

The Fruit of the Spirit: Joy

Lesson Three

The word "radiate" is written in a large, white, lowercase, sans-serif font. It is centered within a circular graphic composed of several concentric, light gray rings.

Settling In: About 10-20 minutes

- 1) Make a note to yourself who, if anyone, is missing from your home group this week.
- 2) Spend some time finding out how everyone is doing: make a note for prayer requests.
- 3) Introduce a time of conversational prayer. Make it clear that group members are not required to participate if they are not comfortable.

or

- 4) After a more brief time of prayer...lead into a time of quiet meditation on the following scripture passages. Ask for each passage to be read in several translations (such as NIV, the Message, and NLT). Between each passage, allow about a few minutes for silent reflection. Provide paper and pen for each member to jot down impressions and thoughts in response to each passage.
 - a) Ps 4:6-8
 - b) Ps 9:2
 - c) Is 35:10

This is only for your information...don't make a big deal of who is missing to the members who are present.

Conversational prayer means each member taking turns praying for various concerns with reasonably short and to the point prayers.

Think of these studies as a palette to paint from. You can rearrange, omit, or augment the materials in the study to fit your home group.

Opener: About 10 minutes

Think about a time when you clearly remember experiencing joy. Now without using the word "joy" or its cognates (such as joyful, joyous, rejoice, or even, enjoy), share with the group one word or short phrase descriptions of what you experienced.

Mini-teach: About 10 minutes

Joy is a choice.

- 1) Almost anyone can relate to the experience of joy when they have been overtaken by happy events. Fewer people can relate to joy as an abiding state of mind or even as a choice.
 - a) A habitually joyful person is sometimes suspected as being fake, or shallow, or perhaps mentally unwell.
 - b) God intends for us to enjoy our lives. But how is this possible if we are world-weary and perpetually annoyed?
- 2) Joy, as with all the other facets of the Fruit of the Spirit, is conditioned by our own choices.
 - a) We usually don't have difficulty understanding that we must exercise our ability to choose in order to be patient.
 - b) But many people think that joy is simply an experience that overtakes them; you are lucky if it happens but there's not much you can do about it.
- 3) Remember that love, joy, and peace are facets of the Fruit of the Spirit. It's difficult to speak of one facet in isolation from the others. For example, we know that joy and peace are closely related and help define each other.
 - a) Even though we are treating each of these facets of the Fruit of the Spirit individually, we can't treat them in total isolation from each other.

The Fruit of the Spirit: Joy

Lesson Three

- b) They are part of the whole character that the Holy Spirit seeks to grow in our lives.

Discussion 1: About 15 minutes

Philippians 4:4-7

- 1) In 4:4 Paul exhorts us to rejoice always.
 - a) Why do you think he repeats himself?
 - b) Is it possible to be authentic and yet rejoice always? Why or why not?
 - c) Have you found ways to rise above your troubles and experience joy?
- 2) Read Phil 4:2-3. What do you think is happening between Euodia and Syntyche? Note that this passage on rejoicing starts with a reference to a conflict.
 - a) How does Paul's instruction regarding gentleness (Phil 4:5) make sense in light of the problems between the church leaders?
 - b) On what basis can they find gentleness and even joy in the midst of this stressful situation? How does Phil 4:5 conclude? What does Paul mean by "the Lord is near?" Is there only one way to understand this statement?
 - c) Does joy need a reason? Does Paul give a reason to always be joyful?
 - d) What are some of the chief killers of joy? ("Worry" will probably be mentioned.)
- 3) In Phil 4:6, what does Paul tell us to do about worry?
 - a) Look up and read Mt 6:25-34 & 1 Pe 5:7.
 - b) How is faith essential to our joy?
 - c) This seems so simple...why is it so difficult in practice?
 - d) Do you think that this means we should be always worry-free? Do you think that Paul was ever worried? cf. Phil 2:28; 2 Cor 4:8,9. See also Mk 33,34.
 - e) Phil 4:6 tells us to include thanksgiving with our prayers. Why? How does this affect the way we pray?
- 4) What do we learn in Phil 4:7 about the peace of God?
 - a) How does God's peace transcend our understanding? Cf. Pr 3:5,6.
 - b) Like faith, peace is also essential to our joy. What does the peace of God actively do in our hearts and minds?

Euodia and Syntyche were probably house church leaders who were having a conflict. Paul appeals to his "loyal yokefellow" (perhaps a third house church leader) to help them to find peace and agreement.

There is always hope and reason for joy even in the midst of troubles because "the Lord is near." Not only is his coming is soon, but he is always close and available to give us his help.

The statement "do not be anxious about anything" is not intended to lead to the idea that worry and anxiety are never a part of the Christian life. Rather, we are to remember that we can commit our worries to God in prayer just as Jesus and Paul did.

The peace of God stands like a sentry, guarding our hearts and minds.

Discussion 2: About 15 minutes

Philippians 4:8-9

- 1) In Phil 4:8, Paul is telling us that we need to take an active role in maintaining the joy of the Lord in our lives. We are to make the effort to direct and discipline our minds to dwell on positive things instead of negative things.
 - a) Why don't most people just do this naturally? What is this saying to us if

The Fruit of the Spirit: Joy

Lesson Three

we are prone to be cynical and negative?

- b) List each of the virtues we should dwell on and discuss how you would explain each of them to someone who tends to be negative.

NIV	Ideas for Explanation
True	Reality; not just mere appearance.
Noble	High moral principles, generous.
Right	Reputable, appropriate, fair.
Pure	Authentic, free from defilement.
Lovely	Compelling, held in high esteem.
Admirable	The best; not the worst. Worthy.
Excellent	The beautiful; not the ugly. Superior.
Praiseworthy	Things to praise; not things to curse.

- c) If we were to make it a practice to dwell on these virtues, how might it affect our attitude? How might it affect our relationships? How might it affect what we watch and listen to for entertainment?
- 2) In Phil 4:9, Paul makes an amazing invitation. What does he tell the Philippian church to do?
- a) Does this invitation seem remarkable to you? Why or why not? *The impact of this statement might be reduced if we think of Paul as SAINT Paul (as in the guy that thousands of churches are named after). Remember that Paul was someone they knew and they knew he wasn't perfect and they certainly did not address him as St. Paul!*
- b) Would you feel comfortable inviting others to put into practice whatever they have heard you say or do? Why or why not?
- c) What is your responsibility as an example to others?

All of us set an example for someone. If we identify ourselves as followers of Jesus, then they are watching us to see what followers of Jesus say and do.

Keep in mind that at very least most of us will become parents. You can be assured that your children will put into practice what you say and do!

Closer:

- Read Phil 1:13,14. What are Paul's circumstances as he writes this letter?
- The Letter to the Philippians is known as the Epistle of Joy because of all of the references to Paul's joy (Ph 1:4; 1:18, etc.) and his encouragements to rejoice.
- Though he writes from prison, he finds reason to rejoice. How will you put into practice what Paul said and did?

Encourage the members to take a few extra moments of silent reflection and prayer. If they have their journals, suggest that they make some notes as a reminder of what God has spoken to them.

Have a suggestion to make this Home Group Guide better? Email us at: contact@radiate-uk.com