

## ***The Fruit of the Spirit***

# ***The Fruit of the Spirit Is Joy***

Lesson #3 for January 16, 2010

Scriptures: Psalm 139; Luke 15:4-24; John 15:10,11; Hebrews 11:16,24,25.

1. The focus of this lesson is on the meaning of *joy* and its role in the Christian life. Why is joy a part of the fruit of the Spirit? What is the difference between *joy* and *happiness*? Why is the Christian's joy permanent while the pleasures of sin are only temporary? (Heb. 11:25)
2. Joy and happiness are not necessarily the same thing. Happiness is the result of favorable circumstances; joy, in contrast, is the result of *being*—as in being connected to Jesus, the True Vine. *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sabbath Afternoon, January 9, 2010.
3. Read Psalm 4:7,8. There we see joy contrasted with circumstances that lead to happiness. In this example of Hebrew poetry, we can see that “gladness” which the lesson equates to happiness is related to an abundant harvest and safety or peaceful circumstances.
4. The true Christian joy comes from knowing God and living in faith/trust in Him. Living with the abiding presence of God in our hearts will get us through even the times of trouble ahead. True joy comes from knowing that we are His and He is ours and He has wonderful plans for us in the future.
5. What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord? (Philippians 4:4) Are either joy or happiness limited to an emotion? Joy is described in our lesson as that more settled conviction based on more than adequate evidence that God can be trusted and that He will work for good no matter what the circumstances. (Romans 8:28; Acts 16:25-31) Some remarkable examples of true Christian joy despite incredible circumstances have been demonstrated in the history of the Christian church. Huss and Jerome sang as they were being burned at the stake. Do you think you could do that? What gave them the strength, courage, and determination to do that? How could anyone have joy when hanging on a cross or while burning at the stake? The Christian's joy is based on the stability of his relationship with his heavenly Father. When that relationship is solid and meaningful, nothing else can shake him. Look at the example of David in the Psalms. He seemed to go back and forth between depression and joy. Notice John 15:11; 16:24; 17:13. Do these verses suggest that a part of Jesus' mission was to bring joy to us? As He was dying on the cross, did Jesus experience any joy to realize that He had just won the great controversy? He said, “It is finished.” Wasn't that a relief? Was He afraid that He would not be able to return to His former position? (DA 686.5)
6. Many of the psalms, which were all written in poetic form, were intended to be sung by the Hebrews to remind them of the joy they had in the Lord.
7. Real Christian joy seems to have some lasting quality to it. What is that? Is *joy* more of an action word? How do you compare *joy* and *peace*?
8. Read Psalm 139; Romans 8:28; 1 Peter 1:8,9; Ephesians 1:1-11; John 14:2,3; Philippians 4:19; Hebrews 4:15,16; 1 Corinthians 15:54. Don't all of these examples demonstrate a clear difference between happiness and joy? Look at the long list of reasons we, as Christians, have to rejoice:
  1. God protects us; He is with us wherever we go.
  2. Nothing can hide us from God's presence.

3. God is our Creator.
  4. God works in all circumstances to bring about good.
  5. Although we cannot see Him now, He promises us salvation.
  6. God blesses us with every spiritual blessing.
  7. He has chosen us to be His children—His own people in union with Christ.
  8. He gives us salvation as a free gift.
  9. By the “blood of Christ,” we are set free.
  10. Our sins are forgiven.
  11. God has won the great controversy throughout the universe.
  12. He has gone to prepare places for us in heaven.
  13. He is coming back to take us home.
  14. He supplies all our true needs.
  15. He came and lived as a human being without sinning and died to show us the way.
  16. He has conquered death for us.
9. In light of all this, how can we be discouraged, sad, or depressed? We live in a dangerous and troublesome world. What choices can we make to help maintain the joy we have in Jesus Christ?
  10. What happens if we focus on our problems? Doesn't it cause them to loom larger and larger? How can we practice turning away from our problems and focusing on Jesus? What could you possibly say to a mother who has just lost her child? Does it help to know that Jesus is waiting on the other side of the grave? What changed in the attitude and behavior of the disciples between the crucifixion and Pentecost? (Acts 4:13) They knew One who had risen from the dead and had the power to give life to anyone He chose. Death is not the end! We may have problems, but if we look around us, we will see that others are much worse off than most of us. We need to remember the Lord in everything we do?
  11. Is it possible for Christians to bring joy to God and to the heavenly angels? (Luke 15:4-24) Does it seem right to you that “there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine respectable people [are these just people that are ‘puffed up’ like the Pharisees?] who do not need to repent”? (Luke 15:7, *GNB*) Why does God get so excited when a sinner repents? Notice that the same refrain is repeated in Luke 15:10. Can we make heaven rejoice by bringing others to Him? Think of the effort and expense we put in to extend someone's life for a few weeks or years. **How much effort should we put in to extend someone's life for eternity?** Can we actually help someone repent? How would we do that? The only way is to “bring them to” Jesus/the Holy Spirit and let Them do Their part of the work.
  12. How does God expect us to express our joy? Do we honor God when we praise Him vocally? Does knowing God's love bring you joy? Does obeying God's will bring you joy? If so, how? Is a straight-laced, long-faced Christian an example of joy? How should obeying God bring happiness?
  13. Is there a logical sequence to the characteristics in the list in Galatians 5:22,23?
  14. If we really believed that leading a sinner to repentance brought great joy to the angels of

heaven and even to God Himself, would we be more zealous in our witnessing?

15. Jesus was willing to come and live 33 years of a very difficult life and die a death on the cross because He foresaw the salvation of souls that would result. Is it asking too much of us to witness to those people? Think of all the trouble that the Devil and his angels must have brought on Jesus! Is it too much for us to suffer just a little bit of trouble on His behalf?
16. Isaiah 53:3 describes Jesus as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. John Chrysostom who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century pointed out that the Bible never mentions specifically that Jesus smiled or laughed. If we know those things are true, how can we believe that He was a man of joy? (Matthew 9:14,15; 11:18,19) Didn't the children love to be around Him? (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17) Even when the moneychangers fled? (Matthew 21:12,13) Children are not attracted to people who are always grumpy or sad. Did Jesus have a sense of humor? Look at some of His interchanges with the Pharisees and scribes! They schemed up so many things to try to trap Jesus. But His answers always were so logically compelling and obvious that people must have smiled to see the scribes and Pharisees squirm a little! Jesus did not do those things just to give them a bad time; He was trying to teach them something at the same time. They were trying to destroy Jesus and everything that He stood for, and He just proved again and again that their arguments were ridiculous! Jesus did talk about Himself and His disciples being happy because as a "Bridegroom," He was still with them. (Matthew 9:14,15) Take a look at some of the creatures that God created, and you can see that God has a sense of humor! Did God laugh when Sarah got pregnant at age 90? (Genesis 18:10-15)
17. Do you actually believe that joy is a logical response to God's love and care? Research suggests that 50% of one's capacity for positive feelings is genetic; another 10 to 15% is thought to be related to socioeconomic status, marital status, health, income, and similar factors; the remaining 35 to 40% is unexplained variance—we are not sure where it comes from. Do you believe that you have "happiness genes"? Do you have friends who have "happiness genes"? Do you have friends who clearly do not have "happiness genes"?
18. Some think that virtually all human activity is intended to bring happiness. Remember that happiness is regarded as a result of current circumstances. However, some happiness might be the result of expectations of good circumstances in the future. All of us have parts of our jobs that we probably do not like very much, but we do those parts to get to the other parts that we do like and the rewards that we do appreciate.
19. Does God's attitude toward us ever change? Can we have security and stability because we know God's love toward us is unconditional? Would it be fair to describe that condition as "biblical joy"?
20. Read John 15:10,11.

If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. (*Good News Bible*)

Do you find that obeying God's will for your life brings joy? What is the joy that Jesus described as "My joy"? How does that joy enter our lives?
21. Read Psalm 1:2; 40:8. These verses suggest that obedience to God's law or God's commands brings happiness and joy. Has that been your experience? Why would obedience to God's will bring happiness? Or joy?

22. Those who believe and understand the great controversy should have no trouble agreeing that it was disobedience and rebellion in heaven that has brought all the unhappiness to the entire universe including to our world. But, will obedience bring back that joy?
23. Be honest now! Do you really believe that God knows what is best for us? If so, wouldn't it also be true that obedience to those directions from God would bring us the best possible life? (Psalm 19:8; Jeremiah 15:16; Matthew 7:21-27)
24. While Christians must always be wary lest they get the idea that they are saved by their own works, there is also no question about the fact that a true Christian will have "works." Faith always produces works. Just as the wise man knew the truth and built his house upon the rock, the true Christian will build his life on the Word of God.
25. Can you remember some occasion in your life when obedience has brought joy, and, by contrast, when disobedience has brought pain? How did the good angels feel when Satan and his followers were cast out?
26. What is it that makes the Christian's happiness change into permanent joy? Is it the unchangeableness of God and His promises to us? In fact, don't we live in the world of God's promises?
27. Psalm 98:4-6, Psalms 150, and James 5:13 suggest that we should make a joyful noise, sing, play instruments, and openly express our joy because of God's salvation. Does that mean that our worship services should be filled with joy? If we are thankful for what God has done for us, shouldn't that be expressed as joy?
28. We rejoice in stories such as the ones of Daniel and his three friends when their trust in God saved them from the destructive forces of the Devil. By contrast, we must recognize that thousands, perhaps millions, of other Christians facing similar circumstances have had the opposite result. Are we being dishonest in focusing on the "victories" for God's side?
29. Read Galatians 6:9; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6. These verses clearly point out that we may pass through very troublesome times, but there are still reasons to rejoice. However, if our primary thoughts are about ourselves, and if we are self-centered despite claiming to be Christians, we cannot have true joy. The only permanent joy comes from centering our hopes on our wonderful God.
30. One very important way to maintain joy even in difficult times is to reach out to help others. Job was comforted by God; his family and wealth were "returned" when he prayed for his friends. (Job 42:10) If we can reach out to help others, it will be a huge step toward feeling better ourselves. An expressed "thank you" warms the heart.
31. One of the characteristics of a psychosis is inappropriate affect—having the wrong emotion given the circumstances at the time. When Christians are joyful despite being in very difficult circumstances, are they showing signs of psychosis? What does the Bible say? (Ecclesiastes 3:1-4; John 16:33; Romans 12:15; 1 Peter 1:6) Try to imagine the emotions of Moses as he looked toward Canaan from the top of Mount Nebo/Pisgah. He must have been inclined to feel sorry for himself. But how do you suppose he felt a few days later as he entered the heavenly Canaan? If we are on God's side, it will all work out in the end.
32. God is not trying to tell us that we must paste on a happy face and never be upset, discouraged, or even mourn. There is a time for mourning. (Matthew 5:4; James 4:8,9)
33. Sometimes—in fact, quite often—in the Christian life, we must pass through difficulties before we experience happiness. Moses chose to go with the children of Israel instead of

remaining behind to become a Pharaoh in Egypt. But as a result, he is now in heaven instead of being preserved as a mummy in the Cairo Museum! (Hebrews 11:24,25)

34. Is it an oxymoron for God to tell us that we can have joy in Him and at the same time tell us that we must pass through troubles and trials? (Luke 9:23; Acts 14:22; Philippians 1:20) Aren't we looking forward to something better? (Hebrews 11:16; 1 Peter 1:6-8)
35. Why is it necessary for Christians to suffer and pass through times of trouble before they can enter the kingdom of God? There will be no trouble, sorrow, persecution, or trials in heaven. So, why do we need to go through them now in preparation?
36. Someday, all true Christians' troubles and trials will disappear. Is that more than just "pie in the sky by and bye"?
37. Is it worth it for us to face perhaps minor embarrassment or even scorn from some in order to share God's joy with others in our world? How much joy for eternity would it bring us to know that we have brought souls into the kingdom of heaven? Of course, we cannot begin to do that by ourselves. But God will certainly give us a "star" in our crown for each person that is there as a partial result of our efforts. Is there anything more exciting than that possibility? What would happen if everyone in our Sabbath school class or our church gave one evening a week to witnessing activities or service activities for the community? Would the world notice?
38. It is the duty of Christians to convince the world that the religion of Christ disrobes the soul of the garments of heaviness and mourning and clothes it with joy and gladness. Those who receive Christ as a sin-pardoning Saviour are clothed with His garments of light. He takes away their sin and imparts to them His righteousness. Their joy is full.
- Who have better right than Christians to sing songs of rejoicing? Have they not the expectation of being members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King? *Is not the gospel good tidings of great joy?* When the promises of God are freely and fully accepted, heaven's brightness is brought into the life.—Ellen G. White, *MS 55* (1901); *A Call to Medical Evangelism and Health Education*, p. 26.4; *1 Notebook Leaflets* p. 140.2 [emphasis supplied]
39. Review the lives of some of the outstanding characters in the Bible. How much joy was there in the life of Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, David, Jeremiah, Paul, or even John the Baptist? If we recognize that millions or even billions of souls are going to be lost—perhaps partially because of our failure to witness to them—could we ever be happy?
40. For those who believe in the "larger-view, great-controversy, trust-healing model" of the plan of salvation, it should be clear that every opportunity we have to defeat the Devil and cast our vote for the Lord should be an opportunity for rejoicing. If we can just come down clearly on the side of the Lord and worship Him through our praise and rejoicing, will that help to hasten the second coming? (2 Peter 3:10-12)

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Last Modified: December 5, 2009

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