

If you've been unable to hold back a smile when reacting to the truth of a Scripture verse, you've got the Holy Spirit to thank for that experience.

Every time the words and music of a favorite hymn, chorus, or choir number has made you want to stand to your feet and lift your hands in worship, you've been brought there—out of yourself and into God's presence—on the powerful wings of the Spirit.

Whenever you've been together in prayer with a handful of friends and closed out the night by sharing coffee and conversation around the kitchen table, you've enjoyed a sense of community created just for you by the Holy Spirit.

Even in times when life wasn't cooperating—but you finally broke through to a place where you could breathe again—the hands that held you and led you out of the darkness came from the firm, eternal grip of God's Spirit. He knows full well how to wrest joy from the tight fist of hardship.

There are many wholesale suppliers of spiritual ice cream and candy, of feel-good moments and flighty infatuations. But true joy is only made by one manufacturer who still delivers right to your door.

Read Luke 10:17-24

I know it's not the way our minds customarily think, not in today's highly competitive, advertising-based culture. We like to push the benefits of our product, then wait for later (after someone's already bought in and can't bring it back) before they discover that there's some work involved in getting the results they were promised.

Yes, the bleach spray *will* whiten the grout and tile in your bathroom shower but not without some toothbrush scrubbing. The fancy new rug shampoo *will* get the pet stains out of your carpet, but you'll have to get down on your knees to do it.

And so I've deliberately left off this upbeat attribute of the Spirit till near the end of the book because to do otherwise wouldn't be entirely honest or give the whole picture.

People wouldn't understand that this is a deeper joy than they're thinking of, more permanent and weighty than any pang or thrill or happiness they've ever felt before. They'd have no way of comprehending that his joy isn't a switch we can turn on, an automatic setting we can dial up without having said two words to him the last three weeks. His joy is not a Tootsie Roll jar passed around for anybody who wants a piece.

Instead it's something much sweeter, much richer, much more fulfilling. That's because the Spirit's done the hard work to make us ready to receive his pure satisfaction.

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

Oh, I'm not saying for one minute that we should ever—ever!—apologize about the joy we feel from our relationship with the Spirit. We should embrace it, celebrate it, fling ourselves back into it the way they used to do the old Nestea plunge on television.

But before we can truly experience his joy, we must let him do in us those hard-fought things we've been talking about up to now.

We must give him room to convict us of our sins—helping us see them for the filthy pollutants they really are, repenting of them, letting him purge them out of our hearts like toxins flushed from our system. Sin is a joy eater. Makes you wonder why we love it so.

We must give him permission to guide our steps in whatever direction he desires—forefeiting our own autonomy, learning to realize that the paths we think up ourselves are fatally flawed by our own flesh, our own agendas, and our own shortsightedness.

We must let his Word become our daily diet of truth—believing what he says no matter how we happen to feel about it at the moment, no matter how many excuses we want to make for asking him to meet us halfway. There’s no joy to be had by hanging on to our own opinions or by foregoing faith just to keep our friends happy.

But as a result of the Holy Spirit’s hardworking traits, he lets us experience a joy you simply cannot find at the bottom of a Ben and Jerry’s cup. It’s a zest for life that only comes from being kept pure and led eternally.

Something Fun To Do

Ask the seventy who were sent out by Jesus, commissioned to give people the heads-up that the Son of God was coming to their town. The joy they received from the Spirit as they made connections, met needs, and mingled with the crowds was a *hundred* times better than if he’d just handed it to them one day after lunch.

What they discovered at each village was the fact that real joy comes from being employed by the Spirit to perform his work. They felt it every time they brought a smile to a troubled face, every time they amazed even themselves by seeing a crippled girl healed or a demon scrambled at one word from their mouths. They knew God was doing something in them and *through* them that they could never do on their own.

So, no, the unbelievers don’t get to have all the fun. In fact, there’s nothing more exhilarating, more electrifying, than being a power tool in the hand of God. And we have the joyful option of being one every day. Sound like fun to you?

Luke 10:17 “The seventy returned with joy”

Jesus had sent them out to minister in his name, and his Spirit working through them had filled with them with joy. Talk about how that feels.

Luke 10:21 “in that same hour He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit”

Even Jesus himself depended on the Spirit for his joy supply. Why is everything else bland and empty by comparison?

Luke 10:23 “The eyes that see the things you see are blessed”

What have you seen lately through your spiritual eyes that has blessed you with joy and gladness and encouragement?

The Spirit fills us with joy and worship. “The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking” or going to movies, or shopping for sweaters, or listening to jazz music. Those things are fine and fun, but they cash out their full payment to you almost immediately. Once you’ve used them up, they’re pretty much out of gas. “The kingdom of God,” though, is “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17)

Holy Spirit, I could use a little of that today. Help me not to waste my time looking for it anywhere else.