

One man met another on the street one day and asked, "Are you a Christian?" To which the man replied, "No, it's just a little indigestion that makes me look this way." You know, we see this picture so often from those around us who profess to be Christians; it's no fun to be a Christian! We see it on their faces and in the way they live. But this picture isn't the truth. Christians should live a joyful existence. This morning I would like to talk about enjoying life, and if you get nothing else from my message, know that I am a Christian who gets a real blast out of living! I could not have as much joy in me if I lived any other way. How could I be happy with a face like this, you might ask. Well, let's see.

First let me define more thoroughly what I mean by 'joy'. Several things are included here. There is peace in your heart, a stillness in your soul (a 'peace, be still') which comes when you completely trust in God. There is a clean conscience which, although we all sin, Peter says comes with knowing that the sacrifice of Christ completely cleanses us continually from the guilt of our sins. And there is sort of a quiet joy, or happiness, or cheerfulness that we can have. There is contentment, or satisfaction with our physical situation. There is pure, good clean unadulterated fun and laughter. And there is a deep, swift-moving passion or drive for life and living and everything that comes with it.

Let's talk now about how we can find joy. {Constitution: pursuit of happiness}. First, we must not let life chase us around. Life can be tough, but we must grab for it, and tangle with it, and struggle to master it, or it will simply overpower you; it will run you right over.

Let me illustrate this by the game of softball. I played some softball in college with a guy who was a real giant. He would take a tremendous swing at the ball and send it rocketing over the outfielder's heads. A home run? No, because by the time he got to first, the ball had been chased down and thrown back into the infield. He could hit the ball well, but he didn't like to run. He didn't have the full speed ahead philosophy of life. I like to play that way; I enjoy tremendously trying to give my best and playing as hard as I can. Have you ever watched Pete Rose play? He's one of the best in baseball, and it's because he plays this way.

It comes down to this: there is great joy in giving 100%, in doing your best. There are no regrets in this way of life. Enthusiasm is really the key to life; and a positive attitude, a will to get things done will fill your days with joy and accomplishment. There is no boredom in this kind of life. Isn't this one of the real roots of Scouting, this idea of 'do your best'?

Let me mention right now that how you begin your day has a great influence on your life. Too many times we stay in bed as long as we can and then jump up and rush to school as quick as we can. For me it is so much better to get up 15 minutes earlier and give myself a little time to wake up. I like to read a while to clear the cobwebs before I have to gear up to do anything else.

But you and I both know that so many times troubles come, and we feel our joy smothered and extinguished. How can we possibly counter this? Well, let me give you an example. When Paul was in prison, in chains for the second time, shortly before he is killed for his beliefs he writes to the Philippians in chapter 4, verse 4; "Rejoice". Now, Paul has troubles with a capital 'T', but does he say, "(whisper rejoice)"? No, he shouts with enthusiasm: "Rejoice, and again I say Rejoice!" How could he have this attitude? He says in the thirteenth verse, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me." Plus, Paul knows that for a Christian, to die is gain, for it is indescribable beauty in heaven with God. Troubles always come, but for the Christian the impact is different. The Christian is not left alone to deal with his problems. He has the power from God to slap down his problems instead of letting them slap him down. His life is not one of giving up, or quitting. You know, you can't really be great unless you have overcome great obstacles; unless you have really been tested. (obstacle course).

In thinking again of my softball analogy, let us say that you step up to the plate and hit a triple. That is a fine accomplishment, but you know that nothing gets put on the scoreboard until you cross home plate. To many of us, our enthusiasm dies on third base. Some people die spiritually and mentally at an early age but are not buried until they are about 70. With Christ you may be buried at 70, but you will live forever. You young men are now at the age where you live your life with enthusiasm and gusto, or you can let it be as blah as unseasoned food. Joy is not something that just falls on you it's something that you work for.

I hope that this morning I have shown you what I feel to be an intimate relationship between joy and enthusiasm. If you're going to do your own thing, have sound reasons why you are doing it, and do it with feeling.

You may have heard of the old Alps mountaineer who arranged to have carved on his tombstone, "He died climbing". Oh, that means something to me! I want to die climbing, reaching out to take the hand of God. Winston Churchill once gave a commencement address that consisted of only these words: "Never, Never, Never, Never give up!"

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