

GOD'S

REVIVALIST

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and Bible Advocate



Joy



about this issue

CHOOSE HAPPINESS

Charles Bridges, a 19th Century preacher, made this statement: "Gloom is not the portion, and ought not to stamp the character, of the children of God."

Life has its ups and downs, even for Christians. However, each day we have a choice to make. Will we be happy or unhappy? A happy state need not waver with difficult circumstances if it is established by a deep-seated joy in our hearts that comes from the assurance that God is Lord (Psa. 144:15). It is impossible to hide such joy. It WILL make the face cheerful (Prov. 15:13). Happiness ensues.

Happiness can be traced to the mind and the heart. The mind is very influential in interpreting our experiences. I am sure you know people for whom a slight inconvenience is the "worst thing" that ever happened to them. The unhappiness seems to take over, spreading throughout their systems, fixing gloominess on their face, and negatively coloring their attitude and conversation. Moreover, some tend to have this as a general disposition, an outcome of early experiences of life (upbringing).

You also know people who struggle with serious illness, family dysfunction, financial problems, etc., yet they are cheerful. How is that possible? I suggest that it is because they choose to focus on the good in their lives. This general orientation can also be traced to upbringing but is more established by how the mind currently frames experiences.

This leads us to the heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." You can make the case that everything flows from the heart: speech, behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, etc. The command to "keep" implies that it is our responsibility and that it is possible. However, if we entrust our hearts to Someone who is omnipotent, omniscient, and full of goodness and love, that would place our hearts in greatest safety. So the best way to keep your heart is to give it away to someone more trustworthy and reliable—to God. Then you can rest.

Knowing that all things are in God's hands gives the Christian a better frame of understanding for the experiences of life and brings a sense of peace and joy amidst these hurts. Why? Because God's children know that He has things in control and that He is always working for their good (Rom. 8:28).

Yes, we do have a choice. Choose God. Be happy! 📌

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the president's page



COUNT IT ALL JOY

by Rodney Loper, President

Have you ever wondered why Christians face trials? Why is it that God's people have to deal with hard times in their lives? Some ask the question this way, *"Why do bad things happen to good people?"*

Perhaps the first step in answering this question involves the accurate understanding that Christian life is not self-centered. We must keep in focus the fact that life isn't about us! Scripture is clear that everything we do is to bring glory to God (Matt. 5:16, 1 Cor. 10:31). We are to be magnets that draw men and women to God.

What is it about us that will draw others to God? One major factor is that we, with God's help, can successfully navigate the difficulties of life. In the midst of trials, troubles, pain, and hurt, our perseverance and steadiness is a testimony of God's grace at work in us. This shows the world that with Christ we are able to "count it all joy!"

So, Christians get cancer, their business enterprises struggle—in fact, Christians have all types of setbacks. But through the ups and downs of life we can demonstrate to the world that Christians handle things differently than those without Christ. Ask doctors if they see differences in patients struggling in the hospital with respect to those who are Christians and those who are not. I am sure they will tell you that there is indeed a difference. Christians have hope, not just in the present, but also in a brighter, eternal tomorrow. It is in the present moment of difficulty that we find our chance to shine the light of the gospel and to display the superiority of the life lived in and for God.

In James 1:2 we are admonished to, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Did you hear that? Consider your trials joy? Are you kidding me? But James says yes! Count it all joy when you meet trials of various kinds.

Many people like to draw a distinction between joy and happiness. In their minds, trials can produce joy, but not necessarily happiness. So when James says,

“Count it all joy,” some will insist he’s not saying to be *happy* about your trials. For them, happiness is different. Happiness tends to be more circumstantial—in the moment. We often associate happiness with that feeling we get when we are doing something fun with our family or friends. We hear this in statements like, “He is happiest when he is golfing,” and, “She is happiest when she is with her family.”

James is saying that for the Christ-follower there is something more than *circumstantial* happiness. You can have something much deeper. While happiness is often seen as fleeting, true joy is a supernatural delight that comes from God. You don’t have it in yourself to have this kind of joy.

On the other hand, as Christians we are guaranteed God’s help at every point along life’s journey—in both good times and bad times. That fact brings happiness to the Christian, even in the midst of difficulties.

Reach out to God. Understand God’s heart in this matter. Trust Him! Joy is a supernatural delight in the person of God, the purposes of God, and the people of God. To know the Lord—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge—puts real joy in our soul and a smile of happiness on our face.

Joy comes from understanding that there’s something bigger than us going on here. It is knowing that God has a purpose, and we must purpose to trust Him even though we might not see it right now—even though it may not make sense—even though it is difficult. When we understand this, our focus isn’t on our happiness, it is on God’s purposes—and that brings joy. We rest in the reality that He is God and we are not. We can trust Him!



Joy also is a supernatural delight in the people of God. There’s just something awesome about being together, isn’t there? Scripture calls Christ-followers the “body of Christ.” When we open our lives to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, when we bear each other’s burdens, we are fulfilling the law of Christ. When

this happens, what we experience is unlike anything else. Only Christians understand this. Only a follower of Christ would ever consider a trial joy. Therefore, as the body comes together in moments of need, we are able to delight in God—together—and thus experience joy.

Many translations (e.g., NASB) of James 1:2 say, “Consider it all joy....” The word “consider” suggests looking at your trial—weighing and measuring it. And, even as you do this, remember that we are here—we exist—to display the superiority of the life lived in God. That’s why we are able to draw another breath. That is what sustains us through the trials of life.

Yes, Christians get cancer. Yes, Christian parents have prodigal children. Yes, Christian businessmen and women have bankruptcies. But, there is a contrast between the way that we as Christians handle things and the way unbelievers handle things. There needs to be a difference, because if we react the same way that the world does, there is no motivation for the world to embrace Christianity! If we get mean, harsh, angry, jealous, bitter, critical, cynical, or display a get-even spirit, we are no better than the sinner. Our biggest failure then is that our lives do not glorify God and point others to Christ. It is in our trials that we are given the opportunity to shine the light of the gospel and display the superiority of the life lived in God. That’s what we are joyful about.

So calculate and consider what’s really going on. Need help? Here’s a practical proposal. Get three 3x5 cards. On the first card write, “What happened to me?” Then give a description of this specific trial. On the second card write, “Why am I here on earth?” Then describe what you see as the real purpose of your life. Keep in mind that you are not just “here” for a few moments of happiness, but rather that God will be glorified through your life. On the third card write, “How can this trial advance that purpose?” Prayerfully ask God to help you know what you can do right now to display the glory of God. Hold on to those cards. It will be helpful to review them periodically.

Back to James: “Count it all joy when you fall into various trials.” That’s usually how it happens, right? You’re going along in life and, SUDDENLY, you find yourself in a trial. What kind of trial? It can be of any sort. The word “various” used here is the same word used in the Old Testament to describe Joseph’s coat of many colors. Yes, it is true that the trials we go through can be diverse. It is also true that my trials are different from your trials. They are not the same. Some are tough, and some are tragic. Some are difficult, and some are devastating.

Life is short; eternity is long. Our trials come to show how God gives grace to His children. When we understand this, we have joy. We rest in the purposes and plans of the Divine!

Brothers and Sisters—**Count it all Joy!** ■

Fullness of

JOY

by Daryl Muir



Have you felt dissatisfaction with the measure of joy you experience and ventured to amplify it to no avail? Most of us have been there at some point. Better understanding the nature of joy will lead almost certainly to its expansion.

Joy may be the only fruit of the Spirit not meant to be itself the focus of growth and development (peace may be the exception). Though love, kindness, faithfulness, self-control, etc., are bestowed by the Holy Spirit as He is given supremacy, we are expected to refine and cultivate them. One does not exercise joy. Even attempting to fixate on it is self-defeating.

Joy is not an end in itself, something to be sought after as a vital component of life. It is always a response to, or the derivative of, something else, especially through the work of the Spirit in us.

Surprised by Joy is an autobiographical account of C.S. Lewis' pursuit of happiness. As God moved him from atheism and hedonism toward conversion, his surprise was in finding that "only when your whole attention and desire are fixed on something else...does [joy] arise. It is a by-product. Its very existence presupposes that you desire not it, but something other and outer. If...it could be produced from within, it would at once be seen to be of no value. For take away the object and what, after all, would be left?—a whirl of images, a fluttering sensation in the diaphragm, a momentary abstraction. And who could want that? This is the first and deadly error.... And the second error is, having thus falsely made a state of mind your aim, to attempt to produce it."

A sense of joy arises out of work we find fulfilling, an exquisite landscape, but focus on pursuing the feelings and emotions produced by the source, and joy dissipates like fog in the sun. Joy resides in the desire for something outside ourselves.

The Spirit increases our capacity for enjoyment and happiness beyond what we can have on our own. But joy is more than a sense of fun or pleasure. Those are mere substitutes, and poor ones at that. Joy is a deep-seated gladness and satisfaction that may or may not be accompanied by emotions, and that caliber of joy is rendered exclusively by the work of the Spirit.

Have you ever felt an aching sense of longing while gazing at something of transcendent beauty? There is joy, but it is inextricably coupled with a craving for something beyond oneself. Similarly, joy the Spirit produces in us arises from an aspiration for oneness with God. That longing, in turn, produces intense joy at His presence. In that regard, joy is a foretaste of the atmosphere of heaven.

The several psalmists wed those concepts in multiple passages, but here is just one example: "My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God" (Psa. 84:2).

If joy is the desire for something other and outer, desiring lowly things can produce only meager joy. Material things produce only fleeting pleasure. Physical pleasures, while certainly fun, may be more painful than pleasurable in the end. Only relationships are truly fulfilling and satisfying, and ultimate satisfaction comes only from a relationship with God.



The pursuit of God is the highest aspiration and the most joyful. Dwell on the beauty of God's nature and character, His numerous blessings, His ways of working in human nature and circumstances, and you will know King David's experience:

*You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*
— Psalm 16:11 ESV

Only in His uninterrupted presence is that level of joy, and then only when our minds are stayed on Him, His nature, and His work—not our need for happiness.

The popular inspirational phrase, "I choose joy," is well-intentioned but a little misleading. Joy, since it is a state of mind, cannot be mustered out of sheer force of will when it lacks a source. Choosing joy is more like choosing gratitude based on real blessings and confidence in a known God.

The prophet Habakkuk wrote an extensive recitation of God's power, and glory (chapt. 3), at which he had to "stand in awe." With that filling his mind he could say, regardless of crop failure, setbacks, loss, or poverty, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (3:18 ESV). That implies choosing joy, but it was joy IN and FROM the Lord. Habakkuk chose to focus on Who God is and what He does, resulting in joy—joy with an Object and a Source—regardless of ambient conditions.

Christians have demonstrated for eons that joy and affliction are not mutually exclusive. The harshest critics of Christianity are confounded by the paradox of Christians expressing joy in suffering, even martyrdom, which "logically" should nullify it.

Were that the case, Paul should have been clinically depressed after multiple whippings, beatings, stonings, imprisonments, and shipwrecks, while living unrelenting danger and deprivation in countless iterations (2 Cor. 11:23-29, Acts 20:23).

Rather than lamenting, "I hate my life!" he said, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my race with joy..." (Acts 20:24). He used the term at least twenty-two times in his epistles, insisting that nothing can destroy the joy of one who is focused on following Jesus Christ and living daily in the Spirit. Neither adversaries nor adversity could abrogate joy because he wasn't absorbed in his own life.

A loss of joy indicates a loss of something greater. Either we've lost connection with the Source, or, like Peter,

turned our eyes to the wind and waves rather than Jesus through Whose power he had quite literally treaded water. Allowing our minds to be absorbed with negative and painful circumstances guarantees shaky trust and questions about God's veracity. Lessened trust slumps into discouragement, even despair, and joy is crowded out.

Foster the perspective that traumatic circumstances are not isolated but are part of a continuum. God's plans are long term, and you and I are a small part of His work that was ongoing before we were born and extends far beyond our lives. He controls every situation and is always doing and producing good, whether He allows us that glimpse or not.

We periodically find ourselves in seemingly unfavorable situations, although God has reasons for allowing them; but focusing on the gloomy closes our minds to the greatness of God and the great things He is doing. The antidote to discouragement is longing for Him, spending time in His presence, and reminding ourselves of countless blessings.

Nothing strips us of joy faster than the works of the flesh Paul details earlier in Galatians 5. The fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh are diametrical opposites, and one cannot but cancel out the other. Many of the sins in the list are inward and unseen, so they are easily excused and covered: hatred, jealousies, selfish ambitions, envy, etc. Others are more obvious but may be whitewashed and winked at.

King David described his utter misery as long as he tried to hide his sin—it was as though his very bones aged and decayed within him (Psa. 32). Sin disconnects us from the Source, so if there is no joy to be found in your life, you may need to allow the Spirit to examine your heart closely.

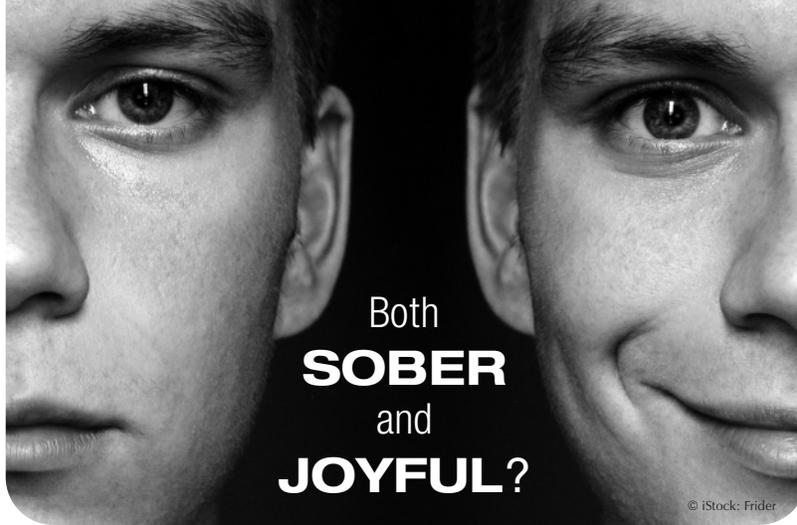
On the other hand, joylessness may have simpler underpinnings. Joy will be fugitive if you regularly live on the ragged edge of exhaustion. Get enough sleep every night, and you just may wake up joyful. Even before the coffee.

Joy is always the byproduct of living for something greater than oneself. That's why Jesus expects us to take up our cross daily. That doesn't sound happy, but in forcing our minds outside ourselves, He spares us the self-destructive pursuit of pleasure, and He knows we will find His yoke easy and light, especially compared to the hard way of the transgressor.

Rather than chasing joy, rest in God's promise to reward the longing for His presence with fullness of joy. Make Him your most intense pursuit. ■

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Can a Christian Be



Both
SOBER
and
JOYFUL?

by Johnathan Arnold

“Nothing is so contrary to godliness as levity,” contended John Fletcher, for “Jesting and raillery [teasing], lightness of behavior, useless occupations, joy without trembling and awe of God, an affection of vivacity and sprightliness, are all contrary to the Spirit of God.”¹ He puts forward the sobering question, “Are we not walking in the presence of God—on the verge of the grave—and in the sight of eternity?” and concludes, in a word, that “All who walk with God are serious.” Seriousness of mind is in view in 1 Peter 5:8: “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.” Christians have a serious adversary, so Christians need to be serious.

But how does this consist with the Church being characterized as a happy people? Those who enjoy God’s favor are implored, “Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!” (Psa. 100:2). If “Christianity is holiness **and happiness**,” as Wesley asserted, how are we to be both sober and joyful?² This question may be easily answered by asking another: What do we mean by happiness?

If happiness is the kind of giddy, stupid feeling that is alluded to in a thousand trite remarks, then it is indeed incompatible with godly sobriety. An old song³ by Al Stillman and Dick Manning offers a revealing quip:

*Happiness comes, happiness goes,
Where it goes, no one knows!
What’s in store, who can guess?
It could be...happiness!*

If happiness is the kind of thing that comes and goes, then one may as well ride the world’s happy wave, surfing from one high to another, and sit out sad moments, hoping that the happy tide will come rolling back in. Those who are constantly fooling around, occupying themselves with “innocent” pleasures, or browsing for a snippet to spark their joy, may spend much time laughing and smiling, but they are fundamentally unhappy people. Biblical happiness is qualitatively different from the kind of joy that is afforded by worldly amusements. True happiness—the pleasant, peaceful assurance of God’s favor and fellowship—is deep as God is deep.

Fletcher knew that he could be easily misunderstood, and anticipated the question, “Are we to be dull and melancholy?” He answered brilliantly: “Seriousness and solid happiness are inseparable.” Christian happiness is **solid** happiness. It is not curt or unsmiling, but it is certainly not light or flighty. A Christian’s solid happiness sometimes overflows in jubilant songs and dances, but these exultations are as different from worldly ecstasy as a rushing river is incomparable to a spritzing spring. Worldly happiness spritzes, but it is always dry when it really counts. Christian joy never runs dry, but springs up into eternal life.

Christian happiness is solid because it is rooted in solid things, and solid things must be taken seriously. In the sober study and contemplation of eternal matters, we find our delight and say with the Psalmist, “Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart” (Psa. 119:111). Worldly joy is fixated on hevel, smoke, vanity of vanities, and inevitably wisps away.

If you are always looking for the fun in life—the joke, leisure, or entertainment—you probably already know, in the secret place of your soul, that true happiness is eluding your grasp. The paradox of Christian happiness is that it flows from a period of mourning over sin, then settles into a steady stream through a serious, lifelong battle against everything that is less than excellent. Christian joy is always mingled with reverence and only comes to those who “Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling” (Psa. 2:11). If you want to be happy—really happy—you must quit playing games and find a place to pray. Or, as James says, “Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you” (James 4:9). Seriousness is not opposed to joy. It is the inescapable path to an abiding attitude of solid happiness. ■

Rev. Johnathan Arnold is Associate Pastor of God’s Missionary Church, Newport, PA, where he resides with his wife Alexandra. He is passionate about preaching and writing. (All Scripture quotations are from ESV.)

1. Fletcher, John. *Works of Fletcher: Volume IV, Miscellaneous*. Schmul Publishers, 1974, p.250.
2. Wesley, John. *Wesleyana: A Complete System of Wesleyan Theology*. Lane & Scott, 1852, p.48.
3. *Words and Music* by Al Stillman and Dick Manning, Roncom Music, 1965.



COME *to the* TABLE

by John D. Parker

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” —Matthew 5:6 NKJV

To me, this is one of the most blessed promises in the entire Word of God. Hunger is involved in every step of the restoration of the relationship of man to his Maker. That blessedness becomes even more progressively blessed as we continue to hunger and thirst after Him. As our trust, commitment, and desire become intertwined with the good and beneficial will of our God, we learn the deeper secrets of blessedness.

Psalm 37 says it like this: “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord: and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass” (vv.3-5). God loves to feed those who are hungry. He delights in preparing a table for hungry children.

I come from deep, deep, south Alabama, and although we didn’t live there most of my growing up years, we’d go back to visit family. My favorite part of those trips was when we made our way out into the country of Geneva County, Alabama, to my great-grandma’s house. We called her Ma Avrett.

GREAT-GRANDMA AVRETT

Ma Avrett was a great big lady and not very well kempt. She was very old and could barely get around. She lived in

a great big farmhouse that had a covered porch around all four sides. The house sat very high off the ground and had never been underpinned. The open space beneath it provided a great refuge for the chickens, dogs, and hogs when it rained. The structure had never had a drop of paint on it in all its history—just old, natural wood.

I loved to go to Ma Avrett’s. We’d pull up in the yard, get out, and climb the steps up onto that porch. Daddy would knock on the front door, and from somewhere deep back in that big old house would come the great big bellowing voice of Ma Avrett: “Y’all come on in!”

She had no idea who was knocking, but that didn’t matter. We would enter and walk down the hallway. We didn’t stop at the living room. Hers had some fairly fancy, but rather dusty, furniture in it. We didn’t go to the sitting room, or the dining room, or den. We went exactly where we knew Ma would be—all the way back on the lefthand side in the kitchen. Ma’s kitchen was huge. It had a table about 16 feet long with a bench down the back side of it and chairs around the other three sides. Then there was Ma’s recliner. Yes, Ma had a recliner in the kitchen! That’s where she stayed.

When we walked through the kitchen door, suddenly Ma, realizing who it was, would come “gathering up” out of that chair (it took her a little while). Once up, she’d get

ahold of her walker. She became the most excited old lady you've ever seen in your life! She would put big old slobbery kisses all over us. Then she would shoo us kids out the door. "Y'all go play. Y'all go play."

She would immediately go over to the end of the kitchen and raise the lids on two freezers and start rummaging around. Daddy would say something like, "Now Ma, we didn't come to eat." I always wondered about my daddy saying that, because I thought that was *exactly* why we had come! She would drag out big bags of south Alabama peas and butter beans and okra. In a few minutes she had the burners going on her two cookstoves, and, with the pots and pans banging around, she kept talking all the time.

In just a little while, the smell of Ma's good cooking would waft out and she'd come to the back door to call us. We would run into the house and slide down that long bench, and my great-grandma would be the happiest person on planet earth because she had some hungry boys to feed. She would say, "I just love to see y'all come. I love to feed hungry boys."

Ma Avrett would pile the food on our plates, and before we got halfway done with the first pile, she'd come by to pile more on, saying, "You like that, don't you?" And we did like it.

GRANDMA PARKER

My grandmother, though she was not Ma Avrett's biological daughter, was raised by her. Grandma Parker was all crippled up with arthritis by the time I graduated from GBS and went back to south Alabama to plant a church. I would periodically drive down that little distance to see Grandma in her little apartment. She could barely move, but I wouldn't be there very long before she would hobble into her little kitchen, open her refrigerator, and pull out stuff from the little freezer on top.

She'd say, "You can eat while you're here, can't you, honey?"

And I would say, "Well, Grandma, you don't have to cook for me."

But she would say, "I've been hoping you'd come. I put some stuff back that I fixed."

She'd have chicken and rice—which is my favorite—and cornbread and peas. She had it all ready. She was just hoping and praying that I would show up. She wanted to sit at the end of the table and watch me eat.

MAMMA

My mother came from Virginia. Although she didn't know Ma Avrett and Grandma until she married into the family, she shared their disposition. I am the oldest of four boys and six girls, and I have heard my mother say on many a Sunday, "Y'all just bring your friends and let them come. I love to see hungry boys eat."

I have thought about that a lot. I believe that is a little picture of how the heavenly Father feels when His chil-

dren pull up to His table, put their feet under His table, and say, "Lord, I'm hungry. I need you."

I believe there is a smile that crosses the face of the heavenly Father. I believe he says, "I've been waiting. I have some stuff stored up for you."

In Psalm 23, David says, "He restoreth my soul" (v.3). While studying that passage one day, I found this explanation from a commentator: "This simply means He brings me back to the table again." That thrilled my heart! Continuing on, David says that He prepares a table before me even in the presence of my enemies—in the midst of difficulties. There is nothing more restorative than the fellowship of His table!

While a student at GBS, I traveled and sang in the school's quartet. One winter I got very sick with pneumonia. They sent me to Dr. Risma, the school doctor. He said, "Man, you've got a bad case. If we don't do something about this, you're going to end up in the hospital." It got worse.

A few days later, President Miller called me and asked, "What are we gonna do?"

I said, "Bro. Miller, if you let me go home for a few days to eat Mamma's cooking, I think I'll make it. I think I will be all right."

He said, "I will have a plane ticket for you in a few hours."

Sure enough, his secretary called to tell me that somebody would be taking me to the airport.

That afternoon I flew back to North Carolina. My mamma picked me up, and as I lay down in the back seat of the car, too weak even to sit up on the way home, she asked, "Son, what sounds good to you?"

I said, "Mamma, I don't know. Whatever you choose."

As soon as we arrived at the house, Mamma got busy fixing the things that she had fed me and nourished me with through the years. It wasn't long until I was like a new person. I was back at GBS in just a few days, able to resume a normal schedule of classes while traveling and singing. Mamma's cooking was restorative!

CONCLUSION

Friends, I know that some of you may be struggling. You may be in the same place spiritually that I was physically. I am happy to pass along the cure. God is looking down the lane, longingly wondering if you are going to come, if you are going to knock on His door. He is waiting with some stuff stored up just for you. So, pull up to His table, He has what you need. He delights in those who come to Him hungering and thirsting. ■

John D. Parker (BRE '78), long involved with pastoral ministry and missions, is currently president of the Alabama Conference of the Bible Methodist Connection of Churches. He and his wife Cathy (Horral) (BRE '78) live in Pell City, AL. This article was adapted from a sermon preached during the GBS winter revival, January 17, 2019.



WINTER REVIVAL 2019

The campus family welcomed John and Cathy Parker to GBS for the Winter Revival (January 17-20). Forty-one years ago John Parker and Cathy Horrall graduated from GBS with Bachelor of Religious Education degrees. They married in 1978 and moved to Enterprise, AL, to plant a church. John has also pastored in Easley, SC, and Westfield, IN, and has held various leadership positions in the Bible Methodist

Connection of Churches, including current president of the Alabama Conference.

The theme for the series of services was "Radical Kingdom Life" based on the Sermon on the Mount. Rev. Parker warned that it is possible to graduate from a Bible college and yet not really know Jesus. Knowing ABOUT Jesus isn't enough; a personal relationship with Him must be developed. The first two sermons focused on the Beatitudes, explaining what it meant to be blessed and how each beatitude expressed a qualification for membership in the Kingdom of Heaven: poor in spirit, mournful, meek, spiritually hungry, merciful, etc. Friday evening's sermon was about

light. When Jesus, the Light of the World, left this earth, He instructed



Rev. John Parker



REVIVALIST FAMILY

On these pages, we feature items about GBS alumni, significant events scheduled throughout the "Revivalist Family," and brief news notes from across the Holiness Movement.

DEATH



Rev. Paul E. Mills, 85, of North Vernon, IN, passed away March 17, 2018, at Schneck Medical Center in Seymour, IN. Rev. Mills was born November 2, 1932, in Grantsburg, IN, the son of Everett E. and Dimple I. McCutcheon Mills. While attending GBS (CWC '53), he met Louise Asher (GBS HS '53) and they married shortly after graduation. Louise preceded him in death (2002) as did his second wife Virginia Lawson (2014).

Rev. Mills served as pastor of several Wesleyan Churches throughout his life, retiring in November of 2017. He had previously served as Trustee of God's

Bible School and College for 26 years. Rev. Mills also served on the District Board of The Wesleyan Church, Indiana South District.

Survivors include his three children, Pamela, Diana, and Steve; 8 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; and 2 sisters, Anna Garcia and Norma Woolems (since deceased). It is worth noting that Rev. Mills' son, Steve, was a GBS graduate (BRE '84) and all six of Steve's children were as well: Brandon (BA '06), Ryan (AA '06), Philip (BA '11), Bethany (AAS, BA '12), Steven (AAS '12), and Tyler (HS '17).

The funeral was held at the Flintwood Wesleyan Church with Rev. Gordon Tilley officiating. Burial followed at Union Chapel Cemetery, Grantsburg, IN.

In a tribute to his grandfather, Philip Mills wrote: "Many men desire to be in the limelight, but no man wants to be in the spotlight. Few men can stand up under the scrutiny of having their life examined, but my grandfather is one of those few.... When I think of my

His disciples, and us by extension, to reflect that light in our world. If we hide our light under a basket, the world will not even know we exist. God doesn't call us to "safe" places. He charges us to enlighten subcultures in a dark world.



On Saturday, Rev. Parker reminded his audience that Christians are in a war against the "Society of Things." Some "things" are indeed necessary, but the proper priority is to "seek first the kingdom of God." If we do that, then "all the other things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

Beginning with the opening prayer and throughout congregational singing on Sunday morning, a special moving of the Spirit was apparent. When Rev. Parker approached the pulpit, rather than launch into his prepared sermon, he asked Vice President Marc Sankey to lead the song "He Is Here." As a holy hush settled over the gathering, many went forward to pray. More singing followed, interspersed with additional times of prayer around the altar. The atmosphere of worshiping and seeking God was a refreshing time of blessing!

The final Sunday evening sermon re-emphasized a beatitude ex-

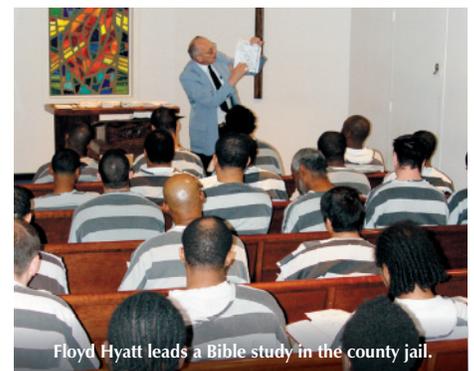
amined on the opening night: "Blessed are they that hunger." Rev. Parker took his text from Revelation 3:20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Admitting its use as an evangelistic text, Rev. Parker presented it in the context of prayer. One of the first marks of a lukewarm church is its lack of prayer. In Revelation 3, we find God knocking on the door of His Church. He wants to satisfy our hungry hearts. He wants to feed us. But even more than that, He wants to dine with us, if we will but open the door.

We are thankful for God's Spirit at work in the hearts of our students and staff during Winter Revival and pray that the victories gained will be maintained with God's continuing help. An article adapted from the opening night sermon can be found on page nine of this issue, and each service can be viewed on the GBS Facebook page www.facebook.com/GodsBibleSchool/.

FLOYD HYATT LAUDED FOR JAIL MINISTRY

A thank-you card came to GBS for Floyd Hyatt, Access and Safety Director, whose 35+ years of jail ministry in Hamilton County have touched many lives. The individual who wrote the note of thanks also made a donation to the school. The card reads:

"I was in jail for my crime and you visited me, showing me the way and how to live in the light that lit my path and took the crime and darkness out of my life. Through



Floyd Hyatt leads a Bible study in the county jail.

grandpa and his ministry, I think of the story of the Apostle Paul in Acts 9:10-20. It's not that my grandpa reminds me of Paul, but rather of Ananias, the disciple in Damascus who led Paul to Christ. Paul is considered one of the greatest evangelists in history, but without the faithfulness of Ananias, the story of Paul might be different. Ananias got to baptize and help mentor the greatest evangelist in his day, all because he was faithful to obey God and do what He asked. Ananias was never in the limelight, but I believe his faithfulness can stand up under the spotlight.... My Grandfather, Paul Mills, was a man of integrity who has left an amazing legacy."

HITHER AND THITHER AMONG US



Steve Stetler (BRE '82, BA '83) has been appointed to serve in the new position of **Director of Member Care for Hope International Missions**, overseeing the well-being of HIM missionaries—emotionally, spiritually, physically, and relationally. Steve has 38 years of ministry experience as an educator, pastor, evangelist, and missionary. He and his wife Beth (Sankey) Stetler (BA '85), a certified bilingual special education instructor, live in Pharr, TX. ■

your teachings, I accepted Jesus into my heart and life. He has blessed and protected me to this day—over 30 years!

“I thank Him for the school and pray for His continuing to work through the school.

“A token of my thanks to all, Charles.”

NEW TRUSTEES WELCOMED TO GBS BOARD



Nathan Smith

comes from a family that has been dedicated to God’s Bible School through many years. His father Joseph (BRE ’80) enrolled at GBS in the 1970s and met fellow student Sharon Morrow (BA ’79) from Canada. They married in 1980 and began pastoring. All of their children have attended and graduated from GBS. Nathan is their third child.

Like his father, Nathan met his future wife at GBS. Laura VonBokern (BA ’08) and Nathan both worked on staff for the social deans while they were students. In 2008, after Nathan graduated with a BA in Church and Family Ministry, they were married and settled in the Shelbyville area of Indiana. Since then he has been a self-employed general contractor, working primarily in residential real estate.

The Smiths are active members of the Bible Holiness Church, Shelbyville, IN, and reside in Waldron, IN, with their two boys and three girls.

Daniel Edwards



grew up as a country boy in Randolph County, IN. He loved helping his parents and grandparents care for the animals and work in the fields on the family farm. His parents, Wilfred and Rachel Edwards, were also involved in song evangelism and traveled extensively across the Mid-

west singing in revivals and camp meetings. Daniel began singing at age two and gave his heart to Jesus while very young. He grew up serving faithfully alongside his father in both the family business and Christian service.

Following his graduation from Winchester Community High School in 1987, Daniel attended Union Bible College, graduating with a BA in 1991. The following year he served as a math and English teacher at Union Bible Academy while traveling with the music group The Singing Friends and preaching on weekends. In the summer of 1992, he went back to the family farm to help his aging father until his death in 1993. The next two years he continued working on the farm while singing and preaching in revivals and camp meetings.

In 1995, Daniel married Angie Tallman (GBS 1994-95) and they continued in full-time evangelism until the fall of 2000 when they began to pastor Sparrow Creek (formerly Dunkirk) Friends Church of Winchester, IN. The Lord has blessed their ministry there and the church has grown under their leadership. They still enjoy traveling from time to time holding revivals and singing for special events with their five children, one of whom (Tyler) is a current GBS student in the Division of Ministerial Education. The Edwards reside in Ridgeville, IN.

JANET ALBERTSON ACCEPTS STAFF POSITION

In 2016 Rowen and Janet Albertson were feeling the winds of change. He was tiring of his work as a microscope analyst for Kodak and she had finished homeschooling their six children. Their two youngest daughters were ready to follow two of their older brothers to GBS. Rowen and Janet thought this



was a good time for a transition in both vocation and location. In September 2016 the Albertsons moved from Johnstown, CO, to Taylor Mill, KY, very close to Cincinnati, OH.

Rowen has been happy in his new job as closet system and kitchen cabinet installer, and Janet has been busy providing in-home patient care. Recently Janet has agreed to make another change by joining the GBS staff as a food services assistant. She is a big help to Debby Byer, our food services supervisor. Welcome to the campus family, Janet!

PRAYER BOARD INSTALLED IN COMMONS

Student Government officers Ariana Gattone, Cale Manley, Renee Albring, and Greg Hinton report that a prayer board has been installed in the Commons to help promote spiritual



unity and community on campus. Students who have a prayer request or a word of encouragement for someone can write it on one of the pieces of paper provided and clip it to the Prayer Board. Other students can then pray for the posted needs. Additionally, there will be beads on the nearby table. When God has answered a prayer, the student can make that known by dropping a bead into the answered prayer jar. It will be exciting to see the jar fill up as God answers prayer! ■



Expanded Ministry Opportunities

President Rodney Loper

At the time that our founder Martin Wells Knapp was envisioning a Bible training home, he was busily engaged in evangelism and outreach. Knapp had relocated from Michigan to the banks of the Ohio River in order to bring the good news of the gospel to the down-and-outers of society. One can rightly conclude that God's Bible School was born on the front lines of ministry. GBS has always been about ministry.

From the earliest moments of our existence, our students have received a quality education within a context of experiences igniting their hearts to share Christ's love. Specific courses were created (for example, the Ten Weeks Course and the Christian Workers Course) in recognition that *everyone* should be equipped to share the gospel, not just those studying for full-time ministry as pastors, evangelists, and missionaries.

That legacy is still alive today. Reaching our world for Christ still resonates in the hearts of our students. We are still passionate about *equipping* our students with an excellent education, but we are equally passionate about *igniting* their hearts for ministry. Every week students spill off our campus to share the love of Christ with our sin-darkened world.

GBS will always be about ministry. As we make strategic plans, as we create our budgets, as we create curriculum for our classes, ministry remains our focus. You don't have to take my word for it. Our report card for ministry is the great host of alumni who have circumnavigated the globe to share the good news of Jesus Christ. College leaders, pastors, missionaries, educators, musicians, lawyers, doctors, engineers, builders, administrators, and a host of

other occupations have been filled by ministry-minded alumni because of the stamp that was pressed into their lives while they were students here at GBS.

Too often ministry is viewed in a limited vocational sense—being a pastor, missionary, Christian educator, or song evangelist. Yes, these are ministry, but ministry is far more. Ministry is life. For the Christian, everything is ministry. Everything we do is for the glory of God. I am passionate about ensuring that GBS students serve this present age both while they are on campus and after they graduate.

Since we believe that all Christians should have a solid biblical worldview regardless of their professions, we are happy to share some exciting news with you. We recently signed two articulation agreements, one with Indiana Wesleyan University that opens the door for nearly two dozen degrees, and another with The Christ College of Nursing and Health Sciences for degrees in nursing and healthcare administration.

This is exciting because we are able to keep doing what we have been doing—what God has called us to be as a Bible College—and yet offer more opportunities for students who are being called into non-typical ministry settings. A broader spectrum of students will now be able to sit in our transformational classes and chapels and live on our campus while they complete their education. These students will receive the GBS stamp of biblical fidelity as they explore horizons beyond what GBS has traditionally offered. As a result, GBS will more fully fulfill its mission—"to prepare faithful servants who proclaim Jesus Christ and spread scriptural holiness throughout the world."

We are excited to announce GBS pathways to regionally accredited degrees in:

- Nursing
- Addictions Counseling
- Business
- Marketing
- Psychology
- And more



For more info visit gbs.edu/pathways

Trust & Obey

There's STILL
No Other Way...

by Michael Kelley

*“Trust and obey, for there’s no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”*

It’s an old song—written in 1887—but it’s still true. If you look at this simple lyric, there are three components in play. There is faith (which the song calls trust), there is action (which the song calls obedience), and there are feelings (which the song refers to as happiness). These are three important components in our lives; but it’s vitally important for us to know a little something about how they are meant to relate to each other.

In an ideal situation, it works like this:

I am excited and joyful about obedience. This is because my faith is strong—I know my Father loves me and wants the best for me, and therefore I believe Him when He tells me in His Word that I should walk in a particular way. So I take action, I obey, and I’m happy the whole time I’m doing it.

And it would certainly be nice if it worked like that, wouldn’t it? But both you and I know it doesn’t. At least some of the time we are not excited about obedience. In fact, we are excited about disobedience. Our hearts lie to us and tell us that happiness and satisfaction will be found not in the way of purity, not in the way of holiness, not in the way of self-control, but instead in walking in the path



The engine of our lives shouldn't be our feelings; it should be our faith. The driving force, then, isn't what you feel.



of least resistance. In giving into the particular temptation we are facing at a given moment.

The problem here is within us. It's that we might know the right thing to do, and we might know the right reason to do it, but we don't feel it. Our hearts and our feelings often betray us by contradicting our faith and then lead us astray, and we are all too willing to follow them. It is as if our lives are a train and our feelings are the engine. The cars behind the train are all the other parts of our lives—our diets, our relationships, our exercise schedule, our reading, the movies we watch, and so on. The engine of feelings pulls along the cars behind it, tugging us along to whatever destination we feel like getting to at a given moment. The locomotive keeps on moving, all led by our feelings.

But there is a better way, and the better way comes in changing the order of the cars on the train.

To keep with the train illustration, I would propose that we've got the wrong thing pulling us along. The engine of our lives shouldn't be our feelings; it should be our faith. The driving force, then, in all these situations isn't what you feel; it's what you believe. You believe that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit; you believe that Jesus is patient with you and you should therefore be patient with others; you believe that your mind is actually formed by what you put inside it; you believe that the Bible is the Holy Word of God; and so on. You believe all these things, and those beliefs are what is pulling along the cars.

So if faith is the engine, the next car is action, for that's when faith is truly validated. It does little good to claim you believe that God will meet with you over the pages of Scripture but never read it. Is that faith? Not really. Faith pulls along the necessary action behind it, whether that means saying, "I'm sorry," or saying no to the extra piece of cake.

Then, behind action, comes the car of feelings. It's funny that it works that way—you often don't feel like doing something in the moment, but you do it anyway. Your action is pulled by your faith, and then feelings come along behind it, eventually catching up with what your faith has known all along. Eventually you do feel it; you're glad you made that choice, but it doesn't happen right away.

You trust and obey. For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey.

Faith. Then action. Then feelings follow. And slowly, by God's grace, the length of chain that connects all those things together gets shorter and shorter. As we grow with Him, we find that our feelings are actually coming closer and closer to faith. ■

Michael Kelley works for LifeWay Christian Resources leading a team of writers that produce challenging, biblical content for churches. He also speaks in churches, conferences, and retreats and has authored several books. This article from michaelkelley.com is used with permission.



Your action is pulled by your faith, and then feelings eventually catch up with what your faith has known all along.

Dear Phil



HAPPINESS AND JOY—WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

Is there a significant biblical difference between “joy” and “happiness?” What is biblical happiness? —A Friend

Dear Friend,

As far as I can tell, there is no significant difference between joy and happiness in Scripture. Both the studies I’ve read and have done indicate joy and happiness are synonyms in Scripture. I know most of us have heard something like, “Happiness depends on circumstances; joy does not”; but you won’t find the Bible using these terms this way.

- **Job 5:17** – Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.
- **Psalms 146:5** – Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in the LORD his God.
- **Proverbs 3:13** – Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding;
- **Proverbs 14:21** – He who despises his neighbor sins; But he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he.
- **Romans 14:22** – Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.

Neither will you find great Christians of the past saying that. John Wesley preached the following:

“[God] made all things to be happy. He made man to be happy in Himself.... Should not every parent, as soon as a child begins to talk, say... ‘[God] made you; and He made you to be happy in Him; and nothing else can make you happy.’ We cannot press this too soon.... Indeed, this should be pressed on every human creature, young and old, the more earnestly and diligently, because so exceeding few... seem to know anything about it. Many indeed think of being happy with God in heaven; but being happy in God on earth never entered into their thoughts. The less so, because from the time they come into the world, they are surrounded with idols. Such...are all the things that...promise a happiness independent of God.... We know that...all religion and all happiness, depend on Him; and whoever teaches to seek happiness without Him are monsters, and the pests of society.”*

This emphasis on happiness was not unique to Wesley. It can be found in Christians of all stripes, including Puritans (e.g., Thomas Boston, Richard Baxter, William Law) and Roman Catholics (e.g., Blaise Pascal).

My study of the biblical words translated “happy” (Hebrew: *’ashrey*; Greek: *makarios*) has led me to conclude that **biblical happiness is the satisfaction that comes from attaining what is good from God’s perspective**. When Wesley said God made us to be happy, he meant God made us to experience the satisfaction or contentment that comes from attaining what **God** considers good.

Biblical joy is similar. It is also at its root satisfaction or contentment. Paul connects joy and faith in Romans 15:13 – “May the God of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing.” It is as we focus our minds in trusting faith on who God is and what God promises that we experience the satisfaction we know as joy. We might even say that “peace” is joy at rest and “exultation” is joy excited. Sometimes we experience heightened emotions as we focus on God’s person and promises, but the emotions themselves aren’t the essence of biblical joy or happiness.

Blessings,
Phil

Dr. A. Philip Brown II is the Graduate Program director and a member of the ministerial faculty at God’s Bible School and College.

* Wesley, John. Sermon 119: “The Unity of the Divine Being.” *The Works of John Wesley*, Third Complete and American Standard Edition, Vol. II, Carlton & Porter, 1856, pp.429-434.



student focus

U.S. CHURCHES DYING

Between 6,000 and 10,000 churches are dying in the United States every single year. Although over 70% of U.S. citizens claim to be Christian, the number of those who participate in corporate worship is declining, and many larger buildings now have only a handful of attendees. Another dynamic is that religiously unaffiliated Americans, commonly referred to as “nones,” represent 25% of the U.S. population today.

APA SAYS TRADITIONAL MASCULINITY IS HARMFUL

The American Psychological Association released new guidelines to help psychologists work with men and boys. Those guidelines rely on four decades of research to show that “traditional masculinity is psychologically harmful and that socializing boys to suppress their emotions causes damage.” The APA, however, overlooks the fact that traditional masculinity was instrumental in building Western civilization and protecting it from the brutalities of other forces, as well as protecting femininity.

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

Christians suffered an increase in persecution last year with 245 million facing violence or oppression around the world—30 million more than the previous year. This came in a report published by Open Doors,

a Dutch charity that supports persecuted Christians. It lists 73 countries as danger zones for Christians, noting that China is among the most dangerous. New laws governing religious expression there have led to raids and the demolition of scores of churches. India has also seen an increase in violence against non-Hindu minorities.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has warned that Christians in the Middle East are on the brink of “imminent extinction.” He has called on the U.K. government to take in more refugees. Only one in 400 Syrian refugees given asylum in the U.K. last year were Christians, despite this group having been subjected to “horrendous persecution.”

The Voice of the Martyrs reports that even as Islamists raid villages, gun down Christians, and destroy homes and churches in Nigeria, thousands are turning to Christ. This is especially true among the Fulani, a traditionally Muslim tribal group (see p.22).

ANTI-SEMITISM RISING IN U.S.

While Jews account for about 2% of the U.S. population, the FBI reports that they account for more than half of Americans targeted by hate crimes committed because of religious bias. The Anti-Defamation League reported a 57% increase in incidents in 2017 as compared to 2016. The political left, especially some of the newly-elected members of Congress, have taken a noticeably anti-Israel position. ■

HEATHER KESSEN, Aurora, IN, began her walk with God when she was around eight years old. She was well acquainted with GBS as her grandparents, parents, and siblings are alumni. But her desire to enroll at GBS was because “I knew it was what God wanted for me.”

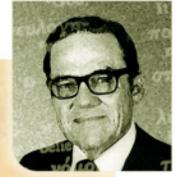
She came to GBS at a very difficult time in her life—while her mother was fighting a losing battle against cancer. God helped her to grow in her faith and sustained her through triumph and tragedy. “God has changed me at my core, as He has been faithfully tearing down barriers, thought-processes, and beliefs in me that were contrary to His character. I have more confidence—not self-confidence, but God-confidence.”

Heather plans to graduate in May with an AAS in Music Ministry and a BA in Integrated Studies (Children’s Ministry and Missions). She is not sure what the future holds, but she intends “to stay surrendered to wherever God leads.” ■

Seventy-five percent of our students receive some form of financial aid which enables them to attend GBS. If you would like to support students with financial needs, you may send a gift to:

Student Fund
God’s Bible School and College
1810 Young Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202

or give online anytime at
www.gbs.edu/givenow



— Called Unto Holiness —

In this space we use writers both past and present to discuss various aspects of Christian holiness.

HOLINESS AND HAPPINESS OUT OF PAIN

by John Wesley

May the Lover of men open the eyes of our understanding, to perceive clearly that, by the fall of Adam, mankind in general have gained a capacity, first, of being more holy and more happy on earth, and, secondly, of being more happy in heaven, than otherwise they could have been!

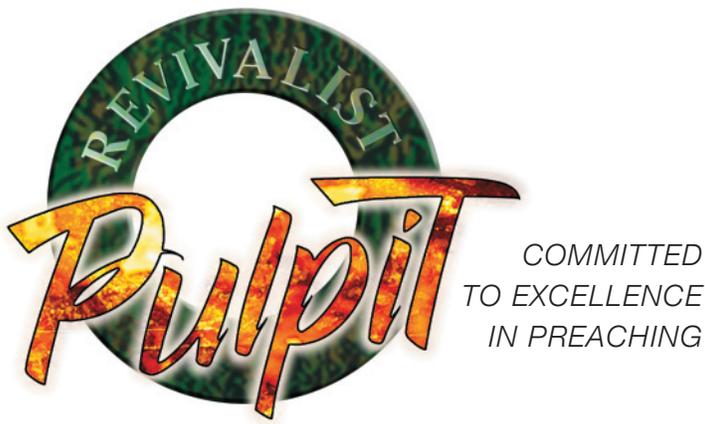
And, first, mankind in general have gained, by the fall of Adam, a capacity of attaining more holiness and happiness on earth than it would have been possible for them to attain if Adam had not fallen. For if Adam had not fallen, Christ had not died. Nothing can be more clear than this; nothing more undeniable: The more thoroughly we consider the point the more deeply shall we be convinced of it. Unless all the partakers of human nature had received that deadly wound in Adam, it would not have been needful for the Son of God to take our nature upon him. Do you not see that this was the very ground of his coming into the world? "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: And thus death passed upon all," through him in whom all men sinned (Rom. 5:12). Was it not to remedy this very thing, that "the Word was made flesh," that "as in Adam all died, so in Christ all might "be made alive?" Unless, then, many had been made sinners by the disobedience of one, by the obedience of one many would not have been made righteous (Rom. 5:19). So, there would have been no room for that amazing display of the Son of God's love to mankind. There would have been no occasion for his being "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It could not then have been said, to the astonishment of all the hosts of heaven, "God so loved the world," yea, the ungodly world, which had no thought or desire of returning to him, "that he gave his Son" out of his bosom, his only-begotten Son, to the end that "whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Neither could we then have said, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself," or, that he "made him to be sin," that is, a sin-offering, "for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him." There would have been no such occasion for such "an Advocate with the Father," as "Jesus Christ the righteous;" neither for his appearing "at the right hand of God, to make intercession for us."

What is the necessary consequence of this? It is this: There could then have been no such thing as faith in God thus loving the world, giving his only Son for us men, and for our salvation. There could have been no such thing as faith in the Son of God, as "loving us and giving himself for us." There could have been no faith in the Spirit of God, as renewing the image of God in our hearts, as raising us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. Indeed the whole privilege of justification by faith could have had no existence; there could have been no redemption in the blood of Christ; neither could Christ have been "made of God unto us," either... "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."

...Such gainers may we be by Adam's fall, with regard both to the love of God and of our neighbour. But there is another grand point, which, though little adverted to, deserves our deepest consideration. By that one act of our first parent, not only "sin entered into the world," but pain also, and was alike the justice but the unspeakable goodness of God. For how much good does he continually bring out of this evil! How much holiness and happiness out of pain! ■

John Wesley (1703-1791) was an English cleric and theologian who founded Methodism. This excerpt is taken from Sermon 59 ("God's Love To Fallen Man") in The Sermons of John Wesley. Wesley's sermons are available in various books which collect his works.



JOY FOR THE JOURNEY

by Jonathan Slagenweit

Scripture: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”—Galatians 5:22-23*

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”—James 1:2-4

INTRODUCTION

I received a text message from my friend Scott that blessed my heart. He told me about a recent trip he and his son Gabriel had taken to BI-LO, a grocery store. A lady was standing at the entrance with a sign that read, “Need help.” When the boy saw that sign he said to his dad, “Dad we GOTTA help her, she needs our help!” While they were in BI-LO they bought a chicken dinner and a coke for the lady. When they came out, Gabriel took the food to the lady. When Gabriel came back to the car he said, “Daddy, my heart feels so happy.” Scott finished that text by saying, “As a preacher I wanted you to know, it ‘took.’”

I couldn’t help but think the outflow of Gabriel’s act of love was joy...or as he expressed it, “My heart feels happy.”

Jesus said in John 15:11 as He spoke of the importance of abiding in Christ, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” The joy we are to pursue is the joy that is the product of Spirit-living and Spirit-walking.

BACKGROUND ON THE PERSON OF JAMES

For us to understand what it means to bear the fruit of love, expressed through joy, we need to take a

deeper look into joy. To do that, we will look at James’ words found in his letter.

The book of James is an interesting book. It begins by saying, “James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” The author only identifies himself as a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ. The truth is, it is written by the half-brother of Jesus. Scripture tells us that Jesus had at least four brothers: James, Joses, Simon, and Judas (Matt. 13:55-56).

James was not a believer in Jesus for most of his early life: “For neither did his brethren believe in him” (John 7:5). In fact, it would appear that James might have thought his brother was insane! “And when His family heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him, for they were saying, ‘He is out of His mind’” (Mark 3:21 ESV). Additionally, Jesus didn’t even entrust His own mother to His siblings when He was dying. Instead, He asked John to care for His mother (John 19:26-27).

It wasn’t until Jesus’ resurrection that James became a believer. 1 Corinthians 15:7 tells us that Jesus made a special appearance to James, probably playing a prominent role in James’ conversion. Subsequently, James became a prominent leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15). He wrote in the time period shortly after Stephen had been stoned and Saul was persecuting the church.

THE ROAD TO JOY

James tells us to do something that by nature runs cross-grain to our feelings! One could translate the original Greek of James 1:2 to say, “Consider your circumstances with calm delight when you fall into various, unavoidable methods of adversity.” There are two thoughts being expressed in the Greek word “temptations”—the outward trials of life and the inward temptations of the soul.

Outward Trials. Consider it all joy when you are persecuted or mistreated; when your car breaks down; when the assignment seems unfair and the professor won’t back down; when you are ridiculed for your faith; when you are beaten for your love for Jesus; when your money runs out and there’s still more month left; when your parents are ill and you have to care for them.

James observed this kind of joy first hand. Jesus told His disciples, “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great” (Matt. 5:11-12 NASB). Then later, when the apostles were dragged before the Sanhedrin, they took His advice. They were flogged and ordered not to speak in the name of Jesus, and released (Acts 5:40-41). They

went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. James would have had a front row seat to this since it took place in Jerusalem and he was a leader in the church at Jerusalem.

Inward Temptations. Consider it all joy when you are tempted inwardly? Yes. When you are tempted to quit the faith; when you are tempted to cheat on your tax return; when you are tempted to go to that website you know is wrong.

But how are we to count temptation joy, when failure means that we have sinned? I think the answer lies in this fact: The testing of our faith demonstrates two truths, (1) We are alive spiritually and Satan is seeking our demise; and (2), God is perfecting something in our lives.

The very thought of counting all these circumstances as joy runs cross-grain to our human nature! But listen to the words of wisdom from Warren Wiersbe. He writes, "Our values determine our evaluations. If we value comfort more than character, then trials will upset us. If we value the material and physical more than the spiritual, we will not be able to count it all joy! If we live only for the present and forget about the future, the trials will make us bitter, not better."*

THE ROUTE TO JOY

We cannot count trials and temptation as joyful if our evaluation is determined by the material and physical, because in that mode we are consumed by how we feel. But James 1:3 helps to put things in proper order, letting us know that the testing of our faith produces endurance. That helps! We can't count something which is painful as joyful unless we know something more than just what we feel. Let me illustrate it this way:

Imagine yourself walking down the sidewalk, and a friend comes running out of nowhere and tackles you and you land three feet off the sidewalk in the grass. In such a situation, surely you would be less than blessed. Right? But what if there had been a large object that was about to drop on your head? That changes things.

In a similar sense, James is saying that we can face our trials and temptations with joy because we know there is a Friend watching over us, and He controls the outcome. Often in the situation, things beyond our feelings are not readily apparent. But the Christian knows that, although unpleasant in the moment, the testing of one's faith produces endurance.

Apart from God, our lives are like pieces of scrap metal, twisted and wrecked from the sin in our lives. But God, the Master Blacksmith, takes our lives and

puts us in the fire and forms our lives. The forging work may be unpleasant, but knowing what is being done changes our perspective of what we are going through. We can rest knowing our Friend, the Master Blacksmith, is overseeing everything, and that these trials are producing endurance within us.

THE DESTINATION OF JOY

James shows us a progression in this journey of joy. We can count our circumstances joyful when we know what God is doing, but what HE is doing is not just producing endurance. That is just a step in the overall journey. James 1:4 says, "And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (NASB). No, endurance isn't the final result, it's a means to the destination. The destination is perfection or completeness—lacking nothing!

Picture your faith as a puzzle. What you begin with appears to be a scattered mess. However, little by little you begin to see how the separate pieces fit into the larger picture. As one piece after another joins together, that picture begins to form, but the puzzle isn't complete until the last piece is nestled into place, finishing the masterpiece.

Jesus wants to do the same thing with your life... your faith. He doesn't want to present a half-finished puzzle to His Father. He wants to present a completed puzzle, lacking nothing!

CONCLUSION

When the fruit of the Spirit, love, is being born in our lives, it produces the fruit of joy. I had the opportunity to watch this firsthand in my life. When I was a teenager, my mother contracted a rare blood disease. Over the course of the next 15 years, I watched as her health slowly deteriorated. For some people, it would have been an opportunity to blame God or question His goodness. However, I watched my mother, and, through all her treatments and setbacks, she grew in her relationship with the Lord. Not everything was pleasant, but she remained joyful through it all. She personally showed me what the fruit of the Spirit looks like. Because of her love for God, she endured and stayed joyful through her various trials. And, I must say, she showed the world what a "perfect person, lacking nothing," looks like. ■

Jonathan Slagenweit pastors the Bible Methodist Church, Easley, SC. He and his wife Tonya have four boys.

* Wiersbe, Warren. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 2nd Edition, Vol. 2, Chariot Victor Publishing, 2004, p.338.



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Observations On

Joy

"The reflections on a day well spent furnish us with joys more pleasing than ten thousand triumphs." —Thomas á Kempis

"Find joy in the ordinary." —Max Lucado

"Life's joys are only joys if they can be shared." —Ravi Zacharias

"The joy of Christ and the joy of the world cannot consist together. A heart delighted with worldly joy cannot feel the consolations of the Spirit; the one of these destroys the other: but in sanctified trouble, the comforts of God's word are felt and perceived in a most sensible manner." —Abraham Wright

"Joy is best sown in broken ground." —Jack Wellman

"Begin to rejoice in the Lord, and your bones will flourish like an herb, and your cheeks will glow with the bloom of health and freshness. Worry, fear, distrust, care—all are poisonous! Joy is balm and healing, and if you will but rejoice, God will give power." —A.B. Simpson

■ "When the heart is full of joy, it always allows its joy to escape. It is like the fountain in the marketplace; whenever it is full it runs away in streams, and so soon as it ceases to overflow, you may be quite sure that it has ceased to be full. The only full heart is the overflowing heart." —Charles Spurgeon

"When large numbers of people share their joy in common, the happiness of each is greater because each adds fuel to the other's flame." —Augustine

"Most of those who fail to experience the joy of the Lord have refused to take up a cross!" —Walter J. Chantry

"Joy has nothing to do with material things, or with a man's outward circumstance.... A man living in the lap of luxury can be wretched, and a man in the depths of poverty can overflow with joy." —William Barclay

"A soul may be in as thriving a state when thirsting, seeking, and mourning after the Lord as when actually rejoicing in Him; as much in earnest when fighting in the valley as when singing upon the mount." —John Newton

"The world looks for happiness through self-assertion. The Christian knows that joy is found in self-abandonment. 'If a man will let himself be lost for My sake,' Jesus said, 'he will find his true self.'" —Elisabeth Elliot

"There is no greater joy in the Christian life than to trust Him and need no explanation." —Jack Hyles

"If you have no joy, there's a leak in your Christianity somewhere." —Billy Sunday ■

MARCH 2019



A NEW FRONTIER IN CHURCH MISSION

by *Nnamdi John Oziri (BA '87)*

Recent humanitarian crises worldwide have created concerns for modern civilizations whose governments and citizens must rethink how to address the social, environmental, and economic impacts that have resulted. The surge of refugees from Central America, with over 5,000 men, women, and children marching on foot to cross the U.S. border, led to clashes at San Diego and Tijuana. In Southeast Asia, over 700,000 ethnic Rohingya have fled



Myanmar as a result of that country's religious intolerance and persecution against them since 2017. In central Africa, thousands of families are on the run as a result of religious persecution in that region. All of these crises have created more work for the groups who have been trying to meet the needs of those in turmoil—needs for shelter, food, medicine, and psychological support. These emergencies should cause the Church to awaken to their duty to see these global events as a new frontier for Christian mission.

During the last International Convention of the Church of the Nazarene, there was a clear mandate that the denomination should divest itself of the secular and politi-

cal ideas that restrict its members from reaching out to those who are suffering. Such a step would be a fulfillment of the Lord's mandate to send forth laborers into the harvest.

In addition to migrations and persecutions, wars and natural disasters are global events that have had a serious impact. Wars in various regions of the world have created a human burden in the form of refugees, while natural disasters, such as fire, flood, and earthquakes, have created another burden in that the affected populations are internally displaced.

A quick reflection on what is happening in our world today (for example, the uptick of Islamic terrorism in Tunisia, Libya, Iraq, Egypt, and Syria) shows that the outcomes of these revolutions have created the largest pool of human suffering since World War II—a record number of

over 65 million refugees. Civil wars have also had their toll in Sudan, Libya, Somalia, and Cameroon. These sub-Saharan regions of Africa have experienced over half of the global refugees in the 21st Century. The issue of the number of internally displaced people in this region, such as in

Nigeria, has not been included in this figure. This is because Nigeria, with a population of over 186 million people, is currently experiencing ongoing terrorism by left-wing Islamist groups such as Boko Haram and Fulani Herdsmen. Attacks in Nigeria's north-eastern and middle belt regions have displaced over 26 million. Of these displaced families, there are now over 5,000 widows and over 15,000 orphans in Borno state alone. Additionally, the war in Cameroon caused more than 30,000 refugees to cross into Nigeria. As a result of all this, the Nigerian Church is faced with the challenge of reaching out to this people. So far, the federal government has been giving only lip service.

Since 2015 and the beginning of Muhammadu Buhari's presidency, Nigeria has witnessed more terrorism and family displacement. In spite of the federal government's effort to contain these terrorist groups, the killing and tension has escalated. One major contributing factor to this rise has been the inclusion of the Islamic Sharia legal system in Nigeria since 2000. Although Nigeria adopted the presidential system of government (like the U.S.) in 1979, it has not practiced true democracy. Rather, what is observed is the practice of politics along either ethnic or religious lines.





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On my recent trip to the border in the town of Bakassi, I saw firsthand the hardship and suffering. I am therefore calling on the Church to reorient how it thinks about mission and take on the challenge this New Frontier has presented to us. The Church must adopt a compassionate approach in its missionary endeavors and help meet the needs of these troubled people, including sharing the gospel with them. Are you ready to meet the challenges of this New Frontier? ■

Dr. Nnamdi John Oziri (BA '87) serves in several ministry capacities in his home country of Nigeria: pastor, visiting university/seminary professor, and institutional board member. He is married to Dr. Adaye Oziri who works in the medical field and has organized many medical compassionate outreaches both within and beyond Nigeria. The Oziri's adult children are medical, engineering, and business professionals in the U.S.

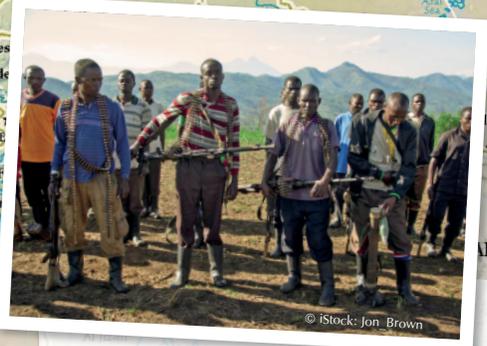
by Sonja Vernon

THE GOD WHO BRINGS JOY!

"The meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy." —Psalm 65:13 NASB

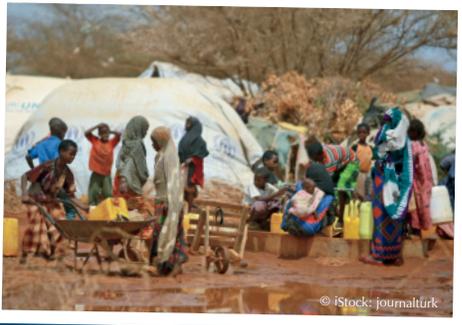
Have you ever known those who brought joy with them whenever they showed up? Something about their persona left everyone better after being around them—the mood lifted, the air was lighter. If you've ever known someone like this, I'm guessing he or she came quickly to mind and probably brought a smile to your face. We describe God in many ways, but, for some reason, we don't often view Him like this—as someone who infuses the atmosphere with joy. Of course, God is awesome in His power and holy in every aspect, but He is also pure joy! I was beautifully reminded of this recently as I read Psalm 65. It is unashamedly effusive in its language, and I worshiped as I read. Perhaps you need to stop for a moment and remember a few truths about our great, joyful God that you may have forgotten. The last few verses go like this: "You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy, the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy" (Psa. 65:11-13). Our awesome, holy God also causes the earth to make itself beautiful and burst into joyful song in His presence. The God who lavishes such care on hills and valleys also longs for you to find joy in His presence. Focus your heart on Him, and let His joy be yours! ■

Sonja Vernon is Director of Student Affairs at God's Bible School.



Many armed rebel groups, such as these members of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, murder countless civilians and wreak havoc throughout Africa.

The sub-Saharan regions of Africa account for more than half of all global refugees in the 21st Century, and massive refugee camps, such as this one in Dadaab, Kenya, have become continuous reminders of the human suffering.



**SYMPHONIC WIND and STRING ENSEMBLE
SPRING TOUR**

March 29, Friday, 7:00 PM
Bible Holiness Church
1224 Main St Troy, MO
Dr. Steve Oliver (636) 528-2902

March 30, Saturday, 6:00 PM
Bible Holiness Church
608 N 13th St, Independence, KS
Rev. Joe Devolt (620) 331-4480

March 31, Sunday, 10:45 AM
Wesleyan Bible Church
6600 S 33rd W Ave Tulsa, OK
Rev. Mike Yancey (918) 445-1972

March 31 Sunday, 6:00 PM
Calvary Bible Fellowship Church
6606 NW 16th St, Oklahoma City, OK
Rev. Phil Mills (405) 789-6221

April 1, Monday, 7:00 PM
Mt. Zion Church of God (Holiness) (Mt. Zion Bible School)
Ava, MO (Go two miles north from Ava on HWY 5, turn left on
B HWY, go two miles to church on left.)
Rev. Bob Thompson (417) 683-4600

April 2, Tuesday, 7:00 PM
Bible Holiness Church
1947 W Barner St, Frankfort, IN
Dr. David Fry (765) 654-7901

April 3, Wednesday, 7:00 PM
Bible Methodist Church
4465 N Fortville Pike, Greenfield, IN
Rev. Mike Mater (317) 326-3601



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