

INTRO

- Do you have any favorite comfort food for the Fall season? What is it?
- What kind of music makes you feel happy?

READ

Read Galatians 5:22-25

REFLECT

Christian joy is more than a feeling; it is a Christian virtue. The virtue of joy is the disposition of character of rejoicing in the Lord even when the circumstances around us are difficult. It is the inclination to see things from God's perspective, to understand who we are as his creatures, and to remember what it means to live a blessed life.

1. Joy from knowing where we are

One reason we can find ourselves despairing in life is because we have staked our happiness on something that can't really sustain it. Perhaps we see ourselves not getting any closer to achieving this something, or we have achieved it, but it failed to make us happy.

Christian joy reminds us of who we are as God's creation. We were made by him and for him, and were made also to do the "good works prepared beforehand". And as long as our lives are directed towards Christ and we walk in the works he prepared for us, we can experience the unshakable joy of living our life's purpose with Christ on our side.

Qu: Can you think of a time when a new perspective completely changed your attitude or your mood about something?

Qu: How do you see the connection between knowing what we were created for and living joyfully?

2. Joy from knowing where we are going

It is undeniable that even a life of joy in Christ is still aware of all the ways in which the world hurts and suffers, including ourselves. Because of that, an important ingredient of Christian joy is *hope*.

It is the hope we have in Jesus Christ that can help us persevere with joy even when life hurts. It is a promise rooted in his resurrection—when he defeated death and began to make all things new. His promise is that was just a foretaste of what is to come when everything will be made right and restored to the perfection God intended for his Creation.

Qu: Have you ever experienced joy in the midst of suffering? What had hope to do with it?

3. Countercultural joy

Christian joy is countercultural because our natural tendency is to put our hopes in the things of this world, and then to despair when they fail us. And while the world sometimes answer the problem with *detachment*, the Christian answer is *right attachment*: to build our hope and our happiness in Christ and the certainty of his promises. And to do that, we must frequently remember and meditate on God's word.

Qu: What practices have helped you experience greater joy in life?

Qu: How can we encourage one another to experience the joy that can only be found in Christ?

RESPOND & PRAY

- What encouraged/challenged you the most from this discussion?
- Spend time praying for one another and those you know who need to hear the good news of salvation.