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# JOY IS WITHIN YOUR REACH

*When we have the Spirit, we rejoice in what the Savior has done for us.*

The chorus of one of my favorite hymns entreats, “Lift up your heart! Lift up your voice! Rejoice, again I say, rejoice!” (“Rejoice, the Lord Is King!” *Hymns*, no. 66). The text of the hymn is taken from Paul’s writings to the Philippians: “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4). The dictionary defines *rejoice* as “to feel joy or great delight.”<sup>1</sup>

The source of the kind of joy which causes us to rejoice is an understanding of the plan of salvation.

Joy comes when we have the Spirit in our lives (see Alma 22:15). When we have the Spirit, we rejoice in what the Savior has done for us.

## How to Have Joy

What do we need to do to have this kind of joy? In addition to attaining saving ordinances and following the living prophet, we need to live in accordance with certain fundamental spiritual principles, such as prayer, scripture study, righteous living, and service to others. It is well understood that if we engage in sinful conduct, we must repent. Let me suggest three other areas or distractions we need to avoid in order to maintain joy and rejoice more fully in the Savior’s gift: (1) avoid distractions which keep us from doing what we ought to do, (2) avoid the magnification of small imperfections, and (3) avoid unfavorable comparisons with others.



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*"What are some of the Saturday Morning Cartoons that distract us from attaining the joy that we desire?"*  
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### **Avoiding Distractions**

We are often unaware of the distractions which push us in a material direction and keep us from a Christ-centered focus. In essence we let celestial goals get side-tracked by telestial distractions. In our family we call these telestial distractions "Saturday Morning Cartoons." Let me explain.

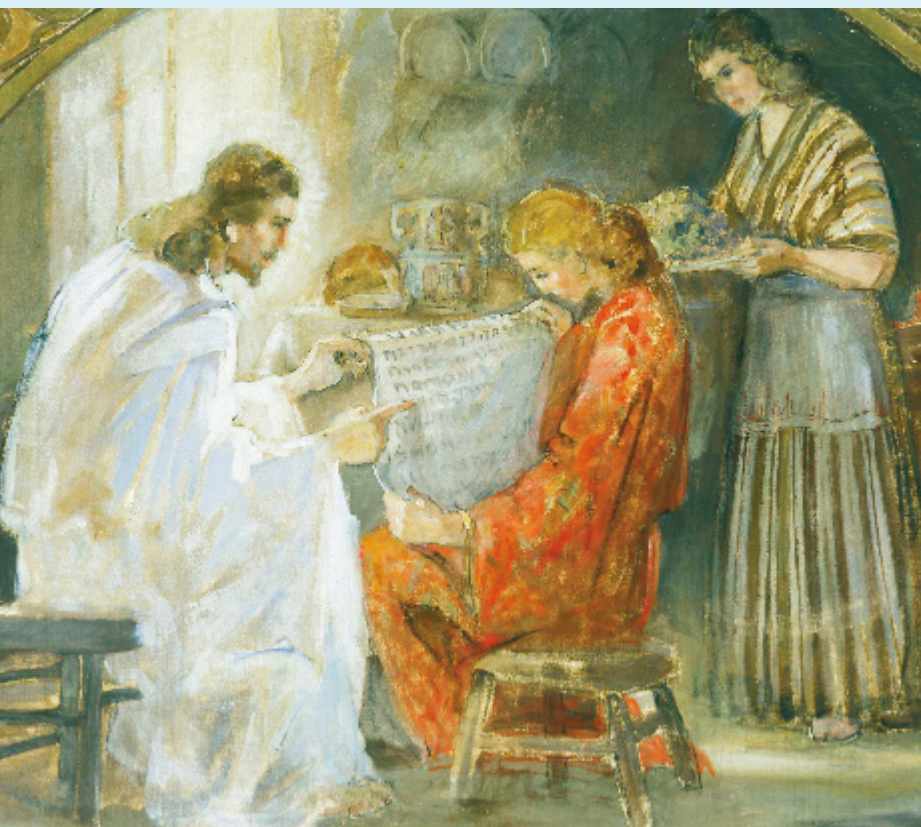
When our son, Larry, was five years old, I asked him what he wanted to be when he grew up. He said he wanted to be a doctor like his Uncle Joe. Larry had experienced a serious operation and had acquired great respect for doctors, especially his Uncle Joe. I proceeded to tell Larry how all the worthwhile things he was doing would help prepare him to be a doctor.

Several months later, I asked him again what he would like to be. This time he said he wanted to be an airline pilot. Changing the goal was fine, so I proceeded to explain how his various activities would help him achieve this goal. Almost as an afterthought I said, "Larry, last time we talked you wanted to be a doctor. What has changed your mind?" He answered, "I still like the idea of being a doctor, but I have noticed that Uncle Joe works on Saturday mornings, and I wouldn't want to miss Saturday Morning Cartoons."

Since that time our family has labeled a distraction from a worthwhile goal as a Saturday Morning Cartoon.

What are some of the Saturday Morning Cartoons that distract us from attaining the joy that we desire? Some want to be married in the temple but only date those who do not qualify for a recommend. Others want to be a good home teacher or visiting teacher but are distracted by the constant parade of TV programs, catalogs, and other material maintenance and don't find time to minister to those they are assigned to teach. Still others want to have family prayer but allow little matters to build into discord that make it harder for the family to kneel together. If we examine the reasons we don't do what we ought to do, we find that the list of Saturday Morning Cartoons is almost endless.

The greatest gift to all mankind is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. If we are to rejoice in this gift, we need to avoid the Saturday Morning Cartoons of life which distract our focus from the Savior and the celestial goal for which we strive.



### Don't Focus on Your Imperfections

A second group who do not find joy are distracted by magnifying small areas of imperfection so as to drive out happiness. Some have allowed their own perceptions of imperfection to cloud the reality of their lives. An objective outsider observing them would conclude that they should be joyful. But they do not feel to rejoice. They are like the couple who have been invited to visit a beautiful garden. Instead of celebrating the visual feast, they see only the few wilted flowers and weeds and the relatively small areas which are not beautiful to behold. They do not feel the garden meets their expectations. In like manner, they are unduly critical of themselves and of others. They have become accustomed to exaggerating small imperfections and underestimating great blessings and have lost the capacity to rejoice.

The Savior in Luke mildly cautioned Martha about this approach when she complained that her sister Mary was spending too much time listening to the Savior instead of serving temporal needs. He said, "Martha, Martha, thou art . . . troubled about many things" (Luke 10:41). The Savior then indicated that Mary was focused on what really mattered.

### Don't Compare Yourself

A third area of distraction that can destroy joy is comparing our talents and blessings with others. The growth in our own talents is the best measure of personal progress. In recent years the concept of "personal best" has become widely accepted. This has great merit. Remember we usually judge others



at their best and ourselves at our worst. In the parable of the talents, the servants who received five talents and two talents were praised by the Lord for increasing their talents and told to "enter thou into the joy of thy lord." The servant who was rebuked was the servant who buried the talent given him. (See Matthew 25:14–30.) Comparing blessings is almost certain to drive out joy. We cannot be grateful and envious at the same time. If we truly want to have the Spirit of the Lord and experience joy and happiness, we should rejoice in our blessings and be grateful. We should especially rejoice in the blessings that are available through the temple.

Let us avoid the Saturday Morning Cartoons of life, particularly those that would keep us from the temple. Let us rejoice in the promise that is ours through the Atonement of the Savior and through Christlike living adhere to the counsel of the Psalmist: "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). **NE**  
*From an October 1996 general conference address.*

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**NOTE**  
1. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (2003), "rejoice."