Promoting and Preserving the Joy of Leadership

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WHY IS JOY SO IMPORTANT?

Because **AN ALARMING NUMBER OF THOSE IN MINISTRY DON'T HAVE JOY.** Some disturbing statistics regarding men in ministry.

These statistics do not lead us to conclude that there is a great deal of joy being experienced by Christian leaders. Granted, these statistics apply to those in salaried, full-time ministry; but the reality is that they could just as easily (perhaps more easily) apply to church elders. I would guess that being paid for one's ministry would make one more inclined to deal with the difficulties of the task than for one who is volunteering his time and energy. (This ecclesiastical sadness/depression is, I believe, a byproduct of flawed ecclesiology.)

Because what gives us joy is indicative of our spiritual condition (see Jonah 4:5-11).

**GOD IS JOYFUL** (1 Timothy 1:11) AND **WE ARE TO REFLECT HIS CHARACTER** (2 Peter 1:4). He does not take pleasure in the condemnation of men, but He does take pleasure in the salvation of men. God particularly takes pleasure in those he has made His own through the work of Jesus (Psalm 17:8; Zechariah 2:8). He views us with the pleasure with which He views the Lord Jesus. Joylessness therefore reflects badly on God (Nehemiah 2:1-2; Psalm 67:4).

Because we are commanded to rejoice always (Psalm 5:11; Philippians 4:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:16).

Joylessness is grief at best for elders (Hebrews 13:17), and sin at worst (Deuteronomy 28:47-48).

Joyless leaders are unprofitable to the church (Hebrews 13:17).

Because joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)

Because the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).
Joy is the normal, expected demeanor of the believer (Psalm 16:11; 32:11—33:3; 51:12). **LEADERS SHOULD EXEMPLIFY JOY** (2 Corinthians 1:24; 2:3; Philippians 1:25-26; 2:17-18; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-7; 1 Peter 5:2-3).

Because joy is one of the things that sets the Christian apart from others, and demonstrates the appeal of trusting in Christ (1 Chronicles 15:15-16, 25-27; Acts 2:46-47; 3:7-10; 4:23ff.; 5:41; 8:8; 16:23-25). Joy sets the believer apart from others.

Evangelism is not merely a dutiful act of witnessing as much as it is the overflow of our joy in Christ (see ACTS 8, 11, 16).

Because what is pleasing to God is a significant factor in discerning God’s will (Ephesians 5:10; John 8:29; 2 Corinthians 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:4, 15; Hebrews 13:20-21; 1 John 3:2). **JOY IS ALSO A SIGNIFICANT MOTIVATION FOR OUR SERVICE** (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Because of the pleasure we have of doing what we are made for, empowered by His Spirit (see Romans 12:8; Philippians 2:17-18). Eric Liddell once said, “God made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure.” ... “I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast!” Spiritual gifts empower us to do what God has made us to do.

**WHAT SHOULD BE THE SOURCE OF THE BELIEVERS JOY?**

The advance of the gospel and salvation of lost sinners (Luke 15:10; Philippians 1:12-18)

The unity of believers (Philippians 2:2).

The growth and maturity of believers (Philippians 2:1-2; 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20; 3:9-10; 3 John 1:2-6)

The perseverance of believers

Experiencing the love of fellow believers (Philemon 1:4-7)
Suffering for the sake of Christ (James 1:2-3; 1 Peter 1:6, 9)

Experiencing God’s presence (Psalm 21:5-6)

The enjoyment of God’s Word (Psalm 119:111)

FELLOWSHIP. A plurality of leaders with like passion for God and love of the brethren, and who share the burden of leadership and its joys (Psalm 133:1-3).

The collective pursuit of wisdom. Enjoy the counsel and correction of best friends with godly wisdom. (Note in Proverbs, the encouragement to seek the wisdom of others; note also the joy/enjoyment that seeking wisdom is.)

The assurance of future joy (Hebrews 12:1-2; Jude 1:24-25)

The joy of learning from those who are masters at what they do (Learning from those who are spiritually gifted in areas where we are weak, like teaching, showing mercy, giving – see Exodus 36:30-35).

**THINGS TO THINK AND PRAY ABOUT:**

Biblical joy is inseparable from one’s personal walk with the Lord.

Biblical joy is the fruit/reward of shepherding or discipleship. We should gain much joy from the growth and success of others in the faith.

**AS ELDERS, OUR WORK OFTEN HINDERS OUR PERSONAL WALK WITH CHRIST, AND ALSO OUR SHEPHERDING OF THE FLOCK.** I fear that we spend more time in “management” than we do in shepherding. When I think through the life of our Lord, I see much less management than I do shepherding. I believe that this is what Acts 6 is about – prayer and the ministry of the Word is our priority, and we must delegate some of those (legitimate) tasks which keep us from it.