

## Our Part In The Sanctification Process (Part Three): Cultivating Joy

Short Term Happiness, Long Term Joy  
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We will turn to several related scriptures upon which I intend to weave a theme for this message. Most scriptural references will be taken either from the Lockman Foundation's *Amplified Bible* or the Lockman Foundation's *New American Standard Bible* or *New American Standard Bible E-Prime*. All three of these versions are available in electronic format on the CGG website.

**Ecclesiastes 1:8** All things become weary; man cannot tell it. The eye has no satisfaction with seeing, nor does the ear fill with hearing.

Solomon is describing garden variety carnal human nature, never satisfied or content with what it has been given but feels compelled to endlessly covet more and more like a hungry, devouring tapeworm. If we read about our impatient, short-sighted forebears on the Sinai, despite the dramatic miracles God did on their behalf, they continuously, incessantly, and thanklessly grumbled, "What have you done for me lately?" After God amply and faithfully satisfied their basic tissue needs, slaking their thirst and hunger, they grumbled about the boring manna, desiring some variety like garlic, onions, leeks, and the savory pots of meat of Egypt. In their piggish gluttony described in Numbers 11, Jacob's spoiled brats gorged themselves with quail, incurring God's wrath.

After losing a whole generation of ingrates on the Sinai, Moses instructs the younger generation at the entrance of the Promised Land not to make the same mistakes as had their hard-hearted parents.

**Deuteronomy 8:10-14** "When you have eaten and have satisfied yourself, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. "Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I command you today; otherwise, when you have eaten and have satisfied yourselves, and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."

**Deuteronomy 8:17-18** "Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' "But you shall remember the LORD your God, for He gives you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it has occurred this day."

We are going back to Ecclesiastes 2.

**Ecclesiastes 2:26** For to a person who does good in His sight God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner He has given the task of gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who does good in God's sight. This too seems vanity and striving after wind.

Notice, it is God alone who gives joy. God alone has the copyright and the patent on joy, pleasure, and happiness, as well as all the legitimate strategies to cultivate joy and to augment and prolong happiness. God alone is the inventor of pleasure.

My Feast sermon in Topeka on September 26, 2002, “Stimulating A Spiritual Appetite,” made the case that Almighty God created both the cravings and the means to lawfully satisfy these cravings. The “drive-reduction mechanism” is one of the most ubiquitous repeatable designs and patterns throughout creation, from the single cell to the multi-cellular organism. The marvelous “drive-reduction mechanism,” satisfying thirst, hunger, sex, sleep, or some other tissue needs, has been intricately designed by our Creator. God has intended that humans experience pleasure. The human quest for pleasure reflects a significant aspect of God’s very mind (Romans 1:20).

Sadly, our forebears on the Sinai, with their checkered experience in the Promised Land, and now Jacob’s offspring in the Diaspora, have never learned to keep God in their thoughts, have never learned to express gratitude, nor have contentment for the lavish blessings they have inherited from Father Abraham’s obedience. Reprobate ‘progressive’ lawmakers in both political parties are feverishly attempting to squander these blessings by breaking modern Israel’s covenant relationship with Almighty God. God’s called-out ones dare not emulate the ingratitude and malcontent demonstrated by either ancient or modern physical Israel.

In Philippians 4, the apostle Paul admonishes those who are called to the New Covenant to exercise gratitude.

**Philippians 4:6** Do not fret or have any anxiety about anything, but in every circumstance and in everything, by prayer and petition (definite requests), with thanksgiving, continue to make your wants known to God.

**Philippians 4:11-12** Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to find contentment in whatever circumstances I find myself. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of having enough and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.

Now turn over to Proverbs 30 for reinforcement of this key to regulating contentment—a major contributory factor in short term happiness and long-term joy.

**Proverbs 30:7-9** Two things have I asked of You [O Lord]; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny You and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal, and so profane the name of my God.

We see a vast continuum of human behavior—on the one extreme covetousness and greed (a sure way to destroy happiness) and on the other extreme the kind of abject hopeless victimhood encouraged by morally debased reprobate ‘progressive’ lawmakers to create a permanent horde of helpless, angry, and resentful voting dependents. Neither class conscious victimhood nor materialistic greed have ever created an ounce of happiness or pleasure. Neither the sullen resentful victim nor the

grasping, greedy, covetous materialist have ever experienced the prolonged happiness and joy through the God-ordained “way of give” as opposed to the “way of get,” mentioned often by the late Herbert W. Armstrong.

In Acts 20, the apostle Paul gives us an insight which people usually do not learn until late in life, while the vast majority never learn.

**Acts 20:35** In everything I have pointed out to you [by example] that, by working diligently in this manner, we ought to assist the weak, being mindful of the words of the Lord Jesus, how He Himself said, It is more blessed (makes one happier and more to be envied) to give than to receive.

A major political party in the United States encourages punitive revenge, victimhood, massive entitlements, and reparations, while at the same time denigrates incentive and productivity by promising free stuff for all, including a guaranteed income whether one works or not. Welfare, food-stamps, and permanent dependency are preferred over the dirty four-letter word “work.”

**Ecclesiastes 5:19** Also, every man to whom God has given riches and possessions, and the power to enjoy them and to accept his appointed lot and to rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God [to him].

God has created productive work to be a blessing and a perpetual source of joy, enabling human beings to experience the same kind of pleasure He enjoys in what He creates.

Physical pleasures—whether they derive from eating a juicy steak, watching our grandchild win a blue ribbon at the county fair, or becoming absorbed in productive and satisfying work—have varying shelf-lives, but they are only a shadow, type, or foretaste of the permanent joy of the luxuriant fruit of God’s Spirit transforming us from mortal humans to immortal beings fashioned in Christ’s image with the capacity and desire to keep God’s law perfectly because it will be wired into our spiritual DNA. In our current formative sanctification stage, physical happiness may be absent at times from our experiences as we grimly weather character-building trials—which Jesus’ brother James encourages us to count as joy (James 1:2).

Ecclesiastes 3:4 describes the cyclical roller coaster of our sad-to-glad experiences, stating there are intervals of weeping, laughing, mourning, and dancing. Moses, in Psalm 90:15, begs God for a parity between painful and pleasurable experiences. He says, “Make us glad in proportion to the days in which You have afflicted us and to the years in which we have suffered evil.”

Let us try to imagine living what some would call a charmed life—a life in which all or most of our experiences are pleasant. Even at the peak pleasurable experiences in our physical life, we must admit that they are disappointingly temporary and relatively short-lived. In his April 1998 Personal in the Forerunner: “The Fruit of the Spirit: Joy,” John Ritenbaugh reminds us, “No matter how secure the sources of our joy may seem, we know joy does not last long. We may die; a mate or a friend who brings us joy may die; good health ceases; comforts vanish; social tragedies and natural disasters destroy loved things; properties depreciate and wear out; and our senses become dull so that we cannot see, hear, taste, feel, or smell as we once did.” (Many of us can relate to that.) In Psalm 119, we learn about the ultimate staying power or shelf-life of every human experience.

**Psalm 119:96** I have seen that everything [human] has its limits {and} end [no matter how extensive, noble, and excellent]; but Your commandment is exceedingly broad {and} extends without limits [into eternity].

**Psalm 119:111** I have inherited Your testimonies forever, for they are the joy of my heart.

**Psalm 16:11** You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

To those whom God has called and implanted His Holy Spirit into their nervous systems—or as Herbert W. Armstrong described “impregnated into their minds,”—God has revealed not only secrets of prolonging and sustaining physical pleasure, but to augment this crude type of joy to a permanent fountain of eternal joy, as one is completely composed of Holy Spirit in the image of God.

My specific purpose in this message is to provide biblical strategies to cultivate the fruit of joy, including developing contentment and gratitude, learning to prefer giving over getting, finding pleasure in work, finding our God-ordained purpose, and embracing God’s holy law, which will absolutely constitute our spiritual DNA and our first nature.

(Please allow me one sidebar before continuing. After I delivered part two of this message, “Cultivating the Fruits of the Holy Spirit: Perfecting Mature Self Love,” someone e-mailed me, taking me to task for adding an “s” to fruit, assuring me that we are dealing with only one fruit with nine aspects. Now even without adding the plural “s,” the noun fruit is still plural, an abstraction leaving out specific characteristics which distinguish an entity like apples from bananas, or strawberries and from pineapples. Ironically, the writer of one book on cultivating the fruit of the Holy Spirit vehemently strained at making a non-existent distinction, declaring vehemently “It’s not fruits plural, but singular,” but then he illustrated each chapter heading with a picture of a different fruit—grapes, apples, strawberries, blueberries, pineapples, oranges, etc.)

The reason our Savior and the apostles Paul and John used metaphor and imagery was that characteristics of a concrete image that we can see is projected upon a spiritual entity that no mortal human can see. Whether we look upon these spiritual unknowns as one entity or multiple entities as described in Ezekiel 47 and echoed by the apostle John in Revelation 22:1-2.

**Ezekiel 47:12** Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.

We are dealing with imagery and metaphor in both cases.

Dave Havir was once confronted by a member of the Big Sandy congregation who seemed to have some difficulty distinguishing between figurative and literal passages of the Bible. When Dave asked this individual if he thought Jesus Christ were returning to earth on a literal white horse as was described by Revelation 19:11, he answered, “Absolutely yes!” Dave then asked about the sword coming out of Christ’s mouth in verse 15, asking if this were also literal. This individual expressed

hesitancy, acknowledging that the sword indeed could be symbolic of the Word of God as we read in Hebrews 4:12.

Another individual, reading Revelation 4:7-8 describing a being looking like a lion, an ox, a man, and an eagle, all having wings, extrapolated that in God's Kingdom, the angelic beings will be like our pet dogs, cats, and parrots. Perhaps. For those who want the real lowdown on this fascinating symbolism in Revelation 4:7, please avail yourselves of John Ritenbaugh's informative seven-part series, "Four Views of Christ," beginning November 20, 1993.

If angelic beings then are supposed to present as animals, why did the angel who struck Peter to wake him up in prison (Acts 12:7) not appear as a 9-foot eagle? The angels who appeared at the Christ's tomb in Matthew 28 certainly were also humanoid in appearance. Paul, in Hebrews 13:2, admonishes us to show hospitality to strangers, suggesting we may have inadvertently shown hospitality to angels. I do not think he was advocating extra bird seed for our pet parrot or a big block of salt for the ox in the barn. The term "strangers" implies a human appearance. Arguing or making a careless extrapolation from biblical imagery and metaphor is futile at best and downright dangerous if one tries to establish a doctrine from it—as we learned from the "Born Again" controversy several years ago. As the German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein has cautioned, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent."

Contentment, a prerequisite or building block of both physical happiness and godly joy, has all but disappeared in the lands occupied by Jacob's offspring.

Chris Benjamin in his e-book, *Life on the Vine: Cultivating Joy*, contends that much of our culture and economy is based upon artificially manufacturing and gratifying desires. He challenges us, "Just pay attention to the ways that our culture (media, peer pressure, expectations) attempts to manufacture desire and then offer the means to gratify it. This becomes most detrimental to cultivating joy when the cycle of manufacturing and gratifying desire becomes an endless pursuit of happiness.

Lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life described in I John 2:16 is completely antithetical to contentment and joy. In attempting to explain how our society fell into this miserable super-covetous state, Benjamin proclaims: "How were we conditioned to want and desire?—the spirit of the age. Just as the Holy Spirit gives life and ripens the fruit of the spirit, the spirit of our age tries to bring life to desire. Satan's world tries to convince us that we should buy things that we really do not need."

When our Savior taught us to pray "Give us this day our daily bread" in Matthew 6:11, just as He supplied only a daily ration of manna to our forebears on the Sinai in Exodus 16, He was shaping us to exercise both faith and contentment. Hoarding has never been a godly principle but instead is tantamount to faithlessness and covetousness.

In his message on July 19th "Whatever Your Heart Desires," Mark Schindler stated that II Timothy 3:1-5 describes the troubling times in which we live, a world of malignant narcissism, exemplified by the self-absorbed Veruca Salt in *Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory*, who sings "I want the world; I want it now." This song describes a whole generation of children gone amok in selfish pursuits, perhaps emblematic of the current crop of gullible but covetous Millennials under the mesmerizing

tutelage of Bernie Sanders and his obedient “Squad” reminiscent of Charles Manson’s squad of obedient murderous hippies at the Spahn Ranch near Chatsworth 50 years ago in August of 1969. (I am not, of course, referring to the Millennials in this room or to those listening to this sermon.)

Motivational speaker Asad Meah has compiled 35 inspirational quotes or aphorisms on contentment, some of which are highly edifying and instructive. Here are few:

“Contentment is not the fulfillment of what you want but the realization of how much you already have.” Anonymous

“Contentment always eludes those who don’t count themselves blessed for what they already have.” Anonymous

“You can own everything in the world but if you lack contentment, you’ll never be happy.” Anonymous

One of America’s Founding Fathers, Benjamin Franklin, came up with this gem: “Contentment makes poor men rich; discontent makes rich men poor.”

In his October 1, 2004 Feast of Tabernacles sermon titled “The Joy of the Lord is Our Strength!,” Martin Collins also provided some timeless words of wisdom on contentment and happiness from Benjamin Franklin:

There are two ways of being happy—we may either diminish our wants, or augment our means: the result is the same; and it is for each man to decide for himself, and do what happens to be the easiest. If you are idle, or sick, or poor, however hard it may be to diminish your wants, it will be harder to augment your means. If you are active and prosperous, or young, and in good health, it may be easier for you to augment your means than to diminish your wants. But, if you are wise, you will do both at the same time, young or old, rich or poor, sick or well; and if you are wise, you will do both in such a way as to augment the general happiness of mankind.

In his sermon and article on “Fruits of the Spirit, Part 6: Joy,” Gary Petty cites Dennis Prager’s book, *Happiness Is a Serious Problem*, which makes the case that unrealistic expectation destroys happiness. Prager says that he thinks one of the great reasons people cannot have happiness in life is because of expectations. We have such unbelievable expectations that we have set ourselves up for failure, no matter what.

In 1933, Count Alfred Korzybski, the father of General Semantics, concocted a formula for happiness which read  $H=ME +MM$ -or “Happiness equals minimum expectations plus maximum motivation.” We will not become happy by passively having low expectations. We must put our maximum motivation to work. If we have Minimum Expectations (ME) and Maximum Motivation (MM), we will achieve Maximum Happiness (MH). The formula was later modified by Irving Lee, reading:  $H = M/ E$  or Happiness consists of keeping our expectations low and the motivation for achieving them high. In my November 1, 1996 Forerunner article “The Formula for Overcoming,” I introduced a variation of this formula  $O = M/ G$  or overcoming consists of keeping our daily goals bite-sized and attainable and the motivation for achieving them high.

The apostle Paul instructs us in I Timothy 6:6, that godliness can lead to great gain when accompanied by contentment. Richard Tow, in his article, “Managing Your Thought Life,” suggested, “If you focus on what you have, you become thankful. If you focus on what you cannot have, you become discontent.”

Gratitude, or thanksgiving, another prerequisite or building block of both physical happiness and godly joy, has also all but disappeared in the lands occupied by Jacob’s offspring. When we practice chronic thanklessness, our relationship with our Creator becomes dangerously attenuated, leading to a debased or reprobate mind. Consider Romans 1:21, “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” In addition to Paul’s command in one of the lead-off scriptures in Philippians 4:6 to combine all our petitions with thanksgiving, he repeats this caution in his other epistles:

In I Thessalonians 5:18, Paul urges us, “Thank [God] in everything [no matter what the circumstances may be, be thankful and give thanks], for this is the will of God for you [who are] in Christ Jesus [the Revealer and Mediator of that will].” In Colossians 3:15-17, Paul makes a similar admonition, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you received calling in one body; and have thankfulness. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.”

Paul continues in I Thessalonians 4:2, “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving;” Reflecting on the four creatures of Revelation which I mentioned in the sidebar, apparently the thanksgiving and gratitude of their praise will go on eternally. Revelation 4:9 reads, “And whenever the living creatures offer glory and honor and thanksgiving to Him Who sits on the throne, Who lives forever and ever (through the eternities of the eternities).”

Don Hooser, in his sermon and article, “The Fruit of the Spirit—Joy: Foundation for a Positive Life” maintains that, “Joy is largely composed of gratitude—gratitude for the wonderful things God has done for us and His “exceedingly great and precious promises” for our future. Dr. Michael McGee, a California physician, in his article, “Cultivating Joy” offered this insight on the relationship of gratitude to joy: “We tend the gift of life; we cultivate the joy that grows out of that gift, taking good care of it by living life thoughtfully, intentionally and skillfully so that we might savor the many pleasures of life. Then we show gratitude for our many blessings. This in turn fuels our joy.”

Eddie Foster, in his sermon and article on the “Fruit of the Spirit: Joy,” suggests that when praying, we list as many spiritual blessings as we can think of, striving to maintain a spirit of gratefulness and excitement about everything we have been given. Beginning August 1st, I conducted an experiment, putting into practice this suggestion, beginning each prayer with 10 separate expressions of gratitude before launching into petitions or requests. This practice generates an attitude of optimism and contentment necessary for a successful and meaningful prayer dialogue.

Secular science has provided a pool of empirical evidence showing a relationship between gratitude and better emotional health. We should never denigrate true science, realizing God created all the laws of physics, biology, chemistry, and every branch of the hard and soft sciences. We, of course, are not talking about false science mentioned by the apostle Paul in I Timothy 6:20, responsible for malignant thought patterns like evolution, attempting to make God irrelevant, and manmade climate

change, a nefarious plan to tax, among other things, carbon dioxide and bovine flatulence. True science based on honest experimentation is always compatible with God's Word.

In 2003, Dr. Robert Emmons, Professor of Psychology at the University of California-Davis, and his colleague Michael McCullough at the University of Miami, published in the "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology" the results of a study examining the effects of writing gratitude diaries on approximately 200 college undergraduates. Divided into three groups, each group wrote 10 weekly diaries focusing on gratitude (blessings, hassles and annoyances, or neutral events.) Those in the gratitude group were told: "There are many things in our lives, both large and small, that we might be grateful about. Think back over the past week and write down up to five things in your life that you are grateful or thankful for." At the end of 10 weeks, those in the gratitude condition reported feeling more positive about their lives, more optimistic about the upcoming week, having fewer physical symptoms, and spending more time exercising.

The researchers then experimented with an entirely different group of people, 65 adults with neuromuscular disease, breaking them into the experimental group writing gratitude diaries and a control group, just filling in assessments of mood and well-being. The partners of those writing the gratitude diaries were also asked to rate their mood and life satisfaction. Dr. Emmons writes: "Results showed that the gratitude group had more positive views of their life than control participants. They also reported a more positive mood and less negative mood daily during the study period. Their partners also reported that the gratitude participants had a more positive mood and greater satisfaction with life."

With respect to health, the gratitude condition improved participants' sleep—both amount and quality. Perhaps focusing on life's blessings reduced the worry and angst that keep people awake at night.

In summary, writing gratitude diaries seems to be beneficial no matter what. Specific benefits of gratitude seem to depend on what you are comparing it to, whether you are healthy or sick, how frequently and over what time period you do the practice. Just two or three weeks of filling out gratitude diaries each evening seems to improve mood, optimistic outlook, and life satisfaction, as well as making you more likely to help others. If you want to gain a health benefit from gratitude, you may need to persist with the diaries for two or three months. This practice takes only five or 10 minutes a day, but when done cumulatively, seems to reorient your mental compass towards focusing on the positive.

Radio evangelist Chuck Swindoll in his article, "Seven Ways to Cultivate Joy," recommends that we keep a "Joy Journal," recording the reasons we must rejoice and the reminders of God's faithfulness that we encounter in our everyday life. Having recently completed digitalizing 48 years of journal experience, I have appended an index helping me to instantly locate past events. Under the descriptor, "God's Intervention," I can instantaneously locate events over the years when my back metaphorically was against the wall and God mercifully intervened. As our forebears on the Sinai were prone to forget God's goodness and deliverance, we are also prone to forget unless we take steps to reinforce the memories of His providence.

In her article "Five Ways to Cultivate More Joy in Your Life," Rachele Williams encourages us to try writing about one to three things we are grateful for every day and make it something different each day. This she says, encourages us to start actively looking for things, people, and situations for which we are grateful, which, in turn, starts to create desirous new thought patterns.

Please turn to Proverbs 11 for a desirous new thought pattern which is counter-intuitive to carnal human nature.

**Proverbs 11:24-25** There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered.

Herbert W. Armstrong repeatedly and enthusiastically endorsed the “way of give” as opposed to the “way of get,” realizing that the more materialistic modern Israel becomes, the more self-centered and more unhappy and dissatisfied people will become.

Some of the greatest works in world literature corroborate the words of our Savior reprinted in Acts 20:35 that it is more blessed to give than to receive. In my Feast of Tabernacles sermon, “Stimulating a Spiritual Appetite” given September 26, 2002, I referenced one of the world’s classic works of literature, Goethe’s *Faust*, which we could characterize as the book of Ecclesiastes filtered through German Romanticism, a work taking over 57 years to complete, encompassing practically the whole of Goethe’s artistic life. In this philosophical drama, a highly educated, but burned out and disillusioned old college professor, Dr. Heinrich Faust, agrees to forfeit his eternal life to Mephistopheles (the Devil) if Mephistopheles is able to give him one supernal ecstatic moment of joy or pleasure, one fleeting moment in which he is compelled to say “Wait, you are so fair.”

The Devil for years and years and years did his level best to cater to Faust’s carnal desires, fulfilling all his lusts for pleasure, including wild parties, strong drink, illicit sex, political power, magical power, secrets of the occult, time travel anything and everything his carnal heart could desire, but the wary old Faust, even though he had never experienced genuine joy, knew the counterfeits inside and out.

In Part II of this philosophical poem—after thousands of disappointing duds in his joy experiments—Faust stumbled on the secret of joy by accident as he undertook an ambitious project in the Netherlands in which he and a crew of workers built a series of dikes to reclaim land from the ocean, a project that required hard work and sacrifice, but ensured the livelihood, happiness, and well-being for the benefit of mankind. From this exhilarating altruistic giving motive, Heinrich Faust received his first experience of true joy which had eluded him his whole life, a moment when he could say, “Wait, you are so fair.”

Because this mindset (which we could well describe as altruistic hedonism stemming from the way of give rather than the way of get) belonged to the spiritual rather than the carnal mind, God’s messengers felt compelled to snatch Faust away from Mephistopheles, depriving the Devil of his part of the bargain.

Not only do many masterpieces of world literature corroborate Christ’s words, “It is more blessed to give than to receive,” but secular science again corroborates God’s Word, providing empirical evidence demonstrating the longer shelf life for altruistic than selfish motives. One example appeared December 24, 2018, an article by Terra Marquette, titled “Joy from Giving Lasts Much Longer Than Joy From Getting, Study Shows” which is linked and archived on the December 18, 2018 CGG Weekly.

Marquette asks the question, “Have you ever noticed that your enjoyment in a repeated activity or repeated activity decreases over time no matter how wonderful it is? When this happens, you are

experiencing what researchers call “hedonic adaptation.” The joy of having our own desires met is always fleeting. As Gary Petty mentioned in his sermon and article on joy, “even roller coaster riding can get old.”

Those of you who may be Twilight Zone connoisseurs may remember the episode [#28 April 15, 1960] called “A Nice Place to Visit” in which a hoodlum, Rocky Valentine, after being fatally shot in the head assumes he has gone to heaven because an amiable white-haired Mr. Pip gives him everything he wishes for. When Rocky eventually becomes bored out of his mind, he demands to be sent to “the other place,” after which Mr. Pip assures him, “This is the other place.”

Marquette continues, “Surprisingly, giving to others created a more lasting happiness, as is substantiated by a set of experiments conducted by Ed O’Brien, of the University of Chicago Booth School of Business the University of Chicago, comparing the satisfaction of giving to getting. Research findings were published in *Psychological Science*, a journal of the Association for Psychological Science.

In the first experiment, explains O’Brien, 96 college student participants were given \$5 each day for five days. The students were told to spend the money on the same thing each day. Some of the participants were randomly assigned to spend the money on themselves, while some were assigned to spend the money on others—maybe an online donation to the same charity each day or even cash placed in a tip jar at the same café.

Participants self-reported at the end of each day how they felt about the money they had spent, and how they rated their overall happiness. The results of the daily spending challenge showed a clear pattern. While participants began with very similar levels of happiness, the students who had spent money on themselves felt decreasingly happy over the five-day period. Conversely, participants who gave their money to someone else, however, continued to feel the same level of joy on the fifth day as they did on the first day.

In the second experiment, 502 participants played ten rounds of a word puzzle game online. For each round won, they earned a nickel, which they could either keep or donate to a favorite charity. Participants self-reported after each round the degree of joy they felt from winning. As in the first experiment, those who gave their winnings to others retained higher levels of happiness for longer periods than those who kept their winnings for themselves. This was true even after researchers accounted for other explanations involved in charitable giving, such as the time and effort it takes to donate.

In my September 2013 Feast of Tabernacles sermon, “Seeing Sanctification As An Exciting Adventure,” I referenced the famous scientific construct Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (perhaps discovered by Maslow, but invented, patented, and copyrighted by Almighty God), pointing out that if we study closely the structure of Maslow’s scientific construct, we come to the conclusion that all needs are satisfied by maturing levels of love—moving from the tissue needs encompassed by self-love or, *e ros*, belonging needs encompassed by collegial brotherly love, *phileo*, and the creative, service-oriented needs, which Maslow refers to as self-actualization, which paradoxically corresponds to selfless, *agape*.

Self-actualization, as described by Maslow, is the opposite of selfishness or self-centeredness, but instead devoting oneself in creative work to serve or bring joy to others. Musicians do not receive maximum joy unless they can share, bringing pleasure and satisfaction to others. The Victorian writer Thomas Carlyle insisted that work is equivalent to worship.

John Ritenbaugh in his Forerunner Personal, “The Fruit of the Spirit: Joy,” declared “The greatest of joys, however, are those that arise when we are so absorbed in some creative task that we are set free from self-concern. It is self-concern that brings us sorrow, blunting the possibilities for joyful living.

Chris Benjamin in his book *Life on the Vine*, insists that, “the more we are drawn out of ourselves [become less self-absorbed], the more we find joy,” a point made by Bill Onisick in his August 3<sup>rd</sup> message on taking the red pill.

Our heavenly Father and Our Savior Jesus Christ find intense pleasure in work, as we read in John 5:17, “But Jesus answered them, My Father has worked [even] until now, [He has never ceased working; He is still working] and I, too, must be at [divine] work.” In John 4:34, Jesus assures us, “My food (nourishment) is to do the will (pleasure) of Him Who sent Me and to accomplish *and* completely finish His work.” After our precious John 6:44 calling, law keeping should be one of our more delightful pleasures tantamount to eating a sizzling juicy steak.

As John Ritenbaugh in his Forerunner Personal “The Fruit Of The Spirit: Joy” declares, “Joy is the sign that life has found its purpose, its reason for being! This, too, is a revelation of God, for no one can come to Him and find the purpose of life unless He, by His Spirit, calls him and reveals it ([John 6:44](#); [I Corinthians 2:10](#)).”

Our calling and our baptism, providing an earnest or down payment of God’s Holy Spirit gives us confidence that our lifetime work of character building and bearing fruit, providing a sense of our Creator’s purpose for us, will exist beyond the grave for eternal life in a spirit body as a member of God’s Family. As the apostle Paul reminded us in I Corinthians 15:13-14, “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.”

In verse 16 he continues, “For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied,” in the abject state of hopelessness that Clyde Finklea described in his August 3<sup>rd</sup> sermon, “Hope and Faith.”

But to those who have committed to the New Covenant, God has initiated a heart transformation process, described in Hebrews 8:10, 10:16, and Jeremiah 31:31 in which His holy law will become part of our spiritual DNA, and law keeping will become ecstatically joyous and sin will become disgustingly repulsive. What antinomian mainstream Christianity has tried to teach us to despise, our earnest payment of Holy Spirit has given us supernal joy by esteeming, loving, and practicing God’s holy law.

To conclude, we will take a stroll down Psalm 119 describing the mindset of one walking in the light, prompted by God’s Holy Spirit. Let us turn there.

**Psalm 119:14** I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches.

**Psalm 119:16** I shall delight in Your statutes; I shall not forget Your word.

**Psalm 119:24** Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my counselors.

**Psalm 119:35** Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it.

**Psalm 119:47** I shall delight in Your commandments, which I love.

**Psalm 119:70** Their heart is covered with fat, but I delight in Your law.

**Psalm 119:77** May Your compassion come to me that I may live, for Your law is my delight.

**Psalm 119:92** If Your law had not been my delight, then I would have perished in my affliction.

**Psalm 119:111** I have inherited Your testimonies forever, for they are the joy of my heart.

**Psalm 119:143** Trouble and anguish have come upon me, yet Your commandments are my delight.

**Psalm 119:174** I long for Your salvation, O Lord, and Your law is my delight.

To give a sneak preview of my next message, I will turn to my second favorite verse in the Bible, Psalm 119:65. “Great peace have they who love Your law; nothing shall offend them or make them stumble.” God willing, at the Feast in Myrtle Beach, I will bring you a message on “Our Part in the Sanctification Process (Part Four): Cultivating the Fruit of Peace.”