

The Vine

I am the vine; you are the branches...John 15:5

A publication of Valley Falls Christian Church

December 2013

IF YOU BELIEVE

Gold, Fur and Common Sense, My husband and I had been happily (most of the time), married for 5 years, but hadn't been blessed with a baby. I decided to do some serious praying, and promised God that if He would give us a child, I would be a perfect mother, love it with all my heart, and raise it with His Word as my guide.

God answered my prayers, and blessed us with a son. The next year God blessed us with another son. The following year, He blessed us with yet another son. The year after that we were blessed with a daughter. My husband thought we'd been blessed right into poverty. We now had 4 children and the oldest was only 4 years old.

I learned never to ask God for anything, unless I meant it. As a minister once told me, "If you pray for rain, make sure you carry an umbrella."

I began reading a few verses of the Bible to the children each day as they lay in their cribs. I was off to a good start. God had entrusted me with 4 children and I didn't want to disappoint Him.

I tried to be patient the day the children smashed 2 dozen eggs on the kitchen floor searching for baby chicks.

I tried to be understanding when they started a hotel for homeless frogs, in the spare bedroom, although it took me nearly 2 hours to catch all 23 frogs.

When my daughter poured ketchup all over herself, and rolled up in a blanket to see how it felt to be a hot dog, I tried to see the humor rather than the mess.

In spite of changing over 25,000 diapers, never eating a hot meal and never sleeping for more than 30 minutes at a time, I still thank God daily for my children.

While I couldn't keep my promise to be a perfect mother- I didn't even come close- I did keep my promise to raise them in the Word of God.

I knew I was missing the mark just a little when I told my daughter we were going to church to "worship" God, and she wanted to bring a bar of soap along to "wash up" Jesus too.

Something was lost in the translation, when I explained that God gave us everlasting life, and my son thought it was generous of God to give us His "last wife."

My proudest moment came during the children's Christmas Pageant. My daughter was playing Mary, two of my sons were shepherds and my youngest son was a wise man. This was their moment to shine.

My 5 year old shepherd had practiced his line, "We found the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes." But he was nervous and said, "The baby was wrapped in wrinkled clothes." My 4 year old "Mary" said, "That's not 'wrinkled clothes,' silly. That's dirty rotten clothes."

A wrestling match broke out between Mary and the shepherd, and was stopped by an angel, who bent her halo and lost her left wing.

I slouched a little lower in my seat, when Mary dropped the doll representing Baby Jesus, and it bounced down the aisle crying "Mama-mama" Mary grabbed the doll, wrapped it back up and held it tightly as the wise men arrived.

My other son stepped forward wearing a bathrobe and a paper crown, knelt at the manger and announced, "We are the 3 wise men and we are bringing gifts of gold, common sense and fur." The congregation dissolved into laughter, and the pageant got a standing ovation.

"I've never enjoyed a Christmas Program as much as this one," laughed the pastor, wiping tears from his eyes. "For the rest of my life, I'll never hear the Christmas story without thinking of gold, common sense and fur."

"My children are my pride and my joy, and my greatest blessing," I said as I dug through my purse for an aspirin.

Joy Has Come

*And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. ¹² And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." **Luke 2:10-12***

Joy is a word I closely associate with Christmas. You can't go through the Christmas season without hearing about joy in so many of our Christmas hymns.

Consider:

'Joy to the world, the Lord has come; let earth, receive her King.'

'Good Christian men rejoice with heart and soul and voice! Now ye hear of endless bliss; Joy! Joy! Jesus Christ was born for this.'

'How great our joy! Joy, joy, joy! Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high!'

'Shepherds why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?'

'A thrill of hope – the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks, a new and glorious morn!'

Handel's Messiah uses **Zechariah 9:9** *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

I have seen several advertisements and flyers from stores that talk about the 'joy of the season.' No mention of Christ. No mention of Christmas. So, does that mean all the cool stuff we can get from their stores or websites is our source of joy?

I know there are a lot of families that get together over Christmas. For many, this is the only time to see distant relatives. It can be a time of joy. But for many, family issues and broken relationships take the joy right out of the holiday.

Relationships, parties, things all have the ability to make us happy for a time. Those things can also dampen potential joy (like when the bill comes for the stuff!). None of these things bring lasting joy. Where does actual joy come from? What is it? How can I get it?

Joy is a deep inner delight of heart, mind and spirit due to the assurance of future good; it is independent of external circumstances. That means no matter what is going on around us, it is possible to have joy!

The scriptures tell us there was good news of great joy. What was it? God the Son had come to the earth. Let me submit right now that you may celebrate Christmas, you may be happy for a

time, but you cannot have true joy celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ outside of a loving relationship with Jesus Christ. It is the very presence of the Lord in our lives that brings the joy our hearts desire.

Let's see what the scriptures have to say about this.

Isaiah 29:19 *The meek shall obtain fresh joy in the LORD, and the poor among mankind shall exult in the Holy One of Israel.*

Zechariah 2:10 *Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the LORD.*

Psalms 21:6 *For you make him most blessed forever; you make him glad with the joy of your presence.*

Philippians 4:4 *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*

Psalms 4:7 *You (the Lord) have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and wine abound.*

When we see true joy in the Bible, it is almost always because of the presence of the Lord or because of something the Lord has done. Our joy and a good relationship with the Lord are inseparable.

So to truly experience joy this Christmas and beyond, we must have a relationship with the Lord. **Psalms 51:12** *Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.*

Peter quoted the following psalm in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2) where thousands came to know Jesus as Savior. **Psalms 16:11** *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* When the people were convicted of their sin and their need for a Savior, they begged Peter, "What shall we do?" Peter's response was, "**Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**" (**Acts 2:38**)

Peter considered repentance and baptism as part of the 'faith package' that is believing in Jesus. He said when we do this we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Joy also is a result of having the Holy Spirit live inside you (Gal 5:22-23). How could we be closer to God than when He indwells our very souls!

Finally, we will see our joy completely fulfilled when we are in the presence of the Lord forever: **Revelation 19:7** *Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb (Jesus) has come, and his Bride (the church) has made herself ready;*

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Recipe Swap

PUMPKIN BREAKFAST CASSEROLE

10 slices white bread, cubed
15 oz. pumpkin puree
2/3 c. sugar
1 tsp. cinnamon
½ tsp. ground ginger
½ tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. vanilla
1/8 tsp. salt
6 eggs, beaten
1 c. milk
5 oz. evaporated milk
½ c. chopped pecans, optional

Spray a 9x13 baking dish with cooking spray and place the bread cubes into the dish. In a bowl, mix together the rest of the ingredients. Pour the mixture over the bread cubes. Cover the dish with plastic wrap, and refrigerate overnight.

The next day, preheat oven to 350*.
Uncover and bake the casserole until the mixture is set and a toothpick inserted into the center of the casserole comes out clean, about 45 minutes.

PRAYER REQUESTS

OUR SOLDIERS: Jacob Mitchell, Curtis Mitchell, Brandon Miller, Ryan Myers, Luke Cummings, Greg Morales, Ryan Kirby, Zach Stiffler, Josh Lackey, Dan Cook, Rick Heuertz, Steve Heinen, Ammin Spencer, Gates Kobuszewski, Leslie Bolz, Steve Grove, Austin Everhart, Noe Garza, Brandon Hammons, Ruth Churchill
June Dedeke needs prayers.
Melissa Scrivner- to get better and for doctors to figure out what is wrong.
Sarah Haybarker- having tests
Carol Welborn
Christy Arnold
Julie Tack- finding a teaching job
Marvin Trotter- cancer
Kevin Gatzmeyer
Chris Sanders brother Mark- in the Philippines when the storm hit

COPIES OF THE SERMONS ARE AVAILABLE ON CD UPON REQUEST: If you would like a copy please see Mike. You can also listen to them online at www.valleyfallscc.org.

POCKET CHANGE FOR PROGRESS: This will be a special offering every 3rd Sunday during church. The money will be split between Mission Lake Camp and the School Supply Giveaway Fund

RECYCLING: We have a recycling box beside the copier in the office.

COLLECTING FOR ALPHA: Alpha Christian Children's Home can use Campbell soup UPC labels and lids, Best Choice UPC labels and General Mills Box Top Symbols coupons (Box Tops for Education.) We will have a box in the hallway outside the nursery under the mailboxes.

SISTERS OF STRENGTH (S.O.S.)-

(Mission Statement: We are a lifeline to glorify God through service to the church and community and to build personal relationships with our Christian Sisters.)

We will not be having our regular meeting in December.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

1 Shirley Harris
4 Allison Thomas
5 Elijah Phillips
7 Jordan Cummings
8 Rachel Arnold
11 Kacie Welborn
14 Chuck Toy
15 Mike & Gina Kirby (1984)
18 Janese (Farr) Temm
Jeff Starkey
Bud & Norma Bryant (1960)
Ray & Rhonda Mitchell (1982)
21 Dan & Janet Strang
23 Tom Brown
26 CHARLES WATKINS
28 Sean & Jennifer Guffey
29 Morgan Diane Jean Turner
30 Jacob & Kari Mitchell (2005)

(Names in CAPS in Mission Field)

Serving in DECEMBER

Congregational Prayer:

Dennis Turner

Scripture Readers:

1-Grove-Luke 18:1-8

8-Anna Kirby- Matt. 25:14-30

15-Mitchell- Matt. 18:21-35

22-Turner- Luke 2:8-20

29-Welborn- Matt. 25:1-13

Nursery:

1-Debbie Gerstner/Nik Branam

8-Glee Hosler

15-Linda Durand/Jackson Reich

22-Nancy Gatzmeyer/Jarret Mitchell

30-Sarah Hollis/Caitlyn Thomas

Greeters/Ushers:

1-Grove

8-Kirby

15-Mitchell

22-Turner

29-Welborn

Lord's Supper Preparation:

1-Grove

8-Kirby

15-Mitchell

22-Turner

29-Welborn

Communion Table:

1-Stan, Jay

Clint Thomas, Matthew Branam

8- Jay, Stan

Ray Mitchell, Jarret Mitchell

15- Stan, Jay

David Grove, Andy Arnold

22- Jay, Stan

Steve Carson, Matthew Branam

29-Stan, Jay

Dennis Tichenor, Jarret Mitchell

Musicians

Worship Leader: Mike Kirby

Organ: Leah Brown

Piano: Donetta Farr

Guitar: Mike Kirby, Clint Thomas, Sarah Ochs

Mandolin: Erin Thomas

Vocals: Clint Thomas, Erin Thomas

Church Offerings

Oct.27-\$1172.00

Nov.3-\$1712.00

Nov.10-\$3402.14

Nov.17-\$1605.00

Our expenses average \$1500 a week.

Valley Falls Christian Church has a website!!

www.valleyfallsc.org

MEN'S BREAKFAST: The men's breakfast will be on Dec. 14th at 8:00 AM. Kevin Gatzmeyer will be hosting.

LADIES BIBLE STUDY: There will be no Ladies Bible Study in December.

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

Dec. 1- Midland Services

Dec. 8- Filling Food Boxes after church
Christmas Caroling at 6:00 PM

Dec. 11- Church Christmas Dinner at Famous Dave's in Topeka at 6:30 PM.

Dec. 14- Men's Breakfast- Kevin Gatzmeyer host- 8:00AM

Dec. 15- Ladies Christmas Party at Rhonda Mitchell's at 3:00 PM.

Dec. 22- Christmas Program

Dec. 24- Christmas Eve Service at 7:00 PM.

FOOD BOXES: Items needed for food boxes are: cookies, breads, cocoa/tea, pudding, snack crackers, fruit, soups, etc. Debbie Gerstner is asking anyone that has shoeboxes to please bring them and leave them in the foyer. Thank you.

LADIES CHRISTMAS PARTY: Rhonda Mitchell has volunteered to hostess the ladies Christmas party on Sunday, Dec. 15th at 3:00 PM. All ladies in the church are invited to this get together to visit and snack. Please plan to bring your favorite snack...and recipe too.

PAPER PRODUCTS: We could really use some paper products if you feel led to bring some. Always needing paper towels, paper plates, napkins and toilet paper. Please leave in a tub in the foyer. Thank you.

Valley Falls Christian Church

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On the web: www.valleyfallsc.org
Find us on Facebook!

Mike Kirby, Pastor

You are welcome to join us!

Sunday Service times:

Bible Study (all ages) – 9:00 AM
Worship – 10:00 AM
Youth Group – 5:00 PM

Midweek Bible Study:

Wednesday 7:00 PM

GOD'S STOREHOUSE CHRISTMAS ADOPTION

The church will be adopting 2 families from Valley Falls through God's Storehouse for Christmas.

We have a family with a 3 year old and by Christmas a newborn.

One of the families is a mom and 4 kids.

If you would like to help the sign up sheets will be on the table in the foyer.

Gifts need to be here wrapped and at the church by Dec. 11th.

If anyone wants to donate food please don't donate it to the families but instead directly to God's Storehouse because they furnish food to the families.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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If you wonder why you don't experience joy at Christmas (or ever), then perhaps you are distancing yourself from the presence of the Lord. Examine yourself. Have you refused salvation through Jesus Christ? Are you delaying a decision to be buried with Him by immersion? Are you grieving the Holy Spirit by disobeying our Lord?

Jesus made a way for each of us to live in unspeakable joy. On a night over 2000 years ago, His plan was put into place as Mary gave birth to the Christ child. Good news. Great joy. For all people. You can make sure you have joy this Christmas and forever after. The decision is yours to make. Come to the cradle; come to the cross. Come to Christ!

Romans 15:13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

Mike