

Can't Steal My Joy

Recently I stumbled on the popular TV show, Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? I watched the audience burst with excitement as a young man won \$250,000. It was obvious how thrilled he and his wife were over their sudden windfall. Even Regis was overjoyed.

If winning what essentially amounts to the lottery could send so many people into hysteria, what are we missing in the church? It seems as if we've forgotten the real source of our joy.

If the truth were told, many people in the body of Christ would admit they have never experienced godly joy. We often walk around like mechanical Christians repeating to one another, "The joy of the Lord is my strength," but we don't mean it. We don't even know what it implies. Until we allow His full counsel and authority in our lives, we will miss His joy as followers of Christ.

The church today needs a complete overhaul in our thinking. We have missed one of the primary commands of Christ: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33, NKJV). When we understand that we must give all for His righteousness, then we will stop putting the cart before the horse and wondering why the cart isn't moving.

So often we develop a mind-set that says, "God, give me what I am praying for." Then if we don't get what we want, or if hard times hit, we lose our joy and get mad at Him for not fulfilling our demands. And instead of admitting that our

hearts are not pure, we try to fight the devil when, in reality, we are our own worst enemy.

Many Christians spend so much time focusing on demons and spirits that they never get a true understanding of what God's kingdom really is. Even preachers find themselves shunning the refining process of God. This shows that they don't have a relevant understanding of the kingdom of God.

If we could just grasp the concept of who He really is, then our thinking, our churches and our lives would dramatically change.

Too many believers take the tough lessons God tries to teach us and blame them on Satan. If we lose our jobs, it's a demonic attack. If our children don't heed our words, we say spirits possess them. And, God forbid, if we ever get sick, it couldn't be our lifestyle—it has to be the devil!

It may not be a popular thought, but God does allow (though does not create) difficult things to happen to us to bring about maturity. The Old Testament character Job knows this all too well. As for Mr. Holier Than Thou and Miss Sanctified Sue: You and I both know that in the past you would wait in line all day to catch a sale at Macy's and all night to get into a nightclub. But if trouble hadn't come your way yesterday, you wouldn't be waiting in line to go to church today.

We didn't just choose to go to church—we were driven there. Trouble hit us. Refining hit us. Fire hit us. We didn't just decide to be as holy as we are. We had to be disappointed, laid off, sick and evicted from our homes before we were prompted to live a godly life.

It's a strange thing, but we don't find out who we really are when things are great. We find that out when all hell literally breaks loose in our lives. Unfortunately, many of us want to abort the refining process and take the less difficult way out.

Let me tell you how to get out of the mess you're in: Stay there until it doesn't bother you any longer, until you can say, "I've passed this test."

Attaining the kingdom will cost you everything, but it is still a bargain. No matter how much credit we give the devil in our lives, He is nowhere close to the kingdom of God. The mind of Christ is in the kingdom. And when you are in the kingdom, everything around you will submit because you are in a seat of authority. We must graduate into a relationship with the Lord in which we are convinced that the devil cannot take anything from us.

Don't let Satan steal your joy. The only way the enemy can take anything from you—joy included—is if you give it to him.