

Finding



JOY

A STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

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INTRODUCTION

Every single person is captivated by one pursuit in life—the pursuit of joy. Where does our endless quest for joy lead us? Far too often it leads to frustration, discontentment and even depression. However, Paul has discovered a secret. I love secrets. When someone says, “I have a secret” – I want in on it. What is it? Give me all the juicy details.

Paul does exactly that. He unpacks for us the secret to joy. Paul, writing from a Roman jail cell, reminds us that ultimate joy isn't derived from comfortable circumstances, but from a living, vibrant communion with Christ. He doesn't say, “Look at my house; now rejoice,” or “Look at my wife . . . my kids . . . my bank account. . .my success; now rejoice!” No, he says, “Look at Jesus, like I am doing, and rejoice with me.”

We are living in a time of uncertainty, chaos and conflict. It seems like we are fighting over everything. In the midst of all the chaos and fighting, Paul writes, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4).¹ Now more than ever, we as Christians need to fight for joy. Finding joy in the Lord not only strengthens and sustains us, it is a powerful apologetic to the world around us.

OUTCOMES

Our prayer is that you would experience transformation in your relationship with Jesus Christ as you study the book of Philippians. Join us in praying that we would grow in believing in *the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord* (Philippians 3:8). Below are three outcomes we desire God's Spirit to accomplish in our lives.

1. We would become a powerful countercultural force for the gospel by demonstrating the joy of the Lord.
2. Engage our people in community by doing a 11 week Small Group Study through the book of Philippians.
3. Encourage our people to study and memorize the Word of God for themselves.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

This study guide will help you experience Philippians within a group. Paul wrote his letter not to a single believer, but to an entire church family. It is meant to be studied alongside other believers. Doing this lets you benefit from what God is also teaching them, and it gives you their encouragement and accountability to live out the truths of the book of Philippians with great joy. It will make your personal devotion time even richer as you study this epistle in the context of community.

1. Sermon Notes

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges, convicts or confuses you?

2. Opening Question

¹ All scripture references are from the ESV unless otherwise noted

This question is designed to “prime the pump” for group discussion. People assimilate what they are able to communicate. Relax! Join in the conversation with your group as you study the book of Philippians.

3. Big Idea

This is the main truth that the Apostle Paul is communicating in the text.

4. Scripture Memory

Come ready to quote each week’s memory scripture with your group. It may be helpful to write the memory verse 2 or 3 times each day.

5. Bible Conversation

Your group will read a passage from Philippians and discuss it. As the heading suggest, the Bible conversation question are designed to get you to interact with the text and discern the author’s intended meaning for the text. Take turns reading each paragraph to increase group interaction.

6. Digging Deeper

The digging deeper questions are designed to help you apply the text to your life. Our prayer is that these questions will convict you and cause you to be more captivated by who Christ is and what he accomplished for you on the cross.

7. Mission

The book of Philippians was written as a thank you note from Paul to the church of Philippi. He thanked them for their generosity which allowed him to advance the gospel in a Roman jail. We are called to join Paul in the mission of the gospel. He calls the church of Philippi his “partners in the gospel” (Philippians 1:5). What does it mean to be a partner in the gospel? It requires of you to intercede, invest and invite.

Intercede

Pray asking God to work in them everything necessary for their salvation.² Pastor Jack Miller wrote that the sovereign Lord had ordained prayer as the means for Christians to activate the fulfillment of God’s missionary promises. He explained, Christians . . . have missed the exciting link between prayer and God’s purposes in the world. It is, simply, that prayer starts the promises of God on their way to fulfillment! In prayer, God allows us to lay hold of His purposes as these are expressed in His promises. . . . By claiming God’s promises as we petition Him in prayer, we set God’s work in motion (Luke 10:1-3, Acts 4:23-31).

Unbelievable as it may seem, the omnipotent God permits our requests to activate the fulfillment of His mighty promises in history (Rev. 8:1-5). As the laborers pray, He begins to ripen the harvest for reaping (Acts 13:1-4).⁶ “When I pray and do evangelism, I have laid hold of God’s own . . . method [of salvation],” He concluded that, “we must get down to knee-work.”³

² Packer, J. I.. Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God . InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

³ Graham, Michael A.. Cheer Up!: The Life and Ministry of Jack Miller (pp. 82-83). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Don't overlook the importance of prayer in evangelism. The more you pray for a person to know and experience the grace of God, the more your passion will grow to share the good news of the gospel with them.

Invest

People don't care how much you know until you know how much you care. Investing begins by listening to people's story. One of the greatest gifts you can give to a person you love is to listen to their story. People have a desire to know and be known. Far too often we are too occupied with our own stories that we fail to hear the stories of those God has placed into our lives.

Much of our evangelism training centers around what we are to say rather than training us to listen. Evangelism strategies can center around answering questions that few people are asking. We are trained to ask people to convert to a major world religion with less information than they would have to buy a used car. Before you can ever share the good news of the Gospel Story to someone you must first hear their story.

If a person is willing to entrust to you their story, especially the story beneath the story, then they will be more likely to trust the gospel story you desire to share with them.

Invite

Once you have heard a person's story you will naturally find opportunities to invite them to church, to a church event or even to your small group. Inviting a person to experience a taste of God's grace as expressed in various forms can be the most difficult step of the process.

8. Accountability & Prayer

Prayer is a critical part of your small group because, as you will be studying, "It is God who work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Your spiritual growth through this study will come by God's grace and power, not by your self-effort. Your group will pray for you and hold you accountable to cooperating with where God is at work in you and through you. You will also get a chance to pray for your group members.

Don't forget to share answered prayers so that your group's faith can be strengthened and rejoice in the faithfulness of God together.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

You can find this study, the Bible reading plan, memory verse and many more additional resources on our website www.newriverftl.com/findingjoy

Lesson

1

JOY IN IDENTITY

Philippians 1:1-2; Acts 16:11-34

1. Sermon Notes

2. Opening Question

How did you view yourself in middle school (Painful, I know)? How did others view you in middle school?

3. Big Idea

Your identity is not in what you have or haven't done but in what Christ has done for you on the cross?

4. Scripture Memory

Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." Acts 16:30-31

5. Bible Conversation

Read: Philippians 1:1-2; Acts 16:11-34

We learn in the book of Acts 16 that the church at Philippi was started by the Apostle Paul with a rather surprising mix of people. There was the affluent and educated Lydia (16:13-15), an oppressed slave girl (16:16-24), and the blue collar jailer (16:25-40). The only thing this group had in common was an encounter with Jesus that turned their lives around and made them followers of him.

The first core group member of Paul's church plant in Philippi is a woman named Lydia. (Acts 16: 11-15). Luke tells us of this very significant individual (v. 14). Apparently, Lydia was a woman of means (a "dealer in purple cloth") who "worshiped God," but that doesn't mean "Christian." She was probably a God-fearer. But when Paul began teaching, God opened her heart and mind to believe the gospel. Like Lydia, many of you have been "God-believers." You grew up religious but you had never encountered the life-changing power of the gospel. While leading a prayer group by the river the gospel that Paul preached captivated her heart. She and her household (who apparently also were impacted by the gospel) were baptized. After this, she showed hospitality by inviting Paul's team to stay with her. God opened her heart; she opened her home. The church of Philippi began in Lydia's home.

The next core group member was a demonically possessed, poltergeist slave girl (16: 16-24). Paul cast out a spirit from this tormented girl. She goes from being a girl who was controlled by demons to a girl who is transformed by the gospel. Because she had brought her oppressive owners a profit from fortune telling, her transformation didn't please them. In their anger, the owners took Paul and Silas before the magistrates, who then had them flogged and imprisoned.

Whenever we advance the gospel in to Satan's backyard you can always encounter resistance and Paul and Silas did. Spiritual warfare will always be the norm when we seek to advance the gospel in joy.

Finally, Luke describes the conversion of the Philippian jailer (16:25-34). Remarkably, Paul is filled with joy while in prison. Do you find this challenging? I do. Do you think you need something other than Jesus to find real joy? We often think, "I know I need Jesus, but I also need this..."

- Better-behaved kids?
- A better job?
- A different address?
- More vacation time?

In America we often think "bigger" is the answer—bigger house, bigger muscles, bigger church, etc.—but what we really need is a bigger vision of God. Nothing else is an ultimate source of joy. You can have all of those and never know this joy. If you have everything but Jesus, you will be longing for more. If you have nothing but Jesus, you have everything you need for joy.

Paul and Silas cared more about Jesus than about earthly comforts. This scene powerfully illustrates Paul's command to "rejoice always" (Phil 4:4). He didn't just write about rejoicing always; he did it! As a result of their praise, God shook the earth and shook the heart of one particular individual. Everyone's bonds were unfastened. Then we read of the jailer. He initially feared for his life because he had failed to do his job (cf. Acts 12:19), but then, after Paul comforted him, the jailer eventually said, "Sirs, what

must I do to be saved?" (16:30). I think this is amazing! God was at work in his life. Paul and Silas rightly told him that he didn't have to clean his life up; he needed only to "believe on the Lord Jesus" (cf. John 3:16; Acts 10:43; Rom 1:16; 10:10-11). After Paul and Silas unpacked the gospel, this jailer and his family believed and were baptized. Like Lydia, he, too, showed the men hospitality. He brought these church planters into his house, fed them, and washed their wounds.

In Acts 16:35-40 we read how the missionaries got an official release (after some drama!) and were asked to leave the city. But before they did, Luke writes, "After leaving the jail, they came to Lydia's house where they saw and encouraged the brothers, and departed" (v. 40).

The church apparently had already grown, and we read that Lydia made her home available as a house church. She used her wealth and her home as a means of building up the church and advancing the gospel. This is the story of the founding of the church in Philippi.

These are the people who Paul called "saints in Christ Jesus." How could he call them saints? Here is what I want you to see. Please don't miss this. Paul doesn't call these people saints because of who they are or what they did but because of who Christ is and what he did for them. As with everyone connected to the church of Philippi, your greater identity is in how you are joined to Jesus and his people. Your identity as a saint is a declaration of what Christ has done in you. He has forgiven you of all sin. He has given you his righteousness. He has made you a new creation. You are an adopted child of God. This is all a work of God's grace in our lives.

Why did Paul refer to himself and Timothy as "servants of Christ"?

Who were the "saints" in Philippi? What is striking about that?

What does this tell us about the power of the gospel and the diversity of the church?

What is it that unifies this diverse church together?

6. Digging Deeper

WHO ARE YOU?⁴

No matter how well you know that your core identity is in Christ, there likely will be times you tend to see yourself in some other way first. For this exercise, work on your own to think about how you answer the question "Who am I?" and what the Bible tells you about it. Complete both steps of the exercise below. Then, when the group is ready, discuss the questions at the end of the exercise together.

STEP 1: HOW YOU SEE YOUR IDENTITY. Let's use the people mentioned at the start of Paul's letter, plus some who were there when the Philippian church began, to think about identity. Note for yourself which of the following types of identity might sometimes feel defining to you.

- The merchant.** I find my identity in my work or career, or in the reputation that comes with workplace or school success.
- The Roman soldier.** I find my identity in my heritage, my national or political affiliation, or a cause I dutifully support.
- The household member.** I find my identity in the family or community I belong to, or in its status, appearance, or way of doing things.
- The slave girl.** I find my identity in a certain hurt I have suffered or lifestyle I have lived, or in some struggle or condition that seems to define my life.
- The overseer or deacon.** I find my identity in a role I have within the church or some Christian ministry.
- The religious achiever.** I find my identity in being spiritually devout, morally upstanding, or doctrinally right.
- The young apprentice.** I find my identity in my youth or my age, or in my generation's way of earning approval or likability.
- Other: _____

STEP 2: YOUR GREATER IDENTITY IN CHRIST. As with everyone connected to the Philippian church, your greater identity is in how you are joined to Jesus and his people. If you are a believer, you are a saint and a servant receiving grace and peace in Christ. This should define how you go about everything else. So now, read through the following list of truths about who you are in Christ that come from the rest of Paul's letter, and do the following:

1. Pick a few that most clearly show you how Jesus is a better identity than your lesser, other identities.

³ PHILIPPIANS: Finding Joy When Life Is Hard, Bancroft, Josiah D. p. 10

2. Pick one and read the passage from Philippians that goes with it. Be ready to share what you learned from that passage.

- God in me.** God is at work in me to make me someone who loves others and brings glory to him (read Philippians 1:6-11).
- Shame lifted.** I can serve Christ with honor, knowing that whatever happens, I belong to my King both in life and in death (read Philippians 1:20-23).
- Engaged in the fight.** I am employed in the great struggle against sin and evil, on the side of Christ the winner (read Philippians 1:27-30).
- Humility.** I am equipped to be the rarest kind of person, one who actually cares for others ahead of myself (read Philippians 2:3-5).
- Shining light.** In the midst of a troubled world, I have a compelling mission and purpose worth living for or even dying for (read Philippians 2:15, 25-29).
- Righteous record.** I rest in a perfectly righteous standing bestowed on me by God instead of an earned record that's a constant burden to maintain (read Philippians 3:8-9).
- Citizenship in heaven.** I will be resurrected from the dead, rescued from shame and destruction, by my Savior who is coming to bring me into glory (read Philippians 3:18-20).
- Joy:** I can be a person of deep thankfulness, peace, and contentment even in this life's hardest situations (read Philippians 4:4-7).

When your group is ready, share and explain your responses. What other identities sometimes feel bigger to you than who you are in Christ? How does the passage you read show you that Christ is your bigger and better identity?

7. Mission

Intercede - Who are three people that you can be praying for that needs to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ?

Invest - How can you invest in them relationally?

Invite - Begin praying for courage to invite to them church.

8. Accountability & Prayer

How has your personal worship time going?

How has your thought life been? Have you let worry, lust or fear dominate your thought life rather than joy?

How can you pray for your group members?

Lesson

2

JOY IN PARTNERSHIP

Philippians 1:3-11

1. Sermon Notes

2. Opening Question

If God could change one specific area of your life, what would that be?

3. Big Idea

Your hope is in the promise that God will complete the work that He has begun in you.

4. Scripture Memory

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. **Philippians 1:6**

5. Bible Conversation

Read: Philippians 1:3-8

The question you have to ask is “why is Paul’s heart overwhelmed with joy?” We don’t have to guess. The very next word tells us “because” of three things: 1) his partnerships in the gospel, 2) God’s gospel promise, and 3) that the church of Philippi were partakers with him of grace.

Gospel partnership (v. 5).

He found joy in his gospel partnerships with the people of the church of Philippi like Lydia, the slave girl and a rough and tough blue collar jailer. And even partners he mentions by name in his letter. Gospel partnerships are friendship that are informed and transformed by the gospel. It is in these kinds of friendships that we find true joy. Joy that fuels relationships even during suffering and sacrifice. It is the kind of friendships that are forged in the gospel that last—in fact, they last for eternity. These are the kind of friendships that are meaningful and life-shaping.

Gospel promise (v. 6).

Paul’s hope was in the promise that he who begin a new work will complete unto the day of salvation. This promise declares that you are not the person you were when you came to Christ and tomorrow you have incredible hope that you will not be the person you are today.

Partakers of Grace (v. 7).

Finally Paul’s joy is rooted in that he is a partaker of God’s grace. The secret to fighting for joy depends upon us to relying upon God’s grace upon grace upon and grace. Grace radically transform us the way we relate together. For example, the apostle Paul opens his letter to the church in Philippi by calling them “saints in Christ.” I loved that he called them “saints in Christ.” We are not “saints on our own”, but “in Christ” we are saints. On our own we are sinners in desperate need of a savior. However, “in Christ” we are sinners saved by grace. We have a whole new identity “in Christ.”

When we began to see each other as “saints in Christ” we relate to each in a radically different way. We relate to each other as “partakers together in grace” (v. 7). We are freed to relate to each other on the promise “that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (v. 6).

Look at the person next to you and say, “God isn’t finished with you yet!” The good news about that promise is we can relate to each other in the hope that God will continue to work his grace in us.

Because of this promise we know that God has not given up on us. And if that is true, then we have the hope not to give up on each other. Look at person next to you and say, “God hasn’t given up on you and neither have I.

Don't look for perfection before you show gratitude; look for evidences of grace in people's lives. Be quick to thank God for the work of the gospel in others, and remember that sanctification is a slow process. The result is that our joy for each other is not dependent upon our perfect performance but on God's perfect promise. That is an unstoppable and unending joy!

We need to remember these three secrets because they are woven throughout this book to empower us to fight for joy. That is just a little glimpse into what it means to be "partners in the gospel" and "partakers together in grace." We will spend the next 9 weeks unpacking how we can advance in joy together.

Have you ever experienced gospel partnerships? Who are/were they? How did you relate to each other differently?

What area in your life do you need to experience the promise that not only does God start the work but will complete the work? How does this bring you assurance, hope and freedom?

How does this promise shape the way you relate to others?

Read: Philippians 1:3-8

Paul moves from expressing appreciation to intercession for those who have partnered with him in the gospel and are partakers with him in grace. It's worth pointing out that Paul's affection for the church leads into this prayer. This is what you do for people you love. You pray for them. Do you love people? If so, you'll pray for them.

This is a prayer for joy. The essence of this prayer is that we would grow together as partakers in grace. It is a prayer describing how we would relate together as we grow in grace. Let's take a look at the prayer in these three parts: (1) the petition, (2) the purpose, and (3) the praise.

The Petition (v.9)

Paul's basic petition is for growth in love—a love that's informed by knowledge and discernment. Paul's prayer for their love to "keep on growing" or "abound" helps us to see that our love shouldn't be static.

Apart from knowledge of God and His Word, we will not love in a way that glorifies God and blesses others. We must see the need for knowledge in all of our relationships. Put all of your relationships under the authority of God's Word and ask God these questions:

- What does Your Word say about dating and marriage?
- What does Your Word say about loving my enemies?
- How should I love my friends and coworkers?
- How should I love my kids?
- How should I love the nations?
- How should I love "the least of these"?

Then submit to the instruction of the Word of God, not to cultural opinion or your own feelings. Love is rooted in the knowledge of God. Otherwise, we can't know how to love appropriately. In our day people want to separate knowledge of God's Word from love. Love today is more associated with tolerance and feelings than with truth and righteousness. Many operate by "If it feels right, then it's acceptable." If you try to correct someone, then you are labeled as intolerant and therefore unloving.

But love must be tied to truth for it to be truly, distinctly Christian love. When the Bible rubs against your preferences, who wins? Be encouraged that this is a prayer. Pray for help in loving in a way that honors an accurate view of Christ and His Word. Know Jesus deeply and allow Him to soften your heart toward others and empower you to love the people in a way that can truly display God's grace.

Purpose (v. 10-11a)

The phrase "approve what is excellent" or as the NIV puts it "discern what is best" refers to the ability to distinguish "the things that really matter" from a variety of competing possibilities. We live in a world that is constantly competing for the contested space of our lives. The space we have when we are not sleeping or working. What consumes that empty space? Paul is praying that we may discern what is best during that time so that our lives are filled with righteousness.

Paul prays for the Philippians to choose the things that are best in this life and in their relationships. He prays for them to have discernment in order to properly distinguish between right and wrong, between the better and the best, between things that matter and things that don't matter.

This petition should cause us to ask questions like these:

- Am I pursuing knowledge of Christ with passion?

- Am I valuing knowing Christ above everything else?
- Am I in a church that teaches the Bible faithfully?
- Am I doing what is best with my life, with my time, with my money, with my mind, with my kids, with my ministry, and in my relationships?
- Am I doing good things or gospel things with my life?

By knowing Christ and pursuing a life that matters, you are living in view of “the day of Christ.” That’s a wise life. A life that leads to joy.

The Praise (v. 11b)

Why does Paul pray for all of these things? It is for the fame and renown of God. He ends with his ultimate goal: the glory and praise of God. There is no higher purpose in life than to glorify God. You don’t glorify God in order to do something else; the end of it all is the glory of God. When this prayer becomes a reality in our lives by God’s grace, we begin to taste and experience the unstoppable joy of the gospel.

Why is it important to have both love and knowledge/discernment (v. 9)? What does it result in? (v. 10-11)?

6. Digging Deeper

Go back and review the question listed in the Bible Conversation section of this lesson. Which question or questions do you need to ask regarding the application of God’s Word in your own life?

What truths of the Word of God challenges your thinking about an area of your life?

What would it look like to allow God’s Word to shape your life versus cultural opinion or your own feelings?

Talk about the implications of this prayer for your life (think of everyday implications).

7. Mission

Intercede - Who are three people that you can be praying for that needs to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ?

Invest - How can you invest in them relationally?

Invite - Begin praying for courage to invite to them church.

8. Accountability & Prayer

How has your personal worship time going? Do you feel like you are understanding the book of Philippians? Where are you struggling in your personal worship?

How has your thought life been? Have you let worry, lust or fear dominate your thought life rather than joy?

How can you pray for your group members?

Prayer

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11)

Lesson

3

JOY IN SUFFERING

Philippians 1:12-18

1. Sermon Notes

2. Opening Question

Have you ever seen a person go through a difficult time and still be filled with joy? Do you think that is possible?

3. Big Idea

How can a person experience suffering and loss and not lose their joy.

4. Scripture Memory

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. **Philippians 1:9-11**

5. Bible Conversation

Read: Philippians 1:12-18

Paul moves from his prayer for the church to an update on what is going on with him. In a dramatic understatement that keeps the attention off himself, Paul simply states "what has happened to me." What has happened to Paul is that he is in prison for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul is facing a terrible trial. Paul is in chains. He was chained to a member of the Praetorian Guard at all hours of the day, on shifts. They would work in shifts, but he was always chained. He wasn't just in prison. He was chained in prison to an individual guard. He couldn't go to the bathroom in privacy. He couldn't sleep in privacy. It was hell. He was suffering for the sake of the gospel.

Before we jump further into text I want to stop right here because we are going to be looking at how Paul was suffering and when ever you talk about suffering it immediately invokes the question in many people's hearts and minds. How can God be both sovereign and good in the face of suffering? This is a major objection that people have when we talk about suffering or when they go through suffering.

For example, in the wake of the great devastation that was brought upon Thailand and other countries surrounding the Indian Ocean, one reporter wrote in the New York Observer: "If God is God, he's not good. If God is good, he's not God. You can't have it both ways, especially after the Indian Ocean catastrophe." (Ron Rosenbaum)

When it comes to suffering, often, people will try to lessen God's sovereignty in an attempt to get him off the hook for the suffering that takes place in this world. Or we may doubt His goodness or His love for us. To diminish God in terms of either His goodness or His sovereignty is to envision an altogether different God than the one the Bible presents to us.

Paul deals with suffering head on. He tells us how to suffering in such a way that we may bring glory to God. He doesn't try to explain why suffering happens he simply and powerfully by his own example tells us not to waste our suffering.

What was causing Paul to suffer? (v. 13)

Who was causing Paul to suffer? (v. 17)

How did Paul's suffering serve to advance the gospel?

6. Digging Deeper

Paul is not only in a very demeaning, demoralizing and dehumanizing situation, but really, his career was to plant churches and that seems like it has come to an end. And now he was not only in prison, but he was facing possible trial and execution. Paul could not be in a worse situation. Yet he says in verse 12, "what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel."

Take a moment and answers these questions individually. Be prepared to come back and share your answers with your group.

When you think about your life, what do you think needs to happen for you to have joy today? What situation or person in your life stands between you and contentment?

Reflect on a difficult circumstance or relationship you have experienced in the past. You don't have to share too many personal details, but consider how God could have used that circumstance or relationship to advance the gospel. Did God use it for His glory? Can God still use it for His glory?

Think of a difficult circumstance or relationship you currently find yourself in. How can God use this to advance the gospel in your own life or in the lives of others?

This "digging deeper" exercise may have stirred up deep emotion and pain in your life. You or your group do not need to resolve those issues during your group time. Stop and allow your group members to pray with you that God would give you his grace to navigate this difficult circumstances or relationship to advance his work of grace in you and through you.

7. Mission

Intercede - Who are three people that you can be praying for that needs to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ? This week ask the three people specifically how you can pray for them.

Invest - How can you invest in them relationally? Schedule time to spend with the people you are praying for.

Invite - Begin praying for courage to invite to them church.

8. Accountability & Prayer

How has your personal worship time going? Do you feel like you are understanding the book of Philippians? Where are you struggling in your personal worship?

How has your thought life been? Have you let worry, lust or fear dominate your thought life rather than joy?

How can you pray for your group members?

Lesson

4

Joy in Life or Death

Philippians 1:18b-30

1. Sermon Notes

2. Opening Question

If there was one thing you can have in this life that would make you eternally happy, what would that be?

3. Big Idea

Your hope is in the promise that God will complete the work that He has begun in you.

4. Scripture Memory

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. **Philippians 1:21**

5. Bible Conversation

Read: Philippians 1:18b-30

If there is one thing you can have in this life that would make you eternally happy what would that be? For those of you who have grown up in church don't jump to the "Jesus" answer so quickly. You may believe that confessionally but is that true functionally? So often we believe that Jesus + something = everything. Rather than Jesus + Nothing = Everything.

Paul loves the church of Philippi so much, he pleaded with them to want something better than any other thing they could want. He wrote, "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ." (Philippians 1:27).

So the big question that we have to wrestle with is, "How are we to live a life worthy of the gospel?" What does Paul mean by this command? He doesn't mean that we should live a life worthy of earning the gospel or our salvation. Salvation is a gift of God's grace in which no one can boast (Ephesian 2:8-9).

For us to understand what Paul means by this we must understand what the word "worthy" means. For Paul, it means ascribing worth. When he commands us to live in a "worthy" way, he means we should live in such a way that we demonstrate what we believe is of supreme worth. In other words, it means living a life in such a way that we truly believe that we "count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of know Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8).

For Christians, it means living in such a way that Jesus is seen as big, that Jesus is seen as glorious. See, in the spiritual economy of Paul, God and his gospel are most important, not Paul and his well-being.

So to answer the question "how do we live a life worthy of the gospel?" The answer is that we must make our life's mission statement "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." (v. 21). We are to live with the preeminence of Christ in our lives in such a way that everything else pales in comparison to knowing Christ.

So this begs the question to be asked: What do you live for? In this short life, we don't know how long we will live. What will you live for?

Writing from a Roman prison, a chained man tells us about the meaning of life and the glory of death. The apostle Paul tells us about a life worth living and a death worth dying. Verse 21 summarizes it: "For me, living is Christ and dying is gain." This is one of the most quoted verses in the entire New Testament, and for good reason. This is what living and dying are about. It's all about. Christ.

It's easy to confess that living is Christ, isn't it? But not so fast. The confession and the conviction don't always go together. Paul's confession erupts from deep conviction. The danger is that we may confessionally believe this but not live this out functionally.

The application of this verse appears with the little phrase at the beginning, "For me." Paul resolved that he would live for Christ. Everyone must fill in this blank personally. How would you complete this sentence, "For me, living is _____"?

Far too many will fill in the blank of "For to me to live is—" with anything but Christ. I alluded to this earlier. It often gets filled in with cheap substitutes: money, sexual pleasure, power, beauty, entertainment, etc. But using the logic of this passage, notice what fills the second blank, "Dying is _____," if you fill the first with one of these substitutes.

- If you say, "Living is money," then you would fill in the second blank with "Dying is being broke ." After all, you can't take it with you.
- If you say, "Living is sexual pleasure," then you would conclude, "Dying is having no more pleasure." So what sustains you in suffering?
- If you say, "Living is power," then the second blank would be, "Dying is being powerless." We can die a thousand miserable deaths every time we lose power or control.
- If you say, "Living is beauty," then you must conclude, "Dying is losing all beauty and rotting."
- If you live for entertainment, then your gravestone would read, "Dying is having no more fun."

You see whatever you fill this first blank in with anything creates it will result in a thousand miserable deaths because anything created will eventually let you down. No pun intended.

In your short life, what will you live for? What will you die for? You don't want to live merely for money, sex, power, beauty, or entertainment. These are gifts from God, to be stewarded properly, but they aren't our aims in life. They often turn into idols that will turn on you.

In fact, the more you look to Christ for your ultimate joy, the more you will enjoy everything else. When you find your ultimate joy in the Gift-giver, then the gifts become much sweeter.

You want to spend your life on something that not only matters now but will also matter in a billion years. If you say, "Living is Christ," then you can joyfully say, "Dying is gain." Living for Christ not only takes the sting out of death but also makes death gloriously attractive.

So of course Paul would say, "To live is Christ." In the logic of the gospel, there are no alternatives to Christ. Every other option is no option at all. When everything considered valuable in life is seen to be nothing in comparison to the glory of Christ, you learn rather well that Christ alone is worth living for. Christ alone is worthy of an entire life's affections and devotions. He is worthy of so much more, in fact, which is why Paul completes his declaration "to live is Christ" this way: "to die is gain." In effect, altogether this meant that Christ was at the conscious center of everything—so that Paul had a Christ-centered life, a Christ-powered life, and a Christ-exalting life.

What does Paul seek to bring encouragement about the future to the church at Philippi in this passage, in light of his pending circumstances?

How does having Paul's perspective of complete trust and hope in Christ in life, death, or suffering (vv. 19-21) bring freedom, power, and purpose?

With this passage in mind, read 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. Do you have a fear of death? What is our hope and purpose in life or death?

Paul saw that his living would benefit others as they grew in faith, found joy in Christ, and glorified Jesus more and more (vv. 24-26). How can you live (practically) to help others grow, find joy, and glorify Jesus?

Paul uses military language to encourage the church to stand firm for the faith and live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. What does Paul call the people, and us, to be about? (In our calling, life, unity, community, the church, expectations, etc.)

6. Digging Deeper

A Gospel Manner of Life⁵

On your own, read about the difference between a worldly manner of life and a gospel manner, based on Paul’s explanations in our passage. Notice some customs that fit your life—both ways you still act like a citizen of the world and ways you have learned to act like the citizen of heaven you are. Be ready to discuss your findings at the end of the exercise.

SELF-PROTECTION vs. UNITY “Standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel. . .” (v. 27).	
Worldly Manner	Gospel Manner
Faced with suffering, scarcity, or tough decisions, I get protective of myself and demanding about what I think is best. My me-first or I’m-right instincts kick in.	I remember that in Christ I am rich in the heavenly treasures that matter most. I rest in the can’t-lose-it live of my Father, who provides all I need in this life and a rich inheritance in the next.
I may become jealous of others who avoid pain I must endure. I may use gossip or manipulation to get ahead of advance what’s “right.”	Knowing that Christ provides and protects makes me able to be generous and accept being last. I am teachable and submit to godly leaders.
I jump to blame people when things go wrong.	I’m understanding when things go wrong.
Convinced that the times are scary. I’m angry with anyone who gets in my way or takes an approach I think is wrong.	Convinced that Christ reigns, I stand with fellow believers to honor and trust him, rather than opposing them to win my preferences.

⁴ PHILIPPIANS: Finding Joy When Life Is Hard, Bancroft, Josiah D. p. 29

FEAR vs. CONFIDENCE

“. . . and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. (v.28)

Worldly Manner	Gospel Manner
Faced with the prospect of suffering, I make decisions out of fear.	I make decision out of confidence in Christ.
I worry about harm or failure, so I avoid risk, or I become willing to cheat or harm others to keep myself from failing.	In the end, I know Christ will not fail and his plans will not suffer harm, so I can be aboveboard and kind in whatever I do.
I worry about disgrace or discomfort, so I become willing to lie or shift blame.	In the end and in Christ, no disgrace will stick to me, so I can always be honest.
I feel that my survival and my reputation depend on me, and the result is anxiety or even a lingering sense of dread. Uncertainty gnaws at me.	I may be uncertain what will happen on the way, but I am sure my end is not destruction. This frees em from worry and selfishness, and lets me love others.

ABUNDANCE vs. WILLINGNESS

“For it has been granted to you that of the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict. (v.29-30)

Worldly Manner	Gospel Manner
The avoidance of suffering or discomfort guides my life. I help others based on my skills or my excess rather than their needs.	I see the big pattern of life: that like my Savior, I endure suffering and discomfort now that surely will lead to victory.
I get annoyed when I’m asked for something that will be a bother.	I see the glory in dying to my me-first-reflexes—starting in small everyday ways.
I resist ministry opportunities or acts of kindness that are outside my comfort zone, explaining how they are “not my calling.”	My calling is to serve Christ, even in discomfort or suffering, which welds me all the more to him.
My ministry involvement feels more like a hobby than like I’m part of the eternal conflict between evil and the gospel, where injuries are part of the fight.	Jesus will twist evil for my good and the glory of his kingdom. So I am willing to engage his mission even when that means entering darkness, knowing hurt, or confronting evil.

When the group is ready, discuss what you noticed. How has God taught you to live in a gospel manner, and how do you want to grow so that your customs better fit your home with Christ?

7. Mission

Intercede - How did the people you are praying for respond to you asking specifically how you can pray for them?

Invest - Share with your group ways you can invest relationally with the three people you are praying for. Think of ways you can serve them or invite them over for coffee, dinner, etc.

Invite - Begin praying for courage to invite to them church.

8. Accountability & Prayer

How has your personal worship time going? Do you feel like you are understanding the book of Philippians? Where are you struggling in your personal worship?

How has your thought life been? Have you let worry, lust or fear dominate your thought life rather than joy?

How can you pray for your group members?

Prayer of St. Patrick the Evangelist

As I arise today, may the strength of God pilot me, the power of God uphold me, the wisdom of God guide me. May the eye of God look before me, the ear of God hear me, the word of God speak for me. May the hand of God protect me, the way of God lie before me, the shield of God defend me, the host of God save me. May Christ shield me today. Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit, Christ when I stand, Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me. Amen.

Lesson

5

Joy in Sacrifice

Philippians 2:1-11

1. Sermon Notes

2. Opening Question

If there was one thing you can have in this life that would make you eternally happy, what would that be?

3. Big Idea

When Christ takes hold of our lives, he enables us to lay down our lives so other can know him.

4. Scripture Memory

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **Philippians 2:3-4**

5. Bible Conversation

Read: Philippians 2:1-11

After encouraging the Philippians to live a life worthy of the gospel, the opening verses of Philippians 2 offer a daunting and beautiful picture of what that means. These verses are about perfect humility and unity. They are a picture of Christ.

First, Paul reminds the believers what they have experienced in Christ: encouragement, comfort from love, participation in the Spirit, affection and sympathy. These are the things they have received from God and the things they, as the church, will reflect if they live a life worthy of the gospel. They will be united, "being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind" (v. 2). If they live a life worthy of the gospel, they will be humble, because unity is impossible without humility.

Paul's words in verses 3-4 sound nice at first. It's not hard to appreciate the idea of caring for one another and looking out for one another. But Paul isn't offering vague encouragement about being better people – he's commanding the church to set aside pride. He's commanding the church to "do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit." This true humility is impossible without Christ, which is why Paul follows his command with a beautiful hymn of Christ's character, sacrifice, and exaltation.

Philippians 2:5-11 should be planted deep in the heart of every believer, because this is the gospel. The Son of God, who was lacking nothing and perfectly holy, took on the form of man in order to become a servant of man. His life of perfect humility, selflessness, and obedience to God culminated in shameful death on a cross. This is the example Christ set for us – willingness to be humiliated for the sake of loving others; willingness to obey God, even if it means death.

There is joy and hope in living for Christ and following his example of selflessness, because death was not his end. By conquering death, Jesus became our Lord and Savior, and God "highly exalted him...so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (vv. 9-11). By serving out of love and doing nothing out of selfish ambition, the church displays Christ to itself and the world, to the glory of God the Father.

How is the Christian community described in verses 1-5 different from communities you've experienced?

Write down steps we can take as a body of believers to better reflect Christ in the way Paul suggests in verse 1-2. Discuss how your group can grow in relating to each other in this way.

Where do you find yourself acting or being tempted to act out of selfish ambition? What would you change in these circumstances if you were able to consider others more significant than yourself?

Read Isaiah 53 and Philippians 2:5-8. How is Christ's humility displayed in these verses?

6. Digging Deeper

JESUS'S STORY AND YOUR STORY⁶

A big part of understanding how Jesus humbled himself for you and was exalted for you is that it means you no longer have to pretend. You don't have to hide from the world or other believers, acting like you're better than you really are. It's okay for people to see that you struggle and fail and often fall into sin, because you have a Savior who died and rose for that kind of person. You can take your problems to Christ, and also take others to him with you.

On your own, think about how your connection to Jesus's down and-up life matters when your own Christian life gets difficult. Work through each step of the exercise below, and be ready to discuss some of your responses.

STEP 1: JESUS'S STORY. Begin by reminding yourself of the gospel's meaning for you if you have believed, as seen in Jesus's humiliation and exaltation. Here's a summary:

⁶ Ibid p. 38-41

- **Humiliation: Jesus became a human** and came to earth on a mission to save you. He knows the weaknesses and troubles of human life in this world, and has been tempted in every way you are, and sympathizes (Hebrew 4:15).
- **Humiliation: Jesus suffered and died** on the cross in your place. Unlike you, he obeyed God perfectly, and then he took on himself the curse and shame and punishment for all your sin. He credits you with his perfectly righteous record, and you are dearly loved child of God (Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- **Turning Point: Jesus went to the grave and came out alive.** In him, you are dead to sin and are spiritually alive, able to be godly and to offer your own life in thanksgiving (Romans 6:4-14). He allowed himself to become a corpse so that you might not fear death but would know he has power over it and will raise you too from the grave to glory (Hebrews 2:14-15).
- **Exaltation: Jesus ascended to heaven** to reign and to constantly help you. From your own future home, he sends the Holy Spirit to comfort you, to build your desire for heavenly things, and to provide you with his above-every-name power as you go on mission. He continually joins his prayer with yours as you ask for daily forgiveness and help in living for God (Hebrews 7:24-25).
- **Exaltation: Jesus will return in glory** to vindicate you and destroy evil. The same person who lovingly died to take your punishment will be the Judge who declares you spotless and brings you into perfect life with him (Matthew 25:34). He will condemn all of his and your enemies, crush sin and death forever, and remake the world into a home where God's glory is forever known and enjoyed.

STEP 2: YOUR STORY. How is it hard for you to love others and live humbly on mission? Think of an incident in your life, which you can tell the group about, that fits one of the following conditions:

- **Disinterest.** Think of a time you failed to see the point of living humbly or on mission, or to be excited about an opportunity to do so. You needed the gospel to energize you to go out.
- **Cold-heartedness.** Think of a time you protected yourself or held back because you didn't care enough about people to live humbly or join in mission. You needed the gospel to awaken your love for Jesus and others.
- **Disappointment.** Think of a time you were trying to live humbly or participate in ministry/mission, but the results were discouraging. Your disappointment was prodding you to draw closer to Jesus to be refreshed and renewed.

- **Condemnation.** Think of a time you were trying to live humbly or participate in ministry/ mission, but you failed in a way that felt personally condemning. Your obvious need for Jesus was pressing you to discover more deeply his love for you.

The time in my life that I'm thinking of is: _____

STEP 3: MATCH JESUS'S STORY WITH YOURS. The whole story of Jesus, both his humiliation and his exaltation, meets you when your Christian life is hard. Consider the hard time you mentioned above, and be ready to answer one of the following questions:

1. What parts of Jesus's story motivated you to start loving others or go on mission, or what might motivate you in a similar situation now? (Try to find something in both Jesus's humiliation and his exaltation that moves you toward love/ mission.)

2. What parts of Jesus's story became more meaningful to you when loving others or being on mission got difficult, or what might do so? (Try to find something in both Jesus's humiliation and his exaltation that help when you're disappointed or have failed.)

When the group is ready, share and explain your answers. How does Jesus's story motivate yours, and how does your story drive you back to his?

7. Mission

Intercede - How did the three people you are praying for respond when you ask them how you can pray for them? If you didn't ask this past week, try again this week.

Invest - Last week you brainstormed ways you can invest relationally with the people you are praying for. This week put some of those actions in to plan.

Invite - Begin praying for courage to invite to them church.

8. Accountability & Prayer

How has your personal worship time going? Do you feel like you are understanding the book of Philippians? Where are you struggling in your personal worship?

How has your thought life been? Have you let worry, lust or fear dominate your thought life rather than joy?

How can you pray for your group members?

Lesson

6

Joy in Obedience

Philippians 2:12-18

1. Sermon Notes

2. Opening Question

If there was one thing you can have in this life that would make you eternally happy, what would that be?

3. Big Idea

You can work out your salvation because God works in your salvation.

4. Scripture Memory

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. **Philippians 2:12-13**

5. Bible Conversation

Read: Philippians 2:12-18

As we read through this text, we see this overwhelming joy spring up out of Paul's heart. The question is what is the cause of this joy? The answer is found in the first word "Therefore." "Therefore" is a connector to last week's passage. Everything we are going to talk about in this lesson must be read and lived out in light of seeing and savoring the Jesus of verse 5-11. Refresh your memory by reading Philippians 2:5-11.

This is one of the most concise and captivating glimpses of who Christ is and what He accomplished for us on the cross that we have in scripture. Paul is telling us to keep this in mind. Jesus not only shows us a pattern for obedience, but gives us the power for obedience. If He was just our example it would be crushing. But He is far more than our example, He is our Savior.

Paul paints this powerful picture of Jesus and then exhorts us with the word "therefore" or "in light of" or "in response to" work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. So what does Paul mean when he says "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling? Let me begin with what Paul does NOT mean. He does NOT mean that we are to work to earn our salvation. Salvation is a gift of God's grace in which no one can boast (Ephesian 2:8-9).

Paul is saying, we don't work FOR our salvation. We work OUT of our salvation (v.12). There is a massive difference between working FOR your salvation and working OUT of your salvation. Paul roots this exhortation in who Christ is and what He accomplished for us on the cross. That is why he connects verses 12-13 with a "therefore" to verses 5-11. He roots the exhortation of verses 12-13 to the declaration of who Christ is in verse 5-11.

Paul is saying that, the hard work of the Christian life is to rest in the finished work of Christ on the cross. In order to grow in your sanctification (to grow in Christlikeness) we must believe more deeply in your justification (the finished work of Christ on the cross). The hard work of the Christian life is to rest more deeply in your justification. This is the secret to experiencing true gospel power in your Christian life.

What does this mean practically? Justification means you have been made right with God. Your sins are forgiven. You have been given the righteousness of Christ. You have all the love, acceptance and approval you will ever need in Christ Jesus. Your identity does not rest in what you have done or not done but on what Christ has done for you on the cross. To the degree that you believe IN your justification will be the degree that you will live OUT your sanctification.

So how do we grow in our sanctification? Paul tells us "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Paul is not talking about a view of God as an angry old man in the sky, waiting to zap us with lightning bolts the moment we mess up. Paul is talking about what happens

deep within our hearts when we encounter a glorious, holy God. We are filled with awe that leads to worshipful obedience. Paul is talking about what happens when daily you live at the foot of the cross keenly aware of the height of God's holiness and thus the depth of your sinfulness so that the cross of Christ looms large in your hearts and minds. Are you captivated by a big view of God?

So the question we must wrestle with "is where do I find the strength to work out my salvation day after day after day?" Here is where we find our unending hope. We work OUT our salvation, because God works IN your salvation. Verse 13 tells us, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. The word "work" comes from the Greek word ἐνεργέω (energeo). It's where we get our word "energy". God is not lazily at work in your life. He's energetically working to make you and me look more like Jesus – even when it doesn't feel that way. And it's the kind of work that God won't fail at.

Paul says that God works in you, both to will and to work. One has to do with desire – the other with ability. Think about it. Aren't those the two greatest enemies of joyful obedience? One the one hand, "I don't desire to do what's right" or on the other hand, "I don't have the strength/power to do what's right." Sin affects our desire and our power to obey. But what God is out to do is reshape our desires and to empower us for joyful obedience.

Here's the beautiful thing, God's commitment to your spiritual growth is not one of begrudging duty. Paul says that God works in you for his good pleasure. God loves enabling His people to flourish in their faith and obedience.

Paul tells the Philippians to "work out your own salvation," not to "work for your own salvation." Why is it important to notice the difference between these two commands?

What do you think it means to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"? How are obedience to God and reliance on God intertwined, and why is humility required for true obedience?

Are you prone to grumbling, complaining, or venting? Why do you think Paul is so adamant about doing everything without grumbling or complaining?

In Philippians 2:17, Paul is able to rejoice even if he is completely poured out for the sake of the faith of the Philippians. Where are you being spent for the sake of the gospel? Thank God for using you in these places. As a group, pray for one another – that the Holy Spirit will give you strength, a right view of God, and the ability to rejoice as you continue to serve.

6. Digging Deeper

Whenever God works in us he also works through us. The Apostle Paul writes that when God works in us he also works through us to make us “shine as lights in the world”. (v. 16). How is God working through you

MISSION FEARS⁷

Paul writes that “even if I am poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of you faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all” (v. 17). Whether your way to participate in God’s mission seems big or little, and whether it takes you around the world or just next door, you will have fears about it. It may even require of you to make sacrifices. On your own, read through the list of possible fears or sacrifices you may have to make to join in with what God is doing in our generation. Assign each a rating from 1 to 5, with 1 meaning you don’t have that fear at all and 5 meaning it’s a big cause of resistance for you. Then answer some question about how the gospel addresses your fear, and be a ready to discuss with group.

- 5
 - 4
 - 3
 - 2
 - 1
- Spiritual warfare.** I fear that what happened to Paul or Epaphroditus might happen to me. I fear that if I take a step of faith in sharing the gospel that heartache and suffering could come my way.

⁷ Ibid p. 48-50

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

Deprivation. I fear that, like the Paul, I could face shortages of basic needs or comforts I'm used to having if I step out in faith and share the gospel.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

Failure. I fear that I may not know all the answers or be rejected because of my faith. I feel inadequate to step out in faith and share the gospel with others.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

Neediness. I fear having to become dependent on others like Paul was, or more obviously dependent on God, asking for help, unable to feel confident about meeting my own needs or being confident in sharing my faith or serving others.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

Embarrassment. I fear being culturally or socially awkward or uncomfortable, looking out of place, or taking foolish missteps.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

Spiritual demands. I fear/resist having my sin exposed, or having it bubble up so that I have to step up my efforts at personal holiness and remaining close to God.

- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

Emotional struggles. I fear loneliness, potential stress in relationships, reminders of hurts in my life, or other emotional hardships that might accompany mission.

Paul has already said in Philippians 1:27-30 that you should not be afraid to engage in the cause of Christ and suffer for him, because (1) your salvation is sure and is from God and (2) you are standing firm together with others. Pick one of your highest-rated fears and briefly answer the following questions:

How does the salvation you have in Jesus address your fear?

How might you involve others as you pursue Jesus and his mission?

When the group is ready, share some of your responses. Why do you resist stepping out to love others and serve God's mission, and what encourages you amid those needs?

7. Mission

Intercede - Pray that they would see Jesus in such a way that they would confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 3:11)

Invest - Share with your group how your relational investments are going with the three people you are praying for?

Invite - Begin praying for courage to invite to their church.

Invite - Begin praying for courage to invite to their church.

8. Accountability & Prayer

How has your personal worship time going? How are you doing in applying your observation and interpretation skills in your study of Philippians? This may be a good to time to review "Learning to read the Bible for all it's worth." You can find it on www.newriverftl.com/findingjoy

How has your thought life been? Have you let worry, lust or fear dominate your thought life rather than joy?

How can you pray for your group members?

Lesson

7

Joy in Serving others

Philippians 2:19-30

9. Sermon Notes

10. Opening Question

Who are some of your living heroes? Why do you look up to them?

11. Big Idea

Looking at earthly servants as spiritual examples in living a life worthy of the gospel.

12. Scripture Memory

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. **Philippians 2:14-15**

13. Bible Conversation

Read: Philippians 2:19-30

At first read, this seems to be some unremarkable verses on Timothy and Epaphroditus' travel itinerary. I think the great temptation would be to read these verses and think about how unremarkable they are in light of the verses that preceded them. Verses like Philippians 1:21, in which Paul declares, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Or Philippians 1:27, in which Paul exhorts us to "let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ." Or in Philippians 2:5-11, which unpacks some of the richest, deepest, and most concise Christology (a picture of Christ) we have in all of Scripture. Or in Philippians 2:12, which challenges us to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling."

The sheer weightiness of these verses could cause us to glance at verses 19-30 and not be moved by what Paul is communicating to the church of Philippi and thus to us. Please don't let that happen to you as you study this text. Let Paul's words in these verses stir you and move you deeply. Let them compel you to love more deeply the Jesus of verse 5-11.

So let us unpack what Paul is communicating in these seemingly side bar conversations in the middle of this beautiful epistle. He is writing the church of Philippi in a sense asking them the following questions:

- Do you want to see what it looks like to live in response to the Jesus of Philippians 2:5-11?"
- Do you want to know what looks like in the flesh to live a life worthy of the gospel?
- Do you want to see what it means in real life, tangible ways to work out your salvation with fear and trembling?

I don't know how you would answer that question, but I would answer—Yes. Please! I need living examples of what it means to live as partners in the gospel and partake together in grace. Please show me, let me see, hear, and touch such living examples. And so Paul gives them exactly that—he points to Timothy and to Epaphroditus as down-to-earth examples.

The Apostle Paul's brief references to Timothy and then Epaphroditus here in Philippians are not casual but rather are meant to capture our attention and top off Paul's train of thought that began in 1:27 with the charge, "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ."

Paul's thought goes like this: In 1: 27-30 he instructs the Philippians on how to live lives worthy of the gospel in relation to the surrounding pagan world—namely, by "standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (v. 27). In doing this Paul tells them not to be "frightened in anything" (v. 28) and that it has been granted them to

“not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake” (v. 29). This is the face and disposition with which the Philippians are to live in this world. Next, in 2:1-4, Paul tells the Philippians how to live lives worthy of the gospel within the fellowship of the church. Very specifically, they were to treat each other with selfless humility: “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (vv. 3, 4).

Paul viewed all of this as so vital that in 2:5-11 he reached for the ultimate example of Christ, saying “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,” and used the most exalted language to describe Christ’s astonishing self-humiliation and super-exaltation (vv. 6-11). Then, in verses 12-18, on the basis of Christ’s example Paul again refocused his call for the church to walk worthy of the gospel of Christ: “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (vv. 12, 13).

If the church does this, its people will “shine as lights amidst a crooked and twisted generation” as they hold fast to the gospel. This will be cause for multiple and mutual rejoicings! Timothy and Epaphroditus are humble, others-focused servants who provide a shining example of working out their salvation in practical acts of serving without grumbling (2:12-14). We shouldn’t elevate them beyond reason, but we must see them as Paul is using them—as examples worth watching and as men worth following.

How did Timothy prove worthy as a down to earth example for the church of Philippi? List as many examples as you can from the text (Philippians 2:19-24).

How did Epaphroditus prove worthy as a down to earth example for the church of Philippi? List as many examples as you can from the text (Philippians 2:25-30).

Who are people in your life who model Jesus? In what ways do they model Christlikeness?

14. Digging Deeper

THE SELFLESS LIFE STRATEGY

Living a selfless life will not come naturally. We must strategically plan to live a selfless life. Think of ways that you can cultivate selflessness as a way of life. What are some practical changes you can make in your daily life? Take a moment by yourself and think through how you can intentional are you serve people in your sphere of influence.

Set SMART goals.

S - specific. Who, what, when and how?

M - measurable. What impact will it have on this person?

A - achievable. Can I do it with the resources I have? Do I need to recruit other people to help me?

R - relevant. Will it be helpful to the person I am serving? It is how they like to be served?

T - time bound. Can I achieve it this week?

Be prepared to share you selfless life strategy with your group.

HOME (spouse, children or roommate)

Who _____

What _____

When _____

How _____

Who _____

What _____

When _____

How _____

WORK (employer, employee or co-worker)

Who _____

What _____

When _____

How _____

Who _____

What _____

When _____

How _____

NEIGHBORS (one of the best ways you can share the love of Christ with your neighbors is by showing them the love of Christ)

Who _____

What _____

When _____

How _____

When _____

How _____

Who _____

What _____

When _____

How _____

CHURCH (What are needs in your church that you can meet? This can be a specific person or a specific ministry in the church)

Who _____

What _____

When _____

How _____

Who _____

What _____

When _____

How _____

Humility and love for God above all else allows us to rejoice in what others are doing for the sake of the gospel. Do you find it easy to appreciate the ways others are (however imperfectly) seeking to serve God and others, or does it sometimes feel like a competition? Why do you think this is?

15. Mission

Intercede - Pray that the Holy Spirit would regenerate their hearts of the people you are praying for. "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." Ezekiel 36:26

Invest - How has your relational investments going this past week?

Invite - Begin praying for courage to invite to them church.

16. Accountability & Prayer

How has your personal worship time going? Was there a truth that popped out of the text you have been study this week or last while you where applying your observation and interpretation skills?

How has your thought life been? Have you let worry, lust or fear dominate your thought life rather than joy?

How can you pray for your group members?

Lesson

8

Joy in Knowing Christ

Philippians 3:1-11

17. Sermon Notes

18. Opening Question

Think back to the last time someone criticized you. How did you respond? Why did you respond that way?

19. Big Idea

Your hope is in the promise that God will complete the work that He has begun in you.

20. Scripture Memory

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ. **Philippians 3:8**

21. Bible Conversation

Read: Philippians 3:1-11

The first thing Paul does in this text is to remind us of the importance of the gospel. "Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you." (v. 1). The way we rejoice in the Lord is to revel in the riches of the gospel. That is why we need to hear the gospel over and over again. The gospel is not just the A,B,C's of Christianity. It is the A-Z of Christianity. It is what fuels our joy. We must constantly remind one another of the gospel, rehearse the gospel, sing the gospel, and proclaim the gospel—not only for the good of the unbeliever but also for the building up of the believer.

So Paul says it's no trouble for me to remind you of the gospel and it's safe for you. Why does Paul say it is safe for us? Here is why. The default mode of our hearts is to earn our salvation. We embark on self-salvation projects all the time. Theologians call this self-righteousness. Paul reminds us of the gospel and warns us against self-righteousness (v. 2-8).

Who are the dogs? They are the ones who want to mark their faith in Christ by what they do or do not do. They wanted to add to the finished work of Christ. Trying to impress God, others or ourselves puts us at the center of our lives. It makes everything all about my looking good. It is done for my glory. And that's pretty much the definition of sin. Sin is living for my glory instead of God's glory. It's a way of avoiding Jesus as your Savior and Lord. Paul is saying if you want to play this self-righteous game, I can play better than anyone. He lists his impressive "self-righteous" achievements.

Our list of self-righteousness is different than Paul's. For example, we may struggle with:

- **Job Righteousness:** God helps those who help themselves. If I work hard, God will reward me.
- **Family Righteousness:** If I just do things right as a parent, I will be accepted by God/other/myself.
- **Theological Righteousness:** I have good theology. Of course God is pleased with me!
- **Intellectual Righteousness:** I am better read, more articulate, and more culturally savvy than others, which obviously makes me superior.
- **Schedule Righteousness:** I am self-disciplined and rigorous in my time management. God is pleased with my stewardship of time.
- **Flexibility Righteousness:** In a world that's busy, I'm flexible and relaxed. I always have time for others. God appreciates my laid-back demeanor.
- **Mercy Righteousness:** I care more about the poor and disadvantaged than other people, and this makes me better in the eyes of God.
- **Legalistic Righteousness:** I don't drink, smoke, or chew, or date girls who do. God is pleased by my moral convictions.
- **Financial Righteousness:** I manage money wisely and stay out of debt, so God must think highly of me.

- **Political Righteousness:** if you really love God, you'll vote for my candidate.
- **Tolerance Righteousness:** I am open-minded and charitable toward those who don't agree with me. In fact, I'm a lot like Jesus that way!

These are just a few examples; perhaps you can think of many more (think of anything that gives you a sense of being "good enough" or better than others). These sources of functional righteousness disconnects us from the power of the gospel. They are counterfeit sources or righteousness.

Theologian John Gerstner says: "The thing that really keeps us from God is not so much our sin, but our damnable good works." We embark on "self-salvation" projects when we fail to see Christ as our only hope of redemption. It's not that we don't think of Jesus as our savior but we think that we need Jesus plus "something else" in order to find validation and satisfaction. The danger is that "something else" tends to become our functional savior and attempts to displace Jesus as our ultimate redeemer. A true christian not only repents of doing wrong but repents of motivation for doing right.

Why does self-righteousness robs us of joy? Self-righteous people are the most miserable people in the world. On one hand, self-righteousness makes you prideful, arrogant and judgmental. You are always angry at people who don't excel at your selective self-righteousness. You are constantly comparing yourself to other people, so you are filled with insecurity and fear. On the other hand, self-righteousness is a game you will ultimately loose at and so you will be filled with self-condemnation. Either way both self-pride and self-condemnation are anti-gospel and will rob you of joy.

Look at Paul's conclusion about self-righteousness in verses 7-8. Self-righteousness is a loosing game. Your righteousness, apart from Christ, such that it is, is a big pile of garbage compared to knowing Jesus.

After Paul gives us this warning, he calls us to rest and revel in Christ righteousness (v. 9-11). Someone once described the gospel as a multi-faceted jewel in which we will spend all of eternity plunging the depth, beauty and the riches of the gospel. Let's look at three facets of the gospel that we can revel and rest in.

The first facet is Justification (v. 9). Justification means that Jesus paid the penalty of our sin which is death. When we put our faith in Christ, we have all the acceptance we could ever long for in Christ Jesus. Justification has been defined as just as if we never sinned. But it can also mean just as if you have always obeyed. We are not defined by our imperfect, flaw performance but Christ's perfect, flawless performance on the cross. To the degree we believe in our justification will be the degree that we will be freed to live a life of joy. Joy is found in NOT basing your identity on what you have done or not done, but on what Christ is done. When you rest in Christ's righteousness no one can rob you of that source of joy.

Paul then turns our attention to a second facet of the gospel called sanctification (v. 10). If justification is that we are freed from the penalty of sin, then sanctification means that we are increasingly freed from the power of sin. Paul is utilizing Easter language. There would be no Easter without Good Friday. What Paul is saying, is that in order for us to increasingly experience the resurrection life we must experience suffering. We think far too often that surrendering your life to Christ means that you will no longer experience suffering. This is where the prosperity gospel has not served us well.

The final facet of the gospel that Paul draws our attention to is glorification (v. 11). If justification means that we are freed from the penalty of sin, and sanctification means that we are increasingly freed from the power of sin, then glorification means that we will be freed from the presence of sin. One day, we will see Jesus face to face and be like Him as He is.

When we rest and revel in these facets of the gospel it will free us from the bondage of our own self-righteousness. It will free us to rest in the righteousness we have in Christ Jesus.

What does this passage (particularly verses 1 and 3) call us to rejoice in, worship (serve), glory and put confidence in? Why? How does this apply to the various areas of your life?

Why is Paul so adamant against putting “confidence in the flesh”?

22. Digging Deeper

Take a moment by yourself and look over the list of ways we can be self-righteous. Write your form of self-righteousness down (it may not be on the list) and then answer the following questions. Be ready to share with your group.

How has the pursuit of self-righteousness shape the story of your life?

How has it made you prideful or arrogant?

How has it made you feel condemnation or shame?

How can you war against specific self-righteousness in your own life? How can you rest in the righteousness that has been imputed to you in Christ Jesus?

Maybe the hardest thing you have done up to this point is to confess to your group the way you look to justify yourself apart from Christ. You will experience the power of God's grace as you bring it into the light and take the first step to resting in the righteousness you have in Christ.

23. Mission

Intercede - Continue to pray that the Holy Spirit would draw the people you have been praying for to himself.

Invest - How has your relational investments going this past week?

Invite - Invite them to have coffee or lunch with you and listen to their story.

24. Accountability & Prayer

How has your personal worship time going? Look back over the past few weeks and see how you are doing in applying the text to your daily life. How are doing? How do you need to rely more on God's grace?

How has your thought life been? Have you let worry, lust or fear dominate your thought life rather than joy?

How can you pray for your group members?

Lesson

9

Joy in Future Hope

Philippians 3:12-4:1

1. Sermon Notes

2. Opening Question

What is one goal that you have set and accomplished? What is a goal that you have set but may never accomplish in this life, yet it remains a worthy goal?

3. Big Idea

Since Christ has made you his own, you don't have to be perfect, just progressing.

4. Scripture Memory

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 3:13-14**

5. Bible Conversation

Read: Philippians 3:12-4:1

Paul, the most spectacular Christian who ever lived, confessed that he had not arrived or become “perfect.” Paul admitted his own need to grow into maturity. Paul wants them to know that even he – with all his accomplishments and understanding of the gospel – hasn’t arrived and won’t “arrive” until Jesus arrives! This must be my confession and your confession. It is a confession of hope. You don’t have to be perfect; you just have to be progressing. One commentator writes, “The Christian life is neither one of perfection nor of passivity, but a progressive pursuit of Christ and his likeness as we await his return and the consummation of all things.”⁸

We must never be content with our current grasp of the gospel. As Christians, we are called to nothing less than plunging into the depth, beauty, and riches of the gospel. According to Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:6, the gospel is “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” J. I. Packer writes in his classic book “Knowing God,” “What makes life worthwhile is having a big enough objective, something which catches our imagination and lays hold of our allegiance; and this the Christian has in a way that no other person has. For what higher, more exalted, and more compelling goal can there be than to know God?”⁹

One of the most devastating effects of sin is its power to rob us of our ability to be truly and eternally astounded. We are easily amazed and captivated by shiny little objects. It’s been called SOS (shiny object syndrome). The problem inevitably is that the newness wears off and we are no longer intrigued. We are endlessly fascinated by what’s “new” but the flaw is that nothing remains new. It gets old. It loses its grip on our attention and we long for what’s next.

The gospel is calling us to be captivated by not what is new nor old, but what is eternal. Paul never lost the wonder of the gospel, and we shouldn’t either. Christian maturity involves going deeper into the gospel and never beyond the gospel. All of our growth comes from the outflow of the gospel. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:18 “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.”

As we plunge the depth, the riches and the beauty of the gospel we are transformed from one degree of glory to another. In other words, we become more and more like what we are captivated by. So the question we must ask ourselves is what captivates our attention the most?

⁸ ESV Knowing the Bible - Philippians Study

⁹ Packer, J. I.. Knowing God (p. 34). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

In light of the glorious nature of the gospel, the Apostle Paul makes this resolve: "but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." (v. 12b) What is he making his own? Last week we looked at Philippians 3:8 which I believe is the pinnacle statement in Paul's letter that he is writing from a Roman jail to the church at Philippi. A church that he loved dearly. Paul declares: "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ."

In other words, Paul lived his life according to this gospel math: Jesus + nothing = everything. Far too often we live our lives according to a worldly math: Jesus + something = everything. Jesus + a secure job. Jesus + well behaved kids, or house broken dog. You fill in the blank. It is whatever you have that you think is crucial to your joy, your happiness in addition to Jesus. It is that thing when it is threatened robs you of your joy. It is that person or thing that when you loose it your world falls apart. What is that "one thing" in your life right now?

Now look at it. Rubbish! That's what Paul calls it. Not that that thing is rubbish-it could be a good thing, but in comparison to knowing Christ it is rubbish. This is the ultimate secret to joy. When we are convinced of this and live in the reality of this truth we find true lasting unshakable joy. Gospel math becomes our reality. Jesus + nothing = everything

The reason that this is the secret to joy is that anything that you look to in addition to Jesus will eventually let you down. When you trust in this gospel math you find deep, eternal joy in Christ which releases you to enjoy all the other gifts that the Gift giver gives you a whole lot more. Since every other gift that God gives you is not your greatest treasure you are not captivated by fear or worry or the need to be controlling because your identity is not rooted in these gifts but in the Gift-giver.

Here is why Paul is convinced of this gospel math. Paul writes in 3:12, "I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." For Paul it has become deeply personal. There is perhaps not greater truth to claim and experience for oneself than this truth - that "Jesus has made me his own."

So what was Paul in awe of? What captivated his heart? It was the fact that Christ took hold of him. What a concise and accurate statement of Paul's conversion. Jesus took hold of Paul. But that's not just Paul's story; that's our story too! Christ has taken hold of us! How did this happen? It happened by grace! God called us by grace. We heard the gospel as a gift of grace. We are sustained by grace. For all eternity, we will sing the praises of the God of all grace.

If we have been truly "made Christ own" then nothing can separate us for the love of God (Romans 8:38-39). If you live with this confidence then nothing can rob you of your greatest treasure. Your joy is unshakeable. It is a true joy rooted in the everlasting God who loves us with an everlasting love. Your joy is secure. Not even death itself can rob you of your joy.

For those who have experienced this great gift of God's grace, this should daily energize us, as it did Paul, to "press on to make it my own," even "straining forward" to Christ and Christlikeness.

As a result of being made Christ's own, Paul's mighty call to a lifelong pursuit of knowing Christ fully peaked with this declaration of relentless determination: "Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (v. 13-14)

What is the "upward call"? It is the "full and complete gaining of Christ for whose sake everything else has been counted as loss." For Paul, this was his "one thing," his life's pursuit. What is your "one thing"? If it is not the "one thing" that Paul pursued, then your pursuit is in vain—it's rubbish. Paul doesn't let his past keep him from this "one thing." He says, "forgetting what lies behind."

For Paul this could have meant two things:

1. His past sin and regrets. He had them but he didn't let them keep him from straining forward to what lies ahead. Shame and condemnation are some of the greatest enemies to pursuing after Christ. Far too many of us are held captive to our past sins and regret. But Christ's shed blood on the cross has cleansed you from all sin and set you free to pursue Him as your greatest treasure.
2. His past successes. He could have rested on his own achievements and his past successes and pedigree (and there were plenty) but none of that could have satisfied his desire to know Christ.

This is why he writes, "Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you." (v. 15). For those who rely on their past success and think they are mature Paul says God will show you how far you need to go.

Paul exhorts us, "Only let us hold true to what we have attained. Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us." (v. 16-17). He is saying we never get over the gospel. Paul has a ton of success and displays incredible maturity but he is not satisfied. He longs for more and more of Christ. And he tells us to mimic him in this pursuit of Christ.

Hard work is assumed in Paul's language of "pressing on" and "straining forward." But progress is also assumed. The race is run in steps—often small (and at times backward!), but we pray and strive for "progress" (Phil. 1:25). What about grace in this "pressing on" and "straining forward." Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:10: "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me" When you have tasted of the

sweetest of God's grace it causes you to "press on" and to "strain forward" in pursuit of the one who gives all grace. It becomes a grace-fueled pursuit.

How does the good news that "Christ Jesus made me his own" compel Paul (and us)? What does he pursue (vv. 12-16)?

While Paul acknowledges he hasn't arrived, he still calls the church to imitate him and his pursuit (v. 17) Who do you have in your life who you can learn from, grow from, and imitate in your pursuit of Christ? Who is imitating you?

What warnings does Paul give against false teachers (vv. 18-19)? How should we heed that warning today?

Read verses 3:20-4:1. What do you find beautiful and compelling about this truth? How does this picture of the future for those who are in Christ shape our present?

3. Digging Deeper

If there was one area of your life you could change, what would that be? How would your spouse or friend answer this question on your behalf?

STRIVING IN PRAYER¹⁰

For a mature Christian, striving to become more like Jesus begins with the neediness inherent in prayer. Verses 10-11 at the end of the last lesson's passage make a good framework for prayer. There, Paul says his goal for life in Christ is "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead."

¹⁰ *ibid* p. 67-70

On your own, follow the prompts below to create some prayer points for yourself based on Paul's outline of what it means to know Christ. Summarize some items you might pray for yourself as you run hard to be like Jesus. Make them items you're also willing to share with the group at the end of the exercise.

The power of his resurrection. By his victory over sin and death, Jesus has already given you a new life that defines who you are: the forgiveness and righteousness you enjoy, the love you have as a child of God, and God's power at work in you to say no to sin. This who-you-are power lets you run after holiness without fear, making it your own. So pick an aspect of how God has first made you his own, and pray that God would teach you about its full wonder.

Summary of my prayer to know how fully I belong to Christ:

Share in his sufferings. Your hard times, disappointments, and troubles do not go to waste but are used by God. He works within them to draw you closer to him, to teach you obedience, to confirm that Jesus is your brother, and to give you joy amid hardship as you follow Jesus's path in battling the temptations that come with human life in this world. So pray about trouble or suffering you face, that God would use it to train you to be like Jesus.

Summary of my prayer that God would use my sufferings:

Becoming like him in his death. Growth in holiness is about dying to yourself. You need to humble yourself so you listen to others and to God as they point out your sin, and then you need to kill off your own selfish interests as you love others and serve Christ. So pray about some way you want to listen better, admit your sin, put aside selfishness, or be willing to follow Jesus in a lose-your-life-for-his-sake manner.

Summary of my prayer that God would use my sufferings:

That by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. In your race to be more like Jesus, you are encouraged not only by who you are but also by the promise of who you are becoming and the certainty that Jesus will raise his faithful ones to new life with him. That life is your prize, heaven is your upward call, and that hope can keep you a diligent follower of Jesus until the day you die or he returns. So pray about some way you want God to take your mind off earthly things and replace it with an eagerness for the glory to come.

Summary of my prayer for greater hope in the coming glory:

When the group is ready, tell about some of your prayer points. What will you be praying for as you strain toward the goal of becoming more like Jesus?

4. Mission

Intercede - Pray that God's kindness would lead them to repentance. "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" Romans 2:4

Invest - How has your relational investments going this past week?

Invite - Invite them to have coffee or lunch with you and listen to their story.

5. Accountability & Prayer

How has your personal worship time going? Write down in one sentence the biggest truth you are learning from your study of the book of Philippians.

How has your thought life been? Have you let worry, lust or fear dominate your thought life rather than joy?

How can you pray for your group members?

Lesson

10

Joy in Peace

Philippians 4:2-9

1. Sermon Notes

2. Opening Question

When you think of the word "peace" what immediately jumps into your mind?

3. Big Idea

Your hope is in the promise that God will complete the work that He has begun in you.

4. Scripture Memory

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand. **Philippians 4:4-5**

5. Bible Conversation

Read: Philippians 4:2-9

Paul's love for the church of Philippi is obvious. He loves them and longs for the church that he calls his "joy and crown." He loves them so much he exhorts them to "stand firm." But the question that jumps into everyone of our minds is "What power do we have to stand firm in a world that is constantly working against us?" He doesn't simply tell the church to stand firm. He tells them the secret to standing firm. He says: "Stand firm in the Lord." Our strength isn't in how long we've been Christians, how much we know about the Bible, or how many times you been on a missions trip. Our strength for standing firm is in our union with Christ. And so it is with peace.

Before we dive deep into this text I want to zoom out and show you a pattern that takes place in this text. Take a moment to scan verses 1-9 again and notice how often Paul mentions the centrality of a relationship with Jesus Christ for these exhortations to be lived out. Underline every time you see the phrase "in the Lord." (Hint: v. 1, 2, 4 and 7)

If you miss this, then this text means death not life for you. This means if you're not a Christian, look no further for application to your life. You need to be "in Christ." Paul mentions having your name in the "book of life" (v. 3). That's what you need! You need to know Jesus. You need experience what Paul experienced when he declares, "Christ Jesus has made me his own." (Philippians 3:12). If you are a believer, then realize Paul isn't calling you to simply "try harder." The exhortations that follow do require effort, but they are empowered through our union with Jesus, and they are "supercharged" through our communion with Jesus. It is a communion with Jesus that comes from the belief that we "count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8). So as we unpack Paul's instructions for standing firm "in Christ" let do this with an unwavering hope, believing that we can change in these areas because of Christ.

So with this in view, Paul jumps right into the messiness of the church in Philippi with the gospel. Paul writes, "I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord." I have to be honest when I read this I laughed. How awkward this must have been as this letter is being read on Sunday morning in front of the whole church. I love that this was happening in the church of Philippi. It would be easy to read this great epistle and put the church of Philippi on a pedestal. There is a great danger in idolizing the New Testament church. We can read passages like Acts 2:42-49 and say I wish we were a New Testament church that did all that perfectly. But the truth is Acts 2 is just a snapshot of the New Testament church. It is like an instagram photo of the New Testament church.

I posted a picture of my wife and I hugging on the beach while we were on vacation with our kids and got a ton of comments online and offline. One woman said, "I looked at that picture and wished I had a perfect marriage like you guys."

Here's the problem. We don't post selfie's of ourselves fighting the night before in our room while all the other families are upstairs have a party! You just see snap shots of our marriage when things are going well. There are no #fightingwithmywife. We have a great marriage but it's far from perfect mostly because I'm far from perfect.

The New Testament church was messy just as our church is messy. I love that Paul doesn't pretend otherwise. Conflicts are inevitable in community. When people live in close proximity to each other they are going to offend each other.

Look what Paul does, he calls the community to get involved. "Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life (v. 3). Paul engages the church to help reconcile. We don't know who the "true companion" was. The church of Philippi knew. He was probably an elder in the church. We as the church are here to help minister the reconciling power of the gospel to broken relationships. This is exactly what Paul is asking the church to do and specifically the "true companion" to do.

How would you resolve this conflict? Resolving conflict always requires us to put our eyes back on Christ--it requires us being astounded and amazed by who Christ is and what He accomplished for us on the cross. We are going to see how this plays out in this text. Whatever their conflict was--it was robbing them of their joy in the Lord. This why Paul tells them immediately to rejoice in the Lord.

George Mueller, an evangelist and Director of the Ashley Down orphanage in Bristol, England, cared for 10,024 orphans in his life wrote, "The first great and primary business . . . every day was to have my soul happy in the Lord." to have my soul happy in the Lord"¹¹

We have to fight for joy. Paul's double emphasis one that reminds us of the truth that we live in a world that constantly seeks to rob us of our joy. And so he says it twice, "rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." Notice what Paul says about rejoicing. He doesn't say, "Rejoice when your circumstances are going well." He says, "Rejoice in the Lord always." Joy comes from our relationship with Jesus, not our circumstances. Paul isn't writing this letter from a sweet beach house. He's writing in prison. He's not writing this instruction while drinking an espresso at some Roman cafe. He's writing this in a dark, dank prison cell in Rome.

Most people think you get joy when you get what you desire. But real joy comes when you realize what you deserve. The realization of what you deserve (judgment) and what you've received instead (salvation) should lead you to great joy. It's not about getting what you want; it's about being grateful for all that you have in Christ Jesus.

¹¹ Merida, Tony; Chan, Francis. Exalting Jesus in Philippians (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (p. 171). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

A few years ago, Pharrell Williams's catchy song titled "Happy" made people "clap along" and sing and dance all over the world. For months it was the number one song on the radio. You could see people singing it in their cars going down the road. I saw you doing it. It first appeared as a single for the movie Despicable Me 2. Interestingly, the song plays when Lucy gives Gru (the former super-villain) a kiss. When the formerly despicable guy finds love, it makes him happy. That sounds like the gospel! When formerly despicable characters are seized and changed by the love of Jesus, it should make them happy.¹²

In Philippians the happiest man in Rome is in jail! What makes him rejoice? The good news of Christ rescuing him makes him rejoice. When we consider what we deserve because of our despicable sin and what we have because of the redeeming love of God through Christ, that realization should give rise to an unspeakable joy. Paul doesn't teach that we should always be skipping around, totally detached from the real world. He teaches that even in hard times the Christian can drink deeply from the well of salvation that produces joy in the midst of struggle. You should always sing with joy because of the Savior, even in times when you have to sing with tears pouring down your face.

What would happen if we lived lives of constant rejoicing? What gospel effect would that have on us and the world around us? Think of all the sins that are overcome by a heart that rejoices in the Lord always. Would this practice not conquer sins like envy, gossip, stinginess, arrogance, discontentment, and complaining? These sins grow out of a heart that's not finding joy in Christ.

What reasons does Paul give of why the Philippians should settle the conflict in the church?

When conflict with other believers arises, how often is your first response to remember who you are in the Lord? How might your conflicts end differently if you did that more often?

How would the instructions given in verse 4-9 be helpful for people who need to resolve a conflict?

¹² Merida, Tony; Chan, Francis. Exalting Jesus in Philippians (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (p. 172). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

Are there any relationships you have with fellow believers that are currently strained because of a disagreement? Talk through how to best resolve those with your group.

6. Digging Deeper

"PRACTICE THESE THINGS"¹³

Paul says, "Practice these things." His list of instructions in our passage is a helpful part of resolving conflict and having unity with each other. Rejoicing, praying, thinking about what is praiseworthy, and so on will not mean you avoid conflict altogether. But when these practices are your habits, they will help you settle conflicts when they arise. They are practices of confidence in Christ, which frees you from being a confidence-in-self person who needs to get your way.

On your own, read about each of Paul's instructions below. You'll then pick a few that you can practice with certain other believers. Be ready to discuss your responses at the end of the exercise.

PAUL'S LIST OF PRACTICES

Rejoice. Songs of praise crowd out complaining. Christians are a people who sing when they are worried and turn to praise when they are weary. You rejoice always, even in hard times, rejoicing in the Lord over his love for you that transcends all evils.

Be reasonable. Paul commends gentleness as a habit for living among everyone, You can be patient with others, asking questions, listening, not making every incident a this-means-everything cause for strife that you must win—because you know the Lord is at hand. He is near you today win or lose, and he is coming soon to set all things right.

Pray. Paul describes prayer as the alternative to anxiety. Prayer overcomes protect-yourself panic and brings the peace of God. You can trust God who "will supply every need of yours" (v. 19). Prayer guards your heart and your mind from feeling you have to make others fit your plans to fix your problems.

¹³ Ibid p. 77-80

Be thankful. Gratitude is a heart attitude within prayer. You are thankful that your Father surely loves you, delights to hear from you, and will answer in a way that's good for you. Thankfulness relieves the pressure of things having to turn out the way you think is best.

Think about praiseworthy things. Paul says to interrupt bad thoughts with beautiful ones. Instead of letting the concerns and amusements and arguments of the world flood over you, you take control of what consumes and comforts you. You make it a practice to take in the purer and far more excellent gospel story.

Imitate godly people. Part of humility is a willingness to learn from others who know Christ. When you realize you are still a trainee under the care of your Good Shepherd and his undershepherds, your bluster recedes. You regularly place yourself under God's Word, and you find mentors and friends who do the same.

As we've seen from Paul, the practice of these things often happens in community, as you live and worship and even struggle with fellow believers. So now, consider how you will practice these things, and with whom. Pick items from the list above to fit the prompts below.

By myself, personally, I especially want to work on practicing these items from Paul's list:

1. _____
2. _____

With a friend or godly mentor (or perhaps a spouse/family), I'd like to be intentional about practicing these items from Paul's list:

1. _____
2. _____

In the larger assemble of God's people, I want to be committed to regularly practicing these items from Paul's list:

1. _____
2. _____

With a believer I've had a some conflict with (which again can may mean a spouse or family member) I want to make a point of practicing these items from Paul's list:

1. _____
2. _____

7. Mission

Intercede - Who are three people that you can be praying for that needs to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ?

Invest - How can you invest in them relationally? How can your group help you? Host a cookout or plan a casual dinner out that you can invite them to.

Invite - By now you have earned the right to invite them to church. Just do it!

8. Accountability & Prayer

How has your personal worship time going? What has been the greatest truth from the book of Philippians to apply to your life?

How has your thought life been? Have you let worry, lust or fear dominate your thought life rather than joy?

How can you pray for your group members? Review the prayer request over the past 10 weeks to not any answered prayers. Take time to thank God for his faithfulness to answer prayers.

Lesson

11

Joy in All Circumstances

Philippians 4:10-23

1. Sermon Notes

2. Opening Question

Where are you trying to find contentment? (Where do your thoughts run to in your free time? What do you do with your "me" time? What compels you?)

3. Big Idea

Jesus is more than enough in all circumstances.

4. Scripture Memory

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:6-7

5. Bible Conversation

Read: Philippians 4:10-23

Let begin with defining contentment. How would you define contentment after reading through the book of Philippians? Imagine if Paul came to our church and did a series of lectures entitled "The Philippians Lectures" and at the end of professor Paul's lectures he gave us a one question final exam. The one question was "How would you define contentment?"

Let me take a shot at it and see if you agree. Contentment is finding my ultimate joy and satisfaction in the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, regardless of my circumstances – PERIOD!

Here is why I would answer the question in this way. Because Paul wasn't sipping an espresso in some trendy little independent coffee shop in Rome while he was writing this letter to the church at Philippi. He was in jail and in poverty. In fact, he is writing this letter to the church of Philippi to thank them for their gift which provided for his every day necessities including his defense.

In an earlier lesson, we discussed that one of the most devastating effects of sin is it's power to rob us of our ability to be truly and eternally astounded. We are easily amazed and captivated by shiny little objects. It's been called SOS (shiny object syndrome). Think of when the iPhone 13 came out. It was amazing! Until the iPhone 14 came out. Some of you have flip phones and have no idea what I am talking about. But something different captivates your heart.

The problem inevitably is that the newness wears off any we are no longer intrigued. We are endlessly fascinated by what's "new" but the flaw is that nothing remains new. It gets old. It loses its grip on our attention and we long for what's next. The result is that we are never truly content. Our hearts are continually infected by this joy-sapping disease called discontentment.

Consider these startling facts:

- The world was horrified by the attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, in which some three thousand people died. Africa suffers the equivalent of two 9/11s every day.
- The tsunami in the Indian Ocean in December 2004 carried off some 300,000 people in a single day. HIV/ AIDs inflicts the equivalent of a tsunami on Africa every month.

What was it that you were complaining about this past week? The title of this lesson should have been entitled "Joy in first world problems."

What exactly is wrong with humans? Well the big answer is sin. But one of the many devastating effects of sin is it robs us of the ability to be truly content. Paul had discovered the secret of contentment in every circumstance. Paul has discovered a secret. I love secrets. When someone says, "I have a secret" – I want in on it. What is it? Give me all the juicy details. Paul does exactly that. He unpacks for us the secret to contentment in any and every circumstance whether he was facing plenty or hunger, abundance or need. What we are going to discover is that true contentment isn't derived from comfortable circumstances, but from a living, vibrant communion with Christ.

Almost since the beginning of human history we have struggled with contentment. I used the word "almost" because for a brief moment contentment reign in the hearts of Adam and Eve. Genesis 2 is a beautiful portrait of true contentment. In the garden of Eden you can actually get a glimpse of what contentment looks like fleshed out in the life of a human being. What you see in Genesis 2 is the creation account where God creates man and woman in His image, and as He does, you see this beautiful picture emerge. Adam was utterly and totally content. It's truly paradise. You see man as he was created to be, content in God, walking with God, trusting God, depending on God, obeying God, believing God's word, freely submitting to God and delighting in God. He was content with relationship with his wife and his relationship with his work. It's a beautiful picture, the way that mankind was created to life.

Genesis 3 shattered the contentment in the hearts of all humanity from this point onward. It's why you struggle with contentment, and it's why I struggle with contentment. Almost immediately after man is created, he is tempted away from this content posture of heart that he was created to live in. You see, Satan, in the form of a serpent, enters the scene in the garden and begins to question what God has told the man and the woman. As the man and woman actually lend their ears to his counsel, to his deception, you see distrust and discontentment beginning to take root in their hearts. The serpent deceives and distorts God's word, and man lends his heart to what the serpent says. As he does, discontentment blossoms and gives birth to sin and rebellion against God. Discontentment is a result of doubting God's goodness. Discontentment leads to rebellion.

Genesis 3 tells us, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." (Genesis 3:6). In this horrific moment, the man and the woman, rebelling against God out of their discontentment, plunged themselves along with the rest of humanity into absolute disarray and futility. They brought creation and all of history down with them into futility.

We would do well to pause and just think about how devastating of an exchange this is, not just for Adam and Eve but for all of mankind, creation, and history along with them. Before we go too much farther into this lesson, I want to stop and give a strong warning against something that you may be tempted to think as we look at Paul's command to be content. You may think to yourself, "So what! What is the big deal about being discontent? Everybody

struggles with discontentment. With all the sins we have to deal with, why should we bother with this one?" Great question. I'm glad you asked

John Piper said this about how horrible this is: "God is infinitely worthy and honorable. But sin says the opposite. Sin says that other things are more desirable and more worthy. How serious is this? The seriousness of a crime is determined, in part, by the dignity of the person and the office being dishonored. If the person is infinitely worthy and infinitely honorable and infinitely desirable and holds an office of infinite dignity and authority, then rebuffing him is an infinitely outrageous crime. Therefore, it deserves an infinite punishment."

What a powerfully weighty statement. It should shake us and not let us get complacent about discontentment.

Look up Colossians 1:26-27 and 2:2-3. Here Paul again mentions the "secret" or "mystery." What is the common thread to all of these secrets? How would you explain what this currently looks like in your daily life? What do you hope or desire for it to look like?

Philippians 4:13 is commonly quoted with little explanation or context. What do you think this verse actually means, considering the rest of the chapter?

Philippians 4:19 says, "And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus." How do you press into God in time of need when he seems not to be answering your prayers for provision? What do you think he might be up to?

When has your discontent helped you see you were wanting something more than Christ?

Which seems to take your eyes of Christ more quickly: worry about having little, or the love of having much? Explain.

6. Digging Deeper

Congratulation! You have finished the FINDING JOY small group study. Before we wrap up our journey together let's evaluate what God has done in and through you? Give some thought to the questions below individually and come back prepared to share your answers with your group.

What is one truth that you are taking away from this study of the book of Philippians ?

How has that truth shaped your every day life?

Has it led to a deeper contentment and joy in your life? How so?

7. Mission

Intercede - How have you seen God working in the lives of the people you have been praying for?

Invest - How have the three people that you have been praying for respond to you investing in their lives?

Invite - You have earned the right to invite them to church on Sunday. Just do it!

8. Accountability & Prayer

How has your personal worship time going? Would you say you are more captivate by who Christ is and what he has accomplished for you on the cross? How so?

How has your thought life been? Have you let worry, lust or fear dominate your thought life rather than joy?

How can you pray for your group members? Celebrate together all the ways God has work in and through your life. "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." Philippians 4:4

READING PLAN

Begin each day in prayer. *Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.* Psalm 119:18

ASK 3 QUESTIONS:

- **OBSERVATION** - What does it say?
- **INTERPRETATION** - What does it mean?
- **APPLICATION** - How should I respond?

WEEK ONE

- Day One: Philippians 1-4
- Day Two: 1:1-3
- Day Three: Acts 16:11-15
- Day Four: Acts 16:16-24
- Day Five: Acts 16:25-34

WEEK TWO

- Day One: Philippians 1-2
- Day Two: 1:3-5
- Day Three: 1:6-8
- Day Four: 1:9-11
- Day Five: Philippians 3-4

WEEK THREE

- Day One: Philippians 1-2
- Day Two: 1:12-14
- Day Three: 1:15-18
- Day Four: 2 Cor 4:16-18
- Day Five: Philippians 3-4

WEEK FOUR

- Day One: Philippians 1-2
- Day Two: 1:19-20
- Day Three: 1:21-26
- Day Four: 1:27-30
- Day Five: Philippians 3-4

WEEK FIVE

- Day One: Philippians 1-2
- Day Two: 2:1-4
- Day Three: 2:5-8
- Day Four: 2:9-11
- Day Five: Philippians 3-4

WEEK SIX

- Day One: Philippians 1-2
- Day Two: 2:12-13
- Day Three: 2:14-16
- Day Four: 2:17-18
- Day Five: Philippians 3-4

WEEK SEVEN

- Day One: Philippians 1-2
- Day Two: 2:19-24
- Day Three: 1 Tim 4:11-16
- Day Four: 2:25-30
- Day Five: Philippians 3-4

WEEK EIGHT

- Day One: Philippians 1-2
- Day Two: 3:1-6
- Day Three: Acts 9:1-22
- Day Four: 3:7-11
- Day Five: Philippians 3-4

WEEK NINE

- Day One: Philippians 1-2
- Day Two: 3:12-14
- Day Three: 3:15-19
- Day Four: 3:20-4:1
- Day Five: Philippians 3-4

WEEK TEN

- Day One: Philippians 1-2
- Day Two: 4:2-3
- Day Three: 4:4-7
- Day Four: 4:8-9
- Day Five: Philippians 3-4

WEEK ELEVEN

- Day One: Philippians 1-2
- Day Two: 4:10-13
- Day Three: 4:14-20
- Day Four: 4:21-23
- Day Five: Philippians 3-4

- Read a Psalm and/or a Proverb corresponding with the date each day for additional time of worship

MEMORY VERSES

Write out your memory verse 3 times each day.

WEEK ONE

Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." **Acts 16:30-31**

WEEK TWO

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. **Philippians 1:6**

WEEK THREE

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. **Philippians 1:9-11**

WEEK FOUR

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. **Philippians 1:21**

WEEK FIVE:

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **Philippians 2:3-4**

WEEK SIX:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. **Philippians 2:12-13**

WEEK SEVEN:

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. **Philippians 2:14-15**

WEEK EIGHT:

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ. **Philippians 3:8**

WEEK NINE:

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 3:13-14**

WEEK TEN

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand. **Philippians 4:4-5**

WEEK ELEVEN

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." **Philippians 4:6-7**