

# A Higher Joy

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May we all seek and find the higher joy that comes from devoting our lives to our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son.

I have had the great blessing of speaking at general conference for three decades now. During that time, I have been asked questions relating to these messages by many around the world. Lately, one particular question keeps coming up. It usually goes something like this: “Elder Uchtdorf, I listened carefully to your last talk, but ... I didn’t hear anything about aviation.”

Well, after today, I might not hear that question for a while.

## On “the Tumbling Mirth of Sun-Split Clouds”<sup>1</sup>

It’s hard to believe it was only 120 years ago when Wilbur and Orville Wright first lifted off and flew over the sands of Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Four short flights on that December day changed the world and opened the door to one of the greatest inventions in the world’s history.

Flying was risky in those early days. The brothers knew this. And so did their father, Milton. In fact, he was so terrified of losing both of his sons in a flying accident that they promised him they would never fly together.

And they never did—with one exception. Seven years after that historic day at Kitty Hawk, Milton Wright finally gave his consent and watched as Wilbur and Orville flew together for the first time. After landing, Orville convinced his father to take his first and only flight and to see for himself what it was like.

As the plane lifted from the ground, the 82-year-old Milton got so caught up in the exhilaration of flight that all fear left him. Orville rejoiced as his father shouted with delight, “Higher, Orville, higher!”<sup>2</sup>

This was a man after my own heart!

Perhaps the reason I speak about aviation occasionally is that I know something of what the Wrights felt. I too have “slipped the surly bonds of Earth and danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings.”<sup>3</sup>

The Wright brothers’ first flight, which happened a mere 37 years before my birth, opened doors of adventure, wonder, and pure joy into my life.

And yet, as amazing as that joy is, there is an even higher kind of joy. Today, in the spirit of Milton Wright's delighted cry, "Higher, Orville, higher," I would like to speak about this higher joy—where it comes from, how it enters our hearts, and how we can experience it in greater measure.

## The Whole Aim of Human Existence

It probably goes without saying that everyone wants to be happy.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it also goes without saying that not everyone is happy. Sadly, it seems that for many people, happiness is hard to find.<sup>5</sup>

Why is that? If happiness is the one thing we humans desire most, why are we so unsuccessful at finding it? To paraphrase a country song, maybe we've been looking for joy in all the wrong places.<sup>6</sup>

## Where Can We Find Happiness?

Before we discuss how to find joy, allow me to acknowledge that depression and other difficult mental and emotional challenges are real, and the answer is not simply "Try to be happier." My purpose today is not to diminish or trivialize mental health issues. If you face such challenges, I mourn with you, and I stand beside you. For some people, finding joy may include seeking help from trained mental health professionals who devote their lives to practicing their very important art. We should be thankful for such help.

Life is not an endless sequence of emotional highs. "For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things."<sup>7</sup> And if God Himself weeps, as the scriptures affirm He does,<sup>8</sup> then of course you and I will weep as well. Feeling sad is not a sign of failure. In this life, at least, joy and sorrow are inseparable companions.<sup>9</sup> Like all of you, I have felt my share of disappointment, sorrow, sadness, and remorse.

However, I have also experienced for myself the glorious dawn that fills the soul with joy so profound that it can scarcely be kept in. I have discovered for myself that this peaceful confidence comes from following the Savior and walking in His Way.

The peace He gives us is not like what the world gives.<sup>10</sup> It's better. It's higher and holier. Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."<sup>11</sup>

The gospel of Jesus Christ is truly the "good news of great joy!"<sup>12</sup> It is a message of matchless hope! A message of yoke-bearing and burden-lifting.<sup>13</sup> Of light-gathering. Of heavenly favor, higher understanding, holier covenants, eternal security, and everlasting glory!

Joy is the very purpose of God's plan for His children. It's what you were created for—"that [you] might have joy!"<sup>14</sup> You were built for this!

Our Father in Heaven has not hidden the path to happiness. It is not a secret. It is available to all!<sup>15</sup>

It is promised to those who walk the path of discipleship, follow the teachings and example of the Savior, keep His commandments, and honor covenants they make with God. What a remarkable promise!

## God Has Something More to Offer

We all know people who say that they don't need God to be happy, that they are happy enough without religion.

I acknowledge and respect these feelings. Our beloved Father in Heaven wants all His children to have as much happiness as possible, so He has filled this world with beautiful, wholesome pleasures and delights, "both to please the eye and ... gladden the heart."<sup>16</sup> For me, flying brought great happiness. Others find it in music, in art, in hobbies, or in nature.

By inviting everyone and sharing the Savior's good news of great joy, we do not discount any of these sources of joy. We're simply saying that God has something more to give. A higher and more profound joy—a joy that transcends anything this world offers. It is a joy that endures heartbreak, penetrates sorrow, and diminishes loneliness.

Worldly happiness, by contrast, does not last. It cannot. It is the nature of all earthly things to grow old, decay, wear out, or become stale. But godly joy is eternal, because God is eternal. Jesus Christ came to lift us out of the temporal and replace corruption with incorruption. Only He has that power, and only His joy is perpetual.

If you feel there could be more of this kind of joy in your life, I invite you to embark on the journey of following Jesus Christ and His Way. It is a journey of a lifetime—and beyond. Please let me suggest a few beginning steps on this worthy journey of discovering pure joy.

## Draw Near unto God<sup>17</sup>

Do you remember the woman in the New Testament who endured a bleeding illness for 12 years?<sup>18</sup> She had spent all she had on physicians, but things only grew worse. She had heard of Jesus; His power to heal was well known. But could He heal her? And how could she even get near Him? Her sickness made her "unclean" according to the law of Moses, and therefore she was required to stay away from others.<sup>19</sup>

Approaching Him openly and asking for healing seemed out of the question.

Still, she thought, "If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole."<sup>20</sup>

At last, her faith overcame her fear. She braved the censure of others and pressed toward the Savior.

Finally, she was within reach. She extended her hand.

And she was healed.

Aren't we all somewhat like this woman?

There may be many reasons why we hesitate to draw near to the Savior. We may face ridicule or condemnation by others. In our pride, we may dismiss the possibility of something so simple being of so much value. We may think that our condition somehow disqualifies us from His healing—that the distance is too great or our sins too many.

Like this woman, I have learned that if we draw near to God and reach out to touch Him, we can indeed find healing, peace, and joy.

## Look for It

Jesus taught, “Seek, and ye shall find.”<sup>21</sup>

I believe this simple phrase is not only a spiritual promise; it is a statement of fact.

If we seek reasons to be angry, to doubt, to be bitter or alone, we will find them too.

However, if we seek joy—if we look for reasons to rejoice and to happily follow the Savior, we will find them.

We rarely find something we are not looking for.

Are you looking for joy?

Seek, and ye shall find.

## Bear One Another’s Burdens<sup>22</sup>

Jesus taught, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”<sup>23</sup>

Can it be that in our search for joy, the best way to find it is to bring joy to others?

Brothers and sisters, you know and I know this is true! Joy is like a barrel of flour or a jar of oil that will never run out.<sup>24</sup> True joy multiplies when it is shared.

It doesn’t require something grand or complicated.

We can do simple things.

Like praying for someone with all our heart.

Giving a sincere compliment.

Helping someone feel welcome, respected, valued, and loved.

Sharing a favorite scripture and what it means to us.

Or even just by listening.

“When ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God,”<sup>25</sup> and God will repay your kindness generously.<sup>26</sup> The joy you give to others will return to you in “good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over.”<sup>27</sup>

## “What Shall We Do Then?”<sup>28</sup>

During the coming days, weeks, and months, may I invite you to:

- Spend time in a sincere, full-hearted effort to draw near to God.
- Seek diligently for everyday moments of hope, peace, and joy.
- Bring joy to others around you.

My dear brothers and sisters, dear friends, as you search the word of God for a deeper understanding of God’s eternal plan, accept these invitations, and strive to walk in His Way, you will experience “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,”<sup>29</sup> even in the midst of sorrows. You will feel a greater measure of God’s unsurpassable love swelling within your heart. The dawn of celestial light will penetrate the shadows of your trials, and you will begin to taste the unspeakable glories and wonders of the unseen, perfect, heavenly sphere. You will feel your spirit lifting away from the gravity of this world.

And like good Milton Wright, perhaps you will raise your voice in rejoicing and shout, “Higher, Father, higher!”

May we all seek and find the higher joy that comes from devoting our lives to our Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. This is my earnest prayer and blessing in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.

### Notes

1. John Gillespie Magee Jr., “High Flight,” [poetryfoundation.org](http://poetryfoundation.org).
2. See Christopher Klein, “10 Things You May Not Know about the Wright Brothers,” *History*, Mar. 28, 2023, [history.com](http://history.com).
3. Magee, “High Flight.”
4. Twenty-four hundred years ago, Aristotle observed that happiness is the one thing all humans desire most. In his treatise *Nicomachean Ethics*, he taught that the greatest good in life is the thing we pursue as an end itself (as opposed to those things we pursue that are a means to some other end). Happiness, above all else, is just such a thing. “We always desire happiness for its own sake,” he said, “and never as a means to something else” (*The Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle*, trans. J. E. C. Weldon [1902], 13–14).
5. See Harry Enten, “American Happiness Hits Record Lows,” CNN, Feb. 2, 2022, [cnn.com](http://cnn.com); Tamara Lush, “Poll: Americans Are the Unhappiest They’ve Been in 50 Years,” Associated Press, June 16, 2020, [apnews.com](http://apnews.com); “The Great Gloom: In 2023, Employees Are Unhappier Than Ever. Why?” BambooHR, [bamboohr.com](http://bamboohr.com).
6. See Wanda Mallette, Patti Ryan, and Bob Morrison, “Lookin’ for Love (in All the Wrong Places)” (1980).
7. 2 Nephi 2:11.
8. See John 11:35; Moses 7:28–37.

9. See 2 Nephi 2:11.
10. See John 14:27.
11. John 10:10.
12. Luke 2:10, New Revised Standard Version.
13. See Matthew 11:28–30.
14. 2 Nephi 2:25.
15. If you have any concerns about whether or not your Father in Heaven will accept you and allow you to receive His joy, I invite you to prayerfully read Christ’s parable of the prodigal son (see Luke 15:11–32). In that parable, we learn how our Heavenly Father feels about His children and how He awaits and celebrates our return after we have strayed from Him! From the moment we “come to ourselves” (see verse 17) and begin the journey home, He will see us, for He stands watching and waiting. And what is He waiting for? For us! As we draw near to Him, He will celebrate our return and call us His child.
16. Doctrine and Covenants 59:18. This revelation also explains, “It pleaseth God that he hath given all these things unto man; for unto this end were they made” (verse 20).
17. To those who draw near to God, He gives this grand promise: “I will draw near unto you” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:63; see also James 4:8).
18. See Mark 5:24–34.
19. See Bible Dictionary, “Clean and unclean.”
20. Mark 5:28.
21. Matthew 7:7.
22. By bearing each other’s burdens, we “fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2; see also Mosiah 18:8).
23. Acts 20:35.
24. See 1 Kings 17:8–16.
25. Mosiah 2:17.
26. In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul states that God “will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: ... glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good” (Romans 2:6–7, 10).
27. Luke 6:38. Our very salvation and eternal happiness may depend on our compassion and kindness to others (see Matthew 25:31–46).
28. Luke 3:10.

29. Philippians 4:7.