



Small Group Questions

Part 3: Experiencing Joy

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Read

Luke 2:8–12; Galatians 5:22–23; Philippians 1:11 and 4:6–7, James 1:2–4 and Proverbs 27:20

Reflect

An angel appears to the shepherds in the field to tell them of Christ's birth. He begins by saying not to be afraid—that he brings good news that will cause great joy for all people. That same joy available to the lonely, fearful shepherds is also available to us. But often we are focused on our circumstances. We don't recognize the important differences between happiness and joy. Have you ever focused on the wrong thing, thinking it would bring you happiness, only to realize later that it couldn't deliver?

"Today's contentment becomes the source of tomorrow's complaining." If focused on external happiness, it will take more and more to make you happy. ~ Pastor Greg

Pastor Greg offers three ways to understand the differences between happiness and joy.

1. Happiness is what happens to you; joy is what is produced in you.
 - a. Do you tend to focus on your circumstances? Explain.
 - b. What do you find yourself often putting in this fill-in-the-blank? I'd be happy if _____ occurs.
 - c. Galatians 5: 22–23 lists the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Which fruit of the Spirit do you feel is the hardest to find in yourself?
2. Happiness is insecure; joy is confident.
 - a. Do you find it easy to be full of joy? Why or why not?
 - b. Do you feel anchored in your faith? Or do you feel adrift?
 - c. What do you need to surrender to God? Will you surrender it to God?
 - d. Do you believe that God loves you? That he is consistent? And that he fulfills his promises? Explain why or why not.
3. Happiness is dictated by the facts; joy is defined by the truth.
 - a. Are you in the habit of counting your blessings when things get tough?
 - i. If not, the next time a problem arises and anxiety starts to take hold, take a moment to name five blessings in your life.
 - ii. How has counting your blessings helped you see God's hand in your life?
 - b. Do you believe God works all things together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose? Explain. Would you count it all as joy?
 - i. In the past, how has God shown up in ways you could not have imagined?
 - c. Pastor Greg listed a number of Bible verses on the back of the sermon notes. Which speaks to you right now?

The Holy Spirit lives in us, offering us all the bountiful fruit of the Spirit. As the angel said, Christ made joy available to all people—and that includes you. Will you accept that truth into your heart?

Respond

What is your next step? Where is God leading you? How can your small group support you and hold you accountable in this?