

Fruits of the Holy Spirit – Session 3

Joy Galatians 5

Timing: 30-45 minutes, then leading into ministry

Buzz groups: Suggestions are boxed, pairs or groups of 3-4 will work best

Illustrations: Suggestions are noted, but your own ideas and stories are preferable

Focus: Major on the one or two points most relevant to your group

Icebreaker: What were you last doing when you experienced real enjoyment?

Introduction

Key Point: Our lives get better and better as we give our lives over to the Holy Spirit

Key Verse: “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*” (Galatians 5: 22-23).

Introduce this week on *joy*

Key Point: God wants to grow His joy in us.

Key Verse: “*The fruit of the spirit is...joy*” (Galatians 5:22)

Everyone wants joy. Find and share some references to joy in advertising eg recent advertisement for the new BMW X1: “Joy follows its heart. Joy is going where the mood takes you. Acting, then thinking. Joy has found its soul mate in the new BM1 X1.”

Common use of the word ‘joy’ is ‘state of happiness’.

Buzzgroups: How do you define joy? What’s distinctive about joy? What’s its significance?

Look up dictionary definition of joy and share it. Say the Bible has a distinctive view on what joy is and how to get it – that’s what this session is about.

1. Jesus is the source of our joy

The Point: Jesus is the ultimate revelation and source of joy, which is not dependent on circumstances.

The whole Christian message from beginning to end is good news of great joy.

Verses: Luke 2:10 “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people”.

Isaiah 51:11 “The ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”

- True joy cannot be taken away (John 16:22)
- God transforms grief into joy (John 16:20)
- Jesus wants our joy to be complete (John 16:24; 17:13)
- the kingdom of God is a matter of joy (Romans 14:17)
- Joy makes Christians willing to pursue God’s kingdom at all cost (Matthew 13:44)
- it’s not dependent on circumstances (psalm 4:7)

Illustration: Ask someone in the group to share their experience of joy as a Christian. It needn’t be dramatic but ensure it’s specific and personal. What were the circumstances? What choices did they have to make? What difference did that joy make to them and others?

Application: On a piece of paper, write down your thoughts on the statement “Jesus is the ultimate revelation and source of joy, which is not dependent on circumstances”. Is that your experience? Why / why not, do you think?

In 2s or 3s: Read John 16: 20-21 and Hebrews 12:11. Discuss how God develops joy in us and what we might do to work with Him to be transformed in this way.

2. How can we get joy?

The Point: As we “remain in God’s love” our joy will increase.

Read John 15:1-17. We are intimately connected to Jesus and are commanded to remain in His love in order that Jesus’ joy may be in us and our joy may be complete (v11).

In 2s or 3s, consider what each of the following sets of verses tells us about joy and how practically we can receive it? Pick one per group.

- a) Job 38:7, Psalm 32:11, Psalm 33:1
- b) Deut 16:14-15; 1 Chron 15:16; Psalm 42:4
- c) Nehemiah 12:43; Acts 13:52; Rom 15:13; Psalm 16:11

If appropriate, get brief feedback from the groups, adding your own comments as below:

- a) Joy as a result of righteousness, ie Jesus is our righteousness, so it’s to be found *in him* – therefore worship is important, since we become what/whom we behold;
- b) Joy is a command of God, ie it involves use of our will, decision and effort. It’s the result of seeking first the kingdom of God.
- c) Gift of the Holy Spirit, ie not actually something we muster up on our own/in our own strength. It’s a gift that’s given for our use and pleasure and given away to others.

Based on these insights, here are some suggestions of practical ways to receive His joy. Share from your own life examples of how these work for you:

- Ask for it in prayer
- Have integrity and live righteously (ie in right relationship with God and others)
- Feast and celebrate
- Understand God’s word
- Nurture worship, praise and thanksgiving
- ‘Institutionalise’ celebration of God’s goodness (Psalm 68:3) into calendar events
- Meditation and reflection
- Help on an Alpha course!
- Smiling more (Proverbs 15:13)
- Deciding not to complain

Illustration: Ask someone in the group to share practically how they have benefited from one or more the ways stated above. Where there any obstacles / deliberate choices they had to make? If so, how did they overcome / make them and what were the specific benefits?

Ideas for Ministry

- Ask people to simply name things they’re thankful for
- Spend time praising God for who He is and what He has done for us.
- Split into smaller groups and ask the Lord to fill you with joy, and pray through specific things that the God has been saying to them in the session.

Recommended Reading:

'Surprised by Joy' - CS Lewis (describes his leap from atheism to belief in God and then to Christianity)