

The Source of Pride and Joy

I'll admit it. I'm a goofball. Whenever someone makes a corny joke, I'm always the first to laugh; whenever someone spends time with me, you can always guarantee that I'll be caught doing something less than intelligent; and whenever I'm at home, half the time I'm singing or dancing haphazardly. Though you might be expecting me to say that my family is the complete opposite from me, in reality, like me, my family is pretty happy. On occasions where we're joking around in the presence of others, something I've heard pretty frequently is how stable the relationship in my family seems. Though we take pride in this comment, of course, it's not always the case. We fight, experience disappointments, and express frustrations; however, at the end of the day, we always find common ground. While others may say this explanation is typical love, I believe that my family's joy and fulfillment comes from God.

The first time I truly experienced the love that comes from God was when I was sent to the principal's office in the sixth grade. Having crossed the boundaries, I ended up experiencing intense fear and guilt for the consequences that I would have to endure, and could not bring myself to confess my wrongdoings to my parents. When ultimately I had to tell them, certain words my mother spoke in those moments brought me to the realization of the sins that I had been holding onto. Following this event, a few weeks later, I found myself committing a similar action to the one that had brought me to discipline at school. Once again, suffering extreme anxiety, this time, without hesitation, I tearfully professed my insolence. Though disappointed, my mother responded in a way that I cannot forget.

While in my bed attempting to fall asleep, instead I found myself crying over the potentially harsher reprimand I might experience the next day. In that instant, my mother, kneeling next my bed, told me that whatever the repercussions were, it would hold no

importance to her. Following these words of unrelenting love, I was able to experience such a peace and happiness that I know now comes from God. My eyes were opened to the fact that through affection sown in the faith, the delight our family expresses is gifted through He who was the displayed the greatest form of love without conditions. The healing and acceptance I received from my family despite my shortcomings were the seeds that grew into the subsequent joy I was able to add into my family, and in His love and salvation, we are granted the glad hearts we display today.

An additional root in my family's happiness is my grandparents. No matter the situation or current state, my family knows that there are always loved ones praying on our behalf, and this produces the peace that manifests into joy within those in our home. Through godly, unwavering love, my grandfather and grandmothers constantly act as the defense in my family's life, protecting us by way of their prayers. Whenever my family and I go to visit my grandparents, or simply contact them through a phone call, they shower us with complete and overwhelming love, and from this, I believe that we are able to obtain the peace that we have. Each of them has faith in God, and in His love, my grandparents are able to touch my family and ensure that we continue to have a healthy relationship.

In all honesty, when I was younger, I would often become irritated due to my grandmother. The way she talked and acted, though well-meaning, would always affect me in a negative way. One distinct memory I still hold with me was when my grandmother would come and watch my sister and I during basketball practice. Small in physique and lacking in skill, I rarely was passed the ball and was lucky on chance occurrences when I would be able to score a goal. Thus, my older sister outshone me, and in moments when she would get the ball into the basket, my observant grandmother would cheer. In contrast, whenever I would miss, her laughs

from the bench were audible enough for them to sting my heart. Naturally, I grew bitter, and rejected her the next time she attempted to follow along during practice.

Looking back upon such anger now, I've come to the realization that what seemed like taunting laughs were simply expressions of my grandmother's enjoyment watching her grandchildren taste victory, fail, and ultimately, grow up. Those actions that so irked me when I was younger were simply the results of love, and coming to such a revelation aided my own self to reciprocate such love back to my grandmother. Even in moments where it seems as if my family members are against me, I am reminded that in each of these occasions, there is the love of God acting as the foundation beneath it all. To quote a common phrase, "Jesus is a rock", and upon him, my family and I are able to stand in the joy of the Lord. Knowing that true love surrounds me, especially from my grandparents, I, as well as my mother, father, and sister, are able to receive happiness.

To reiterate on my earlier phrase, my family is pretty happy. However, this emotion doesn't just come from anywhere, but from the love of God. Moreover, in this joy, my family acquires pride as well. Having received many comments on how jovial we seem, my family thus attempts to approach each situation with a peace of mind. Whether we're out in public, openly dancing or cracking jokes, as a result of being cognizant of the love bestowed upon us from God, my family continues to take pride and express our happiness. For without the Lord, there remains no true happiness, and so through this gift we have been given, we continue to manifest it wholly and with pride.