

DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 17th Jun 2019)**Read - Galatians 5:22-26**

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. v22-23

When you invite Jesus into your life as your Lord and Friend, the Holy Spirit becomes the channel of his power and his presence for you. The fruit that the Spirit bears in our lives shows itself in new behaviour and new attitudes, and the second gift of the Spirit, after love, is Joy.

Everyone who believes is given the gift of this joy. And because it is God's gift to us, we can know this gift independently of our circumstances. We can have this joy in good times and in bad times, and even when we are going through times of suffering and pain.

Joy is therefore more than just happiness. Happiness is great, but it can be fleeting and is dependent on circumstances. God's joy shines through even our difficult times. We feel it in the inner depths of our soul. But it is more than just a feeling, it flows from a deep inner assurance of God's great love for us.

One reason we feel this joy is that we know we have been given new life through the grace of God. I am his child, and nothing can take that away from me!

***Joy! Joy! Joy!, with Joy my heart is ringing,
Joy! Joy! Joy! his love to me is known.
My sins are all forgiven,
I'm on my way to heaven,
My heart is bubbling over with this
Joy! Joy! Joy!***

DAY 2**Read - Psalm 19**

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands..... Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. v1&4

God is a joyful God. We sometimes think of God as being very holy and serious, up in the clouds somewhere, looking down to catch us if we are misbehaving or doing something wrong. The idea of God laughing or having fun seems very strange to us. But I believe God does. Joy comes from the very heart and being of God. God is a happy and a joyful Being. Laughter was invented by God.

The Bible says that there is great joy in heaven (and that includes both the angels and God) when one sinner repents and comes home to God (Lk 15:10). I like to think the angels throw a party! And God is happy too.

Just have a look at the wonderful beauty of the world God created - a butterfly, an orchid, a rose, the sunset, the mountains, magnificent animals, the oceans, the tropical fish, the dolphins, the reptiles and the forests. As you look carefully at them, can you not see that God had fun creating this beautiful and intricate world we live in! There is a joy that shines out of the beauty of it all.

God wants us to experience this joy. The great composer Franz Josef Haydn once said: *When I think upon my God, my heart is so full of joy that the notes dance and leap from my pen; and since God has given me a cheerful heart, it will be pardoned me that I serve Him with a cheerful spirit.*

Father I thank you for the joy I feel in my heart.

DAY 3**Read - Nehemiah 8:9-10**

Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength." v10

The Jewish exiles who had returned to Israel from Babylon spent months rebuilding the walls of their beloved city, Jerusalem. They had to defend themselves against constant opposition and attack from local enemies. But finally, when it was done, Nehemiah gathered the people and read the Law to them, the heart of Jewish teaching, to remind them that they were a special nation, chosen by God to serve him. Some wept as they thought about these things more deeply.

But then he told them that they must go and celebrate what they have achieved. He said that the day was "holy", therefore they should go and enjoy yourselves.

We sometimes have difficulty placing the words "holy" and "enjoy yourself" alongside each other, but that is what Nehemiah does, because he understands that Joy comes from the very heart of God, and it flows out of worship. He says those powerful words which so many hold dear, *"For the Joy of the Lord is your strength"*.

When we have God's Joy in us we are strong. We have the joy of knowing that nothing can separate us from God's love. And God says it is OK to have a party and celebrate, especially when we have come through something difficult with his help.

Life without a festival is like a long road without an inn. Democritus of Aderba

DAY 4

Read - Philippians 1:21-26 & 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice! v4:4

Paul's letter to the Christ-followers in Philippi is sometimes called "the joyful letter" because of the number of times he uses the words "joy" or "rejoice". I invite you to think about these verses.

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ... v1:4-5

The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,.... v1:18

Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me. v1:26-26

.....make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. v2:2

So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour people like him, ... v2:29

Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! v3:1

Joy was a key aspect of Paul's faith. It gave him strength and purpose in everything he did. He went through some seriously tough times and often suffered for the faith, but through it all, this gift of joy sustained him.

The joy of the Lord is my strength!

DAY 5

Read - John 15:9-11

I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. v11

What did Jesus tell us that would bring his joy into our hearts?

This verse follows his parable of the vine and the branches, and in it he tells us three things that will bring joy into our hearts. The first is how important it is to remain or abide in the vine – to stay attached to him and draw life and nourishment from him. We must love him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.

The second thing that will bring us joy is to be obedient to his commands. The commands of Jesus of course always include the Ten Commandments, that is the basis of all Christian conduct. But Jesus also gave us other commands that take us beyond them. He said, "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). In Matthew 5-7 he taught us many things that take us deeper - like being the salt and the light, loving our enemies, giving to the needy, not judging others, turning the other cheek, bearing proper fruit, and not worrying or being anxious. A deep sense of inner peace always flows from obedience to God.

Finally, we must bear fruit for him. the fruit of changed character and behaviour, and the fruit of service to others. Also the fruit of attracting others to believe in Jesus.

If you want joy, real joy, wonderful joy, let Jesus come into your heart.....Your sins he'll take away, your night he'll turn today. Your heart he'll make it over anew, and then come in to stay. If you want joy, real joy, wonderful joy, let Jesus come into your heart

DAY 6

Read - John 16:19-24

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. v24

Joy is a note that resounds all through the Bible. Joy is a mark of this life, but it will also be an essential quality of heaven and the life to come. I invite you to meditate on some of the following verses that speak about joy, and ask how they speak into your life.

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Ps 16:11

Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people; praise his holy name. For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing (joy) comes in the morning. Ps 30:5

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Is 12:3

But only the redeemed will walk there, and those the LORD has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; and everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. Is 35:10

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.... Rom 14:17

Joy is the flag which flies on the battlements of the heart when the King is in residence.

Leonard Small