

Joy and Our Spiritual Formation in Christ

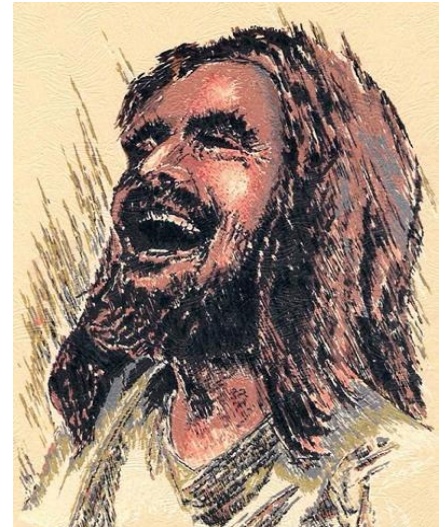
John 15:1-17

October 19, 2025

Joy is part of our spiritual formation in Christ. *“I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete”* Jn. 15:11.

I. Our Experiences of Joy Indicate ...

- Joy is relational. It rests on that which relates to us, be that a special person in our lives or some material thing that we want or give.
- Joy involves gratitude for what is good and right and beautiful in this life. There is a reassuring sense of goodness about life that comes to us as a blessing that affirms everything is alright in this life even when it can seem all wrong. This goodness we sense about life helps us flourish.
- Joy is being loved and giving love.



II. Joy and Our Spiritual Formation

The joy Jesus offers is relational. *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you ... I am the vine; you are the branches.”* Jesus wants us to be related to him in a way that we draw our life from him just like a branch draws its life from the vine. As the source of our nourishment, Jesus embodies the goodness of God that will sustain us and keeps us healthy and growing.

The joy Jesus offers involves living well and doing well. *“If a person remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit.”* Something good and special will result from our relationship with Jesus as our teacher and Lord. Our lives will flourish and have a fruit bearing quality about them that will bring glory to God and a blessing to others.

This flourishing life will become a reality in us as an expression of shared love—of Jesus’ love for us, and our love for him and others. *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love ... my command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”* The purpose in telling us these things is so that Jesus’ joy may be in us, and that our joy may be complete.

The joy Jesus offers promises to complete our joy by connecting us to the source of all good, God. Joy is related to human flourishing and so points to something deeper that we all long for and want. It is a special kind of yearning to be deeply whole and connected and grounded; to be called into deeper communion with what is genuinely true, and genuinely good, and genuinely beautiful; to be in right relationship with the deepest good of the universe. Joy is love finding its rest in God and his goodness. It is

a spiritually based joy that comes through this shared love of Jesus abiding in us and we in him.

III. The Problem of Joylessness

A big problem we face in our society and in our own lives is joylessness. The reason for this is because our search for joy is in all the wrong places. Instead of seeking God to satisfy our souls, we seek all kinds of other things in place of God. That makes our joy incomplete. St. Augustine — “You have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you.”

Another reason we lack joy is because we confuse joy with happiness. Happiness we believe is our responsibility; it's our inalienable right to have and pursue by re-making this world into what we want it to be. Living well and doing well is a matter of achieving material possessions and professional success. But this effort at building a happy life is a fruitless quest of filling our lives with things that cannot satisfy. It exhausts us and makes us unhappy; an unhappiness that only gets intensified as we blame ourselves or others for our inability to somehow fix it all.

The joy that Jesus offers is very different from the pursuit of happiness. It is free from self-mastering, from self-construction, and from self-achieving. It's about self-yielding where we empty our ego of its compulsion to direct and manage all things, and simply receive what Jesus offers, a loving relationship with him that connects to the goodness of life with God.

The cause of our joylessness is spiritual in nature. It's a spiritual condition of not abiding in the loving presence of Jesus Christ who connects us to the goodness of God. Once we know this, we can do something about it. When joylessness comes knocking on the door of our life, it can help us reconnect with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It's a sign that something is wrong that needs to be corrected.

Once we understand joylessness in this way, a breakthrough will take place. Joylessness will become a gateway to spiritual awakening. It will activate our search for a more complete joy; a search that leads to the abiding presence of Jesus and his amazing love for us.

This spiritual awakening will result in an interactive relationship, a close personal two-way relationship with Jesus where we sense him speaking to us, and guiding us through his Word and through our everyday events and activities. A consciousness of him being always with us will fill us with love and gratitude and form us into a more joy filled person.