

## Celebrate And Be Jazzed!

Recently I came across a great quote that has made quite an impression on me.

**“Each day comes bearing its own gifts. Untie the ribbons.”**  
***Ruth Ann Schabacker***

This statement implies that every day is a gift and that we should celebrate that very fact! Indeed, one sure sign of positive spiritual growth includes having an abiding belief that life is a gift.

Imagine with me for a moment that you gave a friend a great jazz recording as a gift. And you couldn't wait to receive a reaction from them. You would want to hear a thank you, but even more than that you would derive much pleasure from hearing them describe their response, their enjoyment listening to the recording, and their appreciation for the gift. After all, their delight was the very reason you gave them the gift in the first place!

Well, here is something to be truly “jazzed” about! The Creator has given us the precious gift of life and is delighted when he sees us enjoying and celebrating life! Author Matthew Fox shares that, **“the gift of life demands a thank you. Our thank you for creation, our fundamental prayer, therefore, is our enjoyment and delight in it”!** God wants us to celebrate life and be jazzed!

Tony Campolo, in his book, “The Kingdom Of God Is A Party” states, **“Our God is a party deity! He loves a party.”** And Mr. Campolo goes on in his book to make an important statement God wants his creatures to be celebrating and enjoying life!

Jesus, contrary to what you may have been taught, spent much of His time celebrating! So much so, that he was accused of being a “party animal”! Moreover, His parables are filled with parties—a lost coin is found, a lost sheep is located, a lost son returns—they all end with a celebration! Jesus even pictures the Kingdom of God as a huge dinner party where everyone is invited!!! Finding the pearl of great price definitely deserves an appropriate response. The joy of discovery produces festivities that are spontaneous!

Celebration can be defined as a departure from routine existence or any special event designated as significant and worthy of celebration. And I can't think of anything more worthy of celebration than the miracle of existence. The fact that we are here in the first place is enough to let the dancing and celebration begin!

For most of us the challenge is to keep our hearts and minds focused on why we should be celebrating. Author John Burrough, in his book, “Reclaiming a Sense of Wonder” exclaims,

**“The most precious things of life are near at hand, without money and without price. Each of you has the whole wealth of the universe at your very door!”**

We need the kind of wonder author Ann Dillard describes, **“The extravagant gesture is the very stuff of creation. After the one extravagant gesture of creation in the first place, the universe has continued to deal exclusively in extravagances, flinging intricacies and colossi down aeons of emptiness...the whole show has been on fire from the word go!”**

A lifestyle of celebration is cultivated by simply responding to the gift of life with joy and thankfulness. We need to rejoice and dance in response to the rhythm of life! Then how come we're not celebrating? How come we're not dancing to the rhythm of life"? Here is an illustration that might help answer this question.

Have you ever noticed that until you get ill you tend to take your health for granted? Until you break a leg you take a simple thing like walking for granted. All of a sudden you begin to have a new appreciation for it! Why is this? It is in part because we have lost our sense of wonder! Novelist and preacher Frederick Buechner penned these incredible words, **“Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless mystery that it is. In the boredom and pain of it no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.”** So our outlook on life is critical. Losing our sense of wonder and taking things for granted always produces negative results in our lives. Ask yourself this question every day, what can I love about life today? Start counting your blessings.

Martha Beck pointedly writes, **“I think that the vast majority of us “normal” people spend our lives trashing our treasures and treasuring our trash”**. In other words we fail to cherish the true gifts we've been given. How is it that the gifts of seeing, hearing, walking, and learning take a back seat to achieving financial success, fame, prestige, and popularity??? So we spend most of our time wondering whether we measure up to success and the impossible standards society have forced upon us.

I am reminded of the story of the Rabbi who had a member in his synagogue who always seemed to be in a hurry, his motor, (so to speak) always running at full throttle. The Rabbi asked him, "Whenever I see you, you're always in a hurry. Tell me, where are you running to all the time? The man answered, "I'm running after success, I'm running after fulfillment, I'm running after the reward for all my hard work." The Rabbi responded, "That's a good answer if you assume that all those blessings are ahead of you, trying to elude you and if you run fast enough, you may catch up with them. But isn't it possible that those blessings are behind you, that they are looking for you, and the more you run, the harder you make it for them to find you?" Often when we reach the success we have worked so hard

to achieve we find ourselves asking, what now? Sometimes our hearts seem to cry out with deep yearning, Why? Why this empty feeling? Why ?

Let's be candidly honest...many of us live lives of anxious striving, caught up in a "performance" trap, where everything depends on how well we perform. Our sense of well-being is contingent on how well we do or do not measure up. We are just too concerned about our own personal progress and personal identity. Sadly, there is no time for celebration if we are overly preoccupied with achievement, appearance, and affluence. We can be so busy chasing success that genuine success cannot catch up with us! Our culture has forced us values that have baptized us into the waters of selfishness. That will only leave us empty and thirsty.

Albert Einstein once said that, "There are two ways to look at life. One is as though nothing is a miracle; the other is as though everything is". So our attitude, our outlook towards life is critical. And when you realize that life itself is holy everything looks entirely different! **Consider this...true success is measured by the amount of celebration you have cultivated in your life!** How much time do you spend savoring the priceless gifts you have been given? How much time is spent rejoicing with the people you love? How much time is spent dancing to the music and rhythm of life? Are you jazzed about life? Remember the source of "being jazzed" comes from a spiritual source. Every day, every breath, and every moment is a miracle!

So begin every day with this question--what am I going celebrate today? Out of all the great gifts God has given which one am I going to choose to celebrate today? Which ones will I cherish today? Then pick one out and start celebrating. Make a decision to rejoice and be glad for the day the Lord has made! Here is a great prayer...

***"Normal Day, let me be aware of the treasure you are. Let me learn from you, love you, savor you, bless you, before you depart. Let me not pass you by in quest of some rare and perfect tomorrow. Let me hold you while I may, for it will not always be so.- Mary Jean Irion***

Arthur Foote continues with another fitting and very beautiful prayer!

***"Let me be.... observant of the perpetual miracle of life and love on this fragment of a star flung across the infinity of space; appreciative of earth's symphony of color, harmony of shape, and ubiquity of beauty...to every intimation of divinity in the lives around me...***

***Let me be...tuned in to all the varied music of the world: to man-made melodies, and to the songs of wind and water,***

***insect and bird...the "still, sad music of humanity": the falling of human tears, the anguish wrenched from human hearts...***

***Let me be...receptive to unfamiliar thoughts, to strange viewpoints, and brand-new ideas, making doubly certain to give fair hearing to all that challenges my complacency, my prejudgments, my unexamined assumptions."***

So let the celebration begin and start with a big thank you to God for the banquet He has spread for us. Then start the music, get your feet moving, and be jazzed as you dance to the music and rhythm of life! It's time to celebrate!

**I want to end this article with some words from a swingin' jazz song I have written;**

**It's always a good day...as long as your breathin'  
It's always a good day...as long as your swingin'  
So why not be jazzed, why not be jazzed about life?  
It's always a good day...as long as your vertical  
It's always a good day...as long as your not to critical  
So why not be jazzed, and show some pizzazz about life?  
Why not be jazzed about life? © 2005 Songs Of David**

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