

PBC20060927CS

SURRENDER

Joyfulness

**Acts 13; Acts 16;
Philippians 4**

September 27, 2006 - Wednesday 6:30PM - Dr. David H. McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message, SURRENDER: Joyfulness]

For the past several weeks we have been involved in a series on Wednesday evenings that I have simply entitled SURRENDER. And surrender is a very important word and concept in the Christian life. And what we've been doing is studying this subject in the life of the Apostle Paul and seeking to understand more about what it means to each and every one of us.

But I'm also very keenly aware of the fact that the whole concept of surrender is a very serious subject. It's a heavy subject. And if we're not careful it can become a morbid subject. You know just sort of beating yourself down and beating yourself up. And I think it's so very important that we are careful in the midst of doing a study like this that we not get out of proportion by getting caught up in introspection. Certainly we want the conviction of the Holy Spirit in our lives and we want God to move and to speak to us and to help us to understand more about this whole idea of surrender.

But my goal in speaking on this subject is not simply to wear us down, but to build us up to be the people that God would have us to be and to do the work that God has called us to do in this hour and in this generation. In fact, I believe with all of my heart that in reality surrender is the secret to the one thing that we all want in life more than anything else. It is the secret true happiness. I really do believe that!

I believe that the more surrendered you are, the happier you will be as a Christian. My pastor, Dr. Adrian Rogers for many years used to make this statement on a regular basis. He used to say "the most miserable person on the face of the earth is not a lost person who does not know God, but it is a saved person who is out of fellowship with God." And therefore to the greatest degree that we can understand what it means to be rightly related to God, first through the experience of salvation... coming to Christ, and then through a walk and an experience of surrender we begin to connect and to attach not only to God's purpose but to a fullness of life that is uncomparred to anything else that you can find in life.

And because we've been studying the life of Paul, and learning life lessons through him, I want to be sure and point out to you that a part of this

man's life surrendered to God, was that his life was full of joy and of happiness.

We studied last week in Acts chapter 13... and I want to invite you to join me there again, because in the opening verses of Acts 13 we read a simple phrase about how that Paul and Barnabus were sent out of the Lord. And I stopped there to talk about not only the way that God sends and calls people specifically to ministry, but how that we are all set apart as followers of Christ and that we are called to live a life of holiness. And the very core meaning... the root meaning of the word *holy* is the idea of being set apart. And so we talked about surrender and holiness last week.

But in this same chapter, chapter 13 as Barnabus and Saul went out preaching the Gospel, fulfilling the mission that they had been called to fulfill, they had a lot of different things happen to them along the way. In some places they were very well received and... in other places there was conflict and rejection. But I loved what the... what is said at the end of Acts chapter 13. And we begin reading in verse 48. And here's what the Scripture says:

48) And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the Word of the Lord. And as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. 49) And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. 50) But the Jews incited a... the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabus, and they drove them out of their district.

So on the one hand you had a group of people who were really connecting and excited about the message they were hearing. It was changing their lives and filling the emptiness. But there were another group so caught in their traditions that they couldn't receive the word... the message and they created a conflict. But look at what it says in verse 51:

51) But they (that is, Barnabus and Saul... Paul and Barnabus) they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and went to Iconium. 52) And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

I think it's so important for me to show you that while they're living out this life of surrender... while they're living out this mission that God has called them to, these were not morbid, miserable men who were just saying, "God has put the weight of the world on our shoulders and all we can do is bear this burden."

I see Christians like that all the time. "It's such a burden to be a Christian." "I'm just so burdened!" [laughter] Are you burrrrdened?! [laughter] You know, it's just... how much burden have you got in your life?

But I want you to notice that these very men who in the real sense were bearing a burden spiritually on the other hand, are characterized as being men who were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. If you saw them, you

wouldn't have seen men who said, "Grrr... I've got to serve God another day while the whole world just has a party!" No. These were men whose lives were full and connected and they were living life and living it in a way that everybody else said, "Whatever it is, that's what we need! That's what we don't have! That's what we gotta get!" And for that reason people were amazed and people were drawn to hear Paul and Barnabus as they went about preaching the Gospel.

It's an amazing thing to see in the life of Paul... his life and his ministry marked by a contagious joy. You're in Acts chapter 13; go over to Acts chapter 15 for just a moment. Here the Bible tells us that they've gone back out and they're continuing to journey and they're in the process of ministering, and down in verse 3 of Acts 15 it says:

3) So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles; and brought great joy to all the brothers.

When they got together, there was incredible joy! They built one another up and while these men were living out lives of surrender, they were living out lives that were overflowing with joy. And Christians throughout history have known that the great secret of the Christian life is the secret of living with joy.

It was G. K. Chesterton who said, "Joe is the gigantic secret of the Christian." And I believe that the one thing that everybody wants in life, that everybody needs in life and that every Christian truly does have in life is this reality of joy; the joy of the Lord... that as we were singing a moment ago... is our strength.

Now why is this so important? Why is it so important for me to make a big deal about joy tonight? Well, let me just give you several reasons that I believe are important for us as we consider this text tonight.

First and foremost, it's very simple... joy is the common pursuit of every human heart... joy is the common pursuit of every human heart. If we were to go out tonight and ask people all over this community what they want above and beyond everything else in life, I can almost guarantee you that the generic answer would be: I just want to be happy... I just want to be happy. That's what I want more than anything else in life. I just want to find happiness and I want to live in the realm... realm and the arena of what is called happiness.

Earlier in the summer Time Magazine did an article entitled "Happiness Is..." and it was an article that was a review of a new work that had just been done by a Dr. Daniel Gilbert who is the author of a book entitled Stumbling on Happiness. And as it turns out he is a professor of psychology at Harvard University. And so the interesting thing was... that the magazine simply said why in the world would you, this brilliant scholar in psychology want to write a book and study this issue of happiness? And he

said, "Why would anybody study anything else? Something close to 100 percent of all human behavior is directed in one way or the other toward attaining happiness. In some sense this is the goal of most all of our actions. And so to me," he said, "it seems to be the obvious thing that any psychologist should study. If it's what everybody wants and is looking for and it's the thing I'm talking to everybody about, why don't I go ahead and speak to them about it?"

But I have to share with you the latter part of the article, and this doesn't have anything to do with the message but it came down to the very last question (It's about a 3 page article) and they asked him the question... They said ah... would you describe yourself as happy? He said, "Extremely. I have everything that I could possibly want in life from a gorgeous daughter, granddaughter, wonderful wife, brilliant students, the best job anybody could hope for and about half of my hair. Not the half I would have kept, but no one consulted me." Ha, I just related to that! That's the reason I wanted to share that with you tonight! [laughter] I... I got to the end and I thought this man is truly a brilliant man. [laughter]

But anyway, I say that to say that here this man says, "You know what? The one thing that people are looking for is happiness." Everywhere we turn people are living in pursuit of happiness.

Another article as recently ah... declared that 2000 students in English state schools are having special classes on happiness under a pilot scheme aimed at trying to help these young people. It says: "Lessons in happiness are being introduced in 11 ... to 11 year olds in state schools to combat the huge rise in depression, self-harm and antisocial behavior that they're facing among young people in Great Britain. Special behavioral techniques imported from the U.S. will be used from September of this year until the next, to help children to be more resilient in living with the pressures of the twenty-first century. It says: "This move comes as experts warn that record numbers of young people are on the verge of mental breakdown as the result of family breakups, exam pressures and growing inability to cope with the pressures and the pace of modern life." Well, you know it's happening everywhere. Everywhere we turn we find people who are struggling to find joy, to find happiness in life.

Now I know what you're thinking. You're using the word *happiness* and you're using the word *joy*. Are you telling me that they are one and the same? Well, the answer to that is yes and no. The answer is yes when it comes to expression. When it comes to expression it would be hard to tell the difference between happiness and joy. They're expressed very much in the same way. But when it comes to the issue of origination there is a world of difference between happiness and joy.

So that brings me to the second observation that I'd like to make tonight and that is that joy is a constant in the midst of conflict and change. What is it that distinguishes happiness and joy? It is simply this: joy... true joy is a constant in the midst of conflict and change. Everything

we've read thus far in the Scripture tonight gives us a context in which Paul and Barnabus were living in conflict and change. But even in the midst of very adverse circumstances in life, they have this constant flowing through them... living through them and it was this issue of joy that was being seen in their lives.

Joy is not dependent on the happenings that are going on around you. They're not things that are happening on the outside. Joy has everything to do with what's going on on the inside.

If you'll turn over one more chapter to Acts chapter 16, you will get the total historical ah... background to one of the most loved and one of the most positive of all of the letters that Paul wrote in the Bible. It's the background here in Acts chapter 16... a one chapter background of events that unfolded in his life in a place called Philippi. Yes, it was for this church at Philippi that Paul wrote the little letter called Philippians... 4 chapters, but oh, how positive, oh, how powerful, how motivational, how inspirational are the words that Paul wrote to the church at Philippi!

But here we read the background of that event and of the establishment of that church. And the Bible simply tells us that Paul and then his traveling companion Silas, went into the place of Philippi and there were three significant conversions there. One was a businesswoman... a seller of purple who they met down by the river. Another was a slave girl who actually had been a fortuneteller and brought in a fortune for those who controlled her. And then ultimately there was a man who was a jailor... a Philippian jailor who was saved; he had his family. Three very powerful conversions.

But because of what happened with the first two, and in particular that slave girl, who by her conversion, confessing Jesus Christ, suddenly was of no use to the businessmen in that city; there was a great conflict; there was a great uproar. And the Bible tells us what happened to Paul and to Silas in Acts chapter 16, beginning in verse 22. Let's begin reading there:

22) The crowd joined in attacking them; and the magistrates tore the garments of them and gave them orders to beat them with rods.

So you had a bad day. I don't know what your day was, let me tell ya, Paul and Silas had a bad day. But we continue here.

23) And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailor to keep them safely. 24) Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

I think that's an interesting little detail that's added there. Not only were they stripped, shamed, beaten, put in jail, but the Bible even adds they were even taken to the place where their feet were locked in stocks. You know yourself if you've ever had any kind of pain in your body, one of the hardest things to do is to get comfortable. If you're injured... if you're afflicted in some way, trying to get comfortable is hard enough just

because of injury. But add to that injury the fact they were locked down; they couldn't move their feet.

And yet the Bible tells in verse 25:

25) About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

Is that some sourpuss person who's saying, "Oh, I'm surrendered. Here I am." Is that someone who's living a morbid life? I'm telling you that's a miracle! It's a miracle to think that any human being could have been in that circumstance, and yet that night with their feet locked down, and with open, bleeding wounds and bruises on their bodies, that they would be sitting there singing hymns to God! Oh, and by the way, the other prisoners were listening. I bet they were! I bet they had everybody's attention who was anywhere near that jail because that was the most unnatural of all responses. Why were Paul and Silas singing? Because joy is a constant in the midst of conflict and change.

I love the words of Warren Weirsbe "We often use the words joy and happiness interchangeably, but a disconnection... excuse me, a distinction should be made. Happiness often depends on happenings; if circumstances are encouraging and people are kind or happy. But joy is independent of both circumstances and people. The most joyful epistle Paul wrote was Philippians and he wrote it from jail as he faced the possibility of being martyred for his faith."

That's exactly what we're reading about. It's Paul and Silas filled with joy. And the distinction of what was happening in their lives, not on the outside, but on the inside was what got the attention of everyone else there.

So that brings me to the third thing tonight and that is to simply say that joy is the condition of a heart where the Holy Spirit dwells... Joy is the condition of a heart where the Holy Spirit dwells.

Now if we were to go back in Acts chapter 16 in the early verses, we would read time and time again that Paul and Silas were being led by the Spirit. And some places the Spirit told them not to go, and specifically the Spirit told them to answer the call of the Macedonians to come over in the northern part of... or... or... to the... to the... or to the edge of Europe at that time where the Gospel would spread into all of Europe. But that they were to come into that region and ultimately to be used of God to spread the Gospel in a way that ultimately influences us.

But as we see that tonight, we realize that the thing that was significant was that these men were Spirit filled men. And I need to say this very clearly and very forthrightly tonight. Joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Joy isn't something you work up. Joy isn't pure human emotion. It is expressed in human emotion but joy in its essence is the fruit of the Holy

Spirit. Again, the Bible told us in that first verse that we read... Acts chapter 13:52:

52) The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

They were kind of synonymous there... if you had the Holy Spirit, then you could have joy. And so it's important for us to realize tonight that joy is intended to be a part of the normal Christian life. And if you are living your life and you're living under the circumstances, then I have a question for you tonight. What on earth are you doing there? God does not want you to live your life under the circumstances. God does not want us to live our lives losing our joy. God wants us to learn to experience His joy even when life is a tough experience.

The Bible tells us in Ephesians 5, verse 18:

18) And do not be drunk with wine, which is for debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another (how?) in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, 20) singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart.

That is, for a believer who is living with the control of the Holy Spirit on the inside, there is the potential to always have a song, even in the night. Now certainly, again, I'm not talking about some sort of just sensationalized... some sort of just superficial... put-a-smile-on, be-a-happy-Christian, walk-through-life, act-like-you-never-shed-a-tear. No, the Bible never teaches that. The Bible does teach us that we grieve. God gave us our tears and God gave us our laughter, and both of them are gifts to be used in the experiences of life. But even in the midst of all things that come, there is a promise of a constant, steady, abiding joy that can be the hallmark of life for you and for me.

The question is what is going on in your heart? It's been said many times: What's in the well comes up in the bucket. And I think that if that's true, in many of our lives when somebody starts bringing something up out of the well, they don't always get joy out of the bucket, do they? Because sometimes there are things in our hearts that are causing us to lose our joy.

Yet the bible teaches that it is the Spirit's work... it is a supernatural work, it is a spiritual work of the Holy Spirit in my life and in your life, if we will simply surrender to the Spirit, we can experience the filling of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit in life.

So that brings me to our next point tonight and that is that joy is based... Please hear this, church. Let me just review for us. Let me be sure we're all together. Joy is the common pursuit of every human heart, number one. Number two, we said joy is a constant in the midst of conflict and change. Number three, joy is the condition of the heart where the Holy Spirit dwells. Number four... please get this tonight... Joy is based on confidence

that God is in control of my life and my circumstances. Joy is based on the confidence that God is in control of my life and my circumstances!

How on earth did Paul get into prison? Doing the will of God. That's how he got where he was. Body broken, incarcerated, dealing with difficulty, he got there living in the will of God! And that means that if you are in the will of God it doesn't necessarily mean that you're going to live on Easy Street.

We live in a fallen world, we live in a broken world. Everyone in this world experiences the pain, the bitterness, the frustration, the injuries of life. The Bible says [Matthew 5:45]:

... it rains on the just and on the unjust...

But Paul was there because he had done the will of God. And Paul learned that God is responsible for His situation; Paul was responsible for his disposition. God... responsible for the situations in my life. I'm not in control of anything! And about the time I think I've found control, I lose it immediately. You know... it's just... life is a series of out of control experiences. And I'm not in control but I am responsible for my disposition... how I respond to things in life. And the first thing that I've got to do is to come to the place where I am unwilling to make every difficult situation in life a gripe session and I turn it into a service of worship.

Weirsbe again said: "The world's joy is temporary and artificial. And when the joy is gone people are left with even greater weakness and emptiness. But the joy that comes from the Lord is real and lasting, and enriches our lives. God doesn't give us joy instead of sorrow or joy in spite of sorrow; but joy in the midst of sorrow. It is not a substitution; it is a transformation."

And being a Christian doesn't mean that you can substitute an easy life for a hard life, a happy life for a burdened life. What it does mean is that all the burdens of life and all the hardships of life can be transformed by God's joy given by the Holy Spirit.

That's why Jesus said in John 15 and verse 11:

"These things I've spoken to you that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."

Now the very group of people that inflicted all of this on Paul and Silas, and the church that was founded there, are the same people that Paul wrote these words back to. The words that I'm referring to are the words that you read in the letter that was addressed to the church at Philippi. And they're the very words that are on the front of your worship guide tonight. I don't know if you took a moment to look at that, but you have a large passage of Scripture there and it comes from Philippians chapter 4. Let me read it:

4) *Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!* 5) *Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.* 6) *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.* 7) *and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.* 8) *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence... if there's anything worthy of praise, think on these things.* 9) *And what you've learned and received and heard and seen in Me, practice these things and the God of peace will be with you.*

Boy, that is not the testimony of a defeated man. That's not the confession of a guy living under the circumstances. That is the incredible expression of a man who is filled with the Holy Spirit and who is living out contagious joy in life. And when I put my confidence in the Lord, it transforms everything in my life.

Now I don't have time to preach Philippians 4. I wish I did; I'd love to just take time and do that. But it would take a long time to do it. If I were to preach it in its entirety. But I do want to give you a simple list of some things that are transformed in life when we put our confidence in the Lord. So, you ready? Let's just walk through them.

When I put my confidence in the Lord, my joy is not dependent on my circumstances. Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord always!" Don't rejoice in life, don't rejoice in your circumstances, rejoice in the Lord! Let the Lord be the source of your joy. "The joy of the Lord will then be your strength."

That's why James said in James 1:2:

Count it all joy when you meet various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

Next, when I put my confidence in the Lord, my attitude is attached to God's promises. Listen to what Paul said: He said, "Rejoice in the Lord always." Then he said, "Let your reasonableness be known to everyone." That you have a reasonable attitude, a reasonable disposition; a forbearing spirit. It's one of the most unusually translated words in the New Testament. It's hard to find any translation that translates this word exactly the same. But it means the opposite of being self-seeking and self-asserting. It means gentleness, reasonableness. And what I'm saying to you is that when my confidence in the Lord... my attitude is attached to God's promise, the Lord is at hand, the Lord is coming, the Lord is in control... I don't have to fight this army, I don't have to stress over this.

Number three, when my confidence is in the Lord, my fears become the fuel of my prayers... my fears become the fuel of my prayers.

6) *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."*

That's why the songwriter said, "Oh what peace we often forfeit; oh what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer." And when I have my confidence in the Lord, my fears become the fuel of my prayers.

Then my thoughts are focused on my responsibilities. When my confidence is in the Lord my thoughts are focused on my responsibilities!

8) *Finally, brothers, whatever's true, whatever is pure, whatever is excellent, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, whatever is just... think on these things.*

You see it's the opposite of thinking about my rights and everyone else's wrongs! It's the ability even in the hard things in life to stay focused on the Lord and on my responsibilities. Living out my life. Letting God handle the outcome of things in life. And I am learning in my life that I am as responsible for my attention in life as I am for my actions in life.

We all talk about it in our society. You're responsible for your actions when you drive an automobile, you're responsible for your actions. Whatever you do, you're responsible for your actions. We live in a litigious society and even in a store today, if somebody spills something on the floor and somebody falls on it before somebody in the store mops it up, the store's going to be held responsible for their actions or lack of actions. Or the actions of somebody that they didn't even know spilled something.

But I say all that to say that while we believe that we're responsible for our actions and we want people to be held accountable for that, I believe the Bible teaches here that we are responsible for our attention! What is your attention on? And for many of us the reason that we don't have joy, is that our attention is on something other than our responsibilities.

And then I would simply say that when I have my confidence in the Lord, my peace is found in God's presence and His purpose. I love what it says in verse 7:

7) *The peace of God, which surpasses understanding will guard your hearts and minds.*

And then it says down in verse 9:

9) *And what you've learned and heard and received and seen in me, practice these, and the God of peace will be with you.*

You see, here's what it all comes down to: Is that peace if found in the presence and the purpose of God in the problems and struggles of life.

On April the ninth of 1865, 4 years after the bitter conflict that erupted, 630,000 lives had been lost, it was in the home of Wilmer and Virginia McClain in a little village called the Appomattox Courthouse village that Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant finally signed the truce and the peace of the Civil War. But before that meeting occurred in that house in that small community a series of correspondence had gone back and forth between Lee and Grant. And the only way that the meeting ever finally occurred was that Lee had to surrender unconditionally to the demands that Grant made, that the war might come to an end.

And you see that's what has to happen with me. If I'm going to have peace with God, I've got to be willing to establish an unconditional surrender with God. So joy is the confidence that God is working in my life circumstances.

That brings me to my fifth and final point tonight and that is that joy is a choice in life that begins with surrender... joy is a choice in life that begins with surrender. It's a very interesting thing to me that most people think that finding joy... finding happiness... finding peace is the result of acquiring something in life that they don't have. But as I reflect on this very simple Bible study that we've done tonight, I really would say that true joy is the result of surrendering something that we do have... ourselves to God. It's a choice and it's because of the fact that joy... true joy is found in Him that everything in life has to keep pressing us back to God, back to God, back to God.

Weirsbe said it this way, if I may quote him one more time: "No matter how you look at it, nothing can steal a man's joy if he possesses a single mind." [Philippians 1:21]

21) For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

You know why Paul had joy in a prison? You know why joy... Paul had joy when he was rejected and abused and spoken ill of? You know why Paul had joy when life wasn't great? It's because he lived with a single focus. "*To me to live is Christ and to die is gain.*"

And if the purpose of your life is to live for the glory of Jesus Christ and to live your life committed to Him, then the secret to maximizing your joy is to live in surrender. So you see it's not an all together morbid subject. It's not all about just beating yourself down. God wants to build you up; God wants you to have joy. But you're not ever going to have that joy until you make the choice to surrender in life.

I want us to take a few moments to pray tonight and I want us to personalize this message on joy and prayer. What I mean by that is I just want us to take time to make the choice tonight to surrender things to the Lord. I want us to make several choices. One, I want some of you to make a personal choice... a personal choice tonight to choose to give your life to Jesus Christ. Some of you need to do that. Some of you are around church,

you're around Christians, but it's not yours... it's not your commitment, your relationship with Christ; and tonight you may need to know Him. And right there in your hand in front of you you've got a simple little card that says: Tonight I want to pray to receive Christ. I'm going to lead us in prayer in just a moment, and if you want to pray and receive Christ, you can pray that prayer with me and tonight you can make that choice.

Others of you need to choose tonight to take a circumstance... a situation... an issue in life and to just bring it to this altar and say, "Lord, I want to make the choice to surrender tonight. I want to be filled with joy. Lord, I'm struggling and I'm stressing but I want Your joy, I want Your peace. Your word says it's mine in You, and I want to come and lay claim of something You promised me. And something that I see in the life of Paul because he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

There are others of you tonight who are here and I want you to make a choice to pray for the need for joy in the life of someone else. There in that worship packet you've got that card and that card expresses the burden... the need... the conflict that another person has and they need peace and they need joy even in the midst of pain. And maybe tonight as an intercessor you would take that card and would walk that card from your pew to this altar and would kneel and pray for that person tonight... that God would give them joy, that God would give them peace, that God would give them surrender.

So I'm going to ask that everyone tonight share in this time of prayer. You can pray in the pew or you can pray here at the front on your knees. But I just think it might be good to come to the altar tonight and to take time to pray for ourselves and to pray for others. And you just come right now. God ahead. Just make your way here if you want to come. [music begins] And let's just begin to kneel before the Lord and call out to the Lord and seek the Lord. Come for yourself; come for someone. It may mean that when we get through tonight all of us are down here. That's great! It may mean that just half of us are here... a few of us are here. It doesn't matter. This isn't about show and tell! This is about coming to the Lord tonight. Just asking Him to give us His joy.

Father, tonight as these are coming and praying, I pray for that one who may be here... a man, a woman, a boy, a girl... who has never made the choice to give their life to Christ. I pray that right now deep within their heart they would say, 'Dear God, I need You in my life. Lord, I've made choices that were bad choices. The choice to live my life without You, the choice to go my own way. And God, I know that that choice is what the Bible calls sin. Falling short of Your plan. Living for my own will. God, tonight I turn from my sin and I turn to Jesus. Jesus, You've said that we can come and call on Your name, that we would be saved. I pray right now that there would be someone here tonight who would say, 'Jesus, save me.' And Lord, even as these are praying with me, would you just hear their cries. 'Jesus, save me. Forgive me. Jesus, fill me with joy and peace with God and life. Let me live to share the secret of life.

If you prayed that prayer with me tonight, I want you just to indicate that on that card. I want you to leave that card tonight as you leave and just let us know that God worked in your life. There are other spiritual decisions you can make [inaudible] We're going to take just a few moments now as we [inaudible]