

Project Joy: We Need More of It in the Church

Hebrews 1:8-9 (NIV) says, "But about the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy.'"

Implicit in this verse is a powerful message.

The Father looked down on His Son and was pleased. Out of all the ways he could have expressed his feelings toward Jesus; He chose to anoint Him with the oil of joy. In today's church, how many of the sermons, how many of the Sunday school lessons, how much of conversation and various other interactions express joy?

If joy is highly favored of God, why is so much of what occupies modern Christianity focused on doomsday issues, discussions of moral corruption, talk of war, pandemics, fires, earthquakes and more?

I venture to say joy, happiness and simply having fun (as with Jesus wrestling playfully with His disciples) are rare commodities in much of His church. Why? Joy and happiness are far better draws than gloom and doom, especially among the young.

Also, joy and spontaneity go hand in hand with having fun. What's wrong with having fun? Even some healthy horsing around among His kids is a good thing. But, all of us—from about 27 to 97—tend more to sullen than jubilant matters of churching.

A Joyful Interlude

Our family was fortunate to be living in northwestern Connecticut when the brief Toronto Blessing of 1994 was in full swing. We were touched powerfully—and personally—by this revival.

My wife, Pat, and I were variously healed from chronic bleeding, dying veins and cardiac dysrhythmia. We're now in our early 80s and remain healthy. Just this past week, I easily pushed through 2 miles of river bottom brush on a turkey hunt. (Wild turkey for Thanksgiving—once again. Not bad for an 83-year-old.)

The Toronto Blessing was real. We started a small home group that grew into a church. Pat had an out-of-body experience at one of those meetings. She prophesied that a computer guru in our midst would one day be a pastor. He shrugged it off. Eight years later, the guru was called to pastor a church in Spokane, Washington, where he lives and teaches to this day.

Pat also received the gift of interpreting tongues. At one Sunday service, someone stood up and delivered a message in tongues. Pat turned to me with a big smile and said: "Wasn't that neat? What a powerful message."

I looked at her and murmured: "It was just gibberish. I didn't hear a message." It was her turn to be amazed. "How can you say that? It was plain English." She then gave me the message, which was powerful.

A woman with a ministry named Singing Grace sprang from (or was propelled by) the blessing and initiated services throughout the immediate region, meetings remarked by many healings. One night we took a woman friend suffering from stage 3 cancer to one of Grace's services.

The friend was shy about going forward, so I took her by the arm and walked to the front of the crowd with her in tow. As Grace walked by, briefly touching foreheads with a Holy Spirit anointing, our slightly disbelieving friend was unmoved—but I

got knocked flat.

The group we were with found this anomaly very amusing. But the woman was healed, as the doctors later informed her. Who can fathom the workings of an omnipotent Creator?

The one outstanding feature of all the events we attended during this time of revival was the singularity of joy. It was the oil enabling all the miracles.

This takes us back to the beginning of this little tale. Out of the infinite variety of reactions and choices available to the Father, isn't it interesting that the oil of joy came out on top? Accordingly, shouldn't this be something firmly embedded in all we do in our own ministries?

A word to the wise. {eoa}

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