



“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11).

Fullness of Joy

Central Truth: Abiding in Jesus brings full joy.

L245. Date: February 1991. **Text:** John 15:1-11.

Topic: Holy Spirit; Fruit Of; Joy.

Beginning with this lesson, the location of our background text changes. We have built the previous nine studies [L236-L244] on the list of Christian virtues mentioned in II Peter 1:5-7. This week's study moves to Galatians 5:22, 23 as the background text. The next four lessons [L245-L248] will deal with the aspects of the fruit of the Holy Spirit which were not dealt with in previous studies in this series.

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy” (Galatians 5:22). Jesus promised that His joy would abide in us and that would make our joy full and complete (John 15:11). Do you want to experience the fullness of joy that He promised? Then keep things in their proper spiritual order: obedience produces joy. Using the analogy of a vine and its branches, Jesus teaches how we may experience joy. We receive our supply from Him and bear fruit for Him. Then we experience the fullness of our joy. Joy involves being filled with the Holy Spirit and producing spiritual fruit as enabled by the Spirit.

If your life has lost its delight and living has become a burden, here is a study for you. It sets forth five areas in which you can experience the joy of your Lord. Be sure to apply those to your personal life as you study.

I. THE JOY OF DIVINE RELATIONSHIP (John 15:1, 2, 5)

Jesus' relationship to God the Father is like that of a vine to the gardener. He is dependent on the Father's ministry of love, and the Father is

committed to Him. He has nothing to fear; He can always trust in safety. There is a bond of eternal love between the Father and the Son.

Jesus' relationship to you is like that of the stalk to the branches of the vine. There is a vital, life-giving union which unites Him and you. As the strength flows from the stalk to the branch, so His sufficiency comes to you. The stalk exists to meet the need of the branch so that fruit may be produced. In just that way Jesus enables your fruitfulness. Jesus used an illustration to explain that relationship, but the actual union is true and literal.

The Father's relationship to you is like that of the gardener to the plants. His personal interest is in your growth and productivity. He does all that is necessary (as a gardener plants, waters, fertilizes, and protects) to enable you to be fruitful. Since Jesus is the vine and you are a branch of the vine, the Father watches over both Jesus and you. He is related to you in His watchfulness, just as He is to Jesus. Think about that! If that does not fill you with the joy of the Lord, what will? Believe it and rejoice.

II. THE JOY OF HELPFUL CARE (John 15:1-3)

Jesus said the Father performs a twofold work on the branches of the vine. (1) He “takes away” what does not bear fruit. (2) He “purges” what does not bear fruit.

What is meant by saying that the Father “takes away” the branch that is no longer bearing fruit? (1) Some say it means that the believer falls from grace and is eternally lost in hell. That cannot be the true interpretation since so many other passages teach security in Christ not based on works. (2) Others understand it to mean that an unproductive believer is taken away in physical death. While that might happen, it is not what Jesus indicates here. (3) Another thinks that the opportunity to bear fruit — the opportunity for service — is taken away. (4) Yet another understanding is that the verb “takes away” may also be translated “lifts up.” If that is the case, Jesus is saying that the Father works with the non-productive branch to make it become fruitful.

The Father purges (prunes away the non-productive part of the branch that bears fruit, enabling it to bear more. God cleanses by His Word. He helps us to increase our yield.

Does that fill you with joy? If you have been unfruitful, the Father will lift you up to increase your productivity. If you are bearing some fruit, the Father will remove the nonessentials from your life so that you may bear more fruit. His personal, helpful care over you should make your joy full.

III. THE JOY OF SUFFICIENT SUPPLY (John 15:4, 5)

A. His supply comes from abiding (verse 4). But what does it mean to abide in Christ? When a bud is grafted into a stalk, two things happen. First, there is a structural union as fibers of the bud and of the stalk grow together. Second, there is a flow of life-giving and fruit-producing sap from the stalk to the branch.

To abide in Christ is to trust Him, obey Him, desire Him, cling to Him,” and to forsake all else for Him. In turn, He will cause His life-giving and fruit-producing Spirit to flow freely in us. Oh, the joy of that abiding!

B. His supply enables the humanly impossible. The branch cannot bear fruit apart from the vine. The Christian cannot bear fruit apart from the enabling of Christ. Believe His solemn words, *“Without me ye can do nothing”* (verse 5). They are true. Without Him we can do absolutely nothing at all. We cannot, but He can. He can and will do through us what we cannot do of ourselves, things which seem impossible in our human understanding. Praise the Lord!

C. His supply increases productivity. Hear Him say, *“He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit”* (verse 5). How much fruit? “Much fruit.”

Look at the progress in fruitfulness which He enables. We who bear some fruit are pruned, cleansed, and lifted up that we may bear more fruit (verse 2). But as we abide in Christ, we are strengthened so that we bear much fruit.

Do you experience His sufficient supply which removes barrenness and increases fruitfulness? If so, you experience His joy. To live a life which produces fruit, more fruit, and much fruit is to live near the doors of heaven. Try it!

IV. THE JOY OF ANSWERED PRAYER (John 15:7)

A healthy spiritual life is lived in continual dependence on the Lord. The saint remembers that apart from Him nothing at all can be accomplished. But in response to answered prayer, the saint can rejoice abundantly.

A. Answered prayer is based on abiding. Remember the context of this promise. Jesus is talking about bearing fruit. The promise is not to be applied to any other area of the Christian life but fruitbearing.

Prayer is essential to fruitfulness because fruitfulness depends on God's provision. Jesus promised to give whatever we ask if we meet two

requirements. (1) We must continue to abide in Him. (2) His Word must continually abide in us. And we might add that (3) what we ask must be related to bearing fruit for our Lord.

How you abide in Him has been discussed above. How His Word abides in you is another subject. It means that you know His Word through studying and praying for insight, you remember His Word and apply it to life's circumstances, and you make decisions of right and wrong based on what His Word teaches. His Word thus becomes a light to your path and a lamp to your feet. You treasure it and submit to its principles. Staying close to the Bible is, therefore, a key to answered prayer.

B. Answered prayer is inclusive of all things. Jesus promised to give “*what ye will*” ask (verse 7). The experience of abiding gives the liberty of asking. There is no need to hesitate about it as if Jesus might not keep the promise. He is the Intercessor who invites you to come in prayer. If you are wholly occupied with Jesus and abide in Him, you are guaranteed the answer to your prayer, whatever may be the thing you ask.

How can the Lord make such an unrestricted promise? What if we ask for the wrong thing? The key is abiding. If we abide, that is, if we are wholly occupied with Jesus, what we want is what He wants. He gives us the desires of our hearts, not just in the sense of giving what our hearts desire but also in giving us the desire for the right things. He creates the desire and then fulfills it when we ask (Psalm 37:4).

Experience the joy of answered prayer. Abide in Him and let His Word abide in you. That is your birthright as a Christian. Claim it and rejoice.

V. THE JOY OF THE FATHER'S LOVE (John 15:9-11)

A beautiful and productive garden reflects praise to the gardener. A Christian who is fruitful reflects praise to Christ who provides and the Father who superintends his life. If any person ministers with the ability that God gives, he will bring glory to God in everything (I Peter 4:11). The ultimate end for our lives is to glorify God.

Jesus turns from the symbolism of the vineyard and speaks plainly of the Father's love. As much as we can learn from nature, an understanding of God's love is by divine revelation. Jesus assures us here that God the Father loves us, and so does God the Son. He informs us that we may continue to abide in His love, and He tells us how we may do so. Finally, He commands us to love one another as He loves us.

A. Recognize the love of God (verse 9). It is possible for the love gifts of our heavenly Father to be received without consciously calling to mind

their source. Remind yourself often that God loves you far more than you could ever imagine or love Him in return. That fact should fill you with joy particularly when you remember that His love for you is totally unconditional. He does not love you because you are good, sincere, or gifted. He loves you just because you are you.

B. Abide in the love of God (verse 10). Continue to be conscious of His love, recognize the blessings of His love, and live in the spirit of His love in your dealings with others.

Jesus said that the way to abide in the Father's love is to keep His commandments. Obedience is the key. It is not that God will cease to love us if we disobey. It is rather that we will be conscious of His love and rejoice in it, if we live in His will and gladly keep His commandments.

The rule for Jesus' life was to obey the Father in all things and abide in Him. That is the rule for the Christian's life also. He who surrenders wholeheartedly to do God's will in everything will find that he is living in continual enjoyment of the love of God the Father and His only begotten Son.

God wants His dear children to be filled with His joy so that their joy will be full. It is possible, even in a world of sorrows.

Cultivate the joy of the Lord. Know Him personally and train your appetite to enjoy spiritual food. Claim His promises; trust His provision; engage in His service; and anticipate His rewards. Then you will know the meaning of the statement, *“The joy of the LORD is your strength”* (Nehemiah 8:10).

Questions for discussion

1. How do you define joy as used in Galatians 5:22?
2. What is the difference between joy and happiness?
3. How does your relationship with the Father bring joy?
4. How does the care of the Father bring joy?
5. What experience have you had of joy in answered prayer?
6. How can you find joy by abiding in Christ?
7. How do you find joy in the love of God?
8. How do you abide in Christ?
9. What has God done to make your life more fruitful?
10. How can you express your joy in the Lord this week?