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God's take on religion

FEELING CLOSE TO JESUS

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Antichrist



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Nehemiah said it was the source of true strength.¹ The psalmist David found it in God's presence and offered it back to Him as a love gift.² Jeremiah found it in God's Word.³ King Solomon said it was one of God's rewards for right living.⁴ Jesus promised it to His followers and said it came through believing and doing what He said.⁵ The apostle Paul named it as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as well as one of the hallmarks of the kingdom of Heaven within.⁶ And Paul should know: It sustained him through imprisonment, persecution, and numerous other perils.⁷ The apostle Peter said it couldn't be put into words, but that it was "full of glory."⁸

"It" is "the joy of the Lord," and it's one of the themes of this issue.

And the good news is that it's not reserved only for prophets, psalmists, kings, and apostles. Many millions of believers of all ages and down through the ages have thrilled to it and lived by it—and you can too. You haven't experienced real joy till you do! It's free, and it can be yours starting right now with a simple prayer asking Jesus to fill you with the Holy Spirit's "joy unspeakable." Jesus has promised, "Ask, and it will be given to you. ... If you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:9,13). Then don't be surprised if you're happier than you've ever been in your life, or that your joy and happiness spill over on others. Like all the other best things in life, the joy of the Lord is best when shared.

Keith Phillips

FOR THE ACTIVATED FAMILY

¹ Nehemiah 8:10, ² Psalm 16:11; 27:6, ³ Jeremiah 15:16, ⁴ Ecclesiastes 2:26, ⁵ John 15:11; 13:17, ⁶ Galatians 5:22; Romans 14:17, ⁷ 2 Corinthians 11:23; Acts 20:24, ⁸ 1 Peter 1:8 KJV

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THE



EACH KIND DEED, AND EACH LOVING
WORD I SAY MAY SEEM SMALL, BUT
IT CAN OPEN A WORLD OF KINDNESS
FOR PEOPLE WHO CROSS MY PATH.

UMBRELLA

BY TOMOKO MATSUOKA

The air was heavy with impending rain as I made my way to the hub of our town. As I glanced at the clouds that hung low and filled the gray sky, I silently berated myself for not bringing an umbrella. It seemed that in a minute or two the heavens would burst open, but two minutes came and went. I took care of my business, then turned toward home.

It was at the railroad crossing that my luck ran out. Huge drops fell from the sky as I stood waiting for the approaching train to pass so I could cross. *Three* trains, the signals announced. I would be standing in the rain for five minutes. Those around me had taken refuge under their umbrellas.

Typical, I thought, but I decided I wouldn't let it faze me. After all, this wasn't the first time that this had happened. Not this exact circumstance, perhaps, but others where I had found myself caught in the rain, unprepared. Each time I had put on a mask of indifference to people's stares—and to the rain. "Yes, I like getting wet!" I wanted to say. Perhaps next time I would wear a sign.

A middle-aged woman walked up and stood next to me. There was nothing striking about her, and I would not have given her a second thought if it hadn't been for what happened next. As she stood next to me, she quietly held her umbrella over *both* of us, shielding me from the rain. I was shocked out of my pretended indifference to the

rain, and thanked her profusely. She smiled but didn't say a word. I wondered what else to say. But as we stood there waiting for the train, I realized I didn't have to say anything. She was one of those people who do not give a second thought to the acts of kindness they perform. We crossed the tracks together, and then went our separate ways.

As time passed, little opportunities came my way where I realized I had a choice to either do something to help others, or to let the chance slip by—opportunities to show God's love to others, as that woman had to me that day. Offering my seat on a train. Helping a mother maneuver her baby stroller up a flight of stairs. Little things. And whenever I was tempted with the thought that it really made no sense to show kindness to strangers, I found good reason in the memory of the kind woman who shared her umbrella with me.

More importantly, I realized that each extra step, each kind deed, and each loving word I say may seem small, but it can open a world of kindness for people who cross my path. You think not? What difference could it make? Well, I'm sure that woman has long forgotten the kindness she showed a wet teenager years ago—lost in the many acts of kindness she has no doubt done since—but I haven't forgotten. ■

TOMOKO MATSUOKA IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN JAPAN.



HAPPINESS!

HALLELUJAH FOR HAPPINESS! BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

IN SOME CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS, AS WELL AS IN SOME OTHER RELIGIONS, THE MORE THE DEVOTEES SUFFER AND THE SADDER THEY ARE, THE MORE RELIGIOUS THEY ARE CONSIDERED

TO BE. But for the born-again Christian, it's supposed to be just the opposite! One measure of Christians' spirituality or religiosity is whether they're truly happy, both inwardly and outwardly.

God hasn't made religion difficult and grievous, and Jesus certainly didn't make it that way. That's always been the fault of religious leaders and teachers who changed things and interpreted things to suit themselves, to exalt themselves and to try to get a tighter control on the people—who, as Jesus said, “bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Matthew 23:4).

I don't see how any people are ever going to be truly happy without the Lord. Even if they have all of their physical needs supplied, they have to have something to satisfy their spiritual needs and their hunger for happiness. Thank God that's what we have in Jesus!

I enjoy everything God has given, and I'm very happy! Even our work makes us happy—if it's work that we know is doing some good and helping people. Our religion makes us happy, our work makes us happy, our play makes us happy, and we have very little that makes us unhappy, except the fact that some other people are not happy.

Sometimes I wonder if I made the right decision or did the right thing, which concerns me and causes me for a little while to not be as happy as I should be. But I always come out of the woods afterwards to find out that the Lord helped everything work out for the best and I shouldn't have worried after all (Romans 8:28).

And we are sometimes sick, of course. That may not make us feel very happy for a while, but even that doesn't destroy our total happiness. Our physical condition may leave a little something to be desired—health and strength—but it doesn't make us all that unhappy. We can still be very happy in spirit and mentally.

When I see people who aren't happy, I always figure there must be something wrong with their religion. That's why we should take every opportunity we get to urge others to enjoy the same happiness that we have. If they haven't got it and they see that we do, they're going to wonder what the difference is, and they're going to want it too—and the difference, of course, is Jesus!

So, hallelujah for happiness! Thank God for a happy religion and a happy life! Thank the Lord for being able to

enjoy all the physical pleasures He gives us, as well as the spiritual pleasures. We've got everything! The only thing I can think of that I want is for other people to be as happy as I am. That's the only real longing or need that I have—the desire to help others understand all that Jesus has to offer, and to help make them happy.

Thank God for happiness and enjoyment of life, our religion, and the Lord! As I often sing:

Happy now, happy now,
Since I found the favor of my loving Savior.
All the past, gone at last,
And I don't care when or how, praise God!
I'm happy now, happy now,
I have lasting joy!
Oh, the Devil's deserted,
And I am converted,
And I'm happy, happy, happy, happy now! ■

THE SOURCE

So many people today don't know what to believe. They don't know where they came from, who they are, or where they're going. They're in absolute confusion—because they've lost touch with the only concrete frame of reference, and that's God and His plan for their life as explained in the Bible. They've either never had or lost faith in God, so therefore they lose faith in love and life and people—in everything!

But we who have found God's love in Jesus have found a God that cannot fail and a love that lasts forever. We know Him, whom to know is life eternal (John 17:3). We've been born again and now have an entirely new outlook on life. His coming into our lives not only purifies and regenerates our spirits, but also renews our minds, breaking old connections and reflexes and gradually rebuilding and rewiring our mind into a whole new computer system with new reactions to nearly everything around us.

Besides the wonderful happiness, life, and love that Jesus gives us, we've also found a real purpose in living and Someone to live for. We now find a thrill in our newfound faith, the greatest of satisfaction in our work for Jesus, and pleasure in the fellowship of our spiritual family.



FEELING CLOSE TO JESUS

QUITE A FEW TIMES I'VE HEARD PEOPLE SAY THINGS LIKE, "I MUST NOT BE CLOSE TO JESUS BECAUSE I DON'T FEEL CLOSE TO HIM." But the Bible makes it very clear that we're not supposed to go by our feelings or how things appear to be on the surface. "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

If we rely on our feelings as an indicator of how well we're doing spiritually, we're going to be very unstable. We'll be continually tossed to and fro by every feeling that happens to come along, and we'll never know how we're going to be doing tomorrow, because that would be determined by how we feel when we get up in the morning.

Regardless of how we may happen to feel, if we love Jesus and are walking by faith and obeying His Word, then we know that our relationship with Him is still firm. And we certainly know that His love for us is unwavering. He says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love," "The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you," and "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Jeremiah 31:3; Isaiah 54:10; Hebrews 13:5).

WALKING BY FEELINGS INVITES DISCOURAGEMENT

If you're running on your feelings, then the Devil is going to do his best to get you feeling terrible most of the time! He knows if he can just get you *feeling* down, then he can actually *get* you down! He'll flood you with his negative thoughts, trying to convince you that you're a failure, until he's got you totally defeated, discouraged, and in despair. Then he'll say, "You certainly aren't close to Jesus! In fact, you must not even love Him, and He must not love you either, because look how terrible you feel!"

When you're relying on your feelings, the Devil can play with your emotions and make you feel very far from the Lord. When he sees that you're



BY MARIA FONTAINE

walking by sight, you're an easy target for his doubts. When besieged with such doubts, you've got to "fight the good fight of faith" and resist the Devil and his lies (1 Timothy 6:12; James 4:7).

IF YOU DON'T FEEL CLOSE TO JESUS, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT

Some people *do* feel close to Jesus. For example, when my daughter was small and I would tuck her into bed, she would say, "I'm going to snuggle up in Jesus' arms now." She could imagine that, and I'm glad she could, but I've never had that ability. I don't feel like I'm resting on Jesus' breast when I go to sleep. I'm not that imaginative, and that's just the way I am.

Some people are able to picture in their minds and enjoy things like that,

whereas others of us can't. We all have certain personality traits, and some of us are much more emotional and "feely" than others. But just because I don't feel a big emotional closeness to Jesus, I can't sit around moping. If I were worried about that all the time, I'd be constantly down in the dumps and I would be in a mess! I'm enough of a mess as it is, without having worries and problems like that! I just have to take things by faith. There aren't too many verses in the Bible about feelings, but there are a lot about faith and trusting the Lord and believing His Word.

You can know if you're close to Jesus by applying His Word, which says that if you "draw nigh to God" by your submission and obedience to Him, "He will draw nigh to you" (James 4:8). Even if you can't *feel* any closeness at all, you can still *know* you're close to Him if you're doing your best to love and please Him. We've got to go by the *facts*, by the Word. Your faith in His Word should have nothing to do with your feelings, so it doesn't really matter whether or not you *feel* close to Jesus.

WHAT IF YOU'VE MADE MISTAKES?

Of course, when we know we haven't lived up to what Jesus expects of us, it's easy to feel guilty. "Oh, I can't possibly be close to the Lord because of all my faults and shortcomings!" But you must not let the Devil—or even your own heart—condemn you (1 John 3:20). Even if you have willfully disobeyed the Lord, if you're sorry for your sins and you sincerely desire to be close to Him, He will be merciful and gracious to you (Psalm 103:8). And though you fall, you will not be utterly cast down, for the Lord will uphold you (Psalm 37:24). For "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). A broken and a contrite heart, He will not despise (Psalm 51:17).

A lot has to do with your heart, with your attitude. If you sincerely want to please Jesus and do His will, to love and live for Him, then He will certainly "draw nigh unto you" when you call out to Him. The Bible promises, "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him in truth," and, "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit" (Psalm 145:18; 34:18).

So regardless of any feelings of discouragement, guilt, or remorse that the Devil may try to barrage you with, if you know you're truly seeking to love and please Jesus, to obey His Word and follow Him, then you're close to Him—whether you happen to *feel* close to Him or not!

In fact, sometimes people are the closest to Jesus when they feel the furthest from Him. For example, when we're humbled by our own mistakes and shortcomings, we don't usually feel so inspired or close to Him, but we may actually be very close to Him. So just because you're feeling down does not necessarily indicate that you're far from the Lord. You can be very close to the Lord even if you're feeling terrible. There are also times when some people may feel that they are very close to the Lord when in fact they may not be close to Him at all—particularly if they're self-righteously trusting in their own so-called goodness instead of the Lord and His goodness, grace, and mercy.

Although we're not ignorant of the Devil's devices (2 Corinthians 2:11), and we know that he frequently tries to use our feelings to discourage and get us down, we can't say that *all* bad feelings are from him. Sometimes we feel bad because the Lord is speaking to our hearts, convicting us of a sin or trying to warn us about something. So when we're feeling bad, we should examine our hearts and actions to find out why we're feeling that way, or what the Lord's trying to show us (2 Corinthians 13:5).

THE KEYS TO CLOSENESS: FACT, FAITH, AND OBEDIENCE

So how do you know if you're close to Jesus? How do you get close to Him? You get close to Jesus by obeying His Word and by yielding to His will, that's how! Jesus has promised, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep [obey] My Word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (John 14:23). So if you're loving Him and obeying what He says in His Word, then of course you're close to Him. He's made His home in your heart, and that's pretty close! It's as simple as that. It's not a matter of feelings at all.

The point is, we can't trust or put our faith in our feelings. We don't walk by our feelings! Whether you feel close to Jesus or not is beside the point! His Word says, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Hebrews 10:22). You have to go by faith! "The just shall live by faith" (Hebrews 10:38).

BEING CLOSE TO JESUS

We may sometimes experience certain thrills of the spirit—the spiritual high that we often feel when we've helped someone find Jesus, or when the Word has spoken loudly and clearly to us, for example—which are a token of the Lord's love and a special encouragement from Him. He knows we like to feel these things, so He gives them to us as pleasurable experiences. But even at such times we can't expect those feelings, and we shouldn't get discouraged or feel that something is wrong with us or our connection with the Lord if they don't happen.

You're not always going to be excited and feel inspired and be jumping up and down for joy. Sometimes you're hungry or tired. Sometimes you're sick. Sometimes it's a struggle to keep your mind on the fact that Jesus loves and cares about you, and that if you hang on long enough, He will pull you through.

So sometimes you might not feel close to Jesus, and other times you might. But don't let that worry you. Even if you



don't *feel* close to Jesus, you can still *be* close to Him, because closeness to Jesus is much more than a mere feeling!

Those who often feel close to Jesus aren't necessarily any closer to Him or more spiritual than those who don't. Feelings are nice if they happen, but they aren't the gauge of spirituality. What we want to do is to *be* close to Jesus! If you do happen to feel close to Him, be thankful. But if you don't happen to feel close to Jesus, don't be discouraged. And remember, you can know you *are* close to Jesus if you love Him and are trying your best to please Him. ■

Feelings come and feelings go,
And feelings are deceiving;
My warrant is the Word of God,
Naught else is worth believing!

Though all my heart should feel condemned
For lack of some sweet token,
There is One greater than my heart
Whose Word cannot be broken!

I'll trust in God's unchanging Word
Till soul and body sever;
For, though all things shall pass away,
His Word shall stand forever!

—MARTIN LUTHER (1483–1546)

THE TWO BANQUETS

A person had a dream in which Heaven and Hell were pictured as two banquets.

In Hell the tables stretched for as far as the eye could see, and they were all filled with every possible good thing to eat and drink. People were seated at the tables, but they were all starving, emaciated, skin-on-skeleton figures. A closer look revealed that they were chained in such a way that they could reach the food and pick it up, but the chains prevented them from bringing the food to their mouths. In the ultimate cruelty, they were dying of starvation with food in their hands.

In Heaven the tables also stretched for as far as the eye could see, and they were filled with all the same wonderful choices as in Hell. And just as in Hell, the people were all chained in such a way that they could pick up the food but not bring it to their own mouths. However, in this banquet hall, the people were all healthy, laughing, singing, and enjoying themselves. The difference? In Heaven they had realized that although they couldn't feed themselves, the chains allowed them to feed each other.

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN



My Unsung Hero



**HER LIFE IS FRAUGHT WITH
ADVERSITY, BUT SHE SEES
ONLY THE MOMENTS OF JOY**

BY JULIE BUHRING

I was discussing the Miss World beauty pageant with some friends the other day, and it started me thinking. In the course of this pageant, the contestants must answer various questions put to them by the judges. One of the questions this time was, “Who is your role model or who do you admire and look up to most?”

If I were asked that question, what would be my reply? Would I name Mother Theresa, or Florence Nightingale, or someone else who has inspired millions the world over through a life of self-sacrifice and service to mankind? No. The one whom I admire more than any other is my own mother.

For the past 27 years, my mother has given herself in the service of others as a Christian volunteer in numerous countries on three continents—the last five years in Africa. Although this is in itself remarkable, what is even more remarkable is that for 23 of those years she has lived with a rare and debilitating disease that affects all of her joints and makes even the simplest movements excruciatingly painful. Yet, if you were to meet her for the first time, apart from a slight limp, you would never know. This, to me, is one of her most admirable qualities: Though she suffers, there is never a word of complaint on her lips—only a beautiful smile.

Even those of us who are closest to her sometimes forget that she is sorely afflicted, until she disappears and we find her on her bed, unable to move because of the pain. In addition to this, she is hearing impaired and recently lost her sight in one eye. Her personal life has also not been a bed of roses, having loved and lost. Anyone else would say her life is fraught with adversity, but she sees only the moments of joy and says, “My life is filled with blessings!”

I believe that her greatest strength comes from her deep faith in God and His love for her, and this love spills over onto everyone she comes in contact with. She has dedicated her life to serve others, and made it not just her profession but her way of life. She radiates such peace and love and comfort that people are drawn to her like a magnet. Even the wildest and roughest of characters will sit with her and pour out their troubles, their fears, and their dreams, and she is a mother to them all. Through her suffering, she is able to comfort others in theirs. This is my idea of true Christianity—not sermonizing from a pulpit but being a living example of love and care for others.

It is not enough to love only when we feel like it, when it is fair weather and we are in the peak of health, or when there are few other demands on our time and we have strength to spare. Love is weeping with those who weep, because it understands their pain. Love is being a shoulder to cry on. It's a hand that lifts others, even when it is too tired to lift itself. Love is not only for an hour, or for a day. Love is *always*.

My mother is no Miss World, but she is, in my eyes, the most beautiful of them all. She is filled with a special inner beauty and grace, and it shows every day of her life. She will never be famous or be remembered in history books, but the love she gives will live now and forever in the many hearts she has touched. ■

JULIE BÜHRING AND HER MOTHER SABINA ARE FULL-TIME VOLUNTEERS WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN AFRICA.



THE THINGS WE LEAVE BEHIND

Out of this life I shall never take
Things of silver and gold I make.
All that I cherish and hoard away
After I leave, on earth must stay.
Though I have toiled for a painting rare
To hang on my wall, I must leave it there.
Though I call it mine and I boast its worth
I must give it up when I quit the earth.
All that I gather and all that I keep,
I must leave behind when I fall asleep.
And I wonder often what I shall own
In that other life, when I pass alone.
What shall they find and what shall they see
In the soul that answers the call for me?
Shall the great Judge learn, when my task is through
That the spirit had gathered some riches, too?
Or shall at the last it be mine to find
That all I had worked for I'd left behind?

—EDGAR A. GUEST

INVESTING IN FOREVER

I read something recently that got me thinking: Giving up some of the things we enjoy or desire can seem like a sacrifice, but when we get to Heaven and see things in proper perspective we'll be ashamed that we didn't make those little sacrifices more cheerfully.

Even now I feel bad, remembering little jobs I weaseled out of, arguments that I had to have the last word in, times I was sure to get the biggest piece of the pie. I'm beginning to see how temporary those things were and that the things that have really counted were the times I gave up a few minutes of my downtime to help someone out, the times I let a mean comment pass without answering back, the times I helped someone save face, and the times I saved that biggest piece of pie for someone else—in short, the times I gave when I could have taken or when I made the day a little better for someone. It doesn't seem like such a sacrifice anymore, giving up these inconsequential things, when I consider that I'm investing in forever. ■

—MICHAEL FRENCH

MORE ON THE RISE OF THE ANTICHRIST

WITH EACH
CRISIS THE
WORLD
POPULATION
IS MORE AND
MORE READY
TO SCREAM,
“WHO WILL
SAVE US
FROM THIS
MESS?”

AT FIRST THE ANTICHRIST WILL APPEAR TO BE THE POLITICAL SUPERMAN THE WORLD HAS BEEN WAITING FOR, BECAUSE HE WILL BRING ABOUT WORLD PEACE AND ECONOMIC STABILITY. Most people will see him as a peacemaker and a wise and winsome popular leader. “He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest [richest] places” and “obtain the kingdom by flatteries”—or “intrigue,” as the Hebrew *chalaqlaqqah* is sometimes translated (Daniel 11:24,21 KJV).

But before the world will accept a one-world government and supreme leader, the world situation will have to be pretty desperate—and peace and safety don’t make people desperate. War, terrorism, economic collapse, and disasters will all help create the climate for the Antichrist’s “peaceful” takeover.

The Antichrist and his agents are working to bring chaos on the world, lining things up for the grand entrance of the false savior, the Antichrist. By capitalizing on the effects of economic, political, and natural disasters, they keep pushing things in that direction.

Why can’t someone put a stop to the suffering and war in Africa—starvation and massacres in Sudan, Somalia, the Congo (DRC), Uganda, and other places? Why does Haiti stagger from one catastrophe to the next? Why are the rich so very rich and the poor so very poor? How can nations get away

with oppressing their own people or wantonly attacking other nations without consequences? Will there ever be a solution to the continual carnage in the Mideast? How can the religions of the world work together and put a stop to their followers killing each other?

Through nonstop media coverage, the people of the world are constantly confronted with these questions. And in all of these matters the nations of the world, as well as the United Nations, have proved ineffective.

When the world teeters on the edge of another global war or catastrophic economic collapse, what then? With each crisis the world population is more and more ready to scream, “Who will save us from this mess?”

When the time is right, the Antichrist will offer the solutions. “We need to come together more,” he will declare, “and I have just the plan to make it happen!”

The Asian tsunami of December 2004 was one of many signs of the End, as foretold by Jesus in His explanation of events leading up to His second coming:

“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various

places. All these are the beginning of sorrows” (Matthew 24:6–8).

“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:25–26).

Like other disasters that grab the world’s attention, the tsunami also helped to prepare the way for the Antichrist through widespread cries for better warning systems and greater monitoring of the environment. While often helpful to that end, systems are also being put into place that can accomplish dual purposes. Those who seek to unite the world under one government have no problem with using technology to more closely monitor the world, and what serves can also enslave. Little by little, the Antichrist is readying himself for the inevitable day when he will be revealed.

“Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, let no one deceive you by any means; for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin [the Antichrist] is revealed. ... The coming of the lawless one [the Antichrist] is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders” (2 Thessalonians 2:1,3,9).

“When the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king [the Antichrist] shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people. Through his cun-



ning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes [Jesus]; but he shall be broken without human means” (Daniel 8:23–25).

In the meantime, anything that causes widespread fear and concern plays into the hands of the Antichrist and his cohorts. People who believe they are about to drown will accept any lifesaver they are offered—even if it’s in the form of a world government and demigod leader.

Current events, tragic and terrifying as they may be, are all part of God’s Endtime plan, and the sooner they play out the sooner Jesus will be able to return to put an end to all suffering, sorrow, pain, and evil. Then and only then will truth and justice prevail, and then at last “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14). ■

ANSWERS TO YOUR QUESTIONS

Q: I've been happier than ever since finding Jesus, but my life still isn't perfect and sometimes it gets me down. My friends try to cheer me up and tell me to "put on my happy face," but how can I smile and look happy when I really don't feel that way? Wouldn't that be hypocritical?

No, if you have received Jesus into your heart it is not being hypocritical to put on a happy face even when you're sad, because it's *His* happiness that you're showing others through your joyful countenance. You're not being hypocritical, but to the contrary you're being a wonderful example of Jesus shining through you. That happy face isn't yours but *His*—the beauty of Jesus as seen in you. "Not I, but Christ who lives within me" (Galatians 2:20).

It's part of love when you're happy around other people, smiling even when you don't really feel like it. It's part of showing love and consideration to others when your expression doesn't make them feel bad or give the impression that you don't like them or are irritated or being critical of them. When you put on a happy face even when your mind and spirit are in the dumps, that is part of showing people the happiness and joy and love of the Lord. He's showing His love through you, in spite of yourself.

You need to be honest with Jesus about whatever it is that's making you sad, so He can help you fix the problem. And if there is someone else who is able to help you sort things out, also talk with them about it. There's a time to look pleasant and smile—which is most of the time in front of others—and there's a time to turn to the Lord and others for help, confessing your faults one to another and praying for one another, bearing each other's burdens in love (James 5:16; Galatians 6:2).

Broadcasting your problems to the whole world through your expression doesn't help anyone, but letting Jesus shine through you no matter how you feel helps everyone! ■

FEEDING READING *Happiness and joy*

True happiness is a gift from God.

Ecclesiastes 2:26a

Romans 14:17

Romans 15:13

Galatians 5:22

True happiness comes from living close to the Lord and His Word.

Psalms 16:11

Psalms 119:111

Psalms 119:162

Jeremiah 15:16a

John 15:11

True happiness is the fruit of obedience to the Lord.

Psalms 128:1-2

John 13:17

Happiness and joy are manifestations of our faith and trust in the Lord.

Psalms 5:11

Proverbs 16:20b

1 Peter 1:8

Happiness and joy come from being more concerned about others than ourselves.

John 3:29

Philippians 2:2

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

Joy comes when we consider and thank God for our blessings.

Psalms 100:1-2,4

Isaiah 51:3b

Jeremiah 33:11

The Lord wants us to be joyful and positive at all times.

Deuteronomy 12:18b

Philippians 4:4

With Jesus, even times of difficulty and suffering can't take away our joy.

2 Corinthians 7:4b

2 Corinthians 12:9-10

1 Peter 3:14a

1 Peter 4:12-13,16

Smile!



A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance.
—PROVERBS 15:13

The world is like a mirror: Frown at it, and it frowns at you; smile at it and it smiles too.
—HERBERT SAMUELS



The thing that goes the farthest
Towards making life worthwhile,
That costs the least, and does the most,
Is just a pleasant smile.
It's full of worth and goodness too,
With manly kindness blent,
It's worth a million dollars,
And it doesn't cost a cent!
—WILBUR D. NESBIT

Most smiles are started by another smile.
—FRANK A. CLARK



If you're not using your smile, you're like a man with a million dollars in the bank and no check-book.
—LES GIBLIN

A smile is the lighting system of the face and the heating system of the heart.
—BARBARA JOHNSON



A smile is a light in the window of the soul indicating the heart is at home.
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Wear a smile and have friends; wear a scowl and have wrinkles. What do we live for if not to make the world less difficult for each other?
—GEORGE ELIOT

Smile. It's free therapy.
—DOUG HORTON



Nobody needs a smile so much as those who have none to give.
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Wear a happy face! It's your display counter—your show window, your best advertisement!
—DAVID BRANDT BERG

What sunshine is to flowers, smiles are to humanity.
—JOSEPH ADDISON

A smile is worth a thousand words.
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN



When you smile at someone, nine times out of ten the other person will smile back and you've made two people's days brighter and better.
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been.
—MARK TWAIN



Smiles are the language of love.
—DAVID HARE



Smile at each other, smile at your wife, smile at your husband, smile at your children, smile at each other—it doesn't matter who it is—and that will help you to grow up in greater love for each other.
—MOTHER TERESA

There are hundreds of languages in the world but a smile speaks them all.
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

A winning smile makes winners of us all.
—AUTHOR UNKNOWN



If you haven't yet experienced the kind of happiness and joy you've read about on these pages, maybe it's because you haven't invited Jesus into your heart and life. If not, you can right now by praying the following prayer.

Dear Jesus, thank You for giving Your life for me. Please forgive me for the wrong things I've done, come into my heart, and give me Your gift of eternal life. Teach me more about Your love, and fill me with Your joy. Amen.

FROM
JESUS
WITH
LOVE

Make
time
for
people

It's easy to be a good person, but still be wrapped up in your own little world. After all, you already have more work and other responsibilities than you feel you can keep up with. It's no surprise that there's so little time for reaching out to others.

When I was on earth, I was also a busy man, especially during My public ministry. I had only about three and a half years to accomplish My mission, but I still took time for people—even some who others thought weren't worth My time. I let the children come to Me. I talked with the Samaritan woman at the well. I noticed Zacchaeus up in the tree and asked to spend the evening with him in his house. I also took time to personally encourage a thousand others—conversations so numerous and seemingly everyday that they didn't make it into the Gospels, yet each had a big impact on someone's life. If I could take the time to stop and show a little love and kindness and understanding to those around Me, you can too.

As you show love in the little things, I will pour more of My love into you, so you will have more to give and more to enjoy. You'll find this "extra" giving of yourself is really no sacrifice at all. I will more than make it up to you in added inspiration and other blessings, and so will those you make time for.

