

It's Time for Christians to Reclaim Happiness

Is your church happy? Most of us are not sure how to answer that question. It seems like church should be a happy place, right?

Yes, it should. Church should be a happy place not because we want it to be but because God wants it to be. God has intentions and purposes for the church, and oddly enough, those purposes include instilling joy in his people.

The church's influence on the world depends on its joy.

Joy is available to any church of any size, and yet joy often sits by as a neglected resource for most churches. It is time to equip Christians to release joy in their churches, to live into a neglected aspect of the Christian life—we are meant to be a people in pursuit of radical joy.

The direct pursuit of happiness rarely produces happiness. But foundational reasons to be happy exist in every church—if it is truly the church. There are blessings unleashed in the common activities of every church. Large or small, in any context or any language, churches have a number of consistent patterns of behavior so simple they often go unnoticed. The tragedy comes when a church forgets why it does the things it does, when these behaviors become dead ritual and mindless habit. Happiness perishes in the arid climate of empty ceremonialism. When a church has lost touch with deep happiness and joy in Christ, it is time to reexamine these common activities we regularly share and uncover the blessings of God we find in them. In restoring this understanding, we just might restore the foundations for a community of pervasive celebration and gladness.

C. S. Lewis said, "Joy is the serious business of heaven."

Happy is serious business. I believe we need to learn the serious business of happiness in our Christian life together in the church. We need to learn to fight for joy in our churches.

It is not a superficial matter. Church in the Western world is declining. Church has developed such a bad reputation that some will be surprised I even choose to use the word. Many pastors avoid saying “church” at all—as impossible as that is—because too many people associate the word *church* with a bad experience, a time they visited a dark and musty building filled with little or no joy, where the people whispered and wept in dark shadows. Church has been starved of its happiness.

It’s time to bring “happy” back.

This excerpt is taken from chapter one, “Getting Serious About Happiness,” from the book *Happy Church: Pursuing Radical Joy as the People of God* by Tim McConnell. Copyright (c) 2016 by Tim McConnell. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426. Visit for more information.

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