

Giving is Joy



Overtaken by God's incredible love and faithfulness to us, we recognize the honor it is to reflect His love by sharing it with those around us. We love because we believe in Christ. We believe because He loves us. We have joy because Christ has invited us into a relationship with God. Because of the love, faith, and joy that we have received from Him, we give because we know we are loved, we know who we are, and we know where we are going.

The Source of our Joy

The source of a Christian's joy is their childhood in God. Jesus revealed this truth directly to His disciples after they returned from their journey to Palestine. Jesus appointed 70 of His followers to go throughout this land, where He was about to go, to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God. Jesus warned them that they would not be received well in all the places they would go. They were going to be "lambs among wolves." However, when their journey was complete and they came back to Jesus, they returned with joy (Luke 10:17). They were filled with joy because they had been successful. God had used them, and they had witnessed the manifestation of the power of Christ in their work. They declared their happiness over the fact that the demons were subject to them in Jesus' name. So because of their success and the power they had experienced, they were happy. Jesus responded to them by redirecting their focus to the true source of joy – *"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven"* (Luke 10:20).

Jesus taught these followers to be careful and not to misplace the basis for their joy. This lesson is important for all of us today. God's blessing is for spiritual life. How often does our joy fluctuate and depend on what is happening in our lives – our family matters, our work life, our social circles, etc...? Do we only rejoice when everything is well? Does our joy disappear when we struggle? What does that tell those around us?

Our joy is founded and rooted in our childhood in God. When this truth remains at the forefront of our lives, then no matter the ebbs and flows of life, our joy is evident. We are secure in a loving

relationship with our Heavenly Father. We are children of a King and are under His provision and care. He has demonstrated His love for us when He sent His Son to rescue us from our sins. His love has been poured into us through the Holy Spirit. This is our joy! It is an unchangeable truth and is the motivation behind all that we do. Experiencing this joy prompts us to give.

Sharing what we have

As a church, a united community of believers, the joy of our childhood in God should inspire us to share and help one another. This was also in the hearts of the believers in the first church. This is exhibited in Acts 2:42-47:

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continually daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

We learn from this example that the first believers chose generosity rather than earthly greediness. They recognized that they were all equal before the Lord, and they made a decision to devote themselves to growing in their knowledge of Him. Their joy led them to share, to give to each other, and celebrate together. They praised God together for His goodness and their new life in Him. Luke tells us that as they did this, because of their joy and activity, they were a witness to those around them, and the congregation grew.

When our life in God is our joy and drives our actions, then others will be impacted by our joy because we will give and share with them voluntarily and without prejudice. Does your relationship with Jesus Christ fill your heart with joy and drive your actions? If you don't know, we encourage you to speak with a minister or a fellow believer who exudes joy to grow in your understanding.

Joyful Giving: 2 Corinthians

Apostle Paul was seeking financial help from the church in Corinth, for the church in Jerusalem. His intent in urging the Corinthians to take part in the offering was to give them the opportunity to use their abundance to help the believers in Jerusalem, who were in poverty. He explained to them how to give properly, and that their offering should be a generous offering rather than a grudging donation. God's generosity to them was to be an incentive for their own generous giving. Their giving would be a thanksgiving to God; it would meet the needs of God's people; and it would unify Jewish and Gentile believers.

As we practice giving out of the joy that we have from God, let us consider the words that Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 9:7 *So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.* When we mature in the mind of Christ, we will no longer give *grudgingly or of necessity*, but rather intentionally and with thought. Our giving becomes our decision, and because it is what we want to do, we give joyfully. Joyful giving is done freely, not grudgingly. This is where giving becomes faith, love, and joy intertwined.

Paul assures the congregation to trust in God's provision. *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work* (2 Corinthians 9:8). Our childhood in God secures our future. He will give us all we need to do the *good work* that He has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). This security frees us to give joyfully, generously, and confidently.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we give generously because we have received all from our generous God without conditions. Let us never forget that we were all lost and unworthy of grace. Yet, our Heavenly Father generously offered His Son to take our place to atone for our sins so that we could be children of God. That's more generosity than we can even fathom. When we joyfully give our resources to the church and those in need, it reminds us that everything we have is itself a gift from God. This is what Paul eludes to when he writes, *for the administration of this service not*

only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God... (2 Corinthians 9:12) When we give to help others, it not only meets their needs, but also is an offering of thanks to God for what He has provided for us. And so, we can joyfully share with others what the Lord has given generously, and give without worry because we know He will always care for His children.

Joyful giving is done thoughtfully and with intention. Through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, we are able to see those who are in need and we are prompted to assist. We want to give when prompted, in hope that the one receiving will experience the joy we have, and glorify the Lord.

As faithful followers of the Lord Jesus, we understand that those who are far from the Lord have needs also, and we believe in the saving power of Jesus Christ. We love them because we are all made in the image of God, who so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son. We share freely the good news of salvation so that the name of Jesus can be made known to all, and so everyone may come to realize that true satisfaction can only be found in Him.

Joyful Giving brings a foretaste of the Kingdom

When believers are united in their joyful giving, then the congregation becomes a foretaste of the kingdom of God. Pray together within your congregation, your family, your circle of friends, and ask the Lord to help you all to be joyful givers. Pray that God will enable you to see the world around you in such a way that you can clearly recognize the needs of others and act upon the prompting of the Holy Spirit to share what He has blessed you with.