



Sermon Growth Guide

November 12, 2023

InstaJoy



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Insta - InstaJoy

John 15:8-11

Key Verse: John 15:11

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

Big Idea: Jesus promises to fill us with His joy.

Foundations

We tend to prefer quick experiences, rather than having to wait. But the problem is that our quick fix efforts rarely satisfy over the long run.

In contrast, Jesus offers lasting fruit that ripens and matures over time. As Christ's life flows through us, we'll take on His qualities and will look like Him. Paul refers to this in Galatians 5:22 as fruit of the Spirit that's evidence of Jesus' work within us.

Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit listed by Paul in this passage—and it's also Jesus' focus in our text. Whereas we tend to link attempts at joy to our circumstances, the joy Jesus offers us remains unchanging. That's because Jesus promises to place His joy within us.

Jesus assures us that we can be filled to the brim with His joy—but this won't happen overnight. The growth and maturation of this fruit of joy is a lifetime process that isn't instant and isn't easy.

The key is remaining closely connected to our Source of Joy. That's why Jesus uses the word “remain” 11 times in the first 10 verses of John 15. We become grounded in the rich soil of Jesus love and joy by spending time with Him that allows His joy to flow in and through us. As Tim put it last week, “This is about habits, practices, and priorities. It's a way of life.”

Understanding God's Word

Together, read John 15:8-11.

Jesus promises us a joy that will be complete. What do you understand Him to mean by this?

Jesus assures us that His joy will be in us. How do you experience this?

Jesus ties our joy to remaining in Him. What do you think He had in mind by this?

Applying God's Word

Jesus offered this promise of joy on a night when He knew He was about to be taken from His disciples, and their world turned upside down. Is it possible to experience the joy offered by Jesus even amidst pain and loss—and if so, how?

Henri Nouwen wrote, “Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.” In what ways can you choose joy this week?

Witnessing God's Word

Joy reaches its fullest expression when it ripples outward to others—and Jesus wants His joy in us to be contagious. As we share our joy with those around us, they're better able to see our Lord in us. With whom can you share your joy this week?

You never know what you might get from coming to church. One Sunday years ago, I returned to my car after worship to discover a flyer under my car's wipers. It declared in big, bold letters: NEEDED: 42 PEOPLE TO LOSE WEIGHT!! NO WILL POWER NEEDED!!!! Then there's the promotion I received in the mail one day: "We'll do all the work—YOU make all the money! Amazing amounts of money can be earned—without working!"

We shake our heads at this approach—but let's be honest about what it's tapping into. Is there anyone here who wouldn't rather get things quickly than to have to wait? An easy path to weight loss. To success. To a nest egg. Or to trust in a relationship. That doesn't sound so bad, does it? The problem is that our quick fix efforts rarely satisfy over the long term. Gordon MacDonald refers to much of what we pursue as cotton candy to the digestive system. It initially tastes good, but it leaves us with no lasting benefit.

Today's passage continues Jesus' message of John 15: a relationship with Him results in changed lives. He tells us, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." (John 15:8) As Christ's life flows through us, our lives become fruitful: we'll take on His qualities and look like Him. But this process isn't easy or instant. It takes time for these lasting qualities to grow and develop.

Have you ever picked and eaten a berry that wasn't yet ripe? Ewww! Fruit isn't instant; it needs time to ripen and mature. When it does, what we taste can be really good. Elsewhere in Galatians, Paul describes nine lasting qualities as fruit of the Holy Spirit—evidence of Christ's work in us. Over the next three weeks we'll look at the first three on Paul's list: joy, love, and peace.

Today's theme is InstaJoy. Would you like a deeper, more consistent joy than you sometimes experience? I suspect

each of us longs to live joyfully—and that makes sense. Lew Smedes observed, "You and I were created for joy, and if we miss it, we miss the reason for our existence."

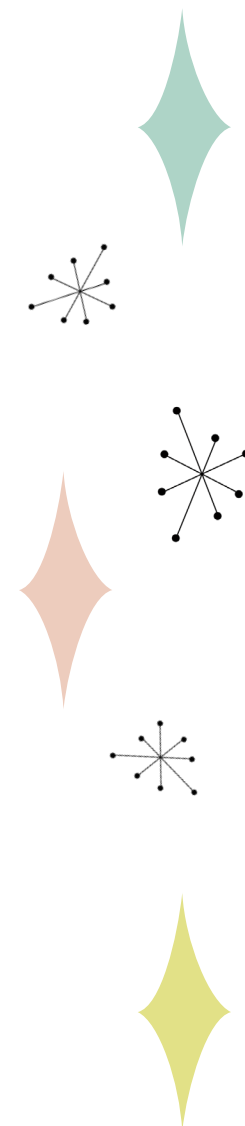
Too often, though, we seek to experience joy in moments that are fleeting. We pursue various activities and interests, hoping they'll make us feel good and add joy to our lives. Do you remember the joy we felt when Peyton Manning and the Broncos won the Super Bowl? That didn't last very long, did it? There's no such thing as InstaJoy. Happiness fueled by circumstances wears off sooner than we'd prefer.

In contrast, Jesus offers a joy that matures over time in lasting and meaningful ways. It's a reservoir of joy that runs deep within, that remains regardless of what may be swirling externally. Does that sound like something you'd be interested in? Let's spend some time unpacking what Jesus is offering us.

We begin with Our Offer of Joy. "I have told you this so that...your joy may be complete." (John 15:11) Dale Bruner translates this, "that your own personal joy can be filled to overflowing." Can you hear the promise? You and I can be filled to the brim with a fullness of joy that has nothing to do with what's going on externally and everything to do with the slow, steady cultivation of our soul within. This joy is the fruit of Jesus' work in us. It's grounded deep within, growing and maturing over time.

The Old Testament prophet Habakkuk experienced this joy. In a time when his nation was threatened and the future looked bleak, Habakkuk wrote these words:

"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls,



yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will be joyful in God my Savior.”
(Habakkuk 3:17-18)

How is this joy different from other attempts at joy that don't last? Moises Silva noted, “Our rejoicing depends not on changing circumstances, but on the one who does not change.”

We experience lasting joy when we seek it from the one who fills us with joy; who offers a deeper, lasting reservoir of joy than we can find anywhere else.

This leads to Our Source of Joy. “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you...” (John 15:11) Jesus invites us to experience His joy—and that's no small thing. Dallas Willard once said, “We should think that God...is full of joy. Undoubtedly, he is the most joyous being in the universe.” If anyone knows joy, it's Jesus. He's basically saying here, “I'm going to put my joy in you.” Jesus isn't offering a better experience of joy than we can find elsewhere; He offers Himself. The more we have of Jesus, the more we have of His joy. You could say that Jesus becomes our reason for joy, as His life flows through ours.

Please note, though, that Jesus doesn't offer His joy so we can hoard it within. He wants our joy to be contagious. As Jesus fills us with His joy, He longs for us share it with those around us. And that makes sense; joy has its fullest expression when it ripples outward toward others. Sharing our joy with others deepens it within us, and reinforces it in each other. Isn't that what we're doing here this morning? Our joyful worship is multiplied by the joyful worship of those around us.

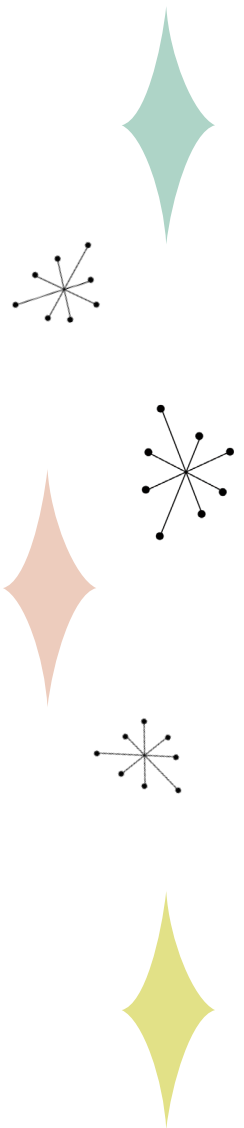
Jesus noted earlier that as we display fruit in our relationship with Him, we reveal Him to the world around us. Similarly, as we share our joy with others, they're better able to see Jesus in us. Sam Shoemaker declared, “The surest mark of a Christian is not faith or even love, but joy.”

This is a wonderful promise of joy—but remember that it doesn't happen quickly. The growth and maturation of this fruit is a lifetime process that isn't instant and it isn't easy. And this leads us to our final point: Our Path to Joy. “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.” (John 15:9-10) This is where the rubber meets the road; or, you could say, where the fruit meets the root!

Anytime something is repeated by Jesus, you know it's important. The word “remain” is found 11 times in the first 10 verses of this chapter. That tells us it's a pretty important concept. Twice here we're instructed to remain in Jesus' love, and He offers His own example of remaining in the Father's love. The Greek word for joy, “chara”, refers to something that comes from deep within the root system. Only as we remain in Jesus can we access God's presence within us. The more deeply rooted we become in our Source of joy, the more we'll experience His joy.

Henri Nouwen wrote, “Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.” How do we choose joy day after day? By remaining close to the Author of our joy. And doesn't that make sense? We wouldn't water a garden with a hose disconnected from the faucet. We wouldn't read at night from a lamp that's unplugged. We can't experience the joy Jesus offers us without a close connection with Him. But how do we remain in Jesus in a way that enables us to experience this joy?

Jesus tells us: “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.” (John 15:10) It's important that we get the order of things correct here. It's not that we keep His commandments, and then Jesus loves us. He loves us, and



then we keep His commandments. And as we seek to become like Jesus by living out what's important to Him, we begin to take on more of His characteristics, like joy.

Our Lead Pastor Tim declared last week that this current series is "about habits, practices and priorities. It's a way of life." How do we know what Jesus' commands are, unless we immerse ourselves in the Bible? How are we reminded of what God desires, without this weekly worship? How do we acknowledge when we fall short of God's desires, without a regular practice of prayer?

We become grounded in the rich soil of Jesus' love and joy by time we spend together that allows His joy to flow in and through us. One way I try to live this out is by sitting quietly in God's presence for a period of time. This is not a time of prayer lists or Bible reading. It's simply a time to sit with Jesus. Yes, my mind wanders far more than I wish it did. But the image that comes to mind is of a child sitting in the lap of a parent. When I spend time just being with Jesus, it feels like we're connected in a meaningful way.

There's much within our world that can dampen joy, and steal it from our hearts. That's why we need a source of joy that won't change even when life does. A few weeks ago I visited one of our elderly members in the hospital. I won't tell you her name, but I will tell you three things about her. First, she'd been hospitalized for nearly 48 hours. Second, walking was a challenge and would continue to be after her release. And third, she had the most beautiful smile during my visit. It was obvious she was drawing from a deep reservoir of joy, experiencing what Jesus offers in this passage. Her circumstances couldn't snuff out her joy within.

Would you like to experience this same joy? Could your joy use some additional depth and consistency? Allow Jesus to place His joy in you. Hold tight this

week to His offer of lasting, overflowing joy. Shift from seeking joy in temporary pursuits, to making Jesus your source of joy. Look for ways each day of remaining closely connected to Jesus so His life will flow through yours.

As we do these things, we'll experience the fruit of joy that can fill our lives and mark us as Christ's disciples. We'll discover what it means for our joy to be complete.

