

*Nine*  
F R U I T S  
*of the*  
S P I R I T

A Bible Study on Developing Christian Character

*Joy*

R o b e r t   S t r a n d



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## *Introduction*

There is an ancient story out of the Middle East which tells of three merchants crossing the desert. They were traveling at night in the darkness to avoid the heat of the day. As they were crossing over a dry creek bed, a loud attention-demanding voice out of the darkness commanded them to stop. They were then ordered to get down off their camels, stoop down and pick up pebbles from the creek bed, and put them into their pockets.

Immediately after doing as they had been commanded, they were then told to leave that place and continue until dawn before they stopped to set up camp. This mysterious voice told them that in the morning they would be both sad and happy. Understandably shaken, they obeyed the voice and traveled on through the rest of the night without stopping. When morning dawned, these three merchants anxiously looked into their pockets. Instead of finding the pebbles as expected, there were precious jewels! And, they were both happy and sad. Happy that they had picked up some of the pebbles, but sad because they hadn't gathered more when they had the opportunity.

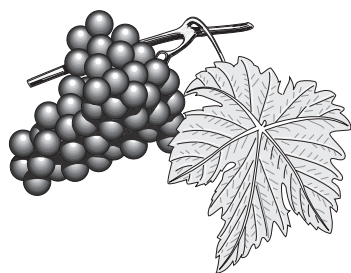
This fable expresses how many of us feel about the treasures of God's Word. There is coming a day when we will be thrilled because we have absorbed as much as we have, but sad because we had not gleaned much more. Jewels are best shown off when held up to a bright light and slowly turned so that each polished facet can catch and reflect the light. Each of these nine jewels of character will

be examined in the light of God's Word and how best to allow them to be developed in the individual life. That is how I feel about the following three verses from Paul's writings which challenge us with what their Christian character or personality should look like. Jesus Christ has boiled down a Christian's responsibility to two succinct commands: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and body, and love your neighbor like yourself. Likewise, Paul the apostle has captured for us the Christian personality in nine traits:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25).

At the very beginning of this study, I must point out a subtle, yet obvious, distinction. The "fruit" of the Spirit is a composite description of what the Christian lifestyle and character traits are all about — an unbroken whole. We can't pick only the fruit we like.

Unlocked in these nine portraits are the riches of a Christ-centered personality. The thrill of the search is ahead of us!



# Joy

*XAPÍA*, (Greek) chara,  
pronounced khar-ahí,  
meaning: cheerfulness, calm delight;  
gladness multiplied greatly; to be  
exceedingly full of joy!

*THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS . . . JOY*



Joyful people can be found any place and in some of the strangest of places! Being joyful is not dependent upon circumstances! Now it must be pointed out at the very beginning that there is a natural joy possessed by lots of people, a natural joy in the beauty of music or nature. There is a human joy in delightful relationships. There is joy in the satisfaction of a job well done. There is a healthy enjoyment of life. But we must also note that this kind of natural joy, at best, is fleeting, it's not permanent.

Sherwood Eliot Wirt was asked by Billy Graham to be the editor of a new magazine in 1958 called *Decision*. Not only was he the editor, but a warm relationship has

*And here  
is a Billy  
Graham  
one-liner:*

*“God  
answers  
my  
prayers  
everywhere  
except on  
the golf  
course.”*



grown between these two men over the years. “Millions of people have heard Billy Graham preach from the pulpit — but many have never heard him laugh,” writes Wirt. “I can testify that he loves to laugh! At team meetings and with his family, his laughter often rings out, hearty and robust.”

Wirt has written a delightful book, *Billy*, and I quote from it: “Like Nehemiah, Billy is a man of joy. The joy of the Lord is his strength; and the joy of the Lord brings laughter. He feels the joy of being alive in God’s creation. He is thrilled by the prospects of future bliss in heaven.”

Graham, Wirt notes, has written:

One of the characteristics of the Christian is inward joy. Even under difficult circumstances, there will be a joyful heart and a radiant face. Unfortunately, many Christians go around with droopy faces that give no outshining glory to God. A true Christian should be relaxed and radiant,

capable of illuminating and not depressing his surrounding.

I have found in my travels that those who keep Heaven in view remain serene and cheerful on the darkest day. In all ages people have found it possible to maintain the spirit of joy in the hour of trial.

There are times when I feel I don't have joy, and I get on my knees and say, "Lord, where is the fruit of the Spirit of joy in my life?" I find that the joy is there down deep — it is a deep river. Whatever the circumstance, there is a river of joy.<sup>1</sup>

*WHAT REALLY IS JOY?* 

In your living — what are the kinds of experiences in which you have experienced real joy?

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Are joy and happiness the same thing? If not, write down the differences?

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If you believe they are the same, explain:

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The Bible has a lot to say about joy and joyfulness. Even a quick reading will give us the concept that God approves of His people being joyful. As we analyze the joy that is specifically the fruit of the Spirit, keep in mind how it can change or improve your own personal lifestyle.

Let's start our study by reading 1 Peter 1:3-9.

What has this "new birth" given to us?

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Based on this text, how was it possible for these first century Christians to experience joy in spite of persecutions and even imminent death?

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Are there any purposes served in suffering?

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Why would God allow any of us to be hurt and suffer?

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What are some of the “kinds of trials” which you have experienced?

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