

Thou shalt not kill another's joy

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

It makes me proud to live in Tennessee. We were on vacation in another country when our legislators voted to post the Ten Commandments in public places. The decision was announced in the English language newspaper there. Sprinkled among reports of violence, crime, and economic disaster (in the host country), the announcement shown like a ray of faith in the power of obedience to God's laws. We can only be blessed by being reminded of God's laws.

Some of the Ten Commandments have special significance to me. The next few articles will mention some of the blessings that have come from praying with the Ten Commandments. The one that has meant the most to me is number 6, Thou shalt not kill. (Exodus 20:13)

As a child, I found myself skipping over this command thinking it was meant for other people. It seemed obvious that I would never kill anybody or try to do them harm. Then it occurred to me that there might be a broader and deeper meaning to this commandment.

I prayed to have God reveal how this commandment could be relevant to my life. Immediately the thought came, don't kill another's joy. If someone has beaten us in competition, do we kill their happiness by venting our frustration or anger? Do we take joy in a friend's accomplishment or feel envious? When another is getting married, having a baby, buying their first house, are we happy for them or sad for ourselves?

Killing enthusiasm and happiness is a nasty habit of selfish thinking. A woman once confided to me that she was afraid to let others know when she was happy. Why? As a child she had been happily playing in the yard. Her grandmother had come upon her and became angry that she was so carefree. Life was hard. Reality was not fun and games. The grandmother told her so and to prove the point, beat her.

We prayed together to restore her God-given joy. God is a joyous God. The Bible says, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save,

he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.” (Zephaniah 3:17) God’s will for us is good. Human life may be hard, but God’s plan is salvation from sin and sadness. As she learned to accept God’s plan of unfolding good and the certainty of His love, her life changed. Confidence in good grew and the fear of being happy diminished. I heard her laugh freely.

God’s obedient children need not be morose. God’s people are to praise Him, express joy and gladness. God is a God of comfort and turns our mourning into joy.

The people of Israel learned this lesson when Jerusalem was destroyed and the majority removed from their homes and taken to Babylon. They were depressed and defeated. Nehemiah was given permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild its walls. The people found the scrolls containing God’s laws and gathered together to hear them read. As Ezra the scribe read, the people wept. But Nehemiah and Ezra rebuked their sadness, “This day is holy unto the Lord your God: mourn not, nor weep...neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” (Nehemiah 8:9,10) And the Bible records, “all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.” (Nehemiah 8:9,10,12)

Let us understand the Word of God. Let us rejoice in the supreme power of God and His goodness. Let us praise Him and be confident in His ability to overcome evil. Let us be glad continually. Then when others are happy we can be happy for them and with them. We can contribute to other’s joy and enhance it. Let us rebuke whatever selfishness or envy or pride would dampen enthusiasm, belittle accomplishments. Let us not kill joy.

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