



ATWATER BAPTIST CHURCH

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV)

Three Things to Take With Us in our Daily Walk

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Rejoice always.

God does not intend for us to be “dill pickle Christians!” No, through the presence of his Spirit, God gifts us with his grace to see the Good and be happy when so many people might be down—sweet, not dill! The primary energy for this joy (which is what drives rejoicing) is God’s love for us in Christ Jesus

As Romans 8:32 tells us: *“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” (NASB)*

Christian joy does not come from our circumstances, but from the blessings we have because we are “in Christ.” There is nothing greater than Jesus in the entire universe! If we belong to Him, we share in His love, His peace, His forgiveness of our sin, His joy, His life both now and forever! These are just some of the “all things” God will give to us. So, we rejoice. Always!

Did you happen to notice the verb tense in “rejoice always?” It’s a command. Why? Because left to our own devices, we grow restless, irritable, discontent with ourselves, those around us and life in general. Without a “Holy Nudge,” our focus and our spiritual energy fade away and we find ourselves “quenching the Spirit” (6:19), grumbling our lives away in negativity. So instead we’re told rejoice!

Pray continually

The next thing to take on our daily walk is constant prayer. If “rejoicing always” is difficult, either the “rejoicing” part or the “always” part, continual prayer can be a challenge as well. The Greek word for “continually” doesn’t mean ALL the time non-stop, it’s more like a constant cough. It hangs in there. That’s what Paul is getting at with prayer, that we hang in there and pray at every opportunity.

Sometimes we forget; outside distractions keep us from prayer. Just about the time we realize “I haven’t prayed about this,” or “I need to pray about this,” the

“continually” kicks in and we address our needs and concerns to God. Maybe you’ve experienced those times when the situation seemed hopeless, then you prayed and amazingly the problem (maybe our own attitude) was resolved.

Prayer works. Why wait until “when all else fails?” And prayer is often followed up by a prod to action. When I was praying about my medical condition the answer I received was “trust God and see your doctor.” We are walking in prayer even as I write, and we’re praying for you too! Where are you needing to pray as you read this? “Pray continually!”

In everything give thanks.

Driven by the Spirit, gratitude wells up like an overflowing fountain. Beginning with rejoicing even in the midst of our suffering, interwoven with prayer at every turn, giving thanks is our reflection back to God of His infinite care, His sacrificial love, and His providential grace and mercy as we walk through our Christian lives.

As I look back at our time together at Atwater Baptist and say “farewell,” I can’t begin to count all the times I gave thanks to God. Here are just a few:

I’m thankful for the variety of worship experiences where a hymn or a chorus struck a resonant chord of joy, for a praise or prayer need that touched our hearts and the heart of God, for a scripture and message that surprised even me as God spoke. And I can’t forget the memorial services where we celebrated the homecoming of beloved saints in the Lord.

I’m thankful for our small group Bible studies where we looked more deeply into God’s Word, asking questions we may have always wondered about, following the simple inductive method to discover the meaning of a particular passage, where we learned from the video series “Living by the Book,” on how to study the Bible, and from the GriefShare series dealing with the loss of a loved one.

I’m thankful for home visits and phone calls where we built and deepened relationships, shared scripture and prayed. For outreach, including our joy-filled “treat packing parties” for needy UC Merced students. For faithful stewardship in the giving and managing of God’s money and property. For mission events and visiting missionaries. For fellowship as we shared meals together, and for you!

As we walk with the Lord, and I bid “farewell,” remember these three things: “Rejoice always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. *Pastor John*