

3. The Fruit of the Spirit is Joy (1Q 2010—The Fruit of the Spirit)

Biblical material: Psalm 139, Luke 15:4–24, John 15:10, 11, Heb. 11:16.

Quotes

- Holy Spirit, descend plentifully into my heart. Enlighten the dark corners of this neglected dwelling and scatter there Thy cheerful beams. *Augustine*
- It is not fitting, when one is in God’s service, to have a gloomy face or a chilling look. *St. Francis of Assisi*
- Even while we wait for the full enjoyment of the good things in store for us, by the Holy Spirit we are able to rejoice through faith in the promise of the graces to come. If the promise itself is so glorious, what must its fulfillment be like? *St. Basil*
- I can think of nothing less pleasurable than a life devoted to pleasure. *John D. Rockefeller*
- If you were all alone in the universe with no one to talk to, no one with which to share the beauty of the stars, to laugh with, to touch, what would be your purpose in life? It is other life, it is love, which gives your life meaning. This is harmony. We must discover the joy of each other, the joy of challenge, the joy of growth. *Mitsui Sagatome*
- Joy is the best makeup. *Anne Lamott*

Questions

What is true joy? Isn’t searching for personal happiness selfish, whatever the Constitution may say? Why are we made with the capacity of experiencing joy? What is it for? Why is joy one of the fruits of the Spirit? How do we experience the “joy of the Lord”? How is our joy “made complete”?

Bible discussion

Psalm 139 tells us of God’s intimate creation of every part of us—so why did he make us capable of such joy? What does this tell us about God? In the parables of Luke 15 Jesus explains the joy of finding what was lost—what is this saying about us and God? Jesus tells us the story of the vine, and of following his commands, as the way of experiencing complete joy (John 15). How do we understand this? We long for the heavenly city where our joy is made complete (see Hebrews 11:16).

Comment

If I were to characterize the way people live I’d say that they’re trying to find happiness. All that the world wants is to be happy, to get happy to stay happy. “Come on get happy” is the song, “if you’re happy and you know it clap your hands” we sing in Youth Meetings; both the church and the world want happiness. Of course there are different ways that are tried in order to find happiness, but in the end are dedicated to making ourselves happy. But how? How do we make ourselves happy? There are so many suggestions, and so many false ideas. Where do we find true happiness? When we are wearied with earthly pleasures, what are we left with?

I had a friend who was once an Adventist. He was then, I believe, very happy. He had a simple job, and made enough to live on. Then he went into business, first one thing and then the next until eventually he was a millionaire with a large number of profitable companies under his control. He was able to indulge himself and his family, to buy expensive cars—later, even a helicopter. He bought a large home out in the country, living a pleasure-filled life, an “ex-Adventist.” And from what he’s told me, I just wonder how happy he is. For all the wealth of the world cannot compare to the joy of knowing God. It’s certainly not wrong to have money. But when it leads you away from God, it’s a curse.

I had another clever friend whom I worked with in the Aerospace industry. The son of a minister, he worked in space technology, and through his expertise he rapidly rose up the ladder of success. Soon he was General Manager. He had a highly-successful career, and yet he was a very unhappy man. He drank more than he should. One day he asked me to talk with him. At the end of a long conversation about very deep things—the meaning of life, the reason for being, hope, salvation and all the rest, he said to me, “I wish I could have faith. I know you have faith, and I just wish I could have faith too.”

I had other friends who searched for happiness in drink, and drugs, and free sex and continual party-going. I remember sitting with a girl as she rolled a hash cigarette, and her saying, “Why won’t even this make me happy?” She found, as all will find, that the gratification of desire leads to world-sickness, to hopelessness and despair. All the devil’s ways to get happy quick by selfish pleasure-seeking end in revulsion—revulsion at yourself, and revulsion at the world. We’ve all tried it to some extent. The good times of the world. Happiness is a good beer. Happiness is puffing a cigar. Happiness is making love to someone you’ve just met. Happiness is dropping acid. Happiness is a mind-blowing rock concert. Happiness is stuffing yourself silly. Happiness is getting your own way. Happiness is having all you want. But in the end this kind of happiness is as temporary as the morning mist, as satisfying as a mouthful of sawdust.

Ellen White Comments

Joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, and charity are the elements of the Christian character. These precious graces are the fruit of the Spirit, and the Christian’s crown and shield. {RC 170}

But remember that happiness will not be found in shutting yourselves up to yourselves, satisfied to pour out all your affection upon each other. Seize upon every opportunity for contributing to the happiness of those around you. Remember that true joy can be found only in unselfish service. {MH 362}

There is no true joy except Christ’s joy. All the supposed happiness a man fancies he can gain without Christ will prove to be as ashes, a disappointment. Do not suppose for a moment that an irreligious man can be a happy man. No man can really enjoy life without religion. Love to God purifies and ennobles every taste and every desire, intensifies every affection, and brightens every worthy pleasure. It enables men to appreciate and enjoy all that is true, and good, and beautiful. You will ever find with the true Christian a marked cheerfulness, a holy, happy confidence in God, a submission to His providences, that is refreshing to the soul. Faith in God’s love and overruling providence lightens the burdens of anxiety and care. It fills the heart with joy and contentment in the highest or the lowliest lot. Religion tends directly to promote health, to lengthen life, and to heighten our enjoyment of all its blessings. It opens to the soul a never-failing fountain of happiness. {ML 158}

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