



Week one

Fruit of the Spirit

‘JOY’

- Welcome (5-10 minutes)

Talk about your favourite fruit! Which one is yours!! How do you like to use fruit? If you could name a fruit, what would you call it!??

- Worship (10-15 minutes)



pray

²² *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*
²³ *gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!*

Galatians 5 (NLT)

- Word (50 minutes)

God does not produce flowers of the Spirit in our lives, but Fruit of the Spirit. There is a significant difference. Flowers are nice to look at, they make the dreary surroundings a little more pleasant, but they have little value beyond that. You do not use fruit for that purpose. If a room is a little drab, you do not hang up a bunch of bananas to cheer it up! Fruit is not for decoration; it is for eating. It is for satisfying the hungry, for giving nourishment to the weary! (p.116, Charles Price)

Read the passage:

Isaiah 35 (NIV)

Joy of the Redeemed

¹ *The desert and the parched land will be glad;
 the wilderness will rejoice and*

blossom.

*Like the crocus, ² it will burst into bloom;
 it will rejoice greatly and shout for*

joy.
The glory of Lebanon will be given to
it,
the splendour of Carmel and Sharon;
they will see the glory of the LORD,
the splendour of our God.

³ Strengthen the feeble hands,
steady the knees that give way;

⁴ say to those with fearful hearts,
"Be strong, do not fear;
your God will come,
he will come with vengeance;
with divine retribution
he will come to save you."

⁵ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

⁶ Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy.
Water will gush forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert.

⁷ The burning sand will become a pool,
the thirsty ground bubbling springs.
In the haunts where jackals once lay,
grass and reeds and papyrus will grow.

⁸ And a highway will be there;
it will be called the Way of Holiness.
The unclean will not journey on it;
it will be for those who walk in that
Way;
wicked fools will not go about on it.

⁹ No lion will be there,
nor will any ferocious beast get up on
it;
they will not be found there.
But only the redeemed will walk there,

¹⁰ and the ransomed of the LORD will
return.
They will enter Zion with singing;
everlasting joy will crown their heads.
Gladness and joy will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

Joy begins where we have a thirst to be with God and to celebrate his living character. When we begin to notice the difference the presence of the Lord makes to our lives, our lives become places of joy and excited fulfilment. The arrival of the Lord's presence into a situation of captivity or disaster is like the bursting into life of a garden in the desert.

- Have a go at describing 'joy'. (It is more than mere 'happiness'.)
- Look at one of the national broadsheet daily newspapers. Where does the world need the joy you have just described?

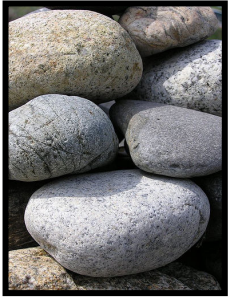


Ziesler has suggested that;

Joy: Greek chara. This is not a matter of being obstinately cheerful on all occasions; after all, there are many situations when we do better to mourn. If we look at the contexts in which Paul writes of joy or rejoicing, they are to do with confidence in God for the future (Rom 5.2) or with being reconciled to God (Rom 5.11), or with gifts of God or of His Spirit. This basic joy can survive difficulties and sufferings (1Thess 1.6) One might suggest that in the Bible, there is a time for joy and a time for sorrow, and in its proper time and place neither inhibits the other. Dare one go further and suggest that the true manifestations of joy are not the fixed grin nor the insensitive refusal to be decently sorrowful, but an underlying courage and a sense of humour? (Ziesler p. 89)

The unifying factor in Ziesler's paragraph is the presence of God within the situations. Happiness may be fleeting, but the Joy which results from the Holy Spirit indwelling a person is something which matures, grows and can be relied on in the whole of life.

- How might Ziesler's 'underlying courage and sense of humour' influence the last or the next big thing in your life? Do you agree with him? Would you add anything to his final question??
- How optimistic do you find Isaiah 35? What is it written in response to? Where does the human impetus come into play?



Isaiah 35 describes salvation coming from the Lord's intervention. There is a sense of the whole of Creation rejoicing as salvation is wrought. This reminds us of Jesus declaring that the stones would cry out if the people stopped cheering on his Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem! Desolation and fear have been supplanted by lush plenty and with hope. Eternal joy describes the redeeming nature of God.

- Look back at verse 1-7. What aspects of your life are 'parched and barren?'

- Where can you see a flourishing as God works his salvation in your Life, Church and Community/Place of Work?

As the Holy Spirit fills and changes you, your responses to life's situations change also.

- What have you changed your attitude toward since you have received the Holy Spirit?

pray!

Pray together for that exuberant joy that accompanies the Lord's presence in your life. Pray also for God to deliver you from a fruitless or meaningless existence. Pray for that deep and abiding confidence in God for your future.

- **Witness** (20 – 25 minutes)

The fruit of the spirit displayed in us, is a witness of Jesus' love and character to the world. As we live out the like-ness of Christ, so we hunger to be more and more like him. As we become more like him, so we reveal him to the people with whom we come into contact everyday.

Discuss and pray for Christ to shine more strongly in you and pray specifically for someone you know, that they might begin to hunger after Christ in their lives.

pray!

Time for refreshments, you've earned them!

Bibliography

Price, Charles; Christ For Real; Kregel Publications; 1995
 Webb, Barry; The Message of Isaiah; BST; 1996
 Ziesler, John; The Epistle to the Galatians; Epworth Commentaries; Epworth;1992

