

Gathering

JOY

Joy is the word that describes what Christmas is all about. Several of our favorite carols mention it: *“Joy to the world, the Lord is come,”* *“O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,”* *“Shepherds, why this jubilee, why your joyous strains prolong?”* *“Joyful all ye nations rise, join the triumph of the skies, with the angelic host proclaim, ‘Christ is born in Bethlehem.’”*

It is also the season when we see ‘joy’ everywhere we look. It appears in frames, stocking holders, wrapping paper, lights, banners, decorations, cards, ornaments. But I wonder how many of us feel joyful every day of the season. It’s not hard to feel joy when everything goes well, or when we are doing the things that causes us to have joy. But it’s not always easy to feel joyful when life gets hard. We could say part of our problem is that we’ve got the wrong idea about joy. We tend to connect it with happiness and think that joy depends on our circumstances. The shepherds were about their daily routine when they received the good news of Christmas:

“But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.” Luke 2:10

The Good News of Jesus’ birth was a cause of great joy! The Messiah, the Savior of the world -the one who would eventually die for us, giving us the gift of eternal life in heaven -was born. This joy is not carnal, but spiritual; not temporary, but lasting. It cannot be taken away from our hearts; it’s not small, but a great unspeakable joy, full of glory!

This season, as you hear the story of the birth of Jesus one more time, invite the Holy Spirit to fill you again with everlasting joy. Put yourself in the shoes of those shepherds that holy night when they received the good news. It was joy for them, it is joy for you and me.

After reading scripture, consider these questions:

- How have the “Good News” of Jesus impacted your life?
- What is the difference between happiness and joy?
- Explore why people, including some believers, may find difficult to feel joyful
- How do you stay joyful in God?

Complete your monthly report and turn it in to the Corps Officer.

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Luke 2:10

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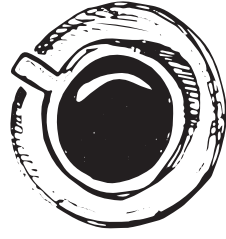
Even during this time of the year, the world's joy cannot last because it is based on fleeting, physical circumstances. But the joy of the Lord is established in our spiritual, eternal circumstances. How can we then make a difference in the way we celebrate this season so that His eternal joy is evident in us and through us?



The Holy Spirit constantly works to help us display His fruit. Therefore, the presence of the “*fruit of the Spirit*” is evidence that our character is becoming more like Christ’s.

2 CORINTHIANS 3:17-18.

What spiritual disciplines can you reinforce to grow joy in your life? Focus on one or two this month and allow the Holy Spirit to produce true joy in you.



Written by Captain Lorena Castillo,
PENDEL Division

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