busy lives. About this life with God, Psalm 47 invites us to learn to be still. “Be still, and know that I am God. I
am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth” (Ps. 46:10)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Philippians 4:4
4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!

1 Thessalonians 5:16
16 Rejoice always.

2 Corinthians 13:9
9 For we rejoice when we are weak but you are strong. What we pray for is your improvement.

Psalm 9:1-2:
1 For the leader; according to Muth Labben,* A psalm of David.
2 I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will declare all your wondrous deeds
Luke 10:17-20:
17 The seventy [-two] returned rejoicing, and said, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name.”
18 Jesus said, “I have observed Satan fall like lightning from the sky.
19 Behold, I have given you the power ‘to tread upon serpents’ and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you.
20 Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

Luke 15:4-10:
4 “What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the lost one until he finds it?
5 And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy
6 and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.’
7 I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.
8 “Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it?
9 And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, ‘Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost.’
10 In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents

Philippians 1:12-18:
12 I want you to know, brothers, that my situation has turned out rather to advance the gospel,
13 so that my imprisonment has become well known in Christ throughout the whole praetorium and to all the rest,
14 and so that the majority of the brothers, having taken encouragement in the Lord from my imprisonment, dare more than ever to proclaim the word fearlessly.
15 Of course, some preach Christ from envy and rivalry, others from good will.
16 The latter act out of love, aware that I am here for the defense of the gospel;
17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not from pure motives, thinking that they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment.
18 What difference does it make, as long as in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is being proclaimed? And in that I rejoice.

Indeed I shall continue to rejoice,

**I Thessalonians 1:4-6:**
4 knowing, brothers loved by God, how you were chosen.
5 For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the holy Spirit and [with] much conviction. You know what sort of people we were [among] you for your sake.
6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, receiving the word in great affliction, with joy from the Holy Spirit,

**Hebrews 12:6**
6 for whom the Lord loves, he disciplines

**James 1:2-4:**
2 Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials,
3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.
4 And let perseverance be perfect, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing

**1 Peter 4:12-14:**
12 Beloved, do not be surprised that a trial by fire is occurring among you, as if something strange were happening to you.
13 But rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly.
14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you

**Psalm 16:8-9, 11:**
8 I keep the LORD always before me;
with him at my right hand, I shall never be shaken.
9 Therefore my heart is glad, my soul rejoices;
my body also dwells secure
11 You will show me the path to life,
abounding joy in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever
Psalm 28:7

7 The LORD is my strength and my shield,
in whom my heart trusts.
I am helped, so my heart rejoices;
with my song I praise him

Psalm 51:8-13

8 Behold, you desire true sincerity;
and secretly you teach me wisdom.
9 Cleanse me with hyssop,* that I may be pure;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
10 You will let me hear gladness and joy;
the bones you have crushed will rejoice.
11 Turn away your face from my sins;
   blot out all my iniquities.
12 A clean heart create for me, God;
   renew within me a steadfast spirit.
13 Do not drive me from before your face,
   nor take from me your holy spirit