
THE GOOD NEWS GAZETTE

THINK ON THESE THINGS...

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

IS IT JUST A SMILE?

In August 2015, Steve Hartman with CBS reported an amazing story about Jaden Hayes. The story has reverberated over the internet and been seen by thousands on Facebook since initially reported. At four Jaden lost his dad. By six, his mother passed away as well. Losing one parent was terrible. Losing both was catastrophic. Jaden was sad. He missed his parents. He still does. But in the midst of his sorrow, he sought a way out. He didn't want to be so sad anymore, and he didn't like seeing others sad all the time either. He asked his Aunt Barbara to help him with a project to bring smiles to people. His idea was to buy small toys like plastic dinosaurs and rubber ducks to give away to people in his community in exchange for a smile. He looked for people who

weren't smiling and would approach them to give the gift of a small toy. Adult or child, it didn't matter. What mattered were the smiles. At the time of Steve's report, over 500 people had been given a toy and responded with smiles — and hugs.

See Jaden's story at the link below.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCPc2RIMTII>



Children can be so amazing and inspiring. Jesus praised children in Matthew 18:1-5. The verses say, "At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, 'Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?' He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.'" (See also Matthew 19:13-14, Mark 10:15-17, Luke 18:15-17, Mark 9:36-37, and Matthew 18:10.)

Sometimes we think it takes a great plan and lots of money to change the world, but Jaden did it with the gift of a small plastic toy. Children naturally enjoy smiling. New mothers and fathers delight in promoting smiles with their babies. As adults, we often let the cares of this world inhibit our smiles. I think we can reverse the trend.

Listed below are a few very good reasons why we might want to work on our smiling skills. When we smile, our brains release a neurotransmitter that helps us feel better and diminishes our stress levels. Even fake smiles will do the trick. The brain doesn't know the difference between a fake smile and a real one, even if we do. The simple movement of the facial muscles into the shape of a smile will work. There is something to be said for the saying

"fake it 'til you make it" when talking about smiles. This same neurotransmitter also helps alleviate pain. Many hospital patients and others in chronic pain feel and are better when they smile and indulge in some good old belly laughs. Watching comedies and listening to comedians is a great way to draw out our smiles. Even knock, knock jokes have a place in our serious, sophisticated world. Smiling also makes us look more friendly and approachable. People trust us more when we smile and are attracted to us. Cortisol (the stress hormone) is reduced when we smile and laugh to decrease negativity. A hospital study revealed that children visited by storytellers and puppeteers (versus those who were not visited) had increased white blood cell counts corresponding to a stronger immune system with which to fight disease. Lastly, just like yawns, smiles and laughter are contagious. Smiles are like a glue that bonds relationships in a benevolent way. One study showed that around 50% of the people we smile at will smile back. So what do we have to lose? A smile. If it doesn't help anyone else, it will still help us personally.

Hugs are another important thing in the lives of our human race. Hugs create social bonds, decrease blood pressure, reduce stress and fear, promote a healthier heart, and help calm. Hugs stimulate the release of oxytocin which diminishes our feelings of anger, isolation, and loneliness. In fact, the older we are, the more we need hugs for good health. Even one 10 second hug a

day has positive, measurable physiological benefit. The gentle pressure of a hug on the sternum helps the thymus gland regulate the production of white blood cells that protect our bodies from disease. Lastly, hugging promotes our self-esteem and makes us feel special. In Luke 13:34, Jesus tells his people in Jerusalem how he longed to gather them “as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings.” Jesus, God’s own Son, expressed a desire to hug and embrace his people. Virginia Satir, a family therapist says, “We need four hugs a day for survival. We need eight hugs a day for maintenance. We need twelve hugs a day for growth.” I’m certain, I haven’t been giving or getting my maximum dosage.

Smiles and hugs are something we can freely give. We don’t even need a plastic dinosaur or rubber duck to go with them (though we could). February, the month of love and Valentine’s Day, is almost over. Ten more months remain in 2016. Since August of last year, Savannah, Georgia has been a happier place because of Jaden Hayes. His goal was to get 33,000 smiles. With the television report and thousands of views on Facebook, I’m sure his goal has been met.

What about us? How many smiles and hugs will we give and receive in 2016? Growing up in a family where smiling was often discouraged and sometimes forbidden, I have to consciously work on smiling and hugging.

At a recent conference, I met Jerica America. (That’s not her real last name, but that’s what she calls herself.) She told me, as soon as I met her, that she does hugs not handshakes. As she grabbed me in a big bear hug of introduction, I felt all those physiological things that come with a hug. I felt love, acceptance, warmth, and caring all in the brief span of a few seconds. Lastly, she made me smile. In fact, she made everyone at the conference smile throughout the weekend with her genuine smiles and sweet hugs - displaying love, concern and acceptance for everyone she met.

I know it won’t always be easy for me to smile and approach people with a hug, but Jerica and Jaden have convicted me to commit to giving more smiles and hugs this year. Maybe I’ll get to 33,000. I’m going to start counting today. What about you? Will you join me and share a smile and a hug?

Let’s think on these things...
Robin Robbins House



What Does the Bible Say?

When Jesus left Galilee in Matthew 19, where did he go?

Who followed Jesus and what did He do for them?

Who asked Jesus “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”

What did Jesus use to answer the above question?

What happens when a man and a woman marry?

Why did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?

From the beginning, what did God intend for a man and woman who married?

What did Jesus say was an exception to the prohibition of divorce?

What sin does a man commit who divorces his wife and marries another when his divorce is not due to his wife being unfaithful?

How did the disciples respond to hearing Jesus’ teaching on marriage and divorce?

To whom has it been given to be single/not marry?

Why did people bring their little children to Jesus?

Why did the disciples rebuke those who brought children to Jesus?

To whom does the kingdom of God belong?

How did Jesus answer the man who asked “What good must I do to get eternal life?”

How many are good?

Who is good?

What was the second question the man asked about to gain eternal life?

Why did the man questioning ask, “What do I still lack?”

What did Jesus say the man would need to do to be perfect?

Why did the man go away sad from Jesus?

What things keep us today from following Jesus?

For whom is it hard to enter the kingdom of God and what is the comparison given?

When the disciples asked, “Who then can be saved?”, what did Jesus respond?

What did Peter claim about following Jesus?

What did Jesus say would be the result of the disciples following him?

What does Jesus promise everyone who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for Jesus’ sake?

What does it mean when Jesus said, “But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.”?

Answers to the questions above can be found in Matthew chapter nineteen.

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