

## The Fruit of the Spirit Is Joy



### SABBATH—JANUARY 9

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Psalm 139; Luke 15:4–24; John 15:10, 11; Hebrews 11:16.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “ ‘I have told you this so that my joy will be in you. I also want your joy to be complete’ ” (John 15:11, NlrV).

**JOY AND HAPPINESS DO NOT ALWAYS MEAN THE SAME THING.** Happiness is the result of good or successful events. But joy is the result of being connected to Jesus, the True Vine.

In Psalm 4:7, the difference between joy and happiness is shown. “You have filled my heart with great joy. It is greater than the joy of people who have lots of grain and fresh wine” (NlrV). The “greater joy” comes from knowing and trusting God. Happiness is a result of pleasant situations, such as a successful harvest. Inward joy is steady as long as we trust God. Happiness is as unexpected as a harvest. Inward joy defeats discouragement. Happiness covers it up. Inward joy lasts a long time. Happiness lasts a short time.

Joy is a delight in life that runs deeper than pain or pleasure. This type of joy comes from knowing God's presence in one's life. It lets us rise above bad situations. It helps us focus on the goodness and love of God. Christian joy comes from the fact that God has acted and is acting to save those who always trust in Him.

**SUNDAY—JANUARY 10****THE COMMAND TO REJOICE<sup>1</sup>  
(Philippians 4:4)**

Many believers let the bad things that happen make them feel bitter and angry. As a result, they experience highs and lows in their spiritual lives. For them, to rejoice (to be joyful) seems unreasonable, even impossible. That is why the command is to rejoice “in the Lord” (Philippians 4:4).

We cannot always rejoice in our situations or in other people. This is because both of them may be negative. But we can rejoice in the Lord, because He always is good, and He never changes.

Being spiritually strong depends on our knowledge of, and duty and loyalty to, God. Knowing God helps us live above our situations and be stable.<sup>2</sup> That is why the Psalms were written in poems and set to music. In this way, the people of Israel could memorize the verses and sing hymns to deepen their knowledge of God. Knowing God makes everything else seem less important.

**What reasons do Psalm 139; Romans 8:28; and 1 Peter 1:8, 9 give us for being joyful? How can we learn to rejoice in these promises of God?**



**The Psalms were set to music so that the people of Israel could memorize them and sing hymns to deepen their knowledge of God.**

What are the other reasons for us to rejoice? Could the other reasons be as follows: God saved us? He adopted us? And He promised to give us an inheritance<sup>3</sup> in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:1–11)? When Christ returns, we will enjoy His being with us and the heavenly place prepared for us (John 14:2, 3). Until that time, it is a joy to know that God has promised to take care of all our needs (Philippians 4:19). What is more, we have the honor of serving the One we greatly love. That includes sharing the good news with the lost. And that also includes encouraging fellow Christians to increase their love and service for Him. It is a joy knowing we can pray to God at any time (Hebrews 4:15, 16). Finally, we can rejoice knowing that death does not have the final word (1 Corinthians 15:54).

**We have these promises and the reasons to rejoice. But we still all**

1. rejoice—being joyful.

2. stable—being strong and firm in the Lord.

3. inheritance—a gift given to us.

**struggle with sadness, discouragement, and pain. These are the “facts of life” here and now. No matter what happens to us, how can we learn to find the joy in Christ? What choices are we making that greatly can influence<sup>4</sup> whether or not we can have joy in Christ?**

### **MONDAY—JANUARY 11**

#### **THE JOY OF CHRIST (Hebrews 12:2, 3)**

To understand fully a Christian’s joy, we must take a look at the joy-filled life of Christ. Where did Christ’s joy come from? What were the principles (rules) He followed?

**What part does joy have in three of the most popular parables (stories) Jesus told? What is almost the same in all three stories?**

**The Lost Sheep (Luke 15:4–7)**

**The Lost Coin (Luke 15:8–10)**

**The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–24)**

These three parables help us better understand the heart of God. It is a heart that is willing to celebrate. It is the pure joy of God that shows joy in reaching the lost. Jesus went through much hardship and suffering, but He was filled with joy. This is because He knew He would succeed in saving many people.

4. influence—to have power, or an effect, over persons or things.

Think how important are the words written in Hebrews 12:2, 3. Prayerfully read them: “He [Jesus] paid no attention to the shame of the cross. He suffered there because of the joy he was looking forward to” (NIRV). Write some of the thoughts that come to your mind as you study the meaning of these words. What was the joy that was set before Jesus? Why would the saving of lost souls be so important to God?

**How would you tie together the idea that Jesus “knew all about sorrow and suffering” (Isaiah 53:3, NIRV) but at the same time was a man of joy? Pick a certain problem in your life that causes you sorrow and grief. But at the same time, how can you experience for yourself the kind of joy that Jesus did?**

### **TUESDAY—JANUARY 12**

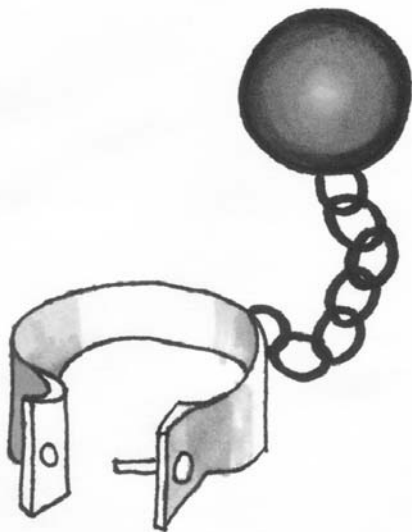
#### **JOY IN OBEDIENCE (John 15:11)**

**What is Jesus connecting joy with in John 15:10, 11? How does this really work? Why should this lead to joy?**

“Blessed is the one [person] who obeys the law of the Lord. . . . He thinks about his law day and night” (Psalm 1:1, 2, NIRV).

“I desire [want] to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart” (Psalm 40:8, NIV).

There is no greater joy than the joy of being obedient to the will of God. Several people may think that obedience to the law of God may serve to sharpen an already guilty heart and mind. But the fact is obedience to the will of God brings freedom from guilt. Remember, it was disobedience that brought war to heaven and sin and death to this planet. All human<sup>5</sup> pain and suffering are the result of humans not obeying the will of God. So, obedience to the will of God through faith helps joy to grow in the heart again.



**Obedience to the will of God frees us from the chains of guilt.**

**How do Psalm 19:8; Jeremiah 15:16; and Matthew 7:21–27 connect obedience with joy?**

The Bible makes it clear that we are not saved by works. But it also is

clear that works cannot be separated from what it means to have salvation. Works show the universe<sup>6</sup> how we appreciate God, who brings salvation to us. We may call someone a legalist<sup>7</sup> just because that person is very strict about obeying God's law. But if we do, we may fall into the trap that Isaiah warned about: "How terrible it will be for those who say that what is evil is good! How terrible for those who say that what is good is evil! How terrible for those who say that darkness is light and light is darkness! How terrible for those who say that what is bitter is sweet and what is sweet is bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20, NIV).

**How have you experienced for yourself the joy that comes from obedience? Or how have you experienced the pain and suffering that come from not obeying the Lord?**

### WEDNESDAY—JANUARY 13

#### JOY IN TOUGH TIMES (John 16:33)

It is a popular belief of many people that if a person is passing through hard times it is because either that person must be doing something wrong or does not have enough faith. What a crude and cold view of God! Jesus said clearly that in this life we would all have troubles, both the believer and the nonbeliever.

5. human—having to do with men, women, or children.

6. universe—all the matter (things), light, and energy (forces in nature that do work) that have been discovered (found) or that we know of.

7. legalist—a person who is thought to be overly strict in obeying God's law.

However much we love the story of Daniel in the lions' den, the fact is most of the Christians thrown to the lions were torn to shreds by the beasts. The same is true with the three Hebrews who escaped death in the fiery furnace. Most Christians tied to the stake were burned there!



Daniel kept his joy in God even though he was thrown to the lions.

**What hope and promises can we take from Galatians 6:9; James 1:2–4; and 1 Peter 1:6 that could help us during painful times?**

Many believers today do not have joy because they are selfish and self-centered. Our problems may be real, but we make them worse by thinking about them. Really, we do have reasons to rejoice, not in ourselves but in God.

Remember that God says, "He [the Father] even counts every hair on your head!" (Read Matthew 10:30, NlrV.) Think of the promise connected with those words. We know our safety

is in Jesus. So, we can reach out and help someone else during our trouble or suffering. Then we can know that self-pity can be turned to joy by just obeying God's will. "After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him successful again. He gave him [Job] twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10, NlrV).

**You might be struggling now. But reach out to someone who is, perhaps, going through a hard time. Surely you know someone who needs help, encouragement, and support. How can accepting someone else's suffering make your own suffering seem lighter?**

#### THURSDAY—JANUARY 14

#### JOY THAT LASTS (Hebrews 11:24, 25)

**What principles of the Christian life are found in Hebrews 11:24, 25? (Read also Luke 9:23; Acts 14:22; Philippians 1:29.) How can we connect these verses with the promise of joy? (Read also Hebrews 11:16; 1 Peter 1:6–8.)**

Moses decided to refuse the throne of Egypt. He might have decided to stay in Egypt and become the next pharaoh. He might have reasoned that to become pharaoh would be God's will (plan) for him. It might not have been that hard to do. This is because there are often so many "good" reasons to make a wrong decision (choice).



Moses refused the throne of Egypt so that he might follow God's will for his life instead.

**Think upon the last time you made a wrong decision based on "good" reasons. What hard lessons did you learn?**

Joy comes from knowing we are obeying the will of God. But the present results often may be difficult and painful. We may think and believe that when we accept Jesus and obey His Word (Bible), all our problems will go away. But this is not what the Bible promises and can lead us to great disappointment. Becoming a faithful Christian does not promise influence (power). Each year thousands of Christians suffer torture. Many even die for their faith.

In the end, our hope, our salvation, everything has to depend upon something greater than what this world offers. How important it is that we always think about what Jesus

has done for us and what He has promised us. If not, we have nothing else but what this world offers. And as we all know, what it offers can sometimes be very bitter.

### FRIDAY—JANUARY 15

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** "It is the duty of Christians to tell the world that the religion of Christ makes a Christian joyful and glad, not sad or gloomy. Those who receive Christ as a sin-forgiving Saviour are clothed with His robes of light. Jesus takes away their sin and gives them His righteousness [holy life]. Their joy is full.

"Who have better right than Christians to sing songs of rejoicing? Do they not expect to be members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King? *Is not the gospel*<sup>8</sup> *good news of great joy?* When the promises of God are freely and fully accepted, heaven's brightness is brought into the life."  
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *A Call to Medical Evangelism*<sup>9</sup> and *Health Education*, page 26, emphasis given.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① Go through the Bible and think about the lives of a few famous believers. How much joy do you think they experienced? How about Noah or Abraham or Joseph? What about Daniel or David or Jeremiah? Or Paul or John the Baptist? What can we learn from their experiences, both

8. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news about salvation.

9. *Evangelism*—the act of spreading the good news about Jesus to the world.

the good and the bad, about what Christian joy really means?

② What are some worldly ways we can be “happy”? How well do these things work? What have you learned about worldly ways of reaching happiness? Are they all bad? Can and should they have their place in our lives?

③ How much happiness or even joy could or should we expect in this life, even as a Christian who knows God’s limitless love? For example, all around us there is sickness, suffering, and death, and we know that many souls are going to be eternally (forever) lost. So, how much happi-

ness should we have? Is it selfish to rejoice in our good fortune while we know that others will die?

④ Why is it that the more self-centered (selfish) we are, the more terrible we feel?

⑤ Why is the hope and promise of eternal life in a whole new earth so important to our whole Christian experience? What would we have without it? How important is it that we have that hope? Suppose we have a very comfortable life here in this world. But we know that it does not remain long. Then how could we be content (satisfied) in the end?