

LESSON ESSENTIALS

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

LESSON 7: JOYFULNESS AND GENEROSITY

We enjoy being with people who demonstrate positive character traits, especially those who genuinely care about our wellbeing and are joyful and generous. This lesson looks at those two character traits, and how God uses them in us to bless others. Generosity and joyfulness come in many forms. Consider how you can practise living like Christ and blessing others today.

“... for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.”

2 Corinthians 8:2

Consider one of God's great extravagant acts – sending His Son, Jesus, to be our Saviour! “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son” (John 3:16). God has been incredibly generous with us.

When we delight in God in the midst of difficulties, we can have a joy that is greater than mere happiness, and deeper than our fleeting emotions. We can learn to live above our temporary circumstances.

Think about the most giving, generous, kind people you know. They aren't necessarily those who have abundant earthly wealth, are they? Someone who knows what it is to go without food or other necessities is far more likely to share with others. In fact, the most joyful and generous people are often those who have been through times of sorrow and despair, and have learned to rely on God.

Today, we will look at the Christ-like characteristics of generosity and joyfulness. Both are responses of gratitude to God. When we are grateful for all God has given us and done for us, it should result in abundant joy and a desire to bless others. Consider one of God's great extravagant acts – sending His Son, Jesus, to be our Saviour! “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son” ([John 3:16](#)). God has been incredibly generous with us. Consider the wonders of creation. They are far more than we need, and have been given for our pleasure! Do you enjoy your coffee in the morning? Music, art or delicious food? God is incredibly generous with us!

When we practise joyfulness, God is pleased with us. God loved King David, who delighted in God so much that he wrote hundreds of songs to Him. He was even found dancing with all his might before the Lord. Joy is one of the most obvious characteristics of believers everywhere. When we delight in God in the midst of difficulties, we can have a joy that is greater than mere happiness, and deeper than our fleeting emotions. We can learn to live above our temporary circumstances. This joy attracts others to us and even spreads to them!

Generosity is also pleasing to God. This character trait is the act of giving joyfully to others from what God has given us. When we are generous, we know that all we have comes from God, and its purpose is to do God's work and bless others. We delight in being generous, perhaps not always with money, but through acts of service, extending grace to others, sharing a meal, or spending time with people who are lonely.

An excellent example of how generosity pleases God is found in the woman, Abigail (1 Samuel 25). While King David had been promised the throne, but had not yet possessed it, he was on the run with his followers. Nabal, a man David had loyally protected and helped in the past, was nearby. David asked him for a few provisions for himself and his men, hoping that the wealthy Nabal would help him. Nabal, however, was not a generous or joyful man. He was selfish and revelled in his riches, hoarding them to himself. Nabal refused David's request. This story could have ended in war;

however, Nabal's wife, Abigail, was a woman of godly character. She was embarrassed by Nabal's stinginess and greed. She was a servant of God and exhibited joyfulness and generosity. She apologized for her husband's behaviour, and brought a generous gift to David and his men. Because of his refusal to give, Nabal was struck with an illness and died. Abigail joyfully became David's wife, and was generously rewarded.

When we love God and trust in Him, we will be joyful and generous. When we acknowledge that all we have (good or bad, poverty or abundance) is from God, we can choose to use it for His work. When we are joyful and generous, we will attract others and be able to share the love of God with them. It is not a burden to be joyful or generous when we place our thoughts on God and who He is, rather than on ourselves and our circumstances.

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IN REVIEW

- Some Christian character traits are not about repressing ungodly impulses, but are rather expressions of our delight in God and our gratitude for His blessings. Two of these virtues are joyfulness and generosity.
- Abigail displayed great generosity and was embarrassed by her husband's choice not to give supplies to David and his men. Her generosity was rewarded by God, and her goodness and kindness are forever remembered.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- How can you have joyfulness in the midst of suffering or trials? Where does our joy come from, and how could a Christian experience more joy?

- How would joy affect the other virtues? Describe joy and self-control and how they are related? Do the same for joy and perseverance, and for joy and compassion.

- What do you have that you could give to others this week as an expression of joy and love for God?

- How do we change our thought patterns in order to be joyful and generous? What verse could you memorize to help you change your thinking?

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