

Health, growth, completion

# Vision



New Apostolic Church USA

District News

[www.nac-usa.org](http://www.nac-usa.org)

Autumn 2018

Dear brothers and sisters,

Recently I came across a word in 2 Corinthians 8:15:

*He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.*

At first, this may seem like a paradox or riddle, and yet it has a special meaning with regards to giving and thanksgiving. It was written by Paul to the congregation at Corinth to inspire them to join the other congregations of Macedonia to give to their poorer brethren in other areas. You may recall hearing about this in a September divine service. These early brothers and sisters, even though persecuted and indigent, supported each other, inspired by the true love of Christ. We read in verse 5 – *but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.* Because of their circumstances, we can see that their giving followed the model of the widow that Jesus commented on in the temple – *but she out of her poverty put in all that she had...* (Mark 12:44).

Let's go back to the riddle. This was a verse Paul actually quoted from Exodus 16:18 that described the gathering and distribution of manna. We can imagine the families and how those who were abled gathered more, and those who were older, disabled, or very young gathered less. However, when the gathering was finished, they all redistributed their "harvest" so that *he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.* This was necessary because Moses said to gather only what they needed for the day and leave nothing left over for the next day. In other words – God would again provide for them.

Here we can see some wonderful aspects of God's ways. He gave the manna, sufficient for each day, as much as was needed for each person. However, He expected His people to trust Him to provide for them again the next day. He also expected His people to distribute this gift in a way that all could be helped and sated.

The Apostle Paul taught this realization of God's ways to the first Christians. Thus, they realized that even if they had little, this little was a gift from their God, and, in thankfulness for it, they gave to others. Jesus also showed this when He gave thanks for the few loaves and fishes before feeding the five thousand. He gave thanks for the "little" and then gave it out.

May these teachings of God's ways also live today in His children by:

- Recognizing *all the gifts* we have been given – time, resources, freedom, and so many others.
- Expressing our thankfulness to our loving Father, the Giver of good things, in our offerings and sacrifices.
- Giving and sharing what we have been given, realizing our dependence on our benevolent Father, and trusting in His divine providence for the future.

Wishing for you a meditative and peaceful Thanksgiving season. I remain yours.

With love,



Giving is Joy



Overtaken by God's incredible love and faithfulness to us, we recognize the honor it is to reflect His love by sharing it with those around us. We love because we believe in Christ. We believe because He loves us. We have joy because Christ has invited us into a relationship with God. Because of the love, faith, and joy that we have received from Him, we give because we know we are loved, we know who we are, and we know where we are going.

## The Source of our Joy

The source of a Christian's joy is their childhood in God. Jesus revealed this truth directly to His disciples after they returned from their journey to Palestine. Jesus appointed 70 of His followers to go throughout this land, where He was about to go, to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God. Jesus warned them that they would not be received well in all the places they would go. They were going to be "lambs among wolves." However, when their journey was complete and they came back to Jesus, they returned with joy (Luke 10:17). They were filled with joy because they had been successful. God had used them, and they had witnessed the manifestation of the power of Christ in their work. They declared their happiness over the fact that the demons were subject to them in Jesus' name. So because of their success and the power they had experienced, they were happy. Jesus responded to them by redirecting their focus to the true source of joy – *"Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven"* (Luke 10:20).

Jesus taught these followers to be careful and not to misplace the basis for their joy. This lesson is important for all of us today. God's blessing is for spiritual life. How often does our joy fluctuate and depend on what is happening in our lives – our family matters, our work life, our social circles, etc...? Do we only rejoice when everything is well? Does our joy disappear when we struggle? What does that tell those around us?

Our joy is founded and rooted in our childhood in God. When this truth remains at the forefront of our lives, then no matter the ebbs and flows of life, our joy is evident. We are secure in a loving

relationship with our Heavenly Father. We are children of a King and are under His provision and care. He has demonstrated His love for us when He sent His Son to rescue us from our sins. His love has been poured into us through the Holy Spirit. This is our joy! It is an unchangeable truth and is the motivation behind all that we do. Experiencing this joy prompts us to give.

## Sharing what we have

As a church, a united community of believers, the joy of our childhood in God should inspire us to share and help one another. This was also in the hearts of the believers in the first church. This is exhibited in Acts 2:42-47:

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continually daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*

We learn from this example that the first believers chose generosity rather than earthly greediness. They recognized that they were all equal before the Lord, and they made a decision to devote themselves to growing in their knowledge of Him. Their joy led them to share, to give to each other, and celebrate together. They praised God together for His goodness and their new life in Him. Luke tells us that as they did this, because of their joy and activity, they were a witness to those around them, and the congregation grew.

When our life in God is our joy and drives our actions, then others will be impacted by our joy because we will give and share with them voluntarily and without prejudice. Does your relationship with Jesus Christ fill your heart with joy and drive your actions? If you don't know, we encourage you to speak with a minister or a fellow believer who exudes joy to grow in your understanding.

## Joyful Giving: 2 Corinthians

Apostle Paul was seeking financial help from the church in Corinth, for the church in Jerusalem. His intent in urging the Corinthians to take part in the offering was to give them the opportunity to use their abundance to help the believers in Jerusalem, who were in poverty. He explained to them how to give properly, and that their offering should be a generous offering rather than a grudging donation. God's generosity to them was to be an incentive for their own generous giving. Their giving would be a thanksgiving to God; it would meet the needs of God's people; and it would unify Jewish and Gentile believers.

As we practice giving out of the joy that we have from God, let us consider the words that Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 9:7 *So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.* When we mature in the mind of Christ, we will no longer give *grudgingly or of necessity*, but rather intentionally and with thought. Our giving becomes our decision, and because it is what we want to do, we give joyfully. Joyful giving is done freely, not grudgingly. This is where giving becomes faith, love, and joy intertwined.

Paul assures the congregation to trust in God's provision. *And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work* (2 Corinthians 9:8). Our childhood in God secures our future. He will give us all we need to do the *good work* that He has prepared for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). This security frees us to give joyfully, generously, and confidently.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we give generously because we have received all from our generous God without conditions. Let us never forget that we were all lost and unworthy of grace. Yet, our Heavenly Father generously offered His Son to take our place to atone for our sins so that we could be children of God. That's more generosity than we can even fathom. When we joyfully give our resources to the church and those in need, it reminds us that everything we have is itself a gift from God. This is what Paul alludes to when he writes, *for the administration of this service not*

*only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God...* (2 Corinthians 9:12) When we give to help others, it not only meets their needs, but also is an offering of thanks to God for what He has provided for us. And so, we can joyfully share with others what the Lord has given generously, and give without worry because we know He will always care for His children.

Joyful giving is done thoughtfully and with intention. Through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, we are able to see those who are in need and we are prompted to assist. We want to give when prompted, in hope that the one receiving will experience the joy we have, and glorify the Lord.

As faithful followers of the Lord Jesus, we understand that those who are far from the Lord have needs also, and we believe in the saving power of Jesus Christ. We love them because we are all made in the image of God, who so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son. We share freely the good news of salvation so that the name of Jesus can be made known to all, and so everyone may come to realize that true satisfaction can only be found in Him.

## Joyful Giving brings a foretaste of the Kingdom

When believers are united in their joyful giving, then the congregation becomes a foretaste of the kingdom of God. Pray together within your congregation, your family, your circle of friends, and ask the Lord to help you all to be joyful givers. Pray that God will enable you to see the world around you in such a way that you can clearly recognize the needs of others and act upon the prompting of the Holy Spirit to share what He has blessed you with.



# YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCE

NEW APOSTOLIC CHURCH USA | SEPT 21-23 | DETROIT, MI

From September 21-23, about 100 young adults from around the country gathered in Detroit for a conference. The theme for the weekend was **Back to Basics** – a deeper look at our faith and what it means to be a follower of Christ.

After arriving, the group was able to meet and spend time with each other at a welcome mixer on Friday evening. Beginning this night and continuing to the end of Saturday, a prayer room was made available to the young adults. This room had different prayer stations, each one focusing on and prompting different elements of prayer.

Saturday, the conference began with a message from District Apostle Kolb about the church’s strategy of making disciples and building a solid foundation for this to happen. Various sessions carried on throughout the day. Young adults learned about certain topics, such as:

- Prayer
- Journaling
- Christian and church history
- Studying Scripture
- Spiritual gifts
- Doubt and faith
- Worship
- Solitude and silence
- Reconciling relationships



In some of the topics, the young adults were given the chance to practice the ideas presented. They also participated in small group sessions that focused on the basic elements of our faith.

Along with these topics, the young adults were able to pose questions to our international church theologian, Dr. Reinhard Kiefer, who was also at the conference, in Q&A sessions throughout the day.

On Sunday, the group took buses to the Sterling Heights congregation to join them in divine service. District Apostle Kolb preached a message based on Romans 10:10, inspiring us to speak about God’s goodness in our lives.

After lunch, the young adults had the afternoon open to talk, ask more questions of the church theologian and the District Apostle, and spend time together. We hope that the opportunities created this weekend to connect to God and to each other have transformed and empowered our young adults to go into the world and live their faith.





## What is repentance?

The Greek word for repentance is *metanoeo*, which means, “rethinking.” This evokes the idea of completely re-evaluating a matter, which then results in a change of one’s direction, condition, or behavior. Repentance is the act of being remorseful for what you have done, turning away from sin, and resolving not to return to that behavior.

In the pre-Reformation church, *metanoeo* was translated as “penance,” rather than repentance. Penance is an act of self-abasement or devotion performed to show sorrow or repentance for a sin. This interpretation implies that we are to pay retribution in some way in order to be in right standing with God. The concept of “penance” leads to the false understanding that when we do good works, we can attain some degree of righteousness before God; this is a dangerous path of thinking. Because of our sinful nature, there

is **nothing** we can do to be worthy or righteous in God’s eyes. Only Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross and His payment for our sins avails us of the grace to be righteous before God.

Yet, repentance comes with a certain amount of suffering; we feel the weight and pain of *our* sin. When we contemplate that Jesus carried the weight of our sin to the cross, we feel remorse. With the realization that every sin separates us further from God, we recognize the need for His grace and the necessity of repentance to receive forgiveness, so we repent and run back to Him.

In 2 Timothy 2:24-25, we read: ***...if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.***

Therefore, we can appreciate repentance as a gift from God, which opens the way to forgiveness and a close relationship with Him. As we “rethink” and change our minds through repentance, we are led out of darkness, and, with God’s help, we allow the new nature of Jesus to unfold within us.

### ...if God perhaps will grant them repentance...

Repentance starts with **awareness**. Often, our sinful nature is not apparent to us. We must stop and take time, perhaps at the end of the day, to meditate, reflect, and examine our thoughts, words, and actions. It’s important to explore the underlying reasons for sinful words or actions. Maybe anger or bitterness causes us to speak or act in a way that is hurtful to others. Perhaps fear or doubt causes mistrust or jealousy, or envy leads to hostility, or selfishness creates apathy. We should compare ourselves to the example of Jesus in the Scriptures and notice where we do not align with His nature. Self-examining in this way permits space for God to enlighten us to our sin, so that we become mindful of the sin and its effects on those around us. Only by realizing how far away we actually are from God can we take the steps to move closer to Him.

We find two examples of this God-inspired assessment in Genesis. In chapter 3, after Adam and Eve sin, *the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”* (Genesis 3:9), and then in chapter 4, when God asks Cain, “What have you done?” to call attention to the terrible deed that Cain, in his self-righteousness, could not recognize. As human beings, we are sinners and therefore enemies of God and His righteousness. We are perpetually sinful; alone, we cannot climb out of this condition. As He questioned Cain, God questions why we have rebelled and fought against Him. Why have we again allied ourselves to the evil one after our Father has continually approached us with love and compassion? It is an act of grace that He questions us, so that we can see the true perspective of our being and recognize that we are far from Him. God is waiting to forgive us, but we must first see our true state so that we understand our dependence on His grace. We are running in the wrong direction and we need to turn back.

The intended result of the awareness of our sin is **remorsefulness**. Once we come to this understanding, we suffer because the relationship with our God and Father has been disturbed. We sink down into the realization of our sinfulness and distance from God, as David did (2 Samuel





12). We are humbled because we realize that we deserve nothing. We deeply mourn our sinfulness as it is juxtaposed with God's goodness and benevolence.

In this state of unrest and turbulence in our souls, we **confess** our sins to God. Confession is the natural progression as we come to the awareness of and remorsefulness for our sin. Apostle John wrote, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). This confession does not just happen in the moments of the Lord's Prayer in the divine service, but needs to be wrestled with daily in our prayers.

At our baptism or confirmation, we promised to renounce the evil one and surrender ourselves to the triune God. Remembrance of this promise inspires **our resolution** to keep fighting against sin. Our old nature resists this, but we fight on because we want the new life of Christ to emerge in us and extinguish the old nature that continually drives us away from the One we love. His love inspires a longing and willingness to change and evolve. Even though we may have resolved a hundred or thousand times before, we resolve once again because we know that God will not remember the sins He forgives.

As we experience God's everlasting love for us through the gift of repentance and

forgiveness, we come to understand His wish for us to also **forgive others**. If we want to be close to God, we cannot let pride or self-righteousness stand in our way. Jesus clearly stated in Matthew 6:14-15: *For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.* Although we may have suffered an injustice or terrible offense from our brother, sister, or neighbor, we are resolved to journey down the path toward forgiveness and seek reconciliation. We realize that if God forgives our many sins against Him, then surely, we can strive to forgive the transgressions of others.

Joined with all of our brothers and sisters, with anxious hearts, we express our confessions, feelings, and resolutions to the almighty God, our Father, in the Lord's Prayer. He, alone, is able to restore us and set us on the right path for His is *the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever!*

With a deep longing, we wait for the comfort we find in the absolution. This is the assurance of God's forgiveness and His willingness to always give us a fresh start by the merit of Christ's sacrifice. This greeting of peace gives us the confidence that He will never forsake us, no matter how many times we fall. The words, "The peace of the Risen One be with you all," are like balsam that washes over our troubled souls, and, released from sin, we rest securely in the assurance that the Lord loves and accepts us once again.

Martin Luther, in his 95 theses, said,

**When our Lord and Master  
Jesus Christ said, "Repent," He  
willed the entire life of believers  
to be one of repentance.**

The daily journey of realizing our sin and coming to repentance creates a tension in us because the old nature must be slain and supplanted by the new life of Christ. For this newness to grow, it is necessary for us to continually embrace God's gift of repentance. **LRK**

# FAMILY DINNER CONVERSATION

With the holidays approaching, there may be some new opportunities to connect with family and friends. Sometimes parents and families want to have more conversation, particularly around the dinner table, but perhaps they just don't know where to start. Here are some potential conversation starters to consider this holiday season.

## FAMILY

If you were to switch roles with me for a day and I had to attend your school, how do you think I would do?

If you were to switch roles with me for a day and you had to do what I do all day, how do you think you would do?

If you were going to plan our next family trip or vacation, where would we go and what would we do?

What is one chore you enjoy doing around the house? Why?

What is your favorite family memory/memories?

## SPIRITUAL

What is one thing God has taught you or shown you lately?

What is one verse that you have read or heard that has really been your favorite?

What is your favorite praise and worship song or Christian song lately? Why is it your favorite?

If you could be a Bible character who would you be?

What is one question you have had about Christianity or God lately that we as a family could study and find out more about?

Of all the miracles that Jesus did, which one would you have wanted to be there for and why?

A wooden boardwalk with railings leads through a dense forest. The trees are covered in autumn foliage, with leaves in shades of green, yellow, and orange. The boardwalk is made of dark wood planks and has a railing on both sides. The path leads towards a bright opening in the trees in the distance. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic.

*Season of Thanksgiving*

The Summer Vision included an article about being more intentional in the time leading up to Thanksgiving. Starting on the first Sunday of October, each service leading up to Thanksgiving Sunday will focus on an aspect of giving thanks to God:

October 7	Gratitude for God, the Father
October 14	Gratitude for Jesus Christ
October 21	Gratitude for the Holy Spirit
October 28	Gratitude for the Church of Christ
November 4	Gratitude for Salvation for the Departed
November 11	Gratitude for our Congregations & Childhood in God

As we walk through this Season of Thanksgiving each week, here are some questions for you, your family, and your congregation to consider. Try going through these questions as a family at the dinner table, or in fellowship with the congregation after a service. Or, you could even pray through these questions as you come to the end of the day.

#### **Gratitude for God, the Father**

- What characteristics of God, the Father are present in His creation?
- What emotions does His creation evoke in you?
- How does the Father's creation inspire trust within you?

#### **Gratitude for Jesus Christ**

- How is the message of Jesus's gospel present in your life?
- In what ways does Jesus' life influence your own actions?
- What can you do to grow in forgiving and loving others as Jesus did?

#### **Gratitude for the Holy Spirit**

- Why is the Holy Spirit important to you?
- How has the Holy Spirit guided you in life?
- What truths have been illuminated for you by the Holy Spirit through divine services?

#### **Gratitude for the Church of Christ**

- How does your life bring glory to God?
- As believers in Christ, how can we overcome our differences to be unified?
- How do you help the church proclaim Jesus Christ?

#### **Gratitude for Salvation for the Departed**

- How has God shown mercy to you?
- How is God's faithfulness displayed in His desire to save all?

#### **Gratitude for our Congregations & Childhood in God**

- Why is worship and praise an important element of showing our gratitude to God?
- How can you show your gratitude for ministers and others who serve in your congregation?
- What changes can you make in your family and congregation to grow closer together?



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# CAROLS OF CHRISTMAS

where did they come from? what do they teach us?

*Come join us for our small group series in December!*

*If you're not part of a small group, talk to your rector about joining or starting one!*

