

**Where is the Joy?**  
**Philippians 4:1-12**  
5-3-15

We are told that an expectation of being a Christian is certain parts of our lives should see an improvement. Specifically, we anticipate receiving what is called the Fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. But often times, those virtues fail to manifest themselves in our lives. Specifically, we might ask: “where is the joy”?

First, it is important that we understand that there is a difference between joy and happiness. The word “happiness” is not found in the New Testament. Happiness depends on happenstance, or the events of the moment. Paul spoke about the ability to rejoice in the Lord in Philippians 4. However, he said this while in prison (1:7), expecting the possibility of his execution (1:20). Certainly he was not “happy” about this, but Paul was in a condition where he could find joy (Php 4:11 *Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.*) We cannot always have happiness, but we can always have joy.

Second, we need to know that the reason we do not have joy is often because we still walk in the works of the flesh. In Galatians 5:16-26, Paul contrasted the Fruit of the Spirit with the Works of the Flesh. He made it clear that we cannot have both. Imagine that your life is a cupboard that can only fit a certain amount of dishes. For every work of the flesh you have, perhaps you must remove a Fruit of the spirit. If you do not have joy, perhaps it is because you still have jealousy or strife. Lacking love? Maybe immorality is in its place. In order to have the full Fruit of the Spirit, you need to remove the entire Works of the Flesh. This may be why you do not have joy – you have made no room in your life for it by keeping works of the flesh.

Third, you need to learn how to pursue joy. This was Paul’s point in Philippians 4 – that there are things you need to do to find joy. First, you need to put away anxiety (4:6). Jesus commanded this in Matthew 6 – do not worry. Worry is a result of a lack of faith and a failure to put God first. Second, you need to surround yourself with those worldly things that will have a positive impact on you. Paul said to think on things that were good, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy, etc. These are not necessarily spiritual characteristics, but attributes that we could apply to our entertainment, friendships, hobbies, work, or other things we do each day.

God has equipped us to have joy. When we do not, it is because we have retained the works of the flesh, and have failed to hold on to the Fruit of the Spirit. It is just that simple.