

Rejoice in the Lord Always

The world seems to be falling apart - very violent Spring Break in Miami, double digit increases in violent crime in many American cities, thousands of deaths per month from illegal drugs, and now a major war in southeast Europe.

But dedicated Christians must pursue a clear spiritual reality: we are not happy or sad because of what happens to us, but because of *how we respond* to what happens to us! Occasionally we run across someone who has the great gift of spreading joy, whatever the circumstance.

In 1998, Robin Williams played a real life doctor named Hunter "Patch" Adams. The doctor actually approached his patients with genuine medical treatment but it was administered often with humor and yet deep care. His patients and some of his fellow doctors saw in Adams a heart that cared about the patients' spirit as much as their bodies.

Sandy and I experienced one such personality in a registered nurse after Sandy had hernia surgery in the 1970s. She was a hard-working professional who also had a knack for seeing just the right time for applying her joy-filled spirit. On one occasion an elderly patient in the next room caused a small, multi-room flood when he stopped up the drain trying to dispose of his dinner.

The "joy-nurse" showed up with a mop and a huge bucket. She burst into the room shouting like a mad woman, "Man the life boats! We're sinking, we're sinking!" She continued with the craziness while everyone present was laughing uncontrollably - even Sandy, as she clutched a pillow to her tummy in futile efforts to ease the pain of laughing after surgery! We laugh to this day about her zany antics. Seriously good RN? Absolutely! Serious boost to her patients' morale? Totally.

Somewhere along the way, some Christians got the mistaken idea that serious religion calls for an almost sullen attitude. God tells us a different reality. As we read deeply and widely in God's word, we see not only the serious nature of spiritual living and the realities of heaven and hell, but also a call to joy that rings like the village bell, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice," Philippians 4:4. When? "Always." Are you sure? "... Again I say rejoice!"

In your daily walk, smile. In your daily walk, rejoice. In your daily walk, don't seek to be comedian, but seek to share and elicit from others, the great, true, deep joy that God has put in your heart that the world tries to squelch. In fact, "Rejoice in the Lord always!"

Ray Wallace