



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

PHILIPPIANS LESSON 4

In our last chapter of Philippians, Paul comes back down to earth. He moves from reminding them they are citizens of Heaven, eagerly waiting for their Savior, to an exhortation to live in harmony while here on this earth. He doesn't miss the opportunity to remind them he loves them, and encourages them again to rejoice in the Lord. This chapter brings the Book of Philippians to a great conclusion. Paul was making the choice to rejoice despite his circumstances and he wanted the Philippians to do the same.

Before you begin, ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and ears to the truth of His Word. I pray that we will gain a better understanding in how to rejoice in the Lord, live in harmony with each other, be content with our present circumstances, and be thankful for all things.

First Day

1. Read Philippians 4:1-23. Observe and list the facts you find. Are there any thoughts that are new to you?
2. List any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts. What reoccurring theme do you find in this chapter that runs through the entire book?
3. What is the main point of this chapter? What would you choose as the key verse?

4. How is this chapter general? How is it specific?
5. What words or phrases reveal Paul's deep affection for his friends?
6. Describe the problem that Paul addresses. (Wouldn't you know it would be in women's ministry!)
7. What was Paul's desire for them?
8. How would you describe the conclusion in verses 20-23?
9. What specific thought or Scripture spoke to your heart? Why?

That's a wrap for today. I pray that we will continue to rejoice "in the Lord" every single day. It's our choice, ladies. Will you make the choice to rejoice?

Memory Verse of the Week: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God ..." Philippians 4:6

Second Day

Work on your memory verse. Let's put it into practice today, shall we?

1. Read Philippians 4:1-3. What does Paul exhort his beloved friends to do? Also read 1 Corinthians 16:13, Galatians 5:1, 1 Thessalonians 3:8, and 2 Thessalonians 2:15.
2. How would you define "standing fast" in the Lord?
3. Paul exhorts them to "stand fast" before he deals with the conflict. How would "standing fast" help maintain harmony within the body of Christ?

Paul calls the Philippians his crown and joy. Let me share a beautiful paragraph from Stuart Briscoe's book Bound for Joy on this verse: "Make a careful note of 'my crown,' for this gives a great clue to Paul's attitude towards people. The crown he refers to is yet another reference to the Olympic Games. It was not a crown of gold or a tiara of diamonds, but a wreath of leaves placed on the victor's head. To Paul, people were evidences of the battles fought and victories won. Not Paul's personal battles, but battles in which God was honored and His purposes vindicated. Every redeemed soul was a leaf in his garland - a trophy of the victory of God."

4. We run into potential "leaves" every day. Are you looking for opportunities daily to share the Good News of the Gospel?

There was an obvious problem between two women in the church that was disturbing the harmony and the fellowship. The problem had made it all the way to Paul's ears in a prison in Rome. Obviously, Paul wanted them to put aside their differences and get along, whatever the problem was. No one is exactly sure whom Paul is referring to as the "true companion." These ladies aren't mentioned anywhere else in Scripture. By using the word "urge" or "implore" twice, it seems like both women were somehow at fault.

5. What was Paul's counsel to them? (Does he tell them they have to agree on everything?)

Clashes do happen in the church, that's for sure. Disagreements and conflict aren't always wrong, but how we handle them is the key. When conflict can't be resolved, usually stubbornness or selfishness is playing a part. Charles Swindoll gives three objectives to remember when trying to resolve conflict. First, remember that the ultimate goal is restoration, not discipline. The right attitude is grace, not force. The common ground is Christ, not logic, church policy, tradition, or your will.

6. Are you experiencing conflict with someone at church? Ask the Lord to show you the steps to take to resolve it. (Do you want it resolved or is stubbornness and selfishness lurking in your heart?)

7. How does our conflict have the capability of affecting the whole body?

8. Read Philippians 4:4-5. Paul doesn't only say, "rejoice," but he says to "rejoice in the Lord." How are the two different? Why is one always possible?

9. In these verses, Paul is still dealing with the conflict between Euodia and Syntyche. The word "gentleness" in verse 5 can be translated forbearance or yieldedness, speaking of selflessness. Why was this necessary in resolving their conflict?

Paul wanted them to get it together before the Lord came back. What a horrible thought to be in the middle of a big argument with another Christian when Jesus returns! I pray that the anticipation of His return drives us to holy living.

10. Do you know of an argument between a sister or brother in the Lord that's causing dis-harmony? What can you do about it?
11. Are you standing fast in the Lord? (Are there any areas in which you're faltering?)

See you tomorrow ladies. I pray that you rejoice in the Lord today, no matter what happens. Remember, happiness depends on happenings, and joy is in Jesus!

Third Day

What's your memory verse? Are you anxious about something? Take it to prayer and He will guard your heart.

1. Read Philippians 4:6-9. What exhortations are found in this section?
2. The word "anxious" can be defined as "worry." Why is it wrong to worry?

3. Jesus Himself introduced this thought in Matthew 6:25-34. Read this passage and write your thoughts. What is Jesus' answer to worry in verse 33?

Many of us are addicted to worry. We can't possibly imagine a life without it. But anxiousness is basically a lack of trust in the Almighty God, who has it all under control. In his book Laugh Again, Charles Swindoll defines worry like this; "Let's first look at what Jesus does not mean. He is not referring to wise foresight, a necessary sense of responsibility, or using care and thoughtfulness toward other people. Those are necessary and good qualities all Christians should exercise. The kind of worry Jesus condemns is that which causes us to be mentally harassed and emotionally agitated, preoccupied with distressing fears, tormented, burdened about things that have not happened, but could."

William Barclay, in his book New Testament Words, contends that there is a "right and wrong anxiety." On the wrong side he finds: "The anxiety and worry which come from too much involvement in the affairs of the world; worry about the future; worry that causes the expenditure of energy on nonessentials; worry about how to face the oppositions and trials which come to a Christian; and worry about how to please the wrong people."

4. Do you have a habit of worrying about things in the above list?

Barclay continues: "The right kind of anxiety, however, looks like this: It is right that we should take thought for each other. It is especially right to take thought for our fellow Christians. It is right to take thought for the church of Christ."

5. I read once that worry "strangles our faith and makes us unable to bear fruit." Explain this in your own words. Do you agree or disagree?

6. So ... what are we supposed to do instead?

7. What will be the result?

The word "keep" or "guard" in verse 7 means to "keep with a garrison" or "kept in custody." God's peace had Paul in custody. Paul was a living testimony that this principle worked. While in prison, Paul maintained a peace that had to be from God. God's peace is never disturbed or interrupted. It is the calm beyond storms and the rest beyond all strife. Peace remains unshaken by conflict, criticism, and crisis.

8. As you bring your requests to God, He gives you peace, which guards your heart. Does God's peace have you in custody today? Is it keeping you or have you chosen to worry instead?

9. How does this principle work, according to verse 7? Also read Romans 5:1.

10. Peace is possible through Jesus Christ, not by the strength of our own will. Read these verses and share how Jesus brought peace.

A. Luke 2:14

B. Mark 4:35-41

C. Mark 5:1-20

11. Are you being shaken by conflict, criticism, or crisis? What should you do to experience the peace that Christ brings?

12. According to verse 8, what else will guard our mind?

13. How do we practically "do" verse 8? (Is it an active or passive verse?) Give some examples of things we should set our minds on.

As we set our mind on the virtues listed in verse 8, we will be free from worrying. We are called to deliberately keep our minds and hearts focused on things that are pleasing to the Lord. Worry steals our peace and our joy. Swindoll gives God's rehab program for worriers: "Worry about nothing, pray about everything." Simple, right? Simple, but not easy. That's why we can only do it through Jesus Christ.

Fourth Day

Are you working on your verse? Have you prayed with thanksgiving today?

1. Read Philippians 4:6-13. How's your prayer life? Do you have a consistent, daily, prayer time with the Father?

2. What "things" can we take to the Father?

3. What kinds of things keep you from praying?

4. In verse 10, do you think Paul was complaining that the Philippians hadn't met his needs like they said they would? If not, what's he saying?

5. What great secret of life does Paul share in verses 11-13? (Also read 1 Timothy 6:6)

The word "abased" is also used to describe a river in a time of drought. Paul knew how to "run low," or live in poverty. He also knew how to abound, or overflow. Paul had learned to live in complete detachment from his circumstances. This only came by guarding his heart and mind, being anxious for nothing, and sitting at the feet of Jesus.

6. **How content are you?** Are you only content when your circumstances are looking up and your finances are high, or are you content even when things are tight, knowing that it is all part of God's plan?
7. Right now, are you abounding or suffering need? What's the key to being content, according to verse 13? Also read John 15:5.
8. Are you teaching your kids how to be content? What are some practical ways we can teach them this great truth?
9. How does verse 13 encourage you in whatever you're facing today?

Before I was even a Christian, someone shared this verse with me. I was having some difficulties and my friend told me to memorize this verse. The only problem was that I didn't even have a relationship with Jesus, so I was using the verse more like a good luck charm, rather than seeing it as a promise or an encouragement. I can't claim this verse to support my own will, but it reminds me that whatever God allows in my life, I can handle through the power of Christ. What He calls me to do can be done through Him.

10. Ask the Lord to show you someone that needs to be encouraged by verse 13 today. Give them a call or drop them a note if you can.

Paul reminds us in this section that His peace will guard us through all circumstances and situations. I pray that you grab on to that peace today, praying for all things, with thanksgiving, letting your requests be made known to God. Let God's peace "keep you in custody."

Fifth Day

Write your verse from memory.

1. Read Philippians 4:14-22. What does Paul commend the Philippians for?
2. What was the purpose of their gift? (vs. 16)
3. What was Paul more blessed by than the gift itself?

The Philippians never forgot about Paul. They generously gave to meet his needs as he traveled about, sharing the Good News. Paul mentions Thessalonica because it was a wealthier city than Philippi, but the Philippians continued to send gifts anyway.

4. According to Paul, how did the Lord see their gift?
5. As we give from our hearts, God sees our sacrifice as a fragrant aroma. How generous are you with the money God has given you? Are you willing to share with those who are in need?
6. When you give, are you giving freely? (Matthew 10:8) Do you give joyfully? (2 Corinthians 9:7) Have you experienced the fact that it is more blessed to give than to receive? (Acts 20:35)
7. Paul knew that it was a sacrifice for the Philippians to minister to his needs. What was his prayer for them?
8. How is giving an act of faith?
9. Do you believe that God will supply all of your needs?
10. Read verses 20-23. What does God deserve forever?

God deserves the glory, or the "credit, or the place of significance" forever. Paul concludes his letter by greeting the saints, most likely with tears in his eyes. He also sends greetings from the household of Caesar, which probably refers to the large amount of Christians in the Emperor's service in Italy. Alfred Plummer writes, "There is little doubt that Christianity had entered the imperial household before Paul reached Rome. There were many Jews among the lower officials in Nero's household, and it was perhaps among them that the Gospel made its first converts."

11. As we wrap up this Epistle, list some of the practical exhortations that Paul gives us in this book.

12. Choose two of your favorite verses from this book and write how God ministered to you through them.

13. The message in this book is clear. Joy = Jesus. Has that truth changed your life these last 4 weeks?

14. How does contentment relate to perspective?

15. Write a prayer of thanksgiving for all the things He has shown you through this book. Ask the Holy Spirit to continue the work He's begun in your heart.

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in Heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Philippians 2:9-11