

**Becoming More like Christ (I): Love, Joy, Peace**

Passages: As listed in the lesson.

*Memory Verse*

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22–23)

<b>Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]</b>	<b>Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]</b>	<b>Good Works [Behavior]</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. God’s love is sacrificial.</li><li>2. God’s joy is not dependent on our circumstances.</li><li>3. God’s peace is found through peace in God’s presence, peace with ourselves, and peace with others.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. God is love.</li><li>2. He is the true source of joy.</li><li>3. God is peace.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Demonstrate our love and joy for others in the power of the Holy Spirit.</li><li>2. Strive to experience God’s peace.</li></ol>

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Love
- B. Joy
- C. Peace

**Life Application:** My Action Plan

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** True love requires selflessness, and joy must flow from us, not into us because of external factors. In the same way, true peace stems from our heart, and remains unaffected by the things of this world, because it comes from the Spirit.

## Events and Spiritual Teachings

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### Introduction: Becoming More like Christ

Just like physical growth, spiritual growth also takes time. But it is slightly different in that we have to put effort into our spiritual growth. Paul told us “that we should no longer be children [...] but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him [...]” (Eph 4: 14–15). But how do we grow up spiritually? One of the ways is by growing in the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Today, we’ll be studying three traits of the fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, and peace. These are not easy traits to develop, but Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). If we abide in Him, then the Holy Spirit will help us bear more love, joy, and peace. Therefore, to grow spiritually and become more like Christ, the first step is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. But aside from this, what can we do to produce these characteristics? Let’s go into more detail about each to see how to develop them in our lives.

#### A. Love

*“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” (1 Jn 4:8)*

First, how would you define “love”? Try completing the following sentence: “Love is...” (*Allow students to brainstorm answers.*) We tend to associate love with emotions and feelings, or at least rather vague ideas. But God’s definition of love goes beyond feelings. The Bible often refers to “love” with the Greek word *agape* (Gal 5:22). This same word refers to the perfect love that Jesus demonstrated by laying down His very life. It transcends human love and is the purest and highest form of self-sacrifice. This is the form of “love” that God wants us to develop within ourselves. For the following verses, write down or underline how we can show our love for others.

- 1 Thess 1:3 – “[Remembering] without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father.”
- Gal 5:13 – “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”
- Lk 6:27 – “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.”
- 1 Jn 3:18 – “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”
- Jn 15:13 – “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.

There are many things in life that show love, but many find it hard to put love into action. From these verses, we can see that godly love can be seen in putting others first in our actions. It is something that requires “labor,” servitude, and sacrifice. The Bible even calls us to love our enemies! The love that we already have may exist when we receive it from others, making our love very self-centered. This is because it is easier to love when we are loved by others first. But Jesus’ love never depended on His mood, the environment, or what others said or did (Mt 5:46–48). God’s love is completely selfless. Knowing this, how do we live out this same kind of love when it’s so difficult to do?

#### Living Out the Love of God

Let’s read Romans 5:5. “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” God has already given us His love! All we need to do is pray in the Spirit. When we do, He will fill us with His power, which will help us grow in our love for others and our love for God. When we do, instead of prioritizing our own desires, we will set aside our own plans for the sake of others, and act with patience and goodness towards those around us, even if they are difficult to get along with. We will be willing to sacrifice our time and energy to help others and

learn to love even when we don't feel like it. We will learn not to fail God (1 Cor 13:4–8). Now that we have a better idea of what it means to love, who can you show love towards today?

## **B. Joy**

*“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (Jn 15:11)*

Let's move on to joy. First, how would you define joy? “Joy is...” (*Allow students to answer.*) Sometimes, we think that we will be happy if we have certain things. “If only I had this or that, I'd be so happy!” This is normally what we might think of when we think of being joyful. But there is a difference between happiness and joy. If something good happens, we feel happy as a result, but only for a short period of time. The joy that the Bible refers to is a deeper, lasting joy that can give us strength (Neh 8:10). But what makes it so different from the happiness we experience in the world? Let's read a few verses about joy in the Bible.

- Jas 1:2 – “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.”
- Neh 8:10 – “[For] the joy of the LORD is your strength.”
- Ps 16:11 – “You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”
- Rom 15:13 – “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

From these verses, we can see that the joy God offers is different. It can give us strength, and we will always feel this joy as long as we are in God's presence. No one in this world can promise that we will be happy all the time, and yet this is exactly what God has promised us.

### **The Joy of the Lord**

God is able to guarantee our joy, because the type of joy He brings is not earthly. Its source is not based on worldly things, or on other people. Rather, it is of the Holy Spirit, making it a joy that is internal, like a spring flowing forth from within us (cf. Jn 4:13; 7:38). The happiness of this world is based on material objects or our physical circumstances, but the joy of the Spirit springs from within our heart, making it possible for us to have joy even while experiencing trials, sorrow, or pain (1 Thess 1:6). But if we are self-centered and only think of our needs, this joy from God will never flourish. Here are some steps to help us increase in our joy:

#### **1. In everything give thanks**

Paul taught the Thessalonian church, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess 5:16–18). A joyful person is someone who recognizes the blessings that God has given them and gives thanks for them.

#### **2. Seek out God's presence**

David wrote, “I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;” and “You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy” (Ps 16:8–9, 11). The closer we come to God's presence, the greater joy we receive. Therefore, we need to put forth the effort to continually seek Him out.

#### **3. Give generously even in trials**

The most blessed and joyful people are those who give. In describing the Macedonian church, Paul wrote that despite their “great trial of affliction,” “the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty” led them to give more, not less, to the churches in need (2 Cor 8:2). As the Bible

teaches, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), so to receive joy we should learn to give to those in need, whether it is physically, spiritually, or emotionally.

### **C. Peace**

*“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Phil 4:6–7)*

How many of you know what “the peace of God” means? Before we define it, let’s first read a few verses:

- Col 3:15 – “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”
- Jn 16:33 – “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”
- 1 Pet 3:11 – “Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.”

Just like love and joy, the peace described in the Bible is clearly different from the peace of the world. The peace of the world depends on the things of the world. For example, we associate peace with the absence of violence or war, or perhaps when family members stop arguing with each other. But a lack of verbal or physical conflict doesn’t mean that we are experiencing true peace in our lives. If peace always depended on the absence of conflict, then our peace would never last for very long! The peace of God is different because it doesn’t depend on these external factors. Instead, it is the highest form of tranquility that comes from harmony with God and with men.

### **The Peace of God**

Let’s read John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Here, Jesus is offering us true peace. This peace comes in three levels: peace with God, peace with ourselves, and peace with others.

#### **1. Peace with God**

How do we obtain peace with God? Paul wrote, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom 5:1). The first step to finding peace with God is by being reconciled with Him. We need to believe in Jesus Christ and repent of our sins. This is the beginning of our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and the foundation of our faith. What is the next step once we have reconciled with God and established our faith?

Let’s read Psalm 119:165. “Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.” We need to learn to love God’s law. When we do, we “will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make [us] dwell in safety” (Ps 4:8). When we obtain peace with God, our lives will change completely. Our thoughts will be centered on God, and we will choose actions that please Him. As a result, we no longer need to fear for our future, because when we love God’s law, we will have a deeper understanding of His love for us as our Father, and our God of peace. With this understanding comes the knowledge that He will take care of our future. We will no longer fear, but lean on Him entirely and, in this way, will be at peace with God.

#### **2. Peace with ourselves**

To have peace with ourselves is a difficult thing. We are our own worst critics—we are never good enough for ourselves. But when we come to know God and understand His will, we will

stop focusing on our flaws and instead focus on what God has given us and praise Him for it. Psalm 139:14 says, “I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows very well.” Peace with ourselves isn’t just the acceptance of what God gave us, though. It is also trust in God’s power and creation.

Isaiah 26:3 says, “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.” To have peace with ourselves means to first trust completely in God’s protection and guidance. When we trust in the fortress that is His power, and trust God with our lives, we will no longer be anxious or frustrated about our own lack of abilities or foresight. Instead, we will experience peace “like a river” (Isa 48:18): an ever-flowing peace that is constant and abundant, and a source of spiritual nourishment for ourselves and those around us.

### 3. Peace with others

Do you have someone you can’t get along with? Maybe it’s a classmate, a teacher, or even a family member. Maybe there’s someone we can’t seem to get along with no matter how hard we try, or perhaps we don’t care enough to even try to patch things up. However, when we harbor dislike, hatred, or anger against others, we cannot live a life that is pleasing to God. To rid ourselves of these feelings, we need to pray for the power of the Holy Spirit. Letting go of our anger or dislike on our own is often too difficult, but the Spirit can fill us with the compassion and love to help us forgive, forget, and get along with others with the peace of God.

It isn’t easy to find the peace of God. But when we allow God to work through us, we can live in harmony with others even if there is conflict, and we will ultimately become more like Christ.

### *Check for Understanding*

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1. **What are the characteristics of godly love according to the Bible?** Godly love can be seen in putting others first in our actions. It is something that requires “labor,” servitude, and sacrifice. The Bible even calls us to love our enemies!
2. **Why is the joy of the Lord so different from the joy of the world?** The happiness of this world is based on material objects or our physical circumstances, but the joy of the Spirit springs from within our heart, making it possible for us to have joy even while experiencing trials, sorrow, or pain (1 Thess 1:6).
3. **In what way is the peace of God different from the peace of the world?** It doesn’t depend on external factors. Instead, it is the highest form of tranquility that comes from harmony with God and with men.
4. **What are the three levels of peace that Jesus offered to us? Briefly explain each.**
  - a. *Peace with God:* This is a result of being reconciled with God, establishing our faith, and loving His law. When we do, we will no longer fear for our future because we will have confidence in His grace and salvation.
  - b. *Peace with ourselves:* When we trust in the fortress that is God’s power and fully trust in Him, we will no longer be anxious or frustrated about our own lack of ability or foresight. Instead, we will experience an ever-flowing river of peace that is constant and abundant, and a source of spiritual nourishment.
  - c. *Peace with others:* When we rely on the Spirit to help us let go of our anger and dislike, and instead fill us with compassion and love for others, we can then live a life that is pleasing to God.

### *Life Application*

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Teachers: The below activity has been included as a printable worksheet for students on the last page of the teacher's guide.

**My Action Plan**

After learning more about these three characteristics of the Spirit, how would you rate yourself for each? On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 being the most), circle where you think you're at on the scale, then explain to the class why you chose that number.

<i>(Have none at all.)</i>			Love				<i>(Have a lot in my heart!)</i>		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Joy									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Peace									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Whether we feel like we have a lot or none of these characteristics, we can always practice and improve upon them! Let's go over each and see how we can act out each of them in our lives.

**1. Love**

We learned today that the essence of godly love is putting others first in our actions, even if it means sacrificing our time, effort, or possessions. What obstacles in your life hinder you from doing this? To help us get started on growing in love, choose two areas from the following list. On your own, or in a group, brainstorm practical ways you can put others' needs before your own in your chosen areas.

- Your home
- Your neighborhood
- Your school
- Your church

**2. Joy**

We learned that the joy of the Lord is not a temporary happiness, but a constant in our hearts, and a source of strength. Do you know anyone who genuinely experiences the deep and satisfying joy of Jesus Christ in their life? Is there anything you can learn from them? Do you feel the joy of the Lord in your heart, despite the daily grind of life? Why or why not? To help us experience more joy, we'll do another brainstorm. This time, write down things that you are thankful for. Be thorough! What blessings has God given you? Don't just think of your material possessions, but also the people around you, the school you go to, and the church that you attend. What are you thankful for in each of these places?

**3. Peace**

The peace of God is predicated on our complete trust in Him, and this is impossible without the power of the Spirit. But His peace also depends on the effort that we put forth to attain it, just like any other characteristic of the Spirit! When we pray with the Spirit, He can help us obtain His peace, but there are some steps that we should take on our own to demonstrate that we want to pursue this fruit:

- Is there someone you aren't at peace with? Identify him or her in your prayer and pray for them. In your prayer, ask God to help you change your attitude and actions towards that person so that you can be filled with His love and peace.
- Are you dissatisfied with something in your own personal life? Identify the source of dissatisfaction and pray to God about it.
- After you have devoted a length of time to these specific prayers, either talk to the person or re-evaluate how you feel about yourself. Although our conflict or dissatisfaction may not just suddenly disappear, continue praying about it and ask God to fill you with His peace.

### *Memory Verse*

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“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22–23)

### **Meaning**

God’s desire is for us to bear the nine characteristics of the Spirit in our lives so that we can become a blessing to others and a living testimony of His glory. They can only be achieved through the power of the Holy Spirit, so we must learn to ask for His help to bear them in our daily prayers. But the nine characteristics are also the result of hard work, deliberate pursuit, and particular attention and care.

### *Conclusion*

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Everyone in the world wants to have love, joy, peace, and patience in their lives. But our Lord Jesus Christ has taught us that real love and joy goes beyond simple feelings. True love requires selflessness, and joy must flow from us, not into us because of external factors. In the same way, true peace stems from our heart, and remains unaffected by the things of this world, because it comes from the Spirit. With this in mind, in order to obtain any of these, we must first develop our relationship with Jesus Christ, draw near to His presence, and ask the Spirit of God to teach, transform, and empower us so that we can bear His characteristics and ultimately become more like Christ.

### Lesson 3 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. Why does God want us to bear the fruit of the Spirit? How do we do it, other than through prayer?  
*So that we can become a blessing to others and a living testimony of God's glory. They can only be achieved through the power of the Holy Spirit, but they are also the result of hard work, deliberate pursuit, and particular attention and care.*
2. "Now may the God of \_\_\_\_\_ fill you with all \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, that you may abound in \_\_\_\_\_ by the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_." (Romans 15:13)  
*hope, joy, peace, believing, hope, power, Holy, Spirit.*
3. What makes the joy of the Lord different from the joy of the world?  
*The happiness of the world is based on material objects or our physical circumstances, but the joy of the Spirit springs from within our heart, making it possible for us to have joy even while experiencing trials, sorrow, or pain (1 Thess 1:6).*
4. God's peace has three levels. What are they? Which do you need to work on the most, and why?  
*Peace with God; peace with ourselves; and peace with others.  
Personal answers.*
5. Of the three characteristics we studied in this lesson, which do you need to work on more? Explain why you believe this – what specific actions do you take that demonstrate the opposite of godly love, joy, or peace? Other than praying for the Spirit's help, come up with a plan to avoid acting similarly in the future.  
*Personal answers.*



## Lesson 3 Life Application Worksheet

### My Action Plan

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The peace of God is predicated on our complete trust in Him, and this is impossible without the power of the Spirit. But His peace also depends on the effort that we put forth to attain it, just like any other characteristic of the Spirit! When we pray with the Spirit, He can help us obtain His peace, but there are some steps that we should take on our own to demonstrate that we want to pursue this fruit:

- Is there someone you aren't at peace with? Identify him or her in your prayer and pray for them. In your prayer, ask God to help you change your attitude and actions towards that person so that you can be filled with His love and peace.
- Are you dissatisfied with something in your own personal life? Identify the source of dissatisfaction and pray to God about it.
- After you have devoted a length of time to these specific prayers, either talk to the person or re-evaluate how you feel about yourself. Although our conflict or dissatisfaction may not just suddenly disappear, continue praying about it and ask God to fill you with His peace.