

Seeking true
*Joy and
Happiness*



CHARIS

Newsletter | December 2022

Hello Charis family! Joy and I would like to wish you all happy holidays and a blessed Christmas as we embark upon what is surely, for many of us, our favorite time of the year. Thank you all for your prayers and your concern for Haiti that so many of you have expressed to us. Haiti continues to be in a very desperate and unfortunate condition that has only worsened since the writing of our last newsletter.

The gangs continue to plague the country as they grow in size and power. This is especially evident in the capital city, Port au Prince. The United Nations was reported to be entering Haiti to aid in peace-keeping efforts and since this was made public, the gangs became privy to this information. In response to this news many groups of gang members began to retreat into smaller rural areas that surround Port au Prince. They then entered various villages and terrorized them. In response to these violent invasions, the residents of these small villages quickly grabbed as many of their scant belongings as they could and fled.

In fear, these people brought their families to caves and clefts in the side of mountains and literally lived there. Of course, food and water are scarce and many of these unfortunate individuals and families continue to struggle to find basic life necessities for themselves and their loved ones. People who chose to remain in the villages endured rape in broad daylight, severe beatings, forced homelessness, and even death by murder. Banks, schools, and hospitals continue to be closed, and gasoline/diesel remain in very short supply. The gangs are still blocking streets and stopping all approaching cars and motorcycles to siphon gasoline from them. The drivers are then left on the side of the road with vehicles void of fuel and unable to travel any further. The gangs then take the stolen fuel and sell it at 15 to 20 times the actual cost. To say that things are difficult for the Haitians would be an understatement, and I'm sure that many of us can't even begin to imagine what day to day reality must be for our Haitian brothers and sisters in such a lawless and dangerous environment.

The South compared to Port au Prince

In our area of ministry, in the South of the country, the overt danger associated with the presence of gangs isn't being felt to the degree that Port au Prince is experiencing. However, roadblocks and thievery are occurring from the gang presence. While the immediate physical danger involving murder and rape isn't appreciably present in our villages at the time of this writing, the relentless suffering caused by the economic fallout is being meted out upon all of Haiti equally.

Food imports are being stolen by gangs who run the ports, gas is not entering the country as fuel contracts have been dishonored due to a defunct government, doctors won't work in fear of being murdered or kidnapped by gangs and banks are closed in fear of being robbed. In response to these unfortunate circumstances, we have had to adapt in any way we can. We are wiring money through small local money wiring services in our villages that have \$200 USD limits. We are instructing our doctors and nurses to still treat people but only if the situation is desperate enough to warrant the risk of being robbed or beaten.

Our evangelism teams are still functioning regularly as they travel into the rural villages in the mountains surrounding our communities. These small mountain villages in the south are fortunately off the radar of the gangs since there is no money there for them to steal. Our rural villages are also far enough from the capital to prevent their use as hiding places by the gangs.

What we are seeing is the fear and hopelessness that has spread throughout the country. This has created an increased receptivity to the gospel. People, irrespective of their age, are now worried about their lives as death is a very real possibility in the midst of the violence and anarchy that defines their current daily reality. This creates an eternal concern, and our evangelists are there to offer eternal hope through the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are praising God as we continue to see salvations and new widow communities, handicapped ministries, and vodou leaders surrendering their lives to Christ! God continues to work in the face of despair, and in many cases, it is this despair, fear, and hopelessness that empowers the gospel message with efficacy. Please continue to pray for the Haitian people and also, please pray for us to be able to discern correctly to get your donations into the hands of our churches, communities, and individuals that need them the most as we continue to work to display the unconditional love of Christ to a country that is realizing that Satan has no interest in helping them.

Tis the season

As I was considering what to write to you all in this newsletter, God put a very definite message into my mind which I will now share with you. Every year around the holidays, Joy and I begin to feel very conflicted and confused within our hearts. This time of year is supposed to make us happy and joyful, but in full transparency, while it is definitely fun to have family around, time off, and an anticipation of Christmas, there is a hole in our heart that refuses to be filled by all of the holiday offerings.

As we searched for reasons behind our feelings we discovered two culprits. First, in all of the gift giving, trips to the mall, online shopping, dinners, and holiday parties, Americans have lost sight of someone—and that Someone is Christ! Progressively, over time, Jesus has become more and more of an afterthought at Christmas in America as we bury Him under wrapping paper, bows, and credit card receipts. On Sunday mornings at church, we uncover Him for a moment of consideration, only to bury Him back under the decorations, stress, and shopping anxiety for the rest of the week.

Joy and I recently watched a documentary that followed several Christian Sudanese refugees who had escaped from the ongoing wars and suffering in their country and came to the United States. They eventually experienced their first American Christmas, and as they observed the aggressive shopping, Christmas trees, elves, and mall Santa, they looked confused and asked the cameraman, "Where is Jesus, isn't Christmas about Jesus?" That's a good question to pose to ourselves during this time of the year—where is Jesus?

Secondly, if one would observe the Christmas reality of our culture, it would become quickly discernible that eating and spending are the preferred activities of the season. For Joy and me this is hard to engage in with any genuine happiness—and that is only



because of what we've been exposed to in Haiti, making our feelings understandably different from many Christians in America who haven't had the experiences we have had. Spending years in Haiti has exposed our family to many appalling realities, as we have witnessed the toll that extreme poverty can take on the human condition. This includes: seeing many Haitian people hardly able to eat and even losing some of them to death from starvation, interacting with malnourished children who live daily on the brink of death and can barely muster enough strength to cry, and impoverished families who could never begin to entertain the idea of celebrating Christmas, birthdays, or any holiday by the purchasing of gifts.

This has turned my thinking away from parties and feasts and toward considerations of fairness and our unspoken addiction to excessiveness. It just doesn't seem fair that so many people in the world are in such misery and need while, at the very same time, we live in pleasure and excess. Something feels deeply wrong about this, and just as a king could not be at peace in his comfort-laden, luxurious palace if his son were out at war, Joy and I, likewise, can't experience happiness in our American comfort knowing that our brothers and sisters in Haiti (and many others in the world) are suffering so badly.

What truly brings glory to Him?

This hole in our heart during this time of year exists for two reasons: First, Christ, our Savior and King, has been removed from the season that claims to exist for the celebration of His birth into the world, and second, the discrepancy that exists between our excessive celebrations and the suffering and misery of the Haitian people. This is a crushing weight on our hearts making it impossible for the season to fill us with the happiness and celebratory bliss that is so commonly associated with it. So why am I telling you this? I want to humbly invite us all to stop for a moment and ask ourselves, how have things drifted so far away from Christ at this time of year? Is this the way God wants us to live? Is this honoring to Him? Is this glorifying to His Name?

And if it isn't, what help does the Bible offer us in terms of how we should view our lives as Christians in relation to a world that loves to celebrate a Christ-less Christmas that elevates our *fun* at the expense of demoting Christ and the incarnation.

When I was thinking about all of this, I began to ponder the question, why is buying gifts at the center of our holidays and celebrations? Whether it be Christmas, Easter, birthdays, or graduations, gifts are at the heart of a majority of our celebrations. Now I am not saying that anything is inherently wrong with giving gifts as I enjoy giving gifts to my wife and children as much as I'm sure all of you do. I want to simply explore the question; do we need gifts to be happy when celebrating all of these observances and holidays?

As I considered this question it brought me to a deeper question that asked what, as God's image bearing human creations, do we think we need to be happy? Also, is the answer to this question similar across races, cultures, socioeconomic groups, religions, and countries? I think that many of us would immediately call that a silly question because intuitively we know that needs, and the happiness attached to those needs are going to be different across respective spectrum of human experiences and environments.

If we took four teens, one born into a wealthy family, one born into deep poverty in America, one born into abject poverty in Haiti, and one born into an Inuit family in a desolate non-industrialized region of Northern Canada, there would surely be sweeping differences in what they would claim made them happy. I believe that no one would argue with that assumption. While this may be true, I believe that irrespective of race, class, gender, and nationality, there has to be an ideal happiness/joy that has been determined by our Creator, and this ideal joy would be common to us all irrespective of physical or social differences. If this is true, then we must investigate whether or not the Bible supports this notion—and it does. To help us understand this let's use an illustration.





The human body

The human body is complex and contains many different components. The hand grasps, holds, points, touches, punches, etc., while the eye allows us to see, is lubricated, can move up, down, left, and right, etc. The hand and the eye are very different and what makes them happy is also different. While the hand would love a massage, the eye wouldn't and while the eye loves to remain wet, the hands don't. Hands like to touch and make direct contact with objects, while the eye avoids contact with any physical objects at all costs. While the hand and eye have very different purposes and functions, exist in different areas of the body, and appear very different, they both share common connection to the body.

This common connection means that there has to be a shared *happiness* for both of them. This would include things like blood and nerves. If the hand and eye had no blood supply or no innervation by nerves, they would both be very unhappy and die, but with blood and nerves they both function well and live. The hand and eye share a common root happiness due to the fact that they share a common foundational existence within a human body. Humans are the same way in the sense that we all share a common Creator who made us ALL in His image and thus there must be common, identifiable things that make us all happy.

To help us understand this fully, let's first consider Adam and Eve before the fall. When God created the world, man, and all that is in the world, He created it perfect. In the original creation, sin didn't exist, there was no knowledge of evil (and therefore no evil motives, actions, or thoughts). There was no death, no sickness, no pain, no fear, no sadness, etc. It was absolute perfection, and when God called His creation "good" it meant that nothing could be added to it or taken from it to make it any better; it was fully sufficient, lacking nothing.

When we acknowledge this we must also acknowledge something else. We must acknowledge that a perfect creation would be perfectly

happy with perfect joy; and such happiness and joy would be that which was determined by God to be perfect and sufficient for mankind—nothing more or nothing less would be needed to make us perfectly content. So if we want to know what needs humanity requires to be perfectly happy according to God, all we have to do is look back to the original Eden (before the fall of man) that existed within the boundaries of perfection.

If we look at Genesis chapters 1 and 2, we will read about the creation of the world, including God's most special creation—humans. So in a perfect world, what did man require in order to be happy as determined by God? Man, according to Genesis 1:27-2:25, needed fellowship with God, food, work, nature, and human companionship/relationship; that's all! Fellowship with God gave man union and intimacy with His Creator, food kept man's body alive, work gave man a purpose, nature provided man with beauty to observe, and physical companionship gave man fellowship with his kind (other humans). While this appears to be offensively simple, we must not allow ourselves to overlook the clear teaching of Scripture in this area. Look at things that make us happy today, wealth, possessions, sex (outside of marriage), power, influence, etc., and all of these things only appeared after the fall of man when evil entered into man's heart, and sin entered the world. The teaching here is that all of the needs that we relate to happiness that exist outside of the needs/happiness of our pre-fall existence is, by Biblical characterization, the result of evil in our hearts and sin in the world.

Lives of the Apostles

Upon hearing this we will surely react with an instant defense mechanism that says, "well we are well past the time in Eden and now happiness is defined differently because the world has changed and cultures have advanced." To counter this thinking we only have to look at the Apostle's lives to see if their happiness fell in line with pre-fall Edenic happiness despite their living thousands of years after Adam and Eve, and it does.



The Apostles, after meeting Jesus, all gave up the things that the world claims makes us most happy, secure, and comfortable, and this included quitting their professions. Upon meeting Jesus, their definitions, standards, and criteria of happiness were completely revised and reformed as they had received a new, Divinely determined standard of living, and thus a new understanding of what made humanity truly happy. This is pointed out by Peter who tells Jesus, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You..” (Matthew 19:27b).

Paul goes even further as his words to the Philippian church reveal the extent to which his life changed following his salvation. Paul had quite the resume as he was a Roman citizen, a Jew, a Benjaminite, a Pharisee, trained under the premier rabbi of the day (Gamaliel), and a strict follower of the Mosaic Law (law of Moses). Paul was a powerful, educated man who was climbing the social ladder of Judaism at a rate faster than all of his contemporaries. Power, influence, position, and wealth were all his for the taking—but then he met Jesus and was saved, and everything changed! Paul, as a Christian, now says this,

“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own which is from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ..” –Philippians 2:7-9a

So Paul’s past needs, that linked him to what he once considered happiness, had radically changed upon his salvation as his heart and mind were regenerated and brought back to pre-fall Eden standards of happiness and needs. He now didn’t need the fame, name, power, wealth, and influence that the world claims will make man happy, but rather he only needed those things that God had originally determined to make us happy. This is made evident in Paul’s letter to Timothy as he tells young Timothy,

“For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.” –1 Timothy 6:7-9

Paul, through the Holy Spirit’s guidance, now knew what he truly needed to be happy; and he also understood the negative effects of wanting what the world tells us will make us happy which are guaranteed, by the Bible, to bring temptations, snares, foolish and harmful desires, with eventual ruin.

Are we prepared for His arrival?

Have we allowed our happiness and joy to be tied to needs that God never intended our happiness to be associated with? Do our celebrations of holidays keep us bound to our old nature whose needs and happiness are determined by the world, or do they reveal our new nature that is bound to God’s determinations of needs and happiness?

Christian brothers and sisters, we must return to God in all aspects of our lives; we must return to His standards of joy and happiness and realize that everything we think we need to make us happy is nothing more than an elusive mirage that the spirit of the world wants us to chase and believe in at the expense of showing the world Christ and what being filled by His Spirit looks like. It is important to judge and examine ourselves in this way because Jesus has promised to return, and when He does He tells us in Scripture that those going with Him are to be prepared for His arrival (see Matthew 24:32-25:46).

While we are busy making sure we get all the gifts we need and buying all the food for our celebrations, there are things occurring in the world that God clearly warned us in Scripture would serve as harbingers of His return. Of course general things like “wars and rumors of war” have been occurring in the world since antiquity, but that’s not what I’m referencing here. Do you know that right now the Euphrates River is actively drying up exactly as it is prophesied in Revelation 16:12,

“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.” –Revelation 16:12

Furthermore, for the first time in 2,600 years, a prophecy made by Ezekiel, appears to be coming to light. Ezekiel stated,

“And he said to me, ‘This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea; when the water flows into the sea the water will become fresh. And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes.’ –Ezekiel 47:8-9

The Dead Sea is coming alive! Fresh water is now flowing into this expanse that has been unable to support life since the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah thousands of years ago, and freshwater fish have now been seen swimming in the surrounding sinkholes that have opened up in recent years as the sea, made up of 33% salt, has been receding. While sinkholes are not an exact fulfillment of this prophecy, we can still see that this is the start of its fulfillment in the very near future.



This Christmas let us remember those around us and in Haiti that have nothing. Rather than being a matchstick in the darkness let us choose to be a real light to a dark world and refuse to bow down for one second longer to this world/beast system in which we live. The world does not have the power to tell us, God's children, what we need to be happy; the world does not have the power to define our standards; and the world has no power to seduce us with its physical and spiritual offerings. God is all we need! We have been saved by grace and that is a gift that we have no power to purchase, but we can help give that gift through missions and evangelism. Let's get serious this year about the only gift that truly matters, the only gift with eternal implications; a gift that can't be bought, wrapped, or put under a tree; a gift that only God can give, but one His children have been empowered to share in the giving of through the sharing of the gospel. Let's ensure that the gift of the Gospel gets to those who have no hope this year, and in doing so we will please God and silence the lesser god of this world with his shiny, glittery deceptions.

Lastly, the Jewish people believe that, according to Numbers 19, a perfect red heifer is required for purification purposes, and only 9 have been sacrificed in the history of the Jewish people. The search for the tenth red Heifer has been ongoing in Israel for thousands of years, and the importance of this tenth red heifer is that its ashes, following sacrifice, are needed for purification rights associated with the erection of the third temple. An article from the September 17, 2022 issue of All Israel News magazine reads,

"Five rabbi-approved red heifers arrived from Texas on Thursday to a ceremonious welcome at Ben-Gurion Airport – and touched off a whirlwind of speculation as to the prophetic significance of their presence in Israel and whether we are barreling toward a third-temple period or the 'last days'. The cows have been inspected by rabbis and were found to be red and unblemished, which means they are ritually pure for sacrifice as stipulated under the law of Moses."

Why am I telling you all of this? Because every one of these signs are very specific and they are being fulfilled in front of our eyes. This means that Jesus is at the threshold ready to return. What will He find us doing? Will He find us mourning for the state of the world and hungering for righteousness (see Matthew 5:1-6), or will He find us celebrating our lives and holidays according to the world's standards? Let's all resolve to change our minds and hearts that have unfortunately been so indoctrinated and deceived by the world around us and begin to live truly surrendered lives—lives that are surrendered to God and dead to the world with its definitions and standards.

We love you all and are looking forward to this upcoming year to see what God has in store for this ministry. The Haitian people and Joy and I thank you, sincerely, for all the support you provided in 2022. We will soon send out a summation of the years accomplishments that all of you made possible in this ministry. God has assigned us all to Haiti and that is why I'm writing this letter and you are all reading it. Joy and I are absolutely honored to be standing with all of you on the front lines of this war against the evil one in Haiti. God is using us all as His instruments, and I stand in awe at the army He has recruited for this great task. Let's stay strong, focused, and engaged in this work as we all will have rewards to look forward to in heaven. Thank you all again.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

YEAR-END DONATION MATCH

UP TO \$10,000

We're so blessed to let you know that an anonymous donor has agreed to match any donation (up to \$10,000) made to Charis through noon on December 31st! Donations can be sent to the address below, or made online. Thank you for partnering with us to bring help and hope to the Haitian people.

3015 E. New York St, A2-295, Aurora, IL 60504

Mission Statement

Charis (Greek for God's Grace) operates in complete obedience to God, giving Him His rightful place in determining the path and goals of His ministry that He has, by grace, allowed us to perform. Charis primarily focuses on the unseen spiritual needs in Haiti, and secondarily on the seen physical needs, always remembering that our success is completely dependent on the will of God, the gospel of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit working effectively through us, His willing servants.



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