



THE LOVE LETTER

Abba's Arms International, Inc.
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THANK YOU!!



We want to thank all of you that were praying for us while we were in New Zealand and/or helped support us going to the Fatherheart Ministries Gathering in Taupo. The scenery is even more majestic and beautiful than the pictures can capture on the internet. Like everything about the Father, you just have to experience it for yourself to really know what it is like! We did feel like we were in another part of the Garden while we were there. The Gathering was also beyond our expectations as James and Denise Jordan poured their hearts into us for 30 days with many new revelations and wisdom about the Father and His Love for His kids.

We will be sharing a little of what we received from the Father in New Zealand here in State College October 10-11, 2014 at Unity Church of Jesus Christ. We are calling this encounter with the Father **"Experiencing the Father Heart-to-Heart"** Please mark your calendar and plan to attend the encounter in October! Bring your friends along too! Also begin to pray for a powerful outpouring of His Love on everyone who attends. Call 814-234-1774 for details.

We also want to draw your attention to a couple new additions to our website www.abbasarmsintl.org. Under Media – Audio we have started to add a recording of what we share at the beginning of each soaking time we have at our home. These are 20 minute inspirations and revelations that the Father has given us recently. Also under Media – Marriage Materials—we are providing downloadable copies of the **Marriage Encouragements** we send out every other month. May you be blessed by these! Please feel free to share and let others know about our website!

Joy Strength

We are all familiar with the last part of **Neh. 8:10** where it says, "...for the joy of the Lord is our strength." Nehemiah was trying to cheer up the people who had just listened to the priests' teachings on the Law. They were sad and wept under the burden of not keeping the Law. God wanted them to be joyful, not to focus on the impossibility of keeping the Law, but to use His joy to strengthen and draw them closer to Him. One of the greatest values of joy is to help us deal in a healthy way with the difficult, painful, traumatic, or burdensome circumstances that we all experience going through life. A high level of joy strength can help us process anything that comes against us in a positive way and go on with life without negative or painful cellular memories that will adversely affect our future.

In the 4th quarter issue of 2013 of the Love Letter, Sue's article *Joy-filled Living*, focused on what joy is, the importance of joy and how we get and build joy. If you haven't read it yet,

you can download it from our website www.abbasarmsintl.org. In this article, however, I want to dig deeper into joy and what it can do for us. Most of what I am going to share comes from two sources, *The Life Model* (James G. Friesen, et al.) and *Joy Starts Here* (James Wilder, et al.)

Joy Camp and Joy Mountain

Joy Camp forms a good word picture of where we all want to be each night before we go to bed, in the joyful state of feeling at peace, safe, secure and loved. (Jim Wilder coined the term "Joy Camp" which is better described in *The Life Model*.) Joy Camp is the base from which we go out each day to climb "Joy Mountain" and experience the fullness of joy that Father created and provided for us to have every day.

Father created all of us with the need for joy. The most powerful force of a child's first two years of life is the desire to experience joy in loving relationships. Children look forward to the moments when they can reconnect

to joy, something that then carries them throughout life. Joy comes when we know that someone is "pleased to be with us." Just looking into someone's face with a smile and making eye contact sends a joyful signal to that other person and then joy is returned back and forth between them.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made by our Heavenly Father. By reading the two books mentioned above, I have gained an appreciation of how joy is built in us from an early age. Looking back on how we were with our two sons, I realize now how stunted their joy strength was because of the things we did and did not do with them during those early years, especially me. Don't feel bad about yourself as you read on because our Heavenly Father is able to re-parent our children (and us) in every area where we did not receive joy growing up.

Infants are born with the need and ability to receive joy through their five physical senses. They also need to



receive unconditional love and care. For the first 3 months, Joy Camp is built with the mother being in close proximity (nursing, rocking, sleeping near the baby, and carrying the baby close to her). Progressively during that first year of life all five of the physical senses fully develop and contribute to the infant enlarging their joy center and gaining joy strength as they interact with people who are pleased to be with them.

Each time the baby receives more joy, they climb a little higher on Joy Mountain and develop higher levels of joy strength. Initially, a baby can only handle so much joy and then they need to look away and refocus for a couple of seconds. As the joy subsides, they are ready for more joy and will start looking for it. As their capacity to receive joy grows, so will their joy strength grow as they climb Joy Mountain again. By slightly exceeding their capacity for joy, their joy strength will continue to grow.

The first year of development is critical for building enough joy strength so that the child can handle the negative emotions that they will begin to feel. By 12 months the parents should have been able to teach their child how to return to joy from unpleasant situations and learn that joy is the normal state to live in. At 15 months the limbic system is complete and a child has the capacity to feel fear and anger. Their joy strength will determine how well they are able to handle these new negative emotions and return to joy. By 2-3 years, a child is able to start building conscious memory that will influence how they begin to react to future situations. Their joy strength can help them build positive memories as they deal with difficult, painful, or traumatic situations in healthy ways and quickly returning to joy (positive memories will produce positive reactions!).

Adults Need Joy Strength Too!

“Having enough joy strength is fundamental to a person’s well-being. We now know that the “joy center” exists in the right frontal orbital cortex of the brain. It has executive control over the entire emotional system. When the joy center has been sufficiently developed, it regulates emotions, pain control, and immunity center; it guides us to act like ourselves; it releases neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin; and it is the only part of the brain that overrides the main drive centers – food and sexual impulses, terror and rage” The Life Model p. 23

We all have a desire within us to be whole and withstand the assaults of the world. We all need to be empowered by higher levels of joy to face the pain and trauma inevitable with life. Without sufficient joy strength the feelings related to the trauma will dominate and fear will prevail. However, with sufficient joy strength, the negative feelings will connect with the right brain and peace and joy will return. There are also six negative emotions that we all have to deal with; *shame, fear, anger, disgust, hopeless despair and sadness*. The longer it takes for us to return to joy the more emotionally exhausted we become. Our joy strength needs to be stronger than the pain, trauma or negative emotions in order for us to deal with them in a healthy way and return to joy quickly.

There are several ways that people try to achieve joy. Just dismissing or detaching from negative emotions can give us a sense of false peace and joy, that is what I used to do. I would tell Sue to, “Just get over it,” or “Quit over-reacting!” or “You’re just too emotional.” Another form of false joy is living in our false self, but that doesn’t get rid of the negative emotions, it only covers them up. Taking care of others

or smiling when you’re dealing with negative emotions won’t get rid of them either. Stuffing your emotions out of fear of upsetting someone or what other people think won’t return us to joy either. I’ve tried all of these on different occasions myself and I know that they don’t work!

Some Benefits of Joy

- ☺ Children with high levels of joy learn everything faster and much better than those with low levels of joy.
- ☺ In joy we are able to see ourselves differently and we don’t have to live the old way anymore.
- ☺ Joy sets the basis for how we will handle relationships, emotional pain and pleasure in our lives. Joy allows us to grow strong, loving relationships and keeps them intact.
- ☺ Joy helps us heal our heart and creates a stable and consistent identity that can last a life time. We can get rid of the false self and identity. We can live without masks because we can expose our weaknesses and know that we are still loved.
- ☺ Joy helps us to be free from fear and live from our heart. It gives us the freedom to share from our heart to our Heavenly Father and others hearts.
- ☺ Joy releases dopamine in the pleasure center of our brain that gives us good feelings and helps us manage pleasure, pain, and emotions effectively.
- ☺ Joy produces positive lasting effects, not like happiness or excitement that only last a short time and are based on external circumstances that continually change.
- ☺ Joy helps us from feeling overwhelmed and unable to recover from upsetting feelings. Weaknesses in the joy center are often associated with people with anxiety, depression, and attention deficit disorders, eating disorders and obsessive-compulsive





disorders. These all come from an inability to maintain joy.

Don't Despair – Return to Joy!

If you're like me, you might be thinking that I didn't have parents who were able to help me build Joy Camp or climb very high on Joy Mountain. Or maybe you had some other traumatic events in your life that have hindered your ability to build joy strength. I injured my mother during birth and she had to have a hysterectomy. That meant at a young age I was taken away from my mother for 6 weeks to live with an aunt while my mother recovered from the surgery. So, during a critical time for joy development I was not able to be close to my mother. I also had a father who was not comfortable with love and was not able to help teach me how to return to joy as a small child. With all of the pain in my heart, I also was not able to help our two sons climb Joy Mountain or return to joy.

But thank God there is still hope for people like you and me and our children who did not have much joy strength growing up or as adults! Our joy center is the only part of our brain that is able to grow during our entire lives. Even if we were not able to grow joy strength growing up, we can still increase our joy now through love bonds with joy-filled people who are pleased to be with us. Even knowing that there is someone out there that is pleased to be with us will grow our joy strength. Images of faces, memories of joyful experiences with others, and experiencing the presence of Father will all help us return to joy. Joy also comes through a loving relationship with our Heavenly Father who knows everything about us and is still pleased to be with us, all the time! In **John 15:9-12** Jesus tells us that by abiding in His love "...My joy may remain in you and your joy may be full." In **John 16:20-24** Jesus tells us that joy will come through the finished work of

the cross and that our joy cannot be taken from us. In **v. 24** Jesus tells us that joy will also come through answered prayer.

We all need authentic joy-producing relationships that can build our joy strength. Joy-filled relationships are vital to someone recovering from past trauma, pain, or hurts in their heart. These loving relationships help us feel deeply understood, know who we really are and result in feeling safe and secure. It takes someone who can come close to us, understand, validate and comfort whatever negative emotions we are feeling. They help us reach a place of Shalom peace and experience Father's presence. We need to see each other the way Father sees us.

One place that these relationships are meant to happen is in the church. We all need life-giving community where people are there to help each other receive love, joy, acceptance, and encouragement so we can get "unstuck" from difficult situations. It takes time, commitment, fellowship, spending time together and living from a heart of love. In this environment, life makes sense and we are able to feel good about ourselves.



We need to learn how to quickly return to joy, not just try to maintain a state of joy by keeping things from going wrong, which I have found is impossible to do! With Father's presence and surrounded by joyful people, we can find our way back to Joy Camp from any negative emotions. The road back to joy starts with Jesus and receiving Father's forgiveness and salvation at the cross. Joy is a gift from Father to us and comes from knowing and experiencing His love and grace for us. We need to establish strong joy bonds with Jesus and Father through an intimate and

personal relationship with them. They are pleased to be with us even with all of our weaknesses, addictions, shortcomings and messes!

Joy also comes through healthy two-way relationships with another person who is pleased to be with us; someone we have a life-long commitment to; someone we can open our heart to and feel safe. As you practice joy skills with each other, joy will grow. This can be a spouse, children, family members, or close friends you know very well.

The safest place to grow joy is in three-way bonded relationships, especially for those who are single or do not have close family or friends that are safe. These are less likely to become sexual or codependent. Children need strong joy bonds with two people in order to form a strong identity that will be constant over time. We feel joy when people we love have good relationships with each other and us.

Joy Skills

There is not space here to go into some of the joy skills that we can practice with others. These are best developed by using the three year basic skill training manuals from "*Thrive – Changing My Generation* and the *Life Model Study Guide for Individuals and Small Groups*" by Rick Koepcke et al.

But we all can be joy starters by just sharing the joy that is in us with others. Recognizing someone by name or giving them a big smile and making eye contact tells them that "I see you" and you are special and important to me. In a restaurant or store where they wear name tags, use their first name when talking with them. Quite often when Sue and I do this, the person's eyes light up and they smile back at us. Joy begins to build in both of us! You can also start hanging out with joy-filled people and allow them to sow more joy into your life and you into their lives!

A Father's Blessing for Joy Strength

I bless you with being surrounded with joy-filled people who will be able to affirm you, encourage you and help you walk through difficult situations and circumstances. I bless you to grow strong in your joy and be able to maintain that high level of joy through each day regardless of what may be happening around you. I bless you to become a protector of joy in others and help other people walk in the joy that Father wants all of us to experience. I bless you to be a joy starter spreading the love and joy of the Father to everyone you meet.

I bless you with a family that is full of joy and able to pass that joy on to others. I bless you with the ability to return to joy quickly and stay in peace and rest all of the time. I bless you with a close and intimate walk with your Heavenly Father. I bless you to know and feel His pleasure and acceptance of you as you are, in all your weaknesses, mistakes and messes that you might be walking through right now. I bless you with a new image of yourself as being beautiful, loveable, a giver, blessed, forgiven/forgiving and a true son or daughter of the Father!



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