

# Finding Joy in Life

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Sisters, we are all in stages of progression, whether we're married or single. We have surely felt the comforting influence of the Spirit in these proceedings. Please know of my love and concern for you!

How long has it been since you shouted for joy? In the Grand Council in heaven in our premortal existence, all the sons and daughters of God “shouted for joy” (Job 38:7). Our Father in Heaven gave us the opportunity to be born, to assume the responsibilities of mortality, which offered the opportunity of a “fulness of joy” (Ps. 16:11) but which also entailed risks of disobedience, sin, and heartache. Yet, as our Father's plan unfolded and we became aware of our divine potential for future immortality, we did all shout for joy.

Now we are here; do we doubt the Lord's word, “Men are, that they might have joy” (2 Ne. 2:25)?

We live in a critical time in the world's history. Satan and his forces are busy. His temptations are relentless, deceiving many, sometimes even the very elect. He would lead us to believe that gospel standards which we know to be good—virtue, honesty, morality, courtesy, industry, cleanliness of mind and body—are no longer important. Let me reaffirm that the Lord's eternal values are still true. The ways of the world may have changed, but the commandments of our Heavenly Father, given for our welfare, are still in force, and true joy comes only from doing his will.

Do we find ourselves wishing our present experiences could soon be over, as we think we might be happier doing something else? Young mothers might think that life would be easier if the children were reared and gone, but this is an opportune time to teach gospel principles.

Mother taught me that we have an obligation to give, that others don't owe us a living, and that more joy comes from giving than receiving.

As a child, I desired a birthday party. I invited all of my friends to come—it wasn't even near my birthday—and I carefully instructed them to each bring me a dime. When Mother heard of my trick, she immediately gave me a scolding, sat me down, and carefully explained why what I did was not right. Then she went with me to each of my friends so that I could apologize. It was an embarrassing lesson, but one I have never forgotten.

When we think of the Lord's eternal plan for us, do we really want no difficulty, no struggle, no adversity? For the plan is to “prove [us] herewith, to see if [we] will do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God shall command [us]” (Abr. 3:25).

The Book of Mormon tells a beautiful example of a people who had been through much tribulation and yet had a remarkable experience of feeling eternal joy while in mortality. On the resurrected Savior's first day among the Nephites, he taught much of his gospel. As he prepared to leave, he saw a people who displayed great faith and who hungered for his words. He was moved with such compassion toward them that he tarried longer and ministered to their personal needs. The scriptures tell us that “no one can conceive of the joy which filled [their] souls” (3 Ne. 17:16–19). The Savior said unto them:

“Blessed are ye because of your faith. And now behold, my joy is full” (3 Ne. 17:20).

Joy, it seems, is not only happiness, but the resultant feeling of the Holy Ghost manifest within us.

How can we provide a climate in our lives to foster the presence of the Holy Ghost, that our lives may be more joyful? Just as a reservoir stores water to bring relief and replenish the thirsty land, so we can store experiences, knowledge, and desires to replenish and fortify our spiritual needs. Four ways may be helpful in developing reservoirs of righteousness and spiritual self-reliance. We prepare by—

1. Developing a cheerful disposition wherein the Spirit can dwell.
2. Learning the Savior’s will for us, that we may know our divine potential.
3. Understanding and accepting his atoning sacrifice and repenting of our sins.
4. Keeping his commandments and having a firm determination to serve him.

Let’s examine these four points:

First: Developing a cheerful disposition can permit an atmosphere wherein one’s spirit can be nurtured and encouraged to blossom and bear fruit.

Being pessimistic and negative about our experiences will not enhance the quality of our lives. A determination to be of good cheer can help us and those around us to enjoy life more fully.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton reminds us:

“With God’s help, good cheer permits us to rise above the depressing present or difficult circumstances. ... It is sunshine when clouds block the light” (*Ensign*, May 1986, p. 66). Each woman is responsible for her own happiness. Let us strive to cultivate this spirit of gladness in our homes and let it shine in our faces wherever we go.

Years ago, when our four-month-old son had an operation, I felt forsaken and alone in a hospital waiting room. Another mother there was particularly comforting to me. She took me down the hall to meet her twelve-year-old daughter, who was suffering from leukemia. I found her to be like her mother, peacefully and cheerfully accepting this fatal illness. The girl was busy knitting dishcloths for her nurses. Her brightness helped me put my own concerns temporarily aside.

A few days later, our little one, now at home, was much better. I received a note from this mother. The affliction had taken my new young friend back to her Heavenly Father, but before she died, she asked her mother to send me a hand-knit dishcloth.

What a beautiful example they were to me of “good cheer” even in such a difficult circumstance. They had learned to accept those things they could not change and remembered the Savior’s words, “Be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you” (D&C 68:6).

I, too, remembered the Savior’s words, “They who have endured the crosses of the world, ... shall inherit the kingdom of God, ... and their joy shall be full forever” (2 Ne. 9:18).

Second point: Learning the Savior's will for us, will help us know of our divine potential and bring joy to our being.

Sisters, take joy in knowing that we have a prophet of God on earth today! Give thanks for the governing, sustaining power of the priesthood! Rejoice in the glories of our womanhood! Both President Spencer W. Kimball and President Ezra Taft Benson have asked that we understand the dignity and worth of our role in the divine process of motherhood and that we, whether married or single, make our homes places of love and learning, of refuge and refinement (see *Ensign*, May 1978, p. 101).

Surely we are adding to our spiritual reservoir as we listen to our prophet's voice, read the holy scriptures, fast and pray, and apply the teachings we learn to our lives through the confirmation we receive from the Holy Spirit, that still, small voice that brings "peace to [our] mind[s]" (D&C 6:23).

There are some lovely women in the Church who are comfortable and content to let someone else do the teaching, give the service, fulfill the callings. Sisters, it is so important that each of us be willing to do whatever is required of us wherever we are called. We do not pick and choose what we will accept, just as we do not choose which commandments to obey.

The Lord says, beware of pride, lift up our hearts and rejoice and cleave unto the covenants we have made (see D&C 25:13–14). We are admonished "to bear one another's burdens, ... comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and ... stand as witnesses of God at all times" (Mosiah 18:8–9). This may be hard to do because of worldly voices telling us to do otherwise. Let us stay close to the Lord and develop our divine potential by using our gifts and talents as he has advised us to do.

Let us rejoice as we work together with those who hold the priesthood, each assuming his or her responsibilities and sharing our gifts and talents, that all may be edified together.

Third point: Understanding the blessing of the Atonement enables us to repent and renew our baptismal covenants weekly.

Joy is knowing that through the atoning sacrifice of Christ we can receive a remission of our sins, even as King Benjamin taught. His people prayed in great humility, having asked for forgiveness of their sins. "The Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and they were filled with joy, having received a remission of their sins, and having peace of conscience, because of the exceeding faith which they had in Jesus Christ" (Mosiah 4:3).

Elder James E. Talmage tells us that repentance "indicates a godly sorrow for sin, producing a reformation of life, and embodies (1) a conviction of guilt; (2) a desire to be relieved from the hurtful effects of sin; and (3) an earnest determination to forsake sin and to accomplish good" (*The Articles of Faith*, 12th ed., Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1924, p. 109). It involves confession for serious sins and restitution where necessary and possible.

Fourth Point: Keeping the commandments and having a firm determination to serve the Savior can bring joy indescribable here and eternal happiness hereafter.

King Benjamin taught that we should not have a mind to injure one another; rather, we should live peaceably, not suffer our children to go hungry, or naked, or transgress the laws of God, or fight and quarrel one with another, but love and serve one another (see Mosiah 4:13–15). He further stated, "I cannot tell you all the ways

whereby ye may commit sin; ... But ... watch yourselves, and your thoughts, words, and ... deeds, and observe the commandments of God” (Mosiah 4:29–30).

The Savior said, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34). That great love enabled him to live a life of service, even unto the laying down of his life for us. He would have us serve one another even as he has done.

An elderly widow struggled with the pain of arthritis. When she came to live with her daughter, the mother retreated into her own uncomfortable world. She had to be assisted up and down the steps as she went in and out the door.

Hoping to give her mother a positive experience, the daughter suggested that her mother might read to a blind neighbor. Reluctantly, the suffering widow agreed.

Moaning faintly at the effort, the widow allowed her daughter to help her down the steps. Then she hobbled up the street to make the dutiful visit.

An hour passed. Two hours. At last, her family saw her returning, coming happily down the street. Amazingly, she came up the steps and into the house without assistance.

“Well,” she told her daughter, “I sure did her a lot of good.”

The Savior admonished us to spread his gospel that all might come unto him. We participate as we prepare our homes to be “missionary training centers” for our children as well as ourselves.

We can also participate in this great missionary cause by fellowshipping those who have wandered. It takes patience and diligence, but, oh, what joy is ours as we assist in bringing these, our brethren and sisters, again unto the Savior (see Alma 31:35; D&C 18:15–16).

May I share a story of one of our dear sisters. She wrote:

“In our home were alcohol, drug abuse, two divorces. I was living in spiritual darkness with two tiny children, when ‘angels of mercy’ came one more time. Each month I peeked out my window as the visiting teachers tried to visit me. I hid myself quietly until they left. They never gave up, and I am so glad and thankful. I learned that God’s love never stops!”

This sister is now an endowed member in full fellowship and full of happiness and joy!

Sisters, may we prepare our reservoirs of spiritual strength, wherein we can find joy! It is God’s reward for righteous living!

Near the end of his life, having experienced years of trial, almost beyond our ability to comprehend, being dragged through the streets, tarred and feathered, having some of his closest associates turn against him, the Prophet Joseph Smith could yet testify and cheer us on as he exclaimed:

“Now, what do we hear in the gospel which we have received? A voice of gladness! A voice of mercy from heaven; ... a voice of gladness for the living and the dead; glad tidings of great joy ... Let your hearts rejoice, and be exceedingly glad” (D&C 128:19, 22).

May we take joy in our faith, even our knowledge, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, I say in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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