

Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church
2080 West Grand Blvd.
Detroit, Michigan 48208
Nathan Johnson, D.D., Senior Pastor

Lesson 20: “Participate in Each Other’s Joys and Sorrows”
Scripture: Philippians 2: 1-18

Goal: To embrace and fulfill our covenant relationship with God and one another.

Objective: To understand the importance of participating in each other’s joys and sorrows.

Covenant Segment:

“We further engage ... to participate in each other’s joy, and with tender sympathy bear one another’s burdens and sorrows.”

Overview

This segment of the covenant charges us to become the earthen vessels through which the joys and sorrows of one another are recognized and embraced. Participating in the joys and sorrows of another reflects sensitivity, care, love, and concern, all of which serves to strengthen the body of Christ. Let us not behave as the Pharisees, who scorned Jesus for the time he spent with the publicans, harlots and sinners. They hated it when sinners came into His presence and found forgiveness, and experienced abundant joy.¹ Love calls us to rise above our resentment, jealousy, covetousness, and anger so that we might be brought to a higher level of fellowship and a deeper dimension of love.² It is only through Jesus that we are able to fulfill our responsibility in this area. He is the author and the finisher of our faith who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross. [Hebrews 12:2] The joy He had was once and for all, according to the will of the Father, He offered a sacrifice for sins for every person who would place their trust in Him. Having shared in our lowly estate and paid the ultimate price for our sins, it would bring Jesus joy for us to share in each other’s joys and to bear one another’s sorrows. The fullness of this joy is related to the unity of believers sharing the same mind and exhibiting the same kind of sacrificial love by serving one another as modeled by Christ Jesus.

“Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:2-3, NIV)

Questions 1:

Why are we called to participate in the joys of one another and bear one another’s burdens and sorrows? What are the benefits?

¹ Turner, William C. *A Journey through the Church Covenant.* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. (2002) 106

² Turner, William C. *A Journey through the Church Covenant.* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. (2002) 105

•Participating in the joys of one another is God’s plan for fellowship that rules out jealousy, covetousness and ill-will. For some, participating in the joy of others increases our love and provides opportunity for greater strength and encouragement.

•We will be better people when we intensify our search for ways to participate in the joys and sorrows of others.³

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tender hearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 3:8, 9)

Summary:

We have been purposed by God to build each other up. This building each other up entails the ability to show forth the love of God as we face the challenges and triumphs of life. Participating in each other’s’ joys and supporting each other through life’s burdens and sorrows is one way in which God develops His compassionate character in us individually and corporately. This reveals God’s divine intention to shape us so that we are more and more like Christ. John 13: 35 tells us “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Indeed, love becomes the witness and identifying mark of those who bear the name, Christian.

Question 2:

What are the goals as we participate in the joys and sorrows of others?

•Our task is to lead brothers and sisters through their sorrows to the joy offered by the Lord for our strength.⁴

•As we participate in the joys of others we have the opportunity to be encouraged and strengthened.⁵

Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit and sincere love of the brethren love one another fervently with a pure heart. (1 Peter 1:22)

Summary:

As members of the body of Christ, we have been placed into a divine fellowship by the Spirit of God. We did not earn our place in the body of Christ. Acceptance of God’s gift of grace is the only way we experience this ‘koinonia’ (fellowship) of the Spirit. Paul writes, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you”. (I Cor. 13: 14). It is God’s grace and love that under girds this communion. Grace and love ought to be pervasive as we commune together. Keeping the fellowship of the Spirit means we are participants in everyone’s joys and must be supporters in their pain and sorrow. We cannot pick

³ Turner, William C. *A Journey through the Church Covenant.* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. (2002) 106

⁴ Turner, William C. *A Journey through the Church Covenant.* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. (2002) 107

⁵ Turner, William C. *A Journey through the Church Covenant.* Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press. (2002) 107

and chose who we love and support. This is an opportunity to experience spiritual growth and demonstrate a love that is no respecter of persons.

Question 3:

What is the role of the body of Christ in times of pain, suffering and joy?

•We are called to be there for one another to offer material and spiritual support.⁶

•When we pray for others for God to move in difficult situations, we should rejoice when God has answered our prayers.

Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16:24)

Bear one another's burden and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

Summary:

Our response to each other during times of joy, suffering and pain ought to be tangibly demonstrated. In times of sorrow and need, we are to provide the essentials needed to support each other. One of the marks of a vibrant church is that we hold “all things in common” so that everyone has what they need. God utilizes the resources of His church to demonstrate His power to meet needs. When we provide for the material, emotional, and spiritual needs of one another, we mirror God’s ability to provide for us and others. The spirit of joy and love we exhibit when we provide for each other ought to flow just as Christ’s blood flowed on Calvary in demonstration of God’s love for us. In this way we demonstrate a living, vibrant, and compassionate faith!

Reflections:

1. In what ways have you participated in the joys of others?
2. How have you seen God use pain and sorrow to bring people closer together?

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Where we are in the Church Covenant... *

HAVING BEEN LED, AS WE BELIEVE, BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers, and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, towards its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to study diligently the word of God; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintance; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be kind and just to those in our employ, and faithful in the service we promise others; endeavoring in the purity of heart and good will towards all men to exemplify and commend our holy faith.

We further engage to watch over, to pray for, to exhort and stir up each other unto every good word and work; to guard each other's reputation, not needlessly exposing the infirmities of others; *to participate in each other's joys, and with tender sympathy bear one another's burdens and sorrows*; to cultivate Christian courtesy; to be slow to give or take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, being mindful of the rules of the Savior in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew, to secure it without delay; and through life, amid evil report, and good report, to seek to live to the glory of God, who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

When we remove from this place, we engage as soon as possible to unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

Each month we will include a copy of the Church Covenant and highlight the current lesson. It is our hope that this will give the larger context for the passage being studied.