

Sermon Study Guide (January 29, 2023)

This Week: A Vibrant Faith is Exciting

Series: Vibrant Faith

Passage: I Thess 1:6; Acts 1:5

BIG IDEA: Supernatural joy is a fruit that is produced when we give permission to the Holy Spirit to be active in our lives.



APPETIZER: Let's chat!

Group Discussion: What would your meme look like in response to the question, "Tell me you're a Christian without telling me that you're a Christian."?



MAIN COURSE: Getting into the text.

1. **Have someone read I Thess 1:6**
2. **Context:** Godly joy is something that is unique to Christ-followers alone, because only Christians have the Spirit of their faith's founder living within them. Neither Buddha nor Mohammed have a Holy Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit – and the fruit that He supernaturally produces - is unique only to Christians.

3. **Discuss.** Is this something that we take for granted and have lost sight of? How do other religions expect their followers to demonstrate godly behaviour if they don't have a Holy Spirit?

Examples of Paul and Silas singing hymns in prison and Corrie ten Boom surviving a concentration camp during the Holocaust were given as examples of "joy in suffering". **Can you share any examples of how you have seen this on display in someone else's life? In your life?**

Two caveats were presented in this teaching about the Value of being "joyfully Spirit-filled":

1. **Godly joy is not exclusively for our own benefit. It is also a means by which we can point others to Jesus.** Jesus said in Matt 5:16 to "let us our lights shine before all people." Christians can be a bright witness to the world when we live, act and react to circumstances that are different than what the world expects from us.

"Joy in suffering" is one poignant way that might make the heads of the world stop and take notice when they see us at peace and with joy during the difficult seasons of our life.

The illustration is given of a **metal can** that crumples when a vacuum is created inside of it. Christians don't HAVE to be stressed out, nor do they HAVE to crumple and collapse and we don't HAVE to be overwhelmed,

because we can tap into the joy and strength of the Person of the Holy Spirit within us.

Can you share times when you were tempted to react to stress in your life like the world does because of grief, loss or suffering but experienced a supernatural presence of the Holy Spirit providing you peace and joy instead?

2. The second caveat shared was that “joy” is a fruit of the Spirit, not a fruit of salvation.

Some of the most miserable people in the world are Christians – so mean, judgmental and angry! **How is it possible that we can live lives that do not reflect the teachings and Character of Jesus?**

Just because we are Christians, does not automatically presume that we will see the fruit of the Spirit present in our lives. It is only when we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit that He is given permission to transform, shape and direct our lives.

We all receive the Holy Spirit when we surrender our lives to Jesus, and then begin a relationship with the third member of the Trinity. We can choose to “keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit” (Eph 5:18), or we can restrict His access in transforming our lives.

Two illustrations are given to help us understand this dynamic better:

a. The sponge and bucket. The Greek word that Jesus used in introducing the experience of the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” is “baptizo” – plunging a sponge deep into a bucket of water and pulling it out dripping with the water that it consumed.

b. The hallways and doors. Another interpretation of the word ‘baptizo’ is to be “fully consumed”. The idea of being filled with the Holy Spirit is likened to water filling a hallway and doors being opened so that the water can also fill the rooms that the doors lead to.



DESSERT: How do we respond?

How might you describe your spiritual vibrancy? Are you experiencing a joy and passion in living for and serving Jesus? Or have you lost the joy of your salvation? Is your heart dripping with the presence of the Holy Spirit, or has it grown dull, lifeless and lackluster?

The antidote for each and everyone of us is to “keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit”. What does that mean if we already have the Holy Spirit within us?

We fully have the Holy Spirit within us, but the Holy Spirit likely does not have full control and access to our hearts because of the restrictions that we have put in place.

The key to us finding new spiritual vibrancy in our lives is a fresh surrender and yieldedness to His control. Our prayer becomes “Lord, I give you all of me for more of You.”

Take a moment as a group to pray the prayer that closed out the service with the congregation:

Dear Jesus.

We ask that you baptize us with your Holy Spirit. Some of us have let our hearts grow very dry and dull. Some of us have been distant from you for quite awhile now. And some of us have shut doors in our hearts that have kept you from doing your work in our lives.

We acknowledge that, but most importantly, we confess this and ask for Your forgiveness. Forgive us for resisting You and preventing You from being active in our lives the way that only You can.

Would you please fill me again? Would you please flood my heart with Your grace, Your mercy, Your holiness, Your power, and frankly – anything and everything else that You see fit.

I surrender and yield my life to You once again, and am so grateful that You are a God who loves His children with an everlasting love.

In Jesus' name, Amen.