

# Joy

Baptized in lemon juice!" Some Christians have been described this way. Crabby dispositions, sour expressions on their faces, and a cranky outlook on life. They're not only miserable to be around, they misrepresent God.

The true effect of Christianity is joy. The lessons Jesus taught were meant to make the joy of His followers "full" or complete (John 15:11; 16:24).

## DIVINE JOY

God is the source of pure joy. Jesus referred to "rejoicing in heaven" (Luke 15:7), the Psalms talk about God "rejoicing in His works" (Psalms 104:31), and prophets go so far as to say God "rejoices with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17). God's joy is spiritual and transcends every human feeling or experience.

Christians derive their joy from God. God is a "well of salvation" from which we draw water with joy (Isaiah 12:2-3). In the presence of God, believers find "fullness of joy" (Psalms 16:11). Every Christian virtue that brings us joy, such as faith, hope and love, is from God.

## JOY IN WHAT GOD DOES

God takes pleasure in His handiwork, and we are filled with His joy when we discover and meditate on all He has done in creation (Psalm 92:4) and for us (Psalm 5:11). The joy of God's salvation is especially intense (Psalm 51:12) and finds its fullest expression in the cross of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:9-11). Joy breaks out wherever the good news of God's love is proclaimed and people open their hearts to the life and power of Jesus (Acts 8:8).

Our anticipation of God's work in the future produces a joy that helps sustain us through grief and pain we have to endure now (John 16:22; 1 Peter 4:13; 2 Corinthians 4:17). Being able to see a future joy is what enabled Jesus to beat the shame and torment of the cross (Hebrews 12:2).

## JOY IN GOD HIMSELF

The ultimate source of joy isn't what God has done, but God himself. "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). We can't always rejoice in our circumstances, but we can rejoice in the Lord who transcends our circumstances! Our joy is located above the ups and downs of life. We don't have to see God to rejoice in Him. Just believing can fill us with "an inexpressible and glorious joy" (1 Peter 1:8).

Joy can come to us as a sudden, spontaneous pang of emotion, but it is also a constant attitude we carry deep within our hearts. At all times, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10)

## FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Paul listed first love, then joy, as the fruit of the Spirit (qualities produced in us by God's Spirit, Galatians 5:22). Thus, joy is the result of God's Spirit working in our lives and not something we struggle to "feel" (1 Thessalonians 1:6). The Holy Spirit is constantly working to maintain joy within us as individual believers and within our spiritual community (Acts 13:52).

Though joy is a key feature of the kingdom of God (Romans 14:17), we won't always have smiles on our faces or float through joy to follow (Psalm 126:5-6; John 16:20-22; 2 Corinthians 4:17). However, in a comforting and real way, the Christian can be "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Corinthians 6:10).

Everyone experiences moments of happiness. The human capacity for pleasure is as great as its capacity for pain. But happiness is different from the divine joy God places in our hearts, which is unknown to the world apart from Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:14). The joy of being loved and cared for by God, of having all guilt washed away, of becoming a member of His family, and growing in Christ is all wonderful. But the greatest of all joys is found only in God's presence (Psalm 16:11).

If you would like to know more about the joy of knowing God, please call us and we will be happy to help you any way we can.