

Christian Family – Part 2 **The Joyful and Loving Family**

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If you ask people what they want out of life, they will tell you that they just want to be happy. I wonder what this means. Think about that for a moment. What makes you happy? Some people's happiness is dependent on others or other things that are often beyond their control. For example, you may love to watch your favorite sports teams play ball. But, you are only really happy when they win. Your happiness is conditional. You may be happy spending time with your family, however, it's no picnic in paradise when your kids are complaining, whining, and fighting. Again, your happiness is conditional. As a general rule, people are happy when things are going their way and they get frustrated when things are beyond their control. That's why it is more important to lead a joyful life rather than a happy life.

Joy is not conditional but is a wonderful byproduct of the Christian faith rooted in trust in God. Joy is something that can last forever and it is directly related to the amount of our lives that we turn over to the Lord Christ. Christian joy is the internal satisfaction that we get when we are confident that God is in control of everything. Joy trusts God to guide us for our own good and for His glory. Our only true source of joy is God because everything else disappoints. Only God can be trusted, only God can deliver all the time, and only God is dependable. Everything else is temporal and is subject to failure. Christian joy is an inner peace and is our personal strength, as it is written:

✠ “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (**Nehemiah 8:10**)

The question is: How can I have a joyful life and a joyful and loving family?

1. Change your attitude towards your family

It is not that difficult. All that you need to do is to think seriously about devotion and how to honor and cherish your family and consider them to be worth the effort.

✠ “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Romans 12:10)

Put your family first and go the distance by offering your help, instead of waiting for them to come and help. Take the initiative and teach by example.

2. Accept one another

Start by simple things like writing down what your spouse likes or dislikes. Thank God for your family and if you feel that there is something that needs to change in them, pray for them. Most importantly, don't wait for them to take the first step to make you happy, but ask yourself what can I do to help my family become happy?

✠ “Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God”
(**Romans 15:7**)

Remember that we are all humans and we have our own weaknesses like others. If they accept us as we are, why don't we accept them as they are? If God, out of the great love He has for us in His heart, came to save us while we were still living in sin and darkness, why don't we do the same and accept our family even if they sin, out of the love that we have in our heart for them? This brings my third point about true love in the family.

3. Love one another

This may require some hard work, not just emotion. Civility and cooperation must also be learned. Many people wrote about love language and they consider it to be a good source of joy in the family.

According to psychologist Dr. Gary Chapman there are 5 languages of love. Everyone has a primary language of love, a way in which they understand love the most. These are practical principles you can apply to show love to your spouse, parent, child, friend, brother or sister.

1. **Physical touch** - this is one of love's strongest voices. It shouts 'I love you'. Research shows that babies who are held, hugged and kissed develop a healthier emotional life than those who are left for long periods of time without any physical contact.
2. **Words of Affirmation** - in communicating love, words are powerful. Words of affection and endearment, words of praise and encouragement, words that give guidance all say 'I care about you'.
3. **Quality Time** - is focused attention. It conveys to a person that they are important enough to want to spend time with them.
4. **Gifts** - the giving and receiving of gifts can be a powerful expression of love. The most meaningful gifts become symbols of love but the person on the receiving end must feel genuine care from the other party, which the gift is not just something to cover up a problem.
5. **Acts of Service** - doing things that will make a person happy. Loving service is a gift, not a necessity, and is done freely, not reluctantly. We can fall back into love by serving our spouse.

Let me tell you a story about how parents can express their love to their children and give them words of affirmation, even if they make big mistakes. The story was written by someone called Arnold Prater in a book entitled "You Can Have Joy!" tells about a man in a little English village named John Deckard. John was a clerk in a textile factory. A modest and quiet man, he lived in an ordinary little house at the edge of town with his wife and his six-year-old son, Rob.

Like thousands of Englishmen, every morning John put on his plain tweed suit, got on his bicycle, and rode to work. Returning home at five in the evening, he would work in his garden until suppertime. Then he would spend a quiet evening with his pipe and family.

He was a very ordinary man living what most people would call a very ordinary life. But he had one claim to fame. For five consecutive years John had won the blue ribbon in the Village Garden Show with his prize rose. It had gone on so long that people had come to expect it. John Deckard's prize rose would win, and that was that.

This year, deep in his own heart, John Deckard knew that he would again win the blue ribbon, for this year his rose was truly a rose among roses. Never had he seen such perfection in a flower. This was his masterpiece and as he watched it daily, his contentment and pride grew.

The show was on Saturday and he planned to transport his rose to a pot early in the morning. But while he was at breakfast, the tragedy happened. His little son Rob burst into the kitchen, and chatting excitedly he rushed to the table and cried, "Look Daddy, look what I have for you!" And in his grimy little hand, half its petals gone, its head drooping, was John Deckard's prize rose.

That afternoon, visitors to the Garden Show were astonished when they came to John Deckard's entry. For in a flower pot he had thrust a stick, and attached to it, at the very top, was a picture of his little son, Rob. When the judges heard what had happened, they gave John Deckard an honorary blue ribbon.

Some said that the rose that was not a rose was the finest he had ever grown.

4. Rejoice always

St. Paul wrote to the Philippians and said:

✠ "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you" (**Philippians 4:4-9**)

What the Scripture is teaching us here is the fact that a family that is not joyful does not know God? How could it know God if it does not reflect the fruits of the Holy Spirit:

✠ "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (**Galatians 5:22-23**)

Once, a man stood up to speak about a turning point in his life and was very proud of the person who made that change, his 6-years old son. It happened that one day he heard knocking on his door and he asked his son to open the door and see who is there. When the son opened the door, he yelled and said: Daddy, there is a friend of yours at the door. The father asked: how did you know that he is a friend of mine and not a salesman? The son replied: because he is frowning and doesn't smile like you. The man stopped for a while and thought about what he was doing to himself and to his family. He just "discovered" that life has taken a toll on him and made him lose the gift of the Holy Spirit "joy", which was very noticeable even by a little child. This also made him select friends of the same type, those who are always frowning and not smiling. So, please don't wait until someone notice the lack of joy in your life, but rejoice always.

5. Be thankful always

A joyful family is always thankful and a thankful family is always joyful because they see all things work together for their goodness, as St. Paul said:

- ✠ “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (**Romans 8:28**)

To practice being thankful at all times, just about these little things, which I once received via email. It says I am thankful for:

- ✠ The husband (or wife) who complains when dinner is not on time, because he/she is home with me, not with someone else.
- ✠ The teenager who is complaining about doing dishes, because that means she is at home and not on the streets.
- ✠ The taxes that I pay, because it means that I am employed.
- ✠ The mess to clean after a party, because it means that I have been surrounded by friends.
- ✠ The clothes that fit a little too snug, because it means I have enough to eat.
- ✠ My shadow that watches me work, because it means I am out in the sunshine.
- ✠ A lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, and gutters that need fixing, because it means I have a home.
- ✠ All the complaining I hear about the government, because it means that we have freedom of speech.
- ✠ The parking spot I find at the far end of the parking lot, because it means I am capable of walking and that I have been blessed with transportation.
- ✠ My huge heating bill, because it means I am warm.
- ✠ The lady behind me in church that sings off key, because it means that I can hear.
- ✠ The pile of laundry and ironing, because it means I have clothes to wear.
- ✠ Weariness and aching muscles at the end of the day, because it means I have been capable of working hard.
- ✠ The alarm that goes off in the early morning hours, because it means that I am alive.