

No Greater Joy Volume Three

by
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Preface

Our first book on child training, **To Train Up a Child**, has now been distributed in a quantity approaching 300,000. In answer to the many questions we receive in the mail, Deb and I began the publication of a newsletter, **No Greater Joy**. It started out as eight pages but soon grew to twenty-four. It is now distributed to over 40,000 homes.

We found that most of the questions we were asked had already been answered in one of our previous newsletter articles. The demand for back newsletters was so great that it became a burden to maintain an inventory. Thus, we compiled our second book on child training, **No Greater Joy Volume One**.

But the letters continued to come in, and new issues were raised or old ones needed further attention. More newsletter articles were written. So we gave you a further compilation of articles, **No Greater Joy Volume Two**.

It has been over a year now since **Volume Two** was published and the ministry continues to grow. Much has been written in the subsequent newsletters that you may have missed. Therefore, it is with great delight that we give you our latest compilation of articles, **No Greater Joy Volume Three**.

It is a provocative experience to read the many letters we receive daily. One letter will tear at our souls as we read of the pain and injury occurring in a family. The next letter will thrill us with wonder at the miracles God has accomplished in a parent's heart. Deb and I are always discussing, analyzing, praying, and writing. Much has been written that we are not yet ready to make public. In time, as our hearts are settled and our keyboards express our minds, we will address a broader scope of family issues.

We pray that in this volume you will find a little light to direct your steps in the most important job in all of human history—training up a child in the way he should go.

The Flavor of Joy

Parenting, like courtship, must be properly seasoned with joy. Parenting without joy is not only tasteless, it is tiring. Joy is more than the fragrance of the moment; it is the energy required to live life to its fullest. Parenting without joy is like music without rhythm or flowers without color. A joyless parent can no more raise happy kids than a skunk can raise skunklets that smell good.

You say, “But the kids destroy my joy!” I am sure it’s mutual. Without aggressive, deliberate child training techniques your kids will be unruly, and your home will be disorderly—sometimes explosive. You will be unhappy, short, rude, and a gripe. If someone were to ask your kids if you are joyful, what would they answer?

In many families the problems are not deep—bad, yes, but not deep. They don’t have deep-seated hostilities or resentments, just chaos. Families without enforced boundaries are like intersections without traffic lights. The “me first” attitude rules relationships. When rules are not enforced so as to guarantee the rights of everyone, “road rage” comes home to the family. Like erecting a traffic light, when parents take authority and enforce boundaries, order is established, the tension leaves, and everything runs smoothly. When there is no adequate authority, children are generally too unruly and the home is too disorganized to permit positive interchange between family members. Frustrated parents develop permanent expressions of criticism. The family is marked by lack of joy.

Many parents have applied simple training procedures and gained complete control of their families in just a few days. By restoring order, these parents have eliminated the outward circum-

stances that provoked everyone to confusion.

It is a blessing to have discipline and peace in the home, but the absence of conflict does not necessarily imply joy. Joy is a positive virtue, not just the absence of conflict.

Some parents are joyless regardless of the circumstances. They may not be angry or unhappy, just joyless. Look at it as a scale, with anger and bitterness on the far left, a stable and sedate personality in the middle, and joyfulness on the far right. Granted, children do far better with deadpan parents who have no joy than they do with angry or bitter parents, but they do best when both parents are known for their joy.

Bitterness is like a plant with a disease. Joyless mediocrity is like a plant without disease, growing in average to poor soil. Joyfulness is a plant rooted in well-balanced soil with the right combination of rain and sunshine. It bears sweet fruit.

The Bible tells us to bring up our children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” The body, mind, and will of a child are trained from without, but the soul of a child is nurtured from within, through example and fellowship. There is no nurturing without joy. As the joy of the Lord is the Christian’s strength, the joy of the parent is the child’s strength.

Children must be joined to their parents by something more than physical lineage. Children choose their role models. They will seek to be like the person to whom they are most attracted. Parents cannot demand respect or admiration. If it is not freely given, it doesn’t exist. Joy attracts everyone. Children are not molded by hands of psychology, but by a heart of joy.

Children are rooted in parental attitude more than in proper technique. More is caught than taught. As salt that has lost its savor is good for nothing but to be cast out and trampled under foot, so parenting that has lost its joy results in a family trampled under foot. As parenting without training is chaos, training without joy is tyranny.

Where there is no joy, what is the point? A soldier can endure the mud, blood and pain of war by visualizing past or future joys, but a child without joy is a lost soul. Likewise, one can endure a dull or painful occupation, knowing that there is a sanctuary of joy waiting

after hours, but when the sanctuary is joyless, what hope can sustain him? A mature wife may cope with a joyless marriage by consoling herself in the hope of afterlife, but a child can't so resign himself. A husband may deal with a joyless marriage by losing himself in the rewards of occupation or hobby, but a child has no outlet that can compensate for loss of relationships. Relationships are a part of the adult world, but relationships are all the world to a child. An adult without refreshing relationships may still be successful in his career. He can read, engage in hobbies, or just endure loneliness, but a child without relationships is emotionally ill.

Ungratefulness or bitterness destroys joy. If Christ were joy, Antichrist would be bitterness. No matter the skill or technique, as a painting done in bitterness leaves its strokes on the canvas, parenting done in bitterness will leave its scars on the canvas of the soul. Bitterness is like a virus; it multiplies until it infects all healthy tissue. It is rotteness to the bones. If the parent's unhappiness has some other cause outside the child, it will still reflect back on the child. Any unhappiness in the home is going to show up in the children.

Positive creativity is conceived in the womb of joy. God created humans to be happy. Happiness and joy are a healing balm. Joyfulness smiles away all the wrinkles in a child's attitude. Children who rise up a little grumpy and meet a smiling mother are soon smiling with her. On the other hand, children who rise up grumpy and meet a grumpy mother will spiral downward into the pit of misery. Mothers may think to themselves, "I am tired of them being grouchy; I will put the pressure on until they straighten up." Pressure never caused a sapling to grow straight. They grow straight when they are reaching for the sunlight.

A little girl who gets up with a chip on her shoulder should meet a smiling mother who is undaunted in her expressions of delight. If the child is not soon overcome with joy, don't let her alter the mood of the family. She should be the odd one; she should cut herself out of the fun with her attitude. If a grumpy child can change the atmosphere to reflect her bad mood, then, in her estimation, her grouchiness is justified.

Though a parent must be firm in enforcing boundaries, you can-

not threaten, insult, or intimidate a bad attitude out of a child. If you become angry, then the child cannot help but view your “discipline” as a personal challenge. The child is offended at your attitude and will respond in anger. The other children catch the gripes and it infects the entire family.

Now, there is a religious escape mechanism you can employ at this point to get yourself off the hook and ignore what I have said. First, put on your most devout and earnest expression, breathe deeply, sigh, let your shoulders droop just a little, now lower your eyebrows and say, “I know I am not happy, but I do have the joy of the Lord in my heart.” Now is the time to say that little ditty you learned in a sermon, “Happiness is based on the happenings of life, which we cannot control, but joy is based on our relationship to God.” Now that you have separated happiness from joy, you can admit that you are not happy and profess to have an unseen joy tucked away somewhere. Some people think it is carnal to be happy. I doubt that the kids appreciate your mystical joy. What they need is happy, cheerful parents. Your theological joy is all right in a ladies’ deeper-life conference, but it is no better than cussing when it comes to raising kids.

Ask yourself this question: Is my lack of joy a result of circumstances alone? If you trained your children to be obedient, would you then be joyful? If your lack of joy is circumstantial, then you should be able to reverse the trend by properly training the kids. Many have testified that after just one day of training, everyone in the family was transformed. When that happens you can know that the symptoms were shallow, just procedural; your technique was off, and so training removed the barriers to joy. Your unhappiness was caused by outer circumstances rather than by inner bitterness.

But if your unhappiness is something you manufacture in your own soul, then applying training techniques will be of some help, but it will not bring the children to where they should be, and it will not give you lasting joy. If your unhappiness is in your soul, then you must go to the soul doctor. Jesus Christ is the only licensed soul doctor. All others are quacks. St. John the apostle said, “*And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full (1 John 1:4).*” Start counting your blessings rather than recounting the reasons why you should be miserable. Life will sum up differently.

John goes on to discuss the things that bring full joy: *“The blood cleanses us from all sin; he is faithful to forgive us of all sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness; truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ; a new commandment I write, that you love one another; I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake; Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is (taken from 1 John).”*

Here is one I like: *“Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life...for that is thy portion in this life (Ecclesiastes 9:9).”* That makes me smile.

How about this commandment? *“Neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10).”*

Would you resolve as David did? *“And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD (Psalm 35:9).”*

Perhaps you need to confess your sinfulness to God and pray with David, *“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation (Psalm 51:12).”*

God sums up the Christian experience: *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17).”* Religion without joy is godless.

Finally, here is the one we based our newsletter on: *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth (3 John 4).”* This is the greatest earthly joy.

Children thrive on joy. They will do anything for someone who enjoys them. Parents have asked me, “What is the first step to recovering what I have lost with my children?” Many times I have answered, and I have never found a need to revise it: “Look into the face of your child and smile.” Let your child look into your face and see someone delighting in their presence. Don’t withhold your joy on the condition that your child earn your smile. Who deserves a good friend? Who deserves the Savior’s love? Smile your children into obedience, and you will find that the rod is seldom necessary. Become the Pied Piper of joy. You won’t have to drive them if you give them something worth fol-

lowing. Don't just smile at your kids; smile into them; smile through them. Let joy flow, and your family will be swept along in the current. 😊

From our Mailbox

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Pearl,

Let me share a funny story with you. A friend of mine gets this newsletter out of "nowhere," talking about child training. She tells me I would really like it, but I did not think too much about it until she got her tapes. She kept saying, over and over, you should listen to these tapes, they are really good. Finally, she brought me the tapes and I began to listen to them. Within the first 3 minutes I was appalled! I stopped the tape, called her and said, this man is nuts! I agreed with everything you said about training children as well as how to train them. It was your thoughts on public school that upset me. You see, I was currently a first grade teacher in a public school. I said, "He has never set foot in my classroom, he doesn't know squat. Maybe it is like that in the big city, but not in my small town, not in my room!" I went on maternity leave soon after and decided to homeschool my daughter for the year. The Lord has taught me a lot over the past year, including my ignorance! I was always very careful not to teach any of that anti-God stuff. But unknowingly, I did. Under the guise of critical thinking, values clarification, and higher-order learning skills, new age came into my classroom. I must say, you have never been in my classroom, but you couldn't have been more accurate in your statements, even in my small town, even in my classroom.

I know the Lord has a sense of humor, because the same person who thought you were nuts is now just as nuts as you are! I am currently helping 3 families begin their road to homeschooling!

In Christ, B.T.