

Increase

The challenge today is to learn to increase your
joy through obedience and service

With a Joyful Heart

by Elder Lynn A. Mickelsen of the Seventy
From an address given in October 1995 general conference.

Want to be happy? Good, because that's what the Lord wants for you, too. You just have to follow the plan.

While teaching at BYU, Brother Dennis Rasmussen was selected to study at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. In the opening session, as he gave his name and university, Rabbi Muffs boomed, "You're the Mormon! ... Do you pay your tithing?"

"Yes," he answered.

"Do you pay it with a joyful heart?"

"Yes," he said.

"I believe," the rabbi said, "that joy is the essence of religion. There is nothing more fundamental to religious living than joy. ... I am working on a book about joy."

Brother Rasmussen responded, "There's a passage in the Book of Mormon ... , 'Adam fell that men might be; and men are that they might have joy'" (2 Ne. 2:25). Rabbi Muffs was profoundly touched and exclaimed, "I've found the text I've searched for all my life ... in the Book of Mormon." Turning to Brother Rasmussen he said, "Say it again, but not so fast." As he repeated the familiar words, the rabbi's eyes glowed in appreciation of this great truth he understood but had not heard so succinctly expressed (Dennis Rasmussen, "An Elder among the Rabbis," Brigham Young University Studies 21, summer 1981: 344-45).

How important it is to know the purpose of our existence. Man is that he might have joy, and that joy will come to us as we keep God's commandments!

In 1995 I saw this joy personified as I accompanied the missionaries in Santiago, Chile, to visit some of their converts. At the Basuare home, eight-year-old twin boys, Nicolas and Ignacio, met us at the door, dressed in white shirts and ties, just like missionaries. Their father had been baptized three weeks earlier, and the following week he baptized his wife and sons. We talked of their conversion. They shared their feelings of love for the missionaries and the joy they were experiencing in living the gospel and keeping the commandments.

I asked Nicolas if he would like to be a missionary when he grew up. He answered yes, and we shook hands on the promise that he would prepare for the day. Then I asked Ignacio the same question. He hesitated and replied, "I'm not sure I can make that promise. I'm only eight years old."

I persisted, "Nicolas made the promise. Wouldn't you like to do the same?"

He still hesitated and said, "I don't know if I could be ready." I could see I had taken on more than I could manage, so I said, "Perhaps you had better talk this over with your father."

He went to his father, who took him in his arms and said, "Ignacio, Jesus was a missionary. He walked the streets like Elder Sheets and his companion and made the people happy by teaching them to keep the commandments. Wouldn't you like to be like Jesus?"

"Yes, Papi, I would."

"Do you think if we work together, you can be ready to be a missionary when you are 19 years old?"

"I think so."

"Wouldn't you like to make the promise to Elder Mickelsen that you will do that?" He came to me, and we shook hands to confirm the promise. I marveled that this young father, a convert of just three weeks, could be so sensitive in helping his family follow the Savior and how he emulated the missionaries in teaching his son.



Since the beginning of creation such family happiness has been central to our Heavenly Father's plan. Having been cast out of the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve began to multiply and replenish the earth. As their family increased, they called upon the Lord for help. He gave them commandments and told them to teach them to their children. These eternal laws were reiterated to Moses on Sinai, summed up by the Savior in the two great commandments (see Matt. 22:36–40), and repeated to Joseph Smith in a revelation known as the "law of the Church" (see D&C 42).

Our happiness in this life and joy in the future as eternal families depend on how well we live these commandments (see Ex. 20).

A Brother Like That

Paul received an automobile from his brother as a Christmas present. On

Christmas Eve when Paul came out of his office, a street urchin was walking around the shiny new car, admiring it.

"Is this your car, Mister?" he asked.

Paul nodded. "My brother gave it to me for Christmas." The boy was astounded.

"You mean your brother gave it to you and it didn't cost you nothing? Boy,

I wish..." He hesitated. Of course Paul knew what he was going to wish for. He was going to wish he had a brother like that. But what the lad said jarred Paul all the way down to his heels.

"I wish," the boy went on, "that I could be a brother like that." Paul looked at the boy in astonishment, then, impulsively he added, "Would you like to take a ride in my automobile?"

"Oh yes, I'd love that." After a short ride, the boy turned and with his eyes aglow, said, "Mister, would you mind driving in front of my house?" Paul smiled a little. He thought he knew what the lad wanted. He wanted to show his neighbors that he could ride home in a big automobile. But Paul was wrong again.

"Will you stop where those two steps are?" the boy asked. He ran up the steps. Then in a little while Paul heard him coming back, but he was not coming fast. He was carrying his little crippled brother. He sat him down on the bottom step, then sort of squeezed up against him and pointed to the car. "There she is, Buddy, just like I told you upstairs. His brother gave it to him for Christmas and it didn't cost him a cent. And some day I'm gonna give you one just like it...then you can see for yourself all the pretty things in the Christmas windows that I've been trying to tell you about."

Paul got out and lifted the lad to the front seat of his car. The shining-eyed older brother climbed in beside him and the three of them began a memorable holiday ride.

That Christmas Eve, Paul learned what Jesus meant when he said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."