



Family Values

Virtue Realities

Joy

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We may not always consider joy a virtue. Yet it is a key element within the Christian lifestyle. It is no accident that the angels brought news of great joy. This news is a cause for celebration. This news is the reason to give God glory. This news is an unending source of joy and laughter.

As a matter of fact, joy and a playful spirit go together. When you look at the life of Christ, one thing that stands out is that he had a keen sense of humor. He liked to tease and exaggerate. So rather than compare splinter with splinter, he compares a splinter in one person's eye with the log in our own. He chides the Pharisees for their preoccupation with the outside of the cup while swallowing a camel in the process without even realizing it. He also says that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of heaven. A ridiculous picture! Yet he is quick to add that with God nothing is impossible.

This playful and joyful side of Christ was also evident in his appreciation of kids. He liked having them around. He appreciated their innocence and naive appreciation for life. He recognized that to such "belong the kingdom of God." Also, He describes this kingdom in terms of banquets, parties, wedding celebrations, etc. All of these are events where people have fun, where joy is in abundance.

Finally, joy is one of the gifts of the Spirit. Paul clearly tells the Galatians that joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit, against which "there is no law." So to walk in the Spirit means among other things to reflect joy. In doing so, we let people know that God is at work among us.

So, it should be no surprise to us that joy is an important virtue within Christian living. As Christians we ought to be upbeat people. We should live our lives with an enthusiasm and zest that reflects the way in which this good news permeates our hearts. Laughter, excitement, songs of praise and rejoicing should be commonplace for us. Such joy uplifts us, dispels sadness and has a healing quality to it.

The following are some ways to practice joy:

1. **Pray daily that God open your heart to joy.** The more we recognize the importance of joy and seek it, the more we will find it.
2. **Look for reasons to be joyful.** A baby's smile. A beautiful sunset. The tender touch of a loved one.
3. **Surround yourself with positive/joyful people.** If you know people who are constantly negative and tend to pull you down, limit your time with them.
4. **Be a source of joy to others.** Look at the light side of life. Appreciate the power of play. Walk on the sunny side of the street.
5. **Take time out to play.** Have fun with your family. Don't let work or other responsibilities weigh you down. Life's too short. Life is meant to be enjoyed.
6. **Let the children lead the way.** Watch how they are spontaneous. See how they let go and give full reign to joy.

Affirmation: *"I deserve to have fun today and to celebrate the blessings that surround me."*

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