

## Having Spiritual Children II John 4

Last week we looked at the definition of true love. We saw that the truth of God should cause us to love people. As Jesus has shown us who he is, who God is, and who we are in light of their purity, kindness and power, we need to observe and mimic how they have shown us love in spite of who we are. Just as we have been shown mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, longsuffering and forgiveness, so we must do the same. It would be wrong for us to receive these blessings, and yet selfishly hold on to them for ourselves without giving away what we ourselves have received.

For some of us loving others is easier than it will be for others. But all of us have at least one or two people who we find challenging to love. For them their only motivation is the fact that God has told them to love everyone. We all need help. We need God to show us how to love people effectively, and we need his eyes of compassion. We need him to help us see people the same way he does.

This morning I want to continue to look at **II John 4**. I think there is a vital lesson to learn. One that can give our Christian walk a boost. John tells us in verse 4:

*How happy I was to meet some of your children and find them living in the truth, just as we have been commanded by the Father.*

As we looked at last week, the term children here could very well be defined as literal biological children or members of a church. But where do members of the church come from. Obviously, we may think that some are born into the church, but can I present the idea to you this morning that the church comes from those who are in the world.

As the Apostle John is telling us here that he found joy in meeting some of the offspring of the church, the same can be said of churches who have produced or who are feeding those who have recently come to know God and his Son Jesus Christ. There is something about meeting someone who has recently experienced the life changing power of God. There is an excitement that comes with seeing a believer with a child-like faith.

Evangelism is something that gives the church a boost. Why? Because we can see God in action. Just this last week Foursquare had its International Convention and our President, Paul Risser gave the following statistics about the Foursquare movement. During the year 2000 there were 897,442 men and women, boys and girls who accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior through the Foursquare movement. That's about 2,460 people per day entering into eternal hope. In the United States alone, there were 82,452 people won to Jesus, 14,031 were water baptized and 10,333 were filled with the Holy Spirit. In the Foursquare movement alone there are 3,402,307 members in the world.

Evangelism is such a vital role for the church. Can you imagine how Aimee McPherson would feel right now seeing the Foursquare movement flourish as it has. I am sure her

words this morning would be John's words to us this morning. "How happy I was to meet some of your children and find them living in the truth." When I think of how God has moved through our church alone. Just last year we had almost 20 first time salvation's here at Redwood Foursquare. We have people in here this morning who weren't here a year ago. We have people here who are living for God today, when only a short time ago they were still wandering in life. "How happy I am today to meet God's children and to find them living in the truth."

There is something about personal evangelism that allows us to experience a joy so unusual and unique. The definition of joy in our text this morning is to exceedingly, greatly, or beyond measure, have a sense of being well off, or calmly happy. I know in my own life, what moved me towards being in the ministry, were experiences and emotions that I had when I saw that God was using me to reach people.

### **1. There is a joy in being used by God.**

For me there is no greater thrill or sense of fulfillment than to see God use me to touch someone else's life. The Apostle Paul said in **Philippians 1:23-26**:

*Dear brothers and sister, I love you and long to see you, for you are my joy and the reward for my work. So please stay true to the Lord, my dear friends.*

*What gives us hope and joy, and what is our proud reward and crown? It is you! Yes, you will bring us much joy as we stand together before the Lord Jesus when he comes back again. For you are our pride and joy. I*  
**Thessalonians 2:19-20**

Think of how many people don't even have any idea of what it is like to be used by God to touch someone else's life? How many of us here don't know what it is like to share our faith? How many of us have short changed ourselves simply because we have feared people's responses to what we believe?

When Jesus sent out the seventy two messengers to go and touch people's lives, it tells us in **Luke 10:17**:

*And when the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use you name!"*

The word joy here tells us that they saw their opportunity to reach out to people as an occasion for joy. A time to celebrate. In our lives today, do we lack opportunities to celebrate? I am not simply talking about having another holiday, but a real and relevant time of rejoicing. God wants us to reach out to others, and in the midst of doing that we will find a real reason to celebrate.

## **2. There is a joy in having spiritual children.**

Jesus made it very clear before his ascension that we needed to impact other people. In **Matthew 28:19-20** he said:

*Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

Because of our willingness to be obedient to the Lord and allow him to impact those around us, through us, we will find fulfillment. In fact, we were created to do this very thing. To give birth to spiritual babies allows us to catch a glimpse of what Christ felt when we came to find him as our Lord and Savior. When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples and people were coming to know Jesus as their personal Savior, we read in **Acts 2:46-47**:

*They worshipped at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity -- all the while praising God and enjoying the good will of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.*

Let me say this morning, that we should be a church that is full of joy not only because of what God has done for us, but also because of what God is doing through us to reach other people. It is this same joy that should stir us to go find more, or to take advantage of every opportunity to share our faith.

I remember the first altar call I gave to a youth group. I was so excited about the three that responded that the first thing I did was get on the phone to my dad and share with him who responded, where they were at in their life, and how I knew that God was going to do good things. I think my dad was kind of stunned at first but realized the simplicity of my thinking and the innocence of my enthusiasm.

After being here at Redwood Foursquare for almost a year now, my mom and dad still hear of my excitement of what God is doing, only now they kind of expect it to happen. I hope you are talking about what God is doing for other people as well. Not that we want to be all emotional about people making decisions, but because the decisions they make here in church are some of the most important decisions they will ever make in their life.

But another part of the joy in having spiritual children is through the discipleship process. This can be both a joyful experience or one that pains our soul. It is hard to watch people make bad choices and see how it effects others. It is hard to see people walk away from the One who has shown them such mercy and grace. It is hard for me to hear about how youth who were in a youth group I had led, have gone through abortions, suicide attempts, drug addiction, or even promiscuity. I think it is so important to become angry, not at the person, but at the one behind all deception.

But sometimes we can find joy in having spiritual children. I remember a friend of mine in High School by the name of Alex Langley. During my final year, I would spend some time with him learning to play some piano chords, and eventually we would talk about different things. My Senior year was one where I strived to let my life be a witness to others. I think we may have talked about religion once or twice. I graduated and came back to the United States and lost contact with him.

About 4 years later my parents received a phone call from a gentleman who was looking to get in contact with me and his name was Alex Langley. He told my parents that he just wanted to tell me that he was working in the LA area and that he wanted me to know that he had come to know the Lord because of my influence and was serving the Lord through a Christian organization known as YWAM, youth with a mission. It goes to show that you never know when you will effect a life, but when you realize that there is someone out there following God because God chose to use you to reach them, there is no greater feeling.

### **3. There is joy in having spiritual children who live in truth.**

Just as the Apostles felt it was their responsibility to do whatever they could to inspire or encourage the church to hold together, we must seek the same thing. In **1 Corinthians 3:13-15** the Apostle Paul said:

*<sup>13</sup>But there is going to come a time of testing at the judgment day to see what kind of work each builder has done. Everyone's work will be put through the fire to see whether or not it keeps its value. <sup>14</sup>If the work survives the fire, that builder will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builders themselves will be saved, but like someone escaping through a wall of flames.*

God holds us personally responsible for the people he places in our care. He holds us responsible for who we have taught or how we have tried to develop the baby Christians he has placed in our lives. That is why Paul said in **Philippians 4:1**:

*<sup>1</sup> Dear brothers and sisters, I love you and long to see you, for you are my joy and the reward for my work. So please stay true to the Lord, my dear friends.*

Some of us here may have already experienced the disappointment of a wandering soul. It makes us feel as if all of our effort has been done in vain, for no reason at all. Without results where would our joy and our reward be? Let us not forget the work that God is doing in us. You know, it takes courage to reach out to people, and it takes faith to be willing to share our faith.

But the development of our spiritual babies is something we cannot neglect. The Apostle Paul said in **1 Thessalonians 3:8-9**:

*It gives us new life, knowing you remain strong in the Lord. How we thank God for you! Because of you we have great joy in the presence of God.*

Seeing our spiritual children remaining strong in God does give us a boost in our faith. Just over the last number of weeks I am amazed at how God is growing our spiritual babies. I am blessed to hear of desires and steps of faith. It gives me reason to continue on in our work here at Redwood Foursquare. It would be very hard to keep coming to church and do the same things over and over again, and yet not see any results. That we would see no move of God, no interest in our church.

What does having Spiritual Children have to do with you this morning? I assure you that you are missing out if you aren't in some way trying to produce other believers. If you don't know what it is like to lead someone to the Lord, or what it is like to help someone to grow up in the Lord, you are missing out on a joy that can be contagious.

What are you doing to bring more people to Jesus? What is your game plan to make your life so attractive that others will want what you have? What seeds have you planted recently? Who has God placed in your life to impact with the truth of His Word?

Jesus' final challenge was to GO. Where are you going today?

My prayer is that we find joy in reaching out to people. That we would find joy in seeing God change their lives. And as proud parents that we would find a sense of fulfillment in our life here on earth.