

Fruit of the Spirit

Joy

What is godly joy?

Joy is the delighted response of Christians to the fact that we have been given a precious truth, gift and understanding of a way of life that brings fulfillment—now and forever.

Why does God want us to demonstrate joy?

Joy that is gained through selfish desires and activities only brings a superficial high or temporary enjoyment. Yet there is another joy that comes through the Holy Spirit and following God's way of life that brings real contentment and truly optimistic feelings.

God wants us to demonstrate the latter in order to prove to the world that He is the One who brings happiness. Satan's landmines feel good for a short time but then blow our lives apart. As with all the fruit of the Spirit, Christians' examples are the beacon showing that true joy is better than fake, flimsy, selfish joy.

Also, when we demonstrate joy, we are actively showing where our priorities are. Notice the parable of the treasure in a field: "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44).

The joy over the coming Kingdom and what God has revealed makes everything else in life seem less important. Grouchy, ungrateful, negative and angry Christians don't exactly demonstrate the truth about the Kingdom of God—something so wonderful that nothing else should take priority over it. It is something to rejoice about every day, all day: at work, at home, while driving, while playing—everywhere.

Why demonstrate joy?

If we truly believe what God has told us in His Bible, then we have plenty to rejoice

about. There will be times of mourning in this life (deaths of loved ones or life changes), but even in those times of sorrow and weeping, the underlying joy of God's plan for humanity (including the resurrection of loved ones and the solving of this world's problems) must reign in our hearts and actions. Easier said than done, right?

An example to follow

The apostle John gives us an example of joy that should be present in our lives. In his letter to Gaius, an elder he greatly commended, he said: "For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1:3-4).

John was exceedingly cheerful and happy that people he had ministered to were continuing to walk in the truth. He was joyful because he knew as long as they walked in the truth, they would also have happiness and joy—for eternity.

John's example explains where joy comes from and why it's important. Joy comes from staying true to God's teachings, and it's important because it gives others joy and shows a grateful response to what we've been given.

An example to avoid

Christ mentions joy in His parable of the sower and the seed: "But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" (Matthew 13:20-21).

This is only temporary joy, not real, lasting joy.

The person in the stony places may have had sincere joy at the beginning, but he soon focused on trials and let that joy fade away. Our joy, excitement and happiness in God must always be growing and expanding by staying close to Him and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. ■

— Eddie Foster

Persecuted Country: North Korea

Justin Joy

FACTS

- Head of State: Kim Jong-un (2011)
- Population: 25,405,000 (300,000 Christians)
- Capital and largest city (2003): Pyongyang, pop. Of 3,222,000
- Government: Communist Dictatorship
- Main Religion: Atheism, Traditional Beliefs
- Persecution Level: Extreme
- Source of Persecution: Communist Oppression, Dictatorial Paranoia



For the sixteenth consecutive year (yes 7 years), North Korea is ranked as the most oppressive place in the world for Christians, #1 on the World Watch List. In this totalitarian communist state, Christians are forced to hide their faith completely from government authorities, neighbors and often, even their own spouses and children. Due to ever-present surveillance, many pray with eyes open, and gathering for praise or fellowship is practically impossible. Worship of the ruling Kim family is mandated for all citizens, and those who don't comply (including Christians) are arrested, imprisoned, tortured or killed. Entire Christian families are imprisoned in hard labor camps, where unknown numbers die each year from torture, beatings, overexertion

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**Mark your
calendar**

March 18
Sunday School & Youth Anniversary

