

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## The Spirit of Joy

by Dan Trygg

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are out-from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world...<sup>5</sup> They are out-from the world; therefore they speak out-from the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup> We are out-from God; the one who experientially-knows God listens to us; the one who is not out-from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.”

1 John 4:1,5-6

“These things I have spoken... that My joy may be in you, and... may be made full.”

John 15:11

“For the kingdom of God is... righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

Romans 14:17

“But the fruit of the Spirit is... joy...”

Galatians 5:22

The apostle John informed us that there are many people who are false prophets (*prophētēs*), people who “speak before” (*prophēteuō*) others, who have “gone out into the world”. In the narrowest sense of that word, these would be people who claim to get a direct message from God, which they proclaim to others. The word can have a broader definition, however, referring to people who “speak before” others in a more generic sense, e.g., teachers, politicians, counselors, business leaders, etc. The point John was making is that **there is often a spiritual entity at work behind what is being said**. These people, and any spirit that may be guiding their thinking, are “out from the world” and “speak out from the world”.

Aside from referring to the planet, **the Greek word for “world” (*kosmos*) is the organized system that is at work “behind the scenes”**. **It is directed by the enemy and his spiritual minions**. It is at work in politics, commerce, education, entertainment, religion, and virtually any area of human activity. John said that “the whole world lies in the evil one”, and that “he deceives the whole world” (1 Jn. 5:19; Rev. 12:9). We ourselves had once been living according to his agenda, but now we have been set free from his dominion through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:2; Col. 1:13). **The challenge for us is to recognize the deception and propaganda of the enemy**, and discover who we are and what we have in Christ so that we can live effectively for Him. **We are to “test the spirits” by examining what they are saying through these people, and paying attention to the “fruit” of their lives**. Jesus told us that we will know them by their fruit, the things they say and do (Matt. 7:15-20; 12:33-35). The enemy tries to deceive us by presenting us with things that look good, and seem attractive, but if we compare the “good news” he and his mouthpieces are peddling with what the scriptures really say, it doesn’t take long to see that they are presenting a different message. The Jesus they may talk about may seem similar, but their idea is a caricature or distortion of who the true Jesus was. The attitude and influence of whatever is at work in them is not at all the same as what the Holy Spirit produces.

**The Holy Spirit will direct us to Jesus**. It loves to exalt Him and reveal to us more about how much He has done for us, and what He has made available for us to discover. **The true Spirit of God will reproduce the heart and character of Jesus in our lives**. Last time, we looked at how Jesus said that *agapē*-love is to become a key marker of those who are genuinely following Christ. God demonstrated His *agapē*-love by sending Jesus to give Himself on our behalf. **The Spirit has been given to us to produce *agapē*-love in us. It is the first aspect that describes the “fruit” of the Holy Spirit in the life of one who is genuinely and effectively following Him**.

**Another aspect of the fruit, or outworking, of the Holy Spirit is joy**. We are to be a people who are characterized by joy. **Joy is what the Holy Spirit produces in a life that is filled with Him**. It is the very nature of God Himself, and His influence. **His “kingdom” is where His heart and purpose are fulfilled**. It is where He is the King, and He has the dominion. **His kingdom, is not like the world’s kingdoms**. The world dominates and controls people from the outside. **The reign and rule of God, however, comes from an inner change and a growing desire to love and honor Him**. Those who come into agreement with His heart, do so freely and voluntarily, because they are drawn by love and convinced of God’s goodness. They come into accord with His desires and will because they discover an inner life and freedom when they do so. **Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty and transformation** (2 Cor. 3:17,18). There is a metamorphosis, a dramatic and radical inner change that produces a different outward appearance and expression. **This is what the “kingdom of God” is. It is seen where the outworking of God’s heart is manifested in outward expression in the world**. Paul described it as “*righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*.”

**What is joy?** It is a state of inner happiness; a positive, confident outlook on one’s circumstances or situation in life; a contented feeling of blessedness; and a delight or celebration in God’s gracious care. It is the opposite of sorrow, sadness or grief (Jn. 16:20), or gloom, dejection or depression (Jas. 4:9), nor is there room for anxiety when a person is filled with this inner sense of assured well-being. **It can range from this inner glow of affirmation about life, to an out-and-out spilling over of praise, celebration and delight in God and His grace**.

**In the NT Greek language, there is a clear connection between grace or graciousness (*charis*), its outward expression in a gift (*charisma*), and the joy (*chara*) that it brings to the recipient.** It is natural to rejoice at good news (Matt. 13:20; Lk. 2:10), or when some unexpected positive event occurs in one's life (Matt. 13:44; Lk. 10:17), or when someone treats us with special kindness (2 Cor. 7:13). **These are natural human emotional responses to positive events.** Both Christians and non-Christians experience joy in *these* kinds of circumstances. In fact, **a significant part of the world's preoccupation is to find or create positive experiences, so that they can experience the emotion of joy.**

**Jesus came to give us a joy that is different from what the world experiences.** In John 15:11, He said, "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." **There is a joy that comes from Jesus that is available to us, ...and He wants us to be filled with that joy.** In the context, this comes as we "abide" in Him. **His nature, ...and the outworking of His nature in us as we abide in Him..., is to be joyful.**

**This joy is not based upon outward circumstances. It grows out of an inner relationship with the great God of the universe, who has shown us that He loves us.** As we align our hearts with Jesus, and His life fills us, joy will be the result. Answered prayer is a key benefit of our relationship with Jesus (15:7). He invites us to pray in His name, "Ask and you will receive, in order that your joy may be having been made full" (16:24). **The discovery of an intimate relationship with God, where He hears and responds to us, brings a joy and confidence that is celebratory and lasting.**

Jesus said that He was going to be returning to the Father. This was to our advantage, because the Holy Spirit would come to dwell in each one of us (Jn. 16:7). Interestingly, in His prayer for us, He stated that He was going to the Father in order that we might have His joy having been made full in us" (Jn. 17:13). **Jesus gave us two things to enable us to fulfill our calling, and walk in joy. (1.) He gave us His word to teach us and guide our thoughts (vs. 14).** His word gives us clarity about Him, His purpose for us and His presence in our lives. It is full of sound, practical instruction and promises to encourage us in our faith and our relationship with Him. **(2.) He gave us "the glory" of God, the same glory that was in Him (vs. 22; Heb. 1:3). What is the glory, the radiance of God, that was in Jesus? It was the Holy Spirit!** Clearly, **the potential for being filled-full with His joy comes with the indwelling Holy Spirit.**

**God desires to do with us what He did with Jesus.** He wants to reveal His heart, His character, His life through our lives. **He wants people to "see His glory" that dwells within our earthly tents (Jn. 1:14). We are to be full of grace, truth, ...and joy!** The Holy Spirit has been given to us to make us like Jesus and display *His life* through *ours*.

**So, learning to walk in the righteousness, peace and joy of the kingdom is our calling.** The apostle Paul put it this way, "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" (Rom. 15:13). **Of course, this joy is most clearly seen in circumstances where natural human joy would likely fail.** Paul was a great example of this, having endured horrible persecution, and yet continuing on with joy and persistence. In Philippi, after being beaten with rods, and put in stocks, he and Silas sang hymns of praise to God. This amazing display of triumphant joy captured the minds and hearts of the other prisoners, and led to the conversion of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16). Later, he went on to Thessalonica, and led some of them to Christ, but was forced to flee because of persecution, again. He wrote to them, "You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 1:6). It was by the inworking power of the Holy Spirit that they could have joy. He later encouraged the Colossian believers, "May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience *with joy*, giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light" (Col. 1:11,12). **God doesn't just want us to endure, ...He wants to enable us to overcome with joy! We need the promises of the word, and the power of the Spirit to help us to walk in joy when circumstances are difficult.**

**We need to learn to process our emotions so that we can experience and abide in joy. This does not happen automatically. We will still feel other emotions. Jesus did.** Remember that He was in great agony, grieved to the point of death, in the garden of Gethsemane (Mk. 14:34). **Emotions are not "wrong" or "evil". They are an involuntary response to what we are perceiving at the time.** They tell us about our circumstances or our own inner state. **It is important to acknowledge them, and then process them by bringing them to God.** We ask for His help, His truth, and His power. We can reframe or enlarge our perception by acknowledging Him, His goodness and His care. **We can use the word to direct our thoughts to Him and His promises. We can ask the Spirit to direct our thoughts to Jesus.** As our view of things change, so will our emotions. As we surrender ourselves and our fears to God, and abide in Him, we begin to experience the comfort and lifting of His life inside of us bringing us to peace and to joy. **We can serve one another by helping with this.** Paul saw himself as a "co-workers of your joy", and was convinced that God had him here to help with "the progress and joy of their faith" (2 Cor. 1:24; Phil. 1:25). We can all assist in this process.

The apostle Peter said that though we do not see Jesus now, we "believe in Him and rejoice with joy inexpressible and having-been-made-glorious (radiant)" (1 Pet. 1:8). **God intends for us to display the life of Jesus by radiant joy. This is what the Holy Spirit will produce in us. Anything less than this is from the world.**