

5 Essential Truths About Christian Joy

The second fruit of the Spirit is joy. There are varieties of joy we share with non-Christians. The celebrative moments in our life—weddings, births, engagements—are great sources of joy. Achievements—breaking the sales record in the office or graduating with honors—bring joy when we have worked hard and reached a goal. Relationships bring joy when we feel things are right between us and another person.

Life often brings joy even for the nonbeliever, but it is different from the fruit of the Spirit. Some non-Christians seem very happy, but we know from our own experience in coming to Christ, and from the Bible itself, that even the happiest non-Christian endures a void, an emptiness, an aching only Christ can fill.

Uniquely, Christian joy—the fruit of joy—begins with our salvation. In talking about salvation in Luke 15, Jesus told the stories of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. Why? Because these figures of speech spoke of salvation. Our heavenly Father rejoices over us when we are saved. It's a time for joy.

One of the dimensions of joy in the New Testament is the joy of the gospel coming to others. When we see someone else saved and come to the Lord, we rejoice. This is a dimension of joy that we don't focus upon enough. In John 4:36, Jesus talked about the ones who go out sowing and reaping and rejoice together. In Acts 15:3, when the early church heard of the conversion of the Gentiles, they rejoiced over what God had done.

There is joy associated with the infilling of the Spirit in Acts 2:13. The joy is so deep that the 120 were mistakenly

assumed to be drunk. But the Spirit does bring joy. Thank God there are those great celebration moments in worship when our hearts truly sing and we are literally outside of ourselves.

Christian joy is even present in the midst of struggle and stress and suffering. “We also rejoice in our sufferings” (Rom. 5:3). Who rejoices in suffering? Christian joy finds us even in our down times and we rejoice because we know that even in our suffering, God is working out a process in our life. This process is initiated with suffering but goes on to develop endurance—another fruit of the Spirit—and character, that which we are when all the masks are removed.

We rejoice also in our future hope. Jesus said in Matthew 5:12, “Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.” We have not yet even begun to consider the glories of heaven. Many times we’re even reticent to speak about heaven and the afterlife because of the criticism that we are “pie-in-the-sky” people. But we should have joy, uniquely Christian joy, in our future hope. A great day is coming.

The Scriptures give us many ways to keep the joy flowing. We nurture joy as we love, sing and give thanks. Singing and nurturing an attitude of thanksgiving are necessary corollaries to joy.