

## Summary

Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, but sometimes we put it aside because expressing joy doesn't seem dignified. In what ways do we experience joy and how do we express it?

## Call to Worship

**Psalm 23 (GNB)**     The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need. He lets me rest in fields of green grass and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water. He gives me new strength. He guides me in the right paths as he has promised. Even if I go through the deepest darkness, I will not be afraid, Lord, for you are with me. Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

You prepare a banquet for me, where all my enemies can see me; you welcome me as an honoured guest and fill my cup to the brim. I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life; and your house will be my home for as long as I live.

## Prayer

Lord, during this time of worship, this time of being in your presence, fill me with joy as I rest in your goodness. Fill me with joy as I experience your leading and guidance. Fill me with joy as I reflect on my dark times. Fill me with joy to the very brim, until it overflows into praise for your goodness. Fill me with joy that I will be with you forever.

Only in Jesus name.

Amen

## Song: by B Fielding, B&J Johnson, E Cash, J Ingram

1. I love you Lord, for your mercy never fails me.  
All my days have been held in your hands  
From the moment that I wake up until I lay my head,  
Oh I will sing of the goodness of God.  
*And all my life you have been faithful, and all my life you have been so so good  
With every breath that I am able, Oh I will sing of the goodness of God.*
2. I love your voice, you have led me through the fire,  
In darkest night you are close like no other.  
I've known you as a Father, I've known you as a friend,  
And I have lived in the goodness of God.  
*Chorus*
3. 'Cause your goodness is running after, it's running after me.  
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me.  
With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now, I give you everything,  
'Cause your goodness is running after, it keeps running after me.  
*Chorus*

© Sony/ATV Music Publishing  
Used by permission CCLI 509237

## Prayer of Intercession

Father, I pray today with those in distress.

I pray for those I know who are grieving after the death of loved ones. I pray that the comforter will be with them.

I pray for those I know who are dealing with health diagnoses, surgery and protracted illness. I pray for a healing touch from you.

I pray for those in relationships that are struggling. I pray that their relationship with you will be strengthened, and that this will spill over into other relationships.

Father I pray with those who are rejoicing.

For those who are celebrating new additions to their family. I pray a blessing on those families.

For those who have experienced healing, and I rejoice with them,

For those who are experiencing new life in your kingdom. Father, fill them with hope for the future, for the assurance of eternal life.

Father I pray with those who are persecuted for their faith. I pray that they too will know the hope that comes with belief in Jesus, for an assurance that will never leave them.

And I thank you for those that support them in prayer, in giving, in training and in encouragement.

Father, I lift these prayers before you. Amen

## Bible Reading:

- John 15:9-11

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept 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.

## Song: "Joy to the World" (Isaac Watts)

1. Joy to the world! The Lord has come; let earth receive her king;  
Let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing.  
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.
2. Joy to the world! The Saviour reigns; let men their song employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plain, repeat the sounding joy.  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
3. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the nations prove  
The glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love.  
And wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

© public domain

### Message: “Joy: the Forgotten Fruit”

We all know about the 8 fruits of the Spirit. Love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Hang on a bit!

That doesn't look right! Of course. I've left out joy - there are 9 fruits of the Spirit! We could write the fruits of the spirit like this – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, because joy implies some occasional exuberance where all the others seem to be more serious or a bit more subdued and maybe more acceptable.

When I go to a Crows' match, and it's a close game and Tex Walker baulks right then left and kicks a 50 metre goal on his left foot, I am out of my seat punching the air in celebration. 45,000 people could be there but not one of them would look at me and say, “What on earth are you doing?” But in church we are much more conservative about joy than any of the other fruits of the Spirit even though we have much more to celebrate and be joyful about than a goal for the Crows. In fact, it seems like the odd one out in that list. We might even wonder how joy gets in there on the same list as self-control!

I'm reminded of a story Nicky Gumbel tells in the Alpha Course. A man sitting towards the front of the church suddenly responds to the preaching by standing up exclaiming, “Hallelujah, praise the Lord.” A deacon of the church walked down the aisle and said to him, “Sir you can't do that.” “But I've got religion”, the man replied. “Well sir, you didn't get it here”, retorted the deacon.

A lady of more mature years came to an Alpha Course at my church and shared that she was attending because she had “lost her joy”. She said her faith was secure, but she had lost her zest for life and her faith was not exciting her anymore. Over the couple of years since that course, she has suffered cancer surgery and ongoing treatment, and some crushing family relationship difficulties, but she exudes joy in all these circumstances. She can't get the smile off her face. The depth of her renewed relationship with the Father has borne the fruit of joy.

It is encouraging to read of the expressions of joy in the scriptures. Think of King David as he follows the Ark of the Covenant returning to its rightful place in Jerusalem and he is so happy that he dances behind the Ark. His wife watching from an upstairs window disapproves of his undignified behaviour (for a king no less), but David says his dignity counts for nothing as he celebrates before the Lord (2 Samuel 6). And can you imagine the unbridled joy of the man lame from birth who was healed by Peter and John and expressed that joy by walking and leaping and praising God (Acts 3:1-10).

One of the greatest expressions of exuberant joy was the event around which history is measured. When Jesus was born an angel spoke to a group of shepherds, telling them that this event would bring great joy to the world and like an exclamation mark to this pronouncement a company of angels spectacularly praised God and testified to his glory. Then the shepherds didn't just wander down into Bethlehem to check it out - they hurried! And it must have been quite a sight to see these same shepherds forming their own little

choir as they returned to their fields glorifying and praising God. The Spirit of that same Jesus lives in us today and brings the same joy to our everyday lives.

Not all joy is of course the walking and leaping kind. Paul expresses his joy as he remembers the believers in the churches he planted and the individuals he mentored. To the Philippians he says he prays for them with great joy (Phil 1:3,4) and this is reflected in the blessing he gives to all the early churches. I have just returned from Thailand as I write this and I too experienced great joy to be reunited with the dear friends who minister and grow in faith at the orphanage with which I am associated. I was moved to tears as I watched some young people whom I have known since they were five years old leading worship with such enthusiasm, engaging in prayer ministry and visiting the sick in nearby villages, and assuming leadership roles under the wise mentoring of current leaders. I experienced some of Paul's deep joy as I saw what God is doing in their lives.

It may be hard to accept that joy is linked to suffering. "Consider it pure joy my brothers and sisters when you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance" (James 1:23). And that perseverance produces maturity in our faith. Peter when speaking of grief and trouble, continues, "In all these you greatly rejoice" (1 Peter 1:6). Paul on several occasions agrees that joy is inherent in suffering. "In all these things God works for good" (Romans 8:28), and "In all our troubles my joy knows no bounds" (2 Corinthians 7:4).

Many Old Testament characters suffered a great deal. Satan was given free reign with Job, and he suffered calamity after calamity. Ezekiel had to persevere through all sorts of tough assignments to convince the people of their sin. Nehemiah had to lead the people in the restoration of Jerusalem and in repentance for the sins of the people leading to the exile. How did they get the strength to withstand all that? Nehemiah had the answer. "Do not grieve", he said, "for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). And not only was Jerusalem restored but so were the people. Job was restored 100% better than before. Ezekiel was restored as he saw in his vision the ever-increasing river of water flowing from the temple, and with restoration comes great joy. If you are facing sadness, trials, setbacks, pain, and grief, God's promises through the pages of Scripture are restoration and an outpouring of the Spirit of God and his fruits, including joy. The flow of joy is as relentless as Ezekiel's river. It may begin as a trickle but grows to ankle deep, grows to waist deep, grows so deep it cannot be crossed and cannot be contained and overflows from us. Living water leading to eternal life (John 4:14).

Did Jesus speak of joy? Did the "man of sorrows" experience joy? Even though we don't see much anecdotally of Jesus experiencing joy it was part of him. "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete". In Jesus words above joy is linked to remaining in his love and living in obedience to him. Joy isn't a thing in itself - it is complete when a relationship with him is strong. It is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and only comes when the Spirit is in us.

Let me finish with a story from Thailand which played out while I was there. About 15 years ago a brother and sister were at our Children's Village because their mother said she could not afford to look after them. When they turned 16 and 14, they suddenly became

## Joy: the Forgotten Fruit

---

useful to bring home to put to work, so their mother came back to plead with them to come home. We explained to them that their future would be better if they stayed and completed their education. The girl was torn but decided to stay. She is now a teacher at our school, married to a fine young man from the Children's Village and they're both young people of great faith and in the group I mentioned earlier. The boy decided to go. He worked a number of menial jobs, and got into an unhealthy lifestyle of drugs, alcohol and homosexual relationships. In recent months he was diagnosed with a brain tumour. He came back to see his sister and he was invited to worship. He was prayed for, and he gave his life to Jesus. A few weeks ago, he was hospitalised and fell into a coma. His sister and brother-in-law drove into the hospital early in the mornings and in the evenings to take care of his needs (as is the way in a regional Thai hospital). The weekend before last he died. Their grief was palpable but in the depth of that there was an even greater depth of joy as they, and we, praised God for his salvation.

Sometimes joy expresses itself in exuberant praise of God and his glory, and sometimes in dancing. Sometimes it is a deep satisfaction and thankfulness for the grace of God in our lives. Sometimes it springs from repentance and our cup overflows. And sometimes it expresses itself in tears as we understand the fullness and richness of God's faithfulness in all circumstances. Enjoy all the fruits of the Holy Spirit. And praise God!

Song:            “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”            *(by Charles Wesley)*

1. Love divine, all loves excelling, joy of heaven, to earth come down,  
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling, all Thy faithful mercies crown:  
Jesu, Thou art all compassion, pure unbounded love Thou art;  
Visit us with Thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.
2. Come almighty to deliver, let us all Thy grace receive,  
Suddenly return and never, never more Thy temples leave:  
Thee we would be always blessing, serve Thee as Thy hosts above,  
Pray, and praise Thee, without ceasing, glory in Thy perfect love.
3. Finish then Thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be;  
Let me see Thy great salvation, perfectly restored in Thee;  
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love and praise.

© public domain

## Benediction

May the Holy Spirit be in you, above you, below you, and beside you every day. And may his fruits abound in you, and by them may you be blessed, and be a blessing to others.

Amen

*This service was prepared by Ron Tiller, HopeNet SA*