

Editorial: God's joy shines through 'imperfect' minds and bodies

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Over the last few days, I had three glimpses into the joy and wonder of God. Amid so much bad and troubling news, I want to share these glimpses with you and challenge us to see differently those in whom God shines so bright.

Lissy Frugé

The first began as an unlikely glimpse into joy.

Katie Frugé, associate director of Texas Baptists' Christian Life Commission, [posted](#) the following on Facebook Sept. 16: "Today [Cook Children's] hospital called informing me they simply need more beds for sick kiddos. They asked if I could postpone Lissy's surgery next week so they could give her bed to a child sick with COVID-19. This is not an exaggeration. They asked if Lissy's stomach tube next week is genuinely medically necessary or if it could wait. I told them we waited 5+ years past the average and we are at a critical point and need life-saving intervention."

Lissy has a seizure disorder and has endured a series of serious health issues, including a recent hospital stay for RSV. Her mom's Facebook post is not an understatement.

[WFAA](#)—the ABC affiliate in Dallas-Fort Worth—picked up Katie's post, as did the ABC affiliate in [Louisville](#), Ky.

Monday evening, Katie posted the photo of Lissy and her captivating joy

shown above with three words: “Surgery is ON!” Tuesday afternoon, Lissy underwent a successful surgery.

Eve Frugé

To celebrate her 10th birthday, Eve Frugé’s parents shared on Facebook over the weekend a [video](#) she made by herself about herself. Eve is Lissy’s older sister. The video can be described in at least one word: moxie. Another word: inspiring.

Despite not having a left arm and right leg, Eve describes herself in the video as “a girl (who) fought against doubt ... accepted her differences and stood up for herself.” She says she “can speak up and make a difference, because we are all different, but not everyone has the courage to say it.”

In the video, Eve paddles a canoe, sings, and does science experiments and other things to show she isn’t impeded by having only one arm and one leg.

It’s hard to watch her video without pumping your fist and declaring, “That’s right!”

Shepherd Curry

As Craig Curry, pastor of First Baptist Church in Plano, shared a family story during his sermon Sunday morning, his middle child Shepherd giggled infectiously—and without much restraint—as he remembered the incident.

Shepherd, who has autism and not a bone of pretense in his body, was tracking right along with his dad and started giggling in anticipation of the punchline—the most pure and wholesome giggling.

And he kept giggling. I could see the wheels turning in his eyes. Then I

giggled, and then my wife giggled. After Craig had moved on, Shepherd kept giggling. And I think I smiled the rest of the morning. I'm smiling now.

Children in church

Not all that long ago, children like Shepherd would not have been part of our worship services. Sadly, too many still aren't. Parents of children with autism have not always seen the church as a safe or welcoming place for the challenges—and blessings—their children offer.

But we can change that.

Likewise, it wasn't all that long ago children like Eve and Lissy were hidden from view. Sadly, too many still are. Stigmas and lack of accommodations have left them and their parents isolated, even from the church. And we've been poorer for it.

But we can change that, too.

We do not know the true reach of God's joy without the smile and laughter of those whose bodies and minds aren't "perfect." We think we will know it when such maladies are extinct and try to have it now with an airbrushed version of joy.

God's joy and wonder are on offer in places we've trained ourselves not to look. If we are to know the true reach of God's joy and wonder, we will need to live by some different rules.

A 2017 [post](#) by Justice and Peace Consulting appeared on my news feed Sunday afternoon, the same Sunday Shepherd giggled in church.

The post lists 10 rules for children in the worship service, and not one of them is punitive. At least, not for the children. Here are a few of the rules listed.

Rule one reads: “If you find that you’re sitting in front of a child and they can’t see, lean to the side.”

Rule two: “If the children seated behind you are rustling papers, hand them a crayon.”

Rule four: “If the teenagers are whispering give them some Smarties. The rustling and crinkling will replace their whispering.”

Rule nine: “When the three-year-old insists on standing on the front pew turned backwards looking at the rest of the people, give the child a pair of very dark glasses. That will prevent the child from catching any adult’s eye, which would lead to distracting them. This will protect the adults who, as we know, have very short attention spans and are easily distracted.”

I shared the post Sunday evening, and I thought about Shepherd enriching the worship service earlier that morning. Don’t tell Craig, but I thought Shepherd *made* the service. I’m so glad he was there. We need to make sure all the Shepherds, Eves and Lissys are there, too.

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