

## Joy

Scripture used: [Galatians 5:22-23 \(NLT\)](#)

### OVERVIEW

Pastor Tilden preached the second sermon in our series “Peel: What’s Under Your Skin?” The message focuses on the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We’re trying to understand how God works underneath the surface (the “skin”) of our lives, to shape our character and change the way we treat ourselves and others. Today Pastor Tilden discussed joy, which is a topic that we don’t take seriously enough. As famous Christian author C.S. Lewis said, “joy is the serious business of heaven.” We learn that joy turns out to be a key to overcoming grief and pain. Rather than something that is optional, joy is essential. God intends for everyone who follows Jesus to have overflowing joy, because joy is a part of God’s character, and the Holy Spirit plants joy into our hearts. Joy is cultivated and flourishes when we love God and love others, and this kind of joy can thrive even when we face tragedy and loss.

### KEY POINTS

- 1) **There is bad news about joy.** Americans are living in a joy crisis. 1 in 4 of us suffer from some form of mental disorder annually, the highest in the world. We struggle to find joy because we look in the wrong places. Despite our wealth and power, we tend to live without joy. Why? Professor Jean Twenge’s 2017 article in *The Atlantic* [“Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?”](#) argues that the combination of smartphones and social media has created a toxic culture. To make things worse, we live in Silicon Valley, where these forces are especially strong
- 2) **There is good news about joy.** Despite the challenges of the modern world, we are still God’s children and He intends for us to be joyful. Joy is so important that in [John 15:9-12 \(NLT\)](#) Jesus identifies it as a symptom of those who remained in His love. We can now see that joy is part of being in relationship with God. Science now tells us the same thing! The longest study on happiness in the world is still being run at Harvard, and Robert Waldinger shared the highlights from 80 years of research in his TED talk [“What Makes a Good Life?”](#) It turns out that being joyful is not about power, wealth, or fame. It is based on deep, meaningful relationships like the ones that Jesus described to His disciples.
- 3) **There is the worst news about joy.** God us wants to be joyful, but we’re still struggling. Why? Because we sabotage ourselves and others in the pursuit of joy. We chase worldly things -- things like money, status, possessions, career success, or physical health and beauty -- that can’t bring us lasting joy. We do this even though deep down we know that this stuff won’t make us happy!
- 4) **There is the best news about joy.** Despite the loss, pain, grief, and anxiety of the world, God’s joy is still real. We see in [John 16:1-2 \(NLT\)](#) that all Christians will suffer. Following Christ does mean that we will have an easy life! But later in [John 16:20-22 \(NLT\)](#), Jesus teaches that suffering will be overshadowed with great joy, like a woman giving birth. The pain is still there, but it fades into the background because God pours out the blessing of His love, salvation, and forgiveness in our lives. One of NBCC’s partners, Atiya Smith, lived this journey over the last few years. She chose to retire from the Army, rejecting a prestigious fellowship so she could spend more time with her husband and children, with whom she had deeply strained relationships. Despite this faithful decision, she was hospitalized shortly afterwards and doctors had to amputate her leg to save her life. Fortunately God was still with Atiya. She counts herself blessed thanks to a renewed marriage and rewarding relationships with her two sons. These three relationships plus her connection to God and deeper realization of His love for her bring her all the joy she needs to sustain a joyful life.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Ask yourself “How often do I experience joy on a daily basis?” and think about specific days in the past week or two. What is it that brings you joy? Is it stuff, experience, or people?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - We can easily fall into the trap of living a joyless life now in hopes of some vague joy way off in the future. What is your fantasy of future joy? And how can you focus instead on improving the quality of relationships around you today?
- 3) **DO** - Pastor Tilden asked us to pray to God and say to Him “I will keep turning to You to find joy!” Is there pain or grief that you can bring to God today and ask for God’s joy to show up? And if you want to join NBCC in daily cultivating the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life, sign up for [the PEEL Challenge!](#)