

**Life on the Vine**  
**Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit in Christian Community**

Lesson Two: **Joy**

**Introduction**

1. Share moments in your life when you have experienced pure joy.
2. How do you define joy? What are some synonyms?

**Lesson Plan**

1. Joy and Pleasure
  - a. How are joy and pleasure similar?
  - b. When we are drawn out of ourselves—such as in focusing on another person—we are more likely to describe the experience as joy.
  - c. Often, we seek certain experiences because we desire the pleasure we find in them—but this strategy does not work with joy. As C. S. Lewis said, “joy is a byproduct whose very existence presupposes that you desire not it but something other and outer.”
  - d. How can our pursuit of pleasure lead us into sinful actions?
  - e. A true desire for joy leads us to focus outward—and a focus on the welfare of others is the heart of righteous living.
2. Joy and Love
  - a. Joy now sounds a lot like love. The root word in Greek for “grace” (*charis*) and “joy” (*chara*) are the same.

Reflect on how this outward focus of joy separates joy from our common definition of happiness. Does our understanding of happiness tend to be an inward focus or an introspection of how we are feeling? Can this be self-defeating?

3. God and Joy
  - a. God himself finds joy in working for the good of us, his creation.
  - b. The New Testament also indicates that joy is a result of our own salvation.

Why does salvation produce joy? Is it primarily because we have received something to benefit ourselves or because our relationship with God has been

restored? Considering the above discussion of joy, why would a relationship with God bring joy?

- c. Paul's writings also indicate that joy was to be found in relationship with other believers. Refer to his statements in 1 Thessalonians 2.19-20; Philippians 4.1; and Romans 15.32.

Why would fellowship with other believers be a particularly good place to discover real joy?

#### 4. Suffering and Joy

- a. Christian joy can be experienced even in the midst of immense sorrow and loss. How so?
- b. In the New Testament, we have examples of Christians finding joy in spite of suffering.

In light of our discussion on joy, why do you think these early Christians were able to experience joy in such difficult circumstances.

- c. In addition to affirming that Christians can be joyful in spite of suffering, scripture also states that suffering can actually be a catalyst for joy. How so?

### *Class Discussion Questions*

1. Does scripture encourage Christians to seek suffering as a means of blessing and joy?
2. Why can we assume that all Christians will suffer at some points in their lives?
3. If joy depends on an outward focus on something desirable, what point of focus will help us find joy in times of suffering?
4. What are some things we can do in times of suffering that will open our hearts to the Holy Spirit's fruit of joy?
5. What are some things we sometimes do during times of suffering that prevent the Holy Spirit from blessing us with the joy we could have?