

GOD'S GLORY. OUR JOY.

CELL GROUP JOURNAL WEEKS 5-9

HOW TO USE THE STUDY

EACH WEEK CONTAINS A SET OF DEVOTIONS MEANT TO BE DONE INDIVIDUALLY ON DIFFERENT DAYS THROUGHOUT THE WEEK. THE TRUTH STATEMENTS OF THE DEVOTIONS EACH WEEK CAN BE COMBINED TO MAKE ONE TRUTH STATEMENT WHICH WILL BE THE FOUNDATION FOR DISCUSSION WITH OTHERS.

WEEKLY STEPS

For Each Devotion follow these steps...

Step One | Read the Text: The text is given in the top right hand corner of the first page of each devotion.

Step Two | Read the Devotion: The devotion was written to help you grasp the main point of the text. It does not dive into the details, but only attempts to help you understand what it is saying.

Step Three | Answer the "Stop & Think" questions: These questions are crucial for life transformation. Take a minute to reflect. This part is crucial.

Step Four | Respond to God through prayer by "Praise & Thanksgiving," "Confession" and "Requests": God's Word initiates our response. This section is a time of structured prayer in which we praise and thank God, confess our sins, and present our requests.

Step Five | Fill out the "CG Conversation" section and discuss with someone else who is also going through the study.

TIPS FROM THE AUTHOR

1) Do the devotions on different days.

2) Write out your answers to the questions and responses in prayer either in the book or in your own journal.

3) Read one of the following books as we study God's glory and our joy.

Christ From Beginning to End: How the Full Story of Scripture Reveals the Full Glory of Christ by Trent Hunter and Stephen Wellum

A Savior Worth Having by E. V. Hill

JOY

Here are some ideas for serving those around you this summer. We hope you will be intentional. Feel free to replace our suggestions with your own ideas.



SERVE YOUR FAMILY

Week Five | Take initiative to clean one area of the house with the kids (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom), especially if you are not the one who usually does this.

Week Six | Encourage your spouse to go out one night and spend time with their friends while you stay home and keep the kids. Then a week or two later, switch places.

Week Seven | Write a letter to your spouse thanking them for everything they do day to day.

Week Eight | Take a trip to the grandparents house with the family. Bring them a meal and do something for them while you're there.

Week Nine | Take a half day off of work and do something special with your spouse or kids (couples massage, family picnic, batting cage)



SERVE YOUR AUTHORITY

Week Five | Take one of your pastors to play golf, out to dinner, or get them a date night gift card.

Week Six | Write a card to your boss thanking them for their leadership and for helping to provide for your family.

Week Seven | Invite a friend who is in law enforcement over for dinner one night. Don't know anyone? Next time you see an officer at a restaurant, buy them a meal and thank them for their service.

Week Eight | Help your kids write/draw a picture for your spouse, thanking them for how much they love and serve your family.

Week Nine | Pick one of the local officials in your community (state representative, mayor, etc.) and write them a letter of encouragement, thanking them for everything they do.



SERVE YOUR STRANGER

Week Five | Buy several disposable ponchos on a rainy day and hand them out at a public place to those who need them.

Week Six | Grab a backpack at guest services and fill it with school supplies to give to a child at our back-to-school bash.

Week Seven | Volunteer at a local soup kitchen.

Week Eight | Bring some candy and small notes of encouragement to your favorite coffee shop and give them to the baristas there.

Week Nine | Bake some cookies or other treats and bring them to your local farmers' market. Set up a table and pass them out and pray with anyone who will let you.



SERVE YOUR MISSIONAL COMMUNITY

Week Five | Volunteer to run a few errands for a family in your MC that seems like they have a lot going on this week.

Week Six | Bring coffee for your Cell Group partners when you meet this week.

Week Seven | Buy a copy of one of the favorite kids books at your house and give it to a family in your MC with younger children.

Week Eight \mid Bring a gift and some flowers to your MC host home family this week.

Week Nine | Write a note to your MC leader thanking them for their leadership. Grab a gift card to go with it



SERVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

Week Five Invite their kids over for a movie night with your kids, and send your neighbor and their spouse out on a date.

Week Six | Offer to help your neighbor with that project they're planning (spreading mulch, trimming shrubs, washing the car, etc.).

Week Seven | Bring a new neighbor a housewarming gift basket (include things like a candle, hand towel, air freshener, cleaning supplies, garbage bags, etc.).

Week Eight | Have a bonfire or movie night and invite your neighbors to hang out with some s'mores or popcorn

Week Nine | Engage a neighbor you know to be suffering from something (lost job, death in the family, etc.) and rally with your MC to meet a large need in their life (pay a monthly bill, building project, etc.).

WEEK FIVE | JOYFUL SACRIFICE

Devotion #1 | God Uses Our Sacrificial Service to Perfect the Church (Phil. 2:12-18)

Devotion #2 | God Serves His Church
by the Sacrificial Love of His
Servants to One Another (Phil. 2:19-30)

CG Conversation & Sermon Notes

WEEK SIX | JOYFUL CONFIDENCE

Devotion #1 | God Shifts Our Confidence Off of Ourselves and onto Christ (Phil. 3:1-3)

Devotion #2 | God Secures Our Joy by Securing Our Righteousness in Christ (Phil. 3:4-11)

CG Conversation & Sermon Notes

WEEK SEVEN | JOYFUL PERSEVERANCE

Devotion #1 | God Secures our Salvation so that We may Joyfully Grow in it (Phil. 3:12-16)

Devotion #2 | God Provides His Church with good examples to follow and imitate (Phil. 3:17-4:1)

CG Conversation & Sermon Notes

WEEK EIGHT | JOYFUL PEACE

Devotion #1 | God Preserves Community
Through the Work of Peacemakers (Philippians 4:2-3)

Devotion #2 | God Establishes Unity
by Bringing Peace to Our Hearts (Philippians 4:4-9)

CG Conversation & Sermon Notes

WEEK NINE | JOYFUL CONTENTMENT

Devotion #1 | God Uses Our Circumstances to Teach Us Contentment in Him (Philippians 4:10-13)

Devotion #2 | God Finds Great Joy and Glory in the Generous Giving of Saints (Philippians 4:14-23)

CG Conversation & Sermon Notes

WEEK FIVE JOYFUL SACRIFICE

Devotion #1

Philippians 2:12-18

Devotion #2

Philippians 2:19-30



The church consisted of a people united in Christ and made one through the Spirit (2:1). They think and live like Christ. They submit to the interest of others. With Christ they suffer for the sake of others, and they do so with full assurance that they too will be exalted with Christ. Christ is their confidence and example. He humbly served and suffered, and in God's timing He ascended into glory. This is the trajectory of the Christian life.

Read Philippians 2:12-13

What did Paul instruct the church to do in his presence and absence? (v.12)

Paul urged them to "work out" their salvation, and in his words we learn a little bit about what this means.

What did those in Philippi do in Paul's presence? (v. 12a)

We would expect Paul to say, "As you... obeyed.. in my presence... much more in my absence, obey!" but he replaces the last obey with, "Work out your own salvation." In Paul's mind, to obey is to work out your salvation.

With what were they to work out their salvation? (v. 12c)

Philippians 2:12-18

...Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling... PHILIPPIANS 2:12

The church, according to Paul, should obey with "fear and trembling." This fear and trembling should not be understood as the same type of fear an abused child might experience when her abusive father walks into the house. Instead, this fear and trembling should be seen more akin to the feeling of cautiousness when one takes responsibility for something precious, significant and important. We might say one handles an expensive and delicate piece of fine jewelry with fear and trembling. Careful, precise, and intentional are the actions and movements of one who carries something of great importance.

What could be more important than the salvation of one's soul? Salvation and glory are at stake. Therefore, Christians should not be careless. They should not consider their behaviors and actions in this world as insignificant. Instead, they should be careful, watchful, intentional, and thoughtful about the way they live. If they do not obey with Christ and endure with Christ and walk with Christ, they have no reason to expect that they will be raised with Christ into glory and life.

Of what truth did Paul remind the Philippian church (v. 13)

What is the scope of God's work within the believer? (v. 13)

God uses our sacrificial service TO PERFECT THE CHURCH.

Week 5 Devotion 1

Paul understood the obedience of the believer not to be the cause of their salvation but the effect of it. If God by His Spirit was indeed present in them (2:1), they should carefully walk in faithfulness. Both the "will" (the desire and resolve) to obey and the "work" (energy and action) of obeying are God's work. In the flesh, no one pleases God; they cannot (Rom. 8:8), but by the Spirit Christians live a life pleasing to God.

Read Philippians 2:14-18

After urging the church to walk in obedience with fear and confidence, Paul instructed them in how to do so.

What should not be a part of their obedience to God and service to others? (v. 14)

For what reasons did Paul want them to be obedient without grumbling and disputing? (v. 15-16)

What was Paul's reason for gladness and rejoicing? (V. 16-17)

Paul possessed great confidence in the Lord and in the work of the Spirit within those in Philippi. He looked forward to the day God would complete the work He began in them. When he looked on them, he saw evidence of God's work, and so he rejoiced with gladness trusting that all his labor, all his teaching, and all his suffering would be worth it on the day of Christ as the church stands before the Lord without blemish.

He did not serve them and obey Christ with grumbling. Instead, he poured himself out with joy knowing that his work would not be in vain. God would use it to purify and perfect His bride. This gladdened the heart of the imprisoned Paul.

Stop and Think

What do you think it means to pour yourself out for the sake of others' faith?

Has anyone made much sacrifice to invest in your faith and life, and it so, who?

Paul reminded them that doing the right thing was insufficient if they did so while grumbling and disputing with each other. The Spirit unites in love and joy. How can the true church grumble and fight with one another?

If indeed they learn to be obedient as Christ was obedient, they will 1) be blameless and without blemish, 2) they will shine brightly in a "crooked generation" and 3) they will be proof that Paul did not labor in vain.

How has his/her work made a difference in your growth as a believer?

Would you say that your life is being spent so that others may grow in their faith? Why or why not?

PRAISE AND THANKS

Praise God for the Spirit who works in you to conform you into His image - into that which pleases Him. Thank Him that He brings you into obedience to His good law. Thank Him for working on you. Praise Him for using men and women who pour themselves out for your good and benefit.

CONFESSION

Confess to God any failure to give careful thought and attention to your conduct and lifestyle. Confess any self-centeredness that keeps you from giving yourself for the good of others. Confess your efforts to build up yourself rather than build up the faith of those around you.

REQUESTS

Ask God to humble you. Ask God to give you the will and the strength to obey and serve. Ask God to finish the work He has begun in you. Ask Him to bring about fruit in the lives of those in which you invest.

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever Amen

HEBREWS 13:20-21





Paul demonstrated joy-filled, sacrificial love and service to the church at Philippi. He poured himself out for their sake. But this pattern of humble service was not reserved for Christ and his select apostles and missionaries. This way of life belonged to all believers rescued by God's grace, and Paul is quick to highlight two men other than himself who embodied the mind and way of Christ (2:4).

Read Philippians 2:19-24

Whom did Paul hope to send to Philippi? (v. 19a)

Why did Paul desire to send Timothy? (v. 19b)

What made Timothy unique? (v. 20)

What did those other than Timothy seek? (v. 21a)

Philippians 2:19-30

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...

PHILIPPIANS 2:5

What did the others not seek? (v. 21b)

How did Timothy prove his worth as a servant of the Lord to Paul? (v. 22)

When did Paul hope to send Timothy? (v. 23)

As his first example of a loving servant of Jesus Christ, Paul mentions Timothy. He desired to send Timothy to Philippi as soon as Paul learned whether or not he would be let out of prison. By sending Timothy for a time, Paul would eventually get word about those in Philippi. Either Timothy would return to him to share how God was working, or Paul would be able to join Timothy in Philippi once he was released. Either way, Paul eagerly waited to hear how God was working, for he was certain God had been doing so.

Timothy was "unlike any other." He possessed a "genuine concern" for the good of the church. Rather than using his platform to advance his own selfish interests, he gave himself for the good of the people. He sought the interests

God serves His church by the sacrifical love of his servants to one another.

Week 5 Devotion 2

of others, and in doing so he sought the interests of Jesus Christ.

Paul did not hope self-sacrificing love would characterize Timothy, he knew this Christ-like quality defined him. Timothy had proven so by his faithful service to Paul.

Why should the Philippians honor Epaphroditis? (v. 30)

Read Philippians 2:25-30

In addition to Timothy, Paul called the Philippians to consider another servant familiar to them. Epaphroditis.

In what roles did Paul identify Epaphroditis? (v. 25)

Why did Paul think it was "necessary" for him to send Epaphroditis? (v. 26)

In Epaphroditis another example of Christ-like service is found. He served Paul and the church even as his own life came under great risk. This willingness to risk his life in service was motivated by love. He longed for them. He possessed affection and desire for them. And, the church at Philippi loved Epaphroditis.

STOP AND THINK

Paul's descriptions of Timothy and Epaphroditis teach us that our service to the church cannot be separated from our service to Christ. To seek the interest of the church is to seek the interest of Christ, for Christ is interested in the welfare of His people. At the same time, to work for the church is to work for Christ, for Christ's work is the church. So then, to forsake the church is to forsake the interests and work of Christ. It is to go your own way and seek your own interests.

Which of your own interests most often compete with the interests of the church?

How did God show Epaphroditis and Paul mercy? (v.26-27)

If you will more faithfully serve the church in the days to come, what sacrifices will you have to make?

How did Paul expect those in Philippi to receive Epaphroditis? (v.28-29)

Would you say that you long with affection for the church, and why or why not?

PRAISE AND THANKS

Praise and thank God for the love, affection, and joy you have experienced in the fellowship of the church. Thank Him for the many ways servants of God have served you even when it cost them. Thank God for the opportunities you have had to serve others. Praise Him for His grace that sustains you while you serve.

CONFESSION

Confess to God your tendency to look out for and seek your own interests. Confess your unwillingness at times to make the necessary sacrifices that service to others would require of you. Confess your abandonment at times of Christ's interests and His work.

REQUESTS

Ask God to fill you with His love for the church. Ask Him to allow you to experience greater joy with fellow believers. Ask Him to reorient your life around the interests of others.

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

ROMANS 12:9-13





- 1. Have you given in to anxiety, fear or addiction this week? What does this say about who you're trusting in besides God? What truth or promise of the gospel do you need to hear and believe to trust in God again?
- 2. Have you wasted any time this week?
- 3. How have you been resistant to God this week: in your mission to the lost? In your sacrificial love for community?
- 4. In light of God's love for you, are there any broken relationships in which you need to seek reconciliation?
- 5. How have you battled sexual or intimacy temptation and how are you preparing to deal with it next week?
- 6. In what areas of your life have you been spiritually tested this week? Did you trust God in those moments, or did you respond with complaints?
- 7. Have you isolated yourself from important relationships? What is causing this?
- 8. Were you able to spend time in God's word and prayer this week? What did God teach you? Did you obey it?

CELL GROUP CONVERSATIONS

SUMMARIZE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM THE SCRIPTURES THIS WEEK. WHAT HAS STOOD OUT TO YOU ABOUT GOD? WHY? DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANYTHING YOU STRUGGLE TO BELIEVE OR ACCEPT AS TRUE? WHY? WERE YOU CHALLENGED TO THINK, ACT, OR FEEL DIFFERENTLY ABOUT SOMETHING? IF SO. HOW SO?

SERMON NOTES

WEEK SIX JOYFUL CONFIDENCE

Devotion #1

Philippians 3:1-3

Devotion #2

Philippians 3:4-11



In the first two chapters of Philippians, we have learned about Christian joy by observing it in Paul and his writings. In chapter three, we encounter a shift in Paul's approach. He desired joy for the Philippians, and after calling them yet again to rejoice with joy in the Lord, he aims with the rest of his letter to instruct them on how to protect and preserve their joy.

Read Philippians 3:1-3

What did Paul command the Christians to do? (v. 1)

Paul begins the final portion of his letter with another call to "rejoice in the Lord." He knew the Lord to be glorious and beautiful. He knew the soul-satisfying sweetness of Christ, and like anyone who finds something delightful, he called others to join him as partakers in the pleasure. "Rejoice in the Lord," Paul urges. Not in riches or sex or fame or power or entertainment, but in Christ!

Following his call to joy in Christ, Paul addressed some of the threats to Christian joy. The first is false teaching by false teachers.

Whom did Paul say the Christians needed to "Look out for"? (v. 2)

Philippians 3:1-3

We... worship by the Spirit of God... glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

PHILIPPIANS 3:3

If the Christians wanted to know persevering joy, they needed to look out for "the dogs." These are those who do evil and "mutilate the flesh." The descriptions Paul offered did not refer to three distinct groups, but to one group who threatened to undercut the Christian's joy in the Lord. Paul spoke against this group in many of his writings; they are the Judaizers - those who taught that their confidence before God as His people depended, in some measure, on their keeping the Law in accordance with the Old Testament covenant.

Paul's three-layered identification of this group reveals why the church must be acknowledge and protect against it.

"The Dogs" - More than a mere insult, this phrase correctly identifies the Judaizers outside the church community. Jews referred to Gentiles as "dogs." This marked them outside the faith community and unclean before God. Paul's use of the term stunningly called those who appeared most qualified to be members of the church as those unincluded.

"The Evildoers" - Paul's identifying of this group as evildoers would have landed with as much offense and surprise as his calling them dogs. These were the outwardly righteous. They took seriously the law of God. Yet, Paul accused them of lacking righteousness even though they placed extreme emphasis on right conduct.

"Those Who Mutilate the Flesh" - With this description Paul referenced their specific emphasis on circumcision as a mark of the Christian community. At the same time, he spoke more broadly of their emphasis on outward practice while ignoring the need for inward change. As we will see, true religion does not force outward change by man's power but originates internally by the power of God.

God shifts our confidence OFF OF OURSELVES AND ONTO CHRIST

Week 6 Devotion 1

What did Paul claim as the identity of himself and the Christians in Philippi? (v.3a)

What did Paul claim about their worship? (v. 3b)

In whom did Paul say the church glories (or boasts)? (v. 3c)

What do they not do? (v. 3d)

The descriptions of the Christians in Philippi stand in direct contrast to the descriptions of the false Christians he warned them of in v. 2. Paul and the recipients of the letter are the true church. They were the true sons of Abraham. They are not marked by outward circumcision but by inward circumcision - a change caused by God in the heart (see Rom. 2:25-29).

The Spirit's work in the heart yields acceptable worship. This worship includes both external work and internal love, devotion, and joy.

The mark of spirit-filled worship is not outward "mutilation" of the flesh but inward "glory[ing] in Jesus." False religion glories in the works of the flesh. False Christians say, "Look at our works. We are the people of God. We know this because we have made ourselves distinct by our own hands." Christians, on the other hand, say, "Look at Christ! By His work we are children of God! We are right before God because in Jesus we stand!" In the church, confidence relies on Christ not the flesh.

STOP AND THINK

If false teachers and religions pose a threat to our joy, we must learn to distinguish between what is right and true and what is wrong and false. If it is possible to look like Christians without being one, we must learn to examine ourselves honestly.

What are some of the "good works" or religious practices you see others using as the basis for their confidence that they are "good" Christians or "good" people.

In your own words, what does it mean to glory in Jesus Christ?

What are (or might be) some of the signs that you or someone else has begun to put their confidence in their own work rather than the work of Jesus Christ?

If true Christianity is marked by a heart that loves Jesus along with hands and feet that serve Jesus, we should expect all true Christians to possess both. Do you have reason to believe that you are a true Christian? Explain your answer.

PRAISE AND THANKS

Praise and thank God for Jesus who is your confidence and hope as a child of God. Thank Him for giving you a love and affection for Jesus. Praise Him for securing your future on the perfect work of Jesus rather than your own flawed work.

CONFESSION

Confess your pride. Confess any confidence you put in yourself. Confess any lack of love and affection for Jesus you experience in your service.

REQUESTS

Ask God to teach you to put your confidence in Christ and His work rather than your own. Ask HIm to fill your heart with joy and love for Jesus. Ask him to teach you to boast only in Christ. Ask Him to humble you.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption... through Jesus Christ... In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ...

EPHESIANS 1:3-9





Paul warned the Philippians to "Look out for the dogs" (v. 2) - those who would teach them to rely upon their own good works or status rather than on the work of God in and through Jesus as the assurance that they belong to God and God's promises belong to them.

At first, Paul's language may seem harsh, but Paul knew the seriousness of the matter. If the false teachers would have found success, the foundation for their joy would have been lost. Paul spoke up against the false religion in order to protect and preserve joy, and in the next several verses Paul used his own testimony to illustrate how false religion leaves men joyless rather than full of joy.

Read Philippians 3:4-6

In what did Paul say he had reason for confidence? (v. 4a)

What did Paul claim about himself in relation to those who think they have reason to be confident in themselves? (v. 4b)

Christians do not put their confidence in themselves but in Christ. This was true of even the most qualified Jew. If there was any hope that one could find themselves secure before God on their own merit, Paul would have been the highest candidate.

Philippians 3:4-11

I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

PHILIPPIANS 3:8

What reasons to Paul list in support of his claim that he had reason to be confident in himself? (v. 5-6)

Paul listed his achievements to show that he possessed everything for which the "dogs" sought and in which they boasted. He held every credential in the eyes of the religious crowd to be confident that he would be numbered with the just and inherit the promises of God.

Read Philippians 3:7-9

What did Paul say he counted as loss? (v. 7, 8)

Why did Paul count everything he had as loss? (v. 7b, 8b).

God secures our joy BY SECURING OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS IN CHRIST

Week 6 Devotion 2

Paul exchanged all he had and all he had done for the sake of gaining and knowing Christ. He counted up all his works and all his qualifications and concluded that in comparison to Christ they amounted to nothing more than rubbish. How could he put his confidence in so little when Christ could be possessed as his hope and confidence?

What did Paul mean by being "found in [Christ]"? (v.9)

How does one receive the righteousness of Christ? (v. 9b)

Paul by God's grace learned that he would be better off trusting in Christ's righteousness than his own. Paul came to know Christ not as a good teacher or moral example. He came to know Christ as his substitute. Christ came and lived the perfect righteous life that Paul could not. And by grace, God counted Christ's righteousness to Paul through faith.

Paul stopped trusting in himself and began trusting himself to Christ's work. He no longer stood on his own works and qualifications and began standing on the much more firm foundation of Christ's. If Paul, the one whose reasons for self-confidence surpassed all others, chose to exchange his own works for the works of Christ, how much more ready should those in Philippi be to do the same?

Read Philippians 3:10-11

What did Paul give as results from exchanging his righteousness for Christ's righteousness? (v. 10)

What did Paul say he would obtain by sharing in Christ's sufferings? (v. 11)

In Paul's mind, without the righteousness of Christ, no confidence and no hope for future glory exists. His credentials may have led to his gaining much in this world, but how tragic would it be to gain the whole world only to die and lose everything? False teachers posed a great threat because they sought to shift the Christians' confidence away from Christ and if they found success, they would have cut the believer off from their reason for joy. The ability to rejoice at all times - even in suffering - depended on their confident hope that in Christ they are secure and through Christ they will know resurrection life in glorious presence of their LORD for all of eternity.

STOP AND THINK

Do you count everything in this world as "loss" and "rubbish" in comparison to Christ?

Paul identified willful suffering as the mark of those whose confidence and joy are found in knowing Jesus. This suffering includes extreme forms and also the simple daily denying oneself of pleasures and desires for the sake of doing what is right. Each and every day Christians are faced with choosing to know Christ and his righteousness or to seek joy in the temporary satisfaction of our fleshly desires.

What desires will you face today that may force you to choose between knowing Christ through suffering and gaining worldly pleasure through unrighteousness?

Joy will come to those who suffer with Him for righteousness' sake even if for a season they weep. However, be assured that sorrow will replace joy for those who place their hope and confidence in their own ability to secure a better future by their own effort and wisdom.

PRAISE AND THANKS

Praise and thank God for Christ and His righteousness. Thank him for the faith to trust Christ rather than yourself. Thank Him for the hope made possible through the work of Christ.

CONFESSION

Confess to God your struggle to trust Him. Confess your pride that leads you to believe you have reason in yourself to be confident. Confess your attributing more value to things of this world than to knowing Christ. Confess any unwillingness to suffer for the sake of righteousness.

REQUESTS

Ask God to grant you greater faith. Ask Him to take away your pride. Ask him show you just how precious and valuable and good knowing Jesus is.

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

PSALM 27:4





- 1. Have you given in to anxiety, fear or addiction this week? What does this say about who you're trusting in besides God? What truth or promise of the gospel do you need to hear and believe to trust in God again?
- 2. Have you wasted any time this week?
- 3. How have you been resistant to God this week: in your mission to the lost? In your sacrificial love for community?
- 4. In light of God's love for you, are there any broken relationships in which you need to seek reconciliation?
- 5. How have you battled sexual or intimacy temptation and how are you preparing to deal with it next week?
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- 7. Have you isolated yourself from important relationships? What is causing this?
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CELL GROUP CONVERSATIONS

SUMMARIZE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM THE SCRIPTURES THIS WEEK. WHAT HAS STOOD OUT TO YOU ABOUT GOD? WHY? DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANYTHING YOU STRUGGLE TO BELIEVE OR ACCEPT AS TRUE? WHY? WERE YOU CHALLENGED TO THINK, ACT, OR FEEL DIFFERENTLY ABOUT SOMETHING? IF SO. HOW SO?

SERMON NOTES

JOYFUL PERSEVERENCE

Devotion #1

Philippians 3:12-16

Devotion #2

Philippians 3:17-4:1



The past few weeks in Philippians have taught us that the Christian life is often filled with suffering and hardship. However, Paul encourages the church by reminding them that they can have an assurance of joy because God is the one who has saved them and is working in them (Phil 1:6). While this is true, Paul goes on to remind them that their race is far from over and there is much work to be done in the realm of sanctification for all believers this side of eternity. Paul calls every believer to endure in a race of joyful perseverance towards the end goal: eternal life with Christ.

Read Philippians 3:12-13

What does Paul think about his current point in salvation? (v. 12)

What is Paul's reason for pressing on in sanctification? (v. 12)

Paul first reminds the church that salvation is a process. Yes, Christ HAD saved him, justifying him from sin. But no, he had not yet reached the end goal of becoming perfect like Christ. Though Christ starts the work, and has promised to finish the work, there is still much work to be done in the middle. So, Paul's commitment is to press on to reach

Philippians 3:12-16

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 3:14

this end goal. In the same way, we must realize that we are in a process of salvation and are not yet finished. We must do as Paul did and press on to make it our own each day.

On the other hand, Paul wants to remind the Philippian church that his growth towards Christlikeness does not come about in his own strength. He is incapable of starting this race, running it, and obtaining the prize at the end without Christ first working in and through him. Brothers and sisters, we too should heed this reminder. It is an easy thing to be captured by the sin of pride, even after we have walked with the Lord for some time and become more like Christ than we were when we started. The salvation that we have experienced and are continuing to move towards is not something we have caused or created but is only received through God's gracious gift to us (Eph 2:8).

Read Philippians 3:13-16

What does Paul do before pressing on? (v. 13)

What is Paul pressing towards? (v. 14)

What hope does Paul have for those who do not think in this way? (v. 15)

God secures our Salvation so that we may joyfully grow in it

Week 7 Devotion 1

Paul instructs believers with two extremely helpful tips in regard to personal sanctification: forget the past and remember the future. Many of us, such as Paul himself, come to Christ with a checkered past littered with sins and evils that readily bring about thoughts of guilt and shame. Yet, if we allow ourselves to dwell on the sins of our past, we can easily become crippled in our current Christian walk, Instead, we are called to leave these burdens behind us. As Paul also says in Romans, "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (8:1). Therefore, we must run the race set before us as forgiven, redeemed saints, not as self-depreciating sinners.

Not only must we forget our past, but we must remember our future. What do I mean by that? Paul states that he is "straining forward to what lies ahead," a future reward that he is certain will one day be his, if he faithfully presses towards the goal. The only way one can remember their future is if they have an unshakable and certain hope that it will occur exactly as they believe it will. In that case, remembering the future simply becomes reminding oneself of the promises that have been given. In the same way, we must live our lives following after Christ, looking towards what we know will be our certain future hope and striving after it with renewed effort.

Paul joyfully perseveres in the race of life and the process of sanctification because he knows that the prize of eternal life that God has called him to through Christ Jesus is worth every bit of pain and suffering he endures in the present. His future is so good and full of joy that it even makes his current situation in life full of joy as well, because it is advancing him towards that glorious end. He even acknowledges that thinking this way is difficult, even for those who are truly mature Christians. Yet he has hope in this as well. Just as Christ is the one who makes all believers his own. God is also the one who will reveal this rich truth to believers as they grow and mature. Paul is confident that his Lord will bring about transformation in those who are striving after the prize of knowing him.

In light of this confidence in God to finish what he started, Paul's final exhortation in this section is simply *let us hold true to what we have attained." In other words, God has given us this incredible gift, an assurance of what is to come, so hold fast to it and persevere. The message is the same for us today church. We must persevere towards the glorious end Christ has promised, and we have every reason to be joyful as we do.

Stop and Think

Can you say with Paul that you are pressing on towards the goal? Why or why not?

What area of your life do you need to work on in your sanctification journey?

When difficult seasons of life arise, do you truly find joy in them?

How can you grow to do this better?

If your answers to some of these questions were discouraging to you, don't worry. None of us are perfect in joyfully pressing towards the goal. Thankfully, we have a good and gracious God who has made us his own, who will bring us to maturity in our thinking and conduct, and who will not lose us from his grasp. He has overcome the world and he will keep us from stumbling in it until we are with him forevermore. So, in the meantime, work out your salvation and press on towards the goal with joy.

PRAISE AND THANKS

Thank and praise God that he has made you his own. Thank him that he does not leave us as he finds us, but brings us to maturity. Thank him that he will not let us fall away, but will keep us in Christ.

CONFESSION

Confess any feelings of pride that you might have in your own efforts of sanctification. Confess your lack of joy in all things, even difficult things, because God is using them to advance his purposes.

REQUESTS

Ask God to give you endurance to press on towards the goal. Ask God to increase your joy in all things. Ask him to help you hold fast to the salvation you have obtained.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

HEBREWS 12:1-2





Anyone who has ridden on a long trip with me knows I am directionally challenged. Without a GPS to follow I will inevitably take the wrong exit onto a new highway and head north when I should be heading south or vice versa. Thankfully, I have the instructions on my phone crafted by those who have traveled that direction before me to guide me in the correct path. In the same way, Paul understands that the members at the church in Philippi have two different directions they can follow in life, with two very different destinations. Fortunately, they, and now we, have clear examples of people who have followed both paths, and we can see the destinations at each of them. Having seen both ends, we are now equipped to make our choice in which one we will commit ourselves. to.

Read Philippians 3:17-19

What is Paul's command to the Philippian believers? (v. 17)

Why did Paul cry? (v. 18)

What descriptions does Paul use of those who 'walk as enemies of the cross of Christ?" (v. 19)

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior...

PHILIPPIANS 3:20

Knowing that the members of this church will be faced with many temptations to sin as they live their lives, Paul encourages them to imitate his own walk with Christ, as well as others who are following after him. Paul understood that the people at Philippi would have no shortage of bad examples to follow, potentially, some who might have once been a part of their own church but who had gone astray. For these people Paul now wept because he knew what was ultimately in store for them: destruction. These people had forsaken the call to follow after Christ and had instead followed after the passions of their "belly" or their inmost desires. Their minds were set on the world and its pleasures, and they had no shame or guilt over the sins they committed, even that of forsaking Christ and his church. These people were truly worthy of the label "enemies of the cross of Christ."

Read Philippians 3:20-4:1

What is the destination for those who follow after Christ? (v. 20)

How will Christ transform the citizens of Heaven? (v. 21)

What happens when believers reach their destination? (v. 21)

God provides His church with good examples to follow and imitate

Week 7 Devotion 2

In contrast to those who are enemies of the cross of Christ. Paul speaks of those who are awaiting him as their savior. These people are counted as citizens of Heaven, though they do not yet dwell there. Their arrival into that place will only occur upon their departure from this one, either through their death or the appearing of Christ their savior. However, that day is something for which they can look forward to as it will bring with it a glorious transformation. Christ will transform their "lowly bodies," full of desires of the flesh, into bodies that resemble his very own, perfect in every way. He and he alone can do this, since he is the only one with the power to subject all things to himself. Not even our sinful natures will be able to stand against his transforming salvation. This will be the day when our salvation is complete and when we can fully enter into his rest.

With this glorious day in view, Paul gives one final instruction. "Stand firm thus in the Lord." Do not waiver or grow weary, for the end is in sight. Rest is coming and the destination will be worth it. Only keep going for a little while longer. Persevere in joy.

STOP AND THINK

Who do you have in your life that you can imitate as Paul instructed the believers of Philippi?

What about your own life is worthy of imitation?

Someone is always looking to us as an example, whether we are aware of it or not. And we are always providing an example, whether it's a good one or a bad one. Consider the people around you: who are influencing you and who you are influencing. Make sure that both groups are pointing you or are being pointed towards Christ.

Whom do you know personally who is 'an enemy of the cross of Christ?" Take a moment and pray for them.

What sinful desire are you warring against that is at odds with your citizenship in Heaven?

Pray that God would help you overcome it, and then confess it to your Cell Group partner when you meet this week.

Is your mind more often focused on worldly things or heavenly things?

Though we are citizens of heaven and have been saved by the work of Christ, we are still in the process of salvation, as we were reminded in the verses above. We will never conquer all of our sinful desires this side of eternity, but we need to be trying and the best way to do this is through prayer and accountability with God's people.

Are you joyfully standing firm in the Lord, or are you floundering in your day-to-day circumstances?

Ask God for strength and then talk to your Cell Group partner about it this week.

No matter what sort of season in life we are facing, the call remains the same. Stand firm in the Lord, rejoicing in the work that he is doing in you. If you are in Christ, God is moving you towards a glorious destination. So, walk as Christ walked, rejoice in every circumstance, and persevere to the end.

PRAISE AND THANKS

Thank God for the examples He has given you to follow in your church and community of believers. Thank Him that He is changing your desires away from old worldly passions to new heavenly ones. Thank Him that one day, we will be gloriously transformed as He is.

CONFESSION

Confess your sinful desires that are at war in your bodies. Confess your lack of joy in all circumstances, even the difficult ones.

REQUESTS

Join Paul in weeping for the enemies of the cross of Christ and pray that God would change their hearts. Write down one person specifically by name. Pray that God would give you grace and strength to stand firm in the Lord, even when life grows difficult.

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

I JOHN 3:2-3





- 1. Have you given in to anxiety, fear or addiction this week? What does this say about who you're trusting in besides God? What truth or promise of the gospel do you need to hear and believe to trust in God again?
- 2. Have you wasted any time this week?
- 3. How have you been resistant to God this week: in your mission to the lost? In your sacrificial love for community?
- 4. In light of God's love for you, are there any broken relationships in which you need to seek reconciliation?
- 5. How have you battled sexual or intimacy temptation and how are you preparing to deal with it next week?
- 6. In what areas of your life have you been spiritually tested this week? Did you trust God in those moments, or did you respond with complaints?
- 7. Have you isolated yourself from important relationships? What is causing this?
- 8. Were you able to spend time in God's word and prayer this week? What did God teach you? Did you obey it?

CELL GROUP CONVERSATIONS

SUMMARIZE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM THE SCRIPTURES THIS WEEK. WHAT HAS STOOD OUT TO YOU ABOUT GOD? WHY? DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANYTHING YOU STRUGGLE TO BELIEVE OR ACCEPT AS TRUE? WHY? WERE YOU CHALLENGED TO THINK, ACT, OR FEEL DIFFERENTLY ABOUT SOMETHING? IF SO. HOW SO?

SERMON NOTES

JOYFUL PEACE

Devotion #1

Philippians 4:2-3

Devotion #2

Philippians 4:4-9



Paul labored for the glory of God and the joy of the church. In chapter 3, Paul warned the church of the threat false teachers and fleshly desire for the world present to lasting joy. The third threat addressed by Paul follows in chapter 4:2.

Read Philippians 4:2-3

Who did Paul address by name? (v.2)

What did Paul "entreat" or "urge" them to do? (v. 2b)

Paul desired joy for the church at Philippi. He prayed for their love to abound, their righteousness to grow, and the glory of God to shine. He also understood that disunity threatened all that he desired. A community that knows love, joy, righteousness, and glory cannot also dwell in disunity and dividedness. So, Paul addressed Euodia and Syntyche. He urged them to "agree in the Lord."

To understand Paul's aim in 4:2, we must call to mind 2:2, "Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." This mind or thinking in which they must be one is the mindset of Christ (2:4).

Philippians 4:2-3

I ask you... help these women [agree in the Lord]...

PHILIPPIANS 4:3

We should not understand Paul as saying that Eudia and Syntyche must agree on whatever they were currently disagreeing. Instead, Paul calls them away from the issue and toward Christ and His way of thinking. Paul was saying, "agree that the other person is more significant than yourself." He would call them to agree to suffer for the sake of humbly serving the other to the glory of God. The way to fortify the church from disunity is a radical agreement in the Lord to humbly serve one another while counting each other's interests more significant than our own. Selfish and competing desires divide the church (Ja. 4:1-2), but humble service yields and guards unity and peace.

What did Paul command his "true companion" to do for these women? (v. 3)

So threatening is disunity within the church that Paul did not just urge these two women to find peace; he also turned to others and said, "Help these women." Sin, which resides in the church because it resides still within every believer, threatens to yield "disorder and every vile practice" (Ja. 3:16). But "a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (Ja. 3:18).

Disunity threatens to disrupt the whole community and rob it of its experience of love and joy. For this reason, Christians must be on guard, not just for themselves but for the whole body. They must not neglect to rightfully get involved and help brothers and sisters "agree in the Lord" by calling them away from themselves and to humble Christ-like service.

God Preserves Community

THROUGH THE WORK OF PEACEMAKERS

Week 8 Devotion 1

What did Paul mention about these women and their relation to him? (v.3b)

What is the last detail Paul mentions about Euodia and Syntyche? (v. 3c)

When Paul inserted himself into the issue hoping to work toward unity, he made sure to remind them of two important facts about these women.

First, they both had served well. These ladies "labored side by side" with Paul and Clement and others. They had most likely faithfully suffered with him. They did so for the gospel of Jesus. They had a history of faithfulness and service.

Second, they both had their names "in the book of life." These women were in Christ. They were daughters of God and members of the same family.

With these two reminders, Paul framed the situation. The primary realties were the statuses of these two women in relationship to God and the church. How they should treat each other and how the church should assist them depended not most importantly on the issue causing disagreement but on the fact that they belonged to each other and together they belonged to God. Paul called the church to protect the joy-filled loving community they desired by treating each other according to who they are together in Christ rather than

who they are separately in relation to a particular issue or disagreement.

Stop and Think

Often we think of theological disagreements causing division within the church, but many other types of disagreements exist.

Can you list 3-5 other types of disagreements Christians sometimes allow to divide them?

What are a few issues over which you disagree with others in the church?

There will be disagreement in the church. We are people flawed in our thinking from different perspectives and different experiences. If you are not aware of any disagreements between you and others in your church you have probably failed to live in any real fellowship and relationship. If you talk to any one else for a meaningful minute you will find points of disagreement.

When is the last time a disgreement with a fellow believer has hurt your relationship with him/her, what was the issue and has it been resolved?

Are you aware of any strained relationships in which Paul would call you to "help"?

PRAISE AND THANKS

Praise and thank God for joy-filled and loving community. Thank Him for binding us together in Jesus Christ. Thank Him for His patience as we continue to battle the disunifying effects of sin. Thank Him for servants who help us live in peace with one another

CONFESSION

Confess to God anv selfishness or pride that has led to a lack of unity between vou and someone Confess any reluctancy or fear that has kept you from addressing division within the Confess church. indifference that leads you to tolerate a certain level of disunity within the church without lovingly helping those at odds with one another.

REQUESTS

Ask God to help you see the serious threat division presents to the church and its joy. Ask God to create in vour church a community that is united and committed to protecting itself against disunity. Ask God to help you see and treat fellow believers as members of God's family rather than members of the opposition party. Ask God to fill you with humility and love

For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

JAMES 3:16-18





Fortifying the church against the threat of division and fragmentation requires a proactive regimen of spiritual disciplines. These disciplines protect and unite the church community in their shared joy and love.

Read Philippians 4:4-7

What did Paul command the believers to always do? (v. 4)

Paul called the church to find delight and pleasure in God not stuff. This involves an intentional and conscientious decision to turn to Him by faith. You cannot draw satisfaction from the fountain if you never turn to it and drink. This then is Paul telling divided people and people prone to division to go to God and drink until you are full.

Christians will either be united in their shared enjoyment of God's glory, or they will be divided in the pursuits to know satisfaction in various objects of desires which compete against one another. If the church will avoid splintering, a shared passion for the glory of God must hold them together. Paul knew this, and this compelled him to urge the church to seek hard after God.; to go delight and rejoice in God for He is good.

What did Paul urge the Christians to make known? (v. 5)

Philippians 4:4-9

...practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

PHILIPPIANS 4:9B

Depending on your translation, you may have answered the last question with "reasonableness," "gentleness," or "graciousness." With this instruction, Paul called the church to gentleness as they dealt with each other. They cannot be so rigid and dogmatic that it leads them to be at odds with one another. There must be a way to love each other in unity even as we do not see eye to eye. Christians should not call each other heretics with inflammatory language just because they do not agree.

What did Paul claim about the Lord? (v. 5b)

What third instruction did Paul give? (v. 6a)

"Do not be anxious," Paul declared, for anxiety disrupts unity and peace. Anxious people are self-interested people. Anxiety arises when one's interests seem insecure, uncertain, and at risk. Anxiety drives one to secure his interests and by default puts him at odds with other anxious people. Seeking the kingdom of God cannot be accomplished by those who worry about what they will eat, drink, or wear. Men and women consumed with uncertainty about their own needs and interests will naturally fragment the kingdom of love, joy, and peace rather than establish and preserve it. If the church will remain united and strong, the church must learn to put aside anxiousness.

God establishes unity

BY BRINGING PEACE TO OUR HEARTS

Week 8 Devotion 2

Laying aside anxiousness is easier said than done. Thankfully Paul offers helpful guidance to believers.

What does Paul instruct the church to do rather than be anxious? (v.6b)

Paul called the church to go to God with their interests. Rather than run around attempting to fortify and secure their own perceived good, they must sit still and talk with the Creator. Here the peace of God is obtained. Anxiety is quieted as you experience deepened fellowship with the sovereign LORD.

This communion includes all aspects of prayer, from asking to discussing and thanking. These are not individual aspects of prayer but a picture of a full prayer life. One who communes with God will know all of these. Believers can know the freedom of casting their cares on the LORD and the joy of receiving what they asked or even something far better. Knowing God through communion with Him kills anxiety. It brings calm to the soul.

What does Paul instruct the church to think about? (v. 8)

rather than what is true or just. It is more natural to find every fault and probelm with the other side than it is to see what is true and commendable and excellent. When disagreement fractures fellowship, men and women have a tendency to only see what is deplorable in the other while what is praiseworthy becomes hidden from view.

Paul instructed the church to intentionally look for, find, and think about the good. This does not mean we should avoid anything over which we disagree. Instead, we should discuss our disagreements with a charitableness that takes into account the good we see in our fellow believers.

STOP AND THINK

Which of these disciplines or instructions do you find most difficult to practice - rejoicing in the Lord, being reasonable and gentle in your disagreements, setting down your anxiousness, communing with God, or thinking about the good in those with whom you are at odds?

What do you think makes this discipline so challenging for you?

What are 2-3 actions you can take to grow in this discipline?

Paul's last instruction may be the most difficult. If you have ever been at odds with someone, you know how difficult it can be to think well about the person and situation. It becomes easy to prioritize what helps me

PRAISE AND THANKS

Praise and thank God for Jesus who has made communion with the Father possible by His death and resurrection. Thank God for making satisfaction and joy in Him available and experienceable.

CONFESSION

Confess to God your seeking joy in other things. Confess to God any harshness or lack of grace you have shown to those with whom you are at odds or disagree. Confess any laziness in your prayer life. Confess to God any view of others that ignores what is true and good about them.

REQUESTS

Ask God to guard you and your church from division. Ask Him to make Himself your source of joy and delight. Ask God to help you think rightly. Ask Him to help you learn to commune with Him. Ask Him to quiet your anxious heart. Ask Him to forgive the way you have treated those with whom you disagree.

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.

ISAIAH 26:3-4





- 1. Have you given in to anxiety, fear or addiction this week? What does this say about who you're trusting in besides God? What truth or promise of the gospel do you need to hear and believe to trust in God again?
- 2. Have you wasted any time this week?
- 3. How have you been resistant to God this week: in your mission to the lost? In your sacrificial love for community?
- 4. In light of God's love for you, are there any broken relationships in which you need to seek reconciliation?
- 5. How have you battled sexual or intimacy temptation and how are you preparing to deal with it next week?
- 6. In what areas of your life have you been spiritually tested this week? Did you trust God in those moments, or did you respond with complaints?
- 7. Have you isolated yourself from important relationships? What is causing this?
- 8. Were you able to spend time in God's word and prayer this week? What did God teach you? Did you obey it?

CELL GROUP CONVERSATIONS

SUMMARIZE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM THE SCRIPTURES THIS WEEK. WHAT HAS STOOD OUT TO YOU ABOUT GOD? WHY? DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANYTHING YOU STRUGGLE TO BELIEVE OR ACCEPT AS TRUE? WHY? WERE YOU CHALLENGED TO THINK, ACT, OR FEEL DIFFERENTLY ABOUT SOMETHING? IF SO. HOW SO?

SERMON NOTES



Devotion #1

Philippians 4:10-13

Devotion #2

Philippians 4:14-23



Friendship is an incredible gift from the Lord, and one that we often take for granted. In some cases, friendships can run so deep that not even the barriers of time and distance can diminish the care and concern that friends have for one another. Friends can spend a decade apart separated by an ocean and upon meeting again the relationship simply continues from where it started.

Paul possessed this kind of relationship with the Philippians and here in verses 10-13, Paul's friendship with the Philippians is the context in which he teaches us about contentment.

Read Philippians 4:10-13

Why did Paul rejoice in the Lord greatly? (v. 10)

Paul wanted the Philippians to be sure that his friendship with them was completely independent of their support of him financially and otherwise. It seems the Philippians had been unable to support Paul for a season, and Paul was grateful that they had renewed their support. Paul wants to be sure they know he knows their circumstances had prevented it.

Philippians 4:10-13

...I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content...

What clarification did Paul make about his circumstances? (v. 11a)

Why did Paul not see himself as in need? (v. 11b)

Paul did not see himself as in need, for he had learned to be content in all circumstances. Although he rejoiced in the Philippians and their gifts, he wanted to make sure that his joy and satisfaction were not dependent upon the physical supplies they gave.

What two things did Paul claim to know? (v.12a)

What secrets did Paul also learn? (v. 12b)

God uses our circumstances to teach us contentment in him

Week 9 Devotion 1

Paul says that he has learned contentment in whatever situation he finds himself. Paul says he knows how:

- To be brought low
- To abound

Paul had learned the secret to facing all of life's circumstances. His joy had been completely severed from the last meal he was able to eat, from the amount of money he carried in his pocket, or from the condition of the clothes on his back

What makes contentment difficult in times of need?

What makes contentment difficult in times of abundance?

Stop and Think

Paul claimed that he learned contentment in every situation. We mustn't think that contentment is something that some people are naturally better at than others. On the contrary, contentment is a learned discipline.

How would you define contentment?

How do Paul's words about contentment encourage you as you struggle to learn contentment yourself?

Can you recall and describe a time God "brought you low"?

How might knowing God used Paul's circumstances to teach him contentment change the way you view your own circumstances?

Can you recall and describe a time when God caused you to "abound"?

As we walk through various circumstances, we must remember that the secret to Paul's circumstance-independent joy was Christ. Because Paul's joy was found in Jesus, what Jesus was doing in his life and in the lives of others, Paul could be satisfied that, no matter what, Jesus would give him strength to face anything with joy.

PRAISE AND THANKS

Praise and thank God for Christ who is the object of our satisfaction. Thank God for using your various circumstances to teach you contentment. Thank Him for strengthening you to remain faithful regardless of whether you have much or little.

CONFESSION

Confess the areas of life in which you are discontent.
Confess the effects of discontentment you see in your life such as irritableness, anger, self-pity, despair, joylessness, stinginess.

REQUESTS

Ask God to fill you up with joy in Him. Ask God to make you sure of His goodness and His promise to never leave you. Ask God to give you a joy that cannot be disrupted in times of need nor in times of abundance.

Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

HEBREWS 13:5





Have you ever been on a mission trip or spent an extended period serving with a group of people? If you have, you'll know that few experiences create a stronger a bond than partnering together for gospel ministry. And even though they weren't physically with him Paul shared this kind of bond with the Philippians.

Read Philippians 4:14-17

What did the Philippians share in? (v. 14)

What was exceptional about the Philippians? (v. 15)

When you share the highs and especially the lows of gospel ministry with others, you are connected with them. The Philippians had shared in Paul's trouble. They stood by Paul in prayer, financial support and even in sending workers from the early days when he left Philippi and headed for Europe. They sent aid when he was close by in Thessalonica. They supported him when no other church would partner with him.

But lest we think for a moment that all this talk of partnership is about Paul, we get vs. 17. Because Paul had learned contentment in any circumstance, he could seek their help for another reason.

Philippians 4:14-23

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit

PHILIPPIANS 4:17

Do you know what a FANG stock is? FANG is an acronym for Facebook, Amazon, Netflix, and Google. These companies have been so successful that investors created an acronym to speak of them.

Chances are if you have invested in those companies in any significant way you saw an incredible return on your investment On the other hand, if you recently invested in any of the new crypto currencies like bitcoin, doge coin, or Ethereum and you didn't cash out quickly you might have lost a lot of money. FANG stocks have proven to be good investments, crypto not so much.

Paul, wanted the Philippians to understand that their partnership with him, giving, sending, or supporting had actually been a spiritual investment. Paul did not cherish the Philippians gifts to him because they supplied his needs although they certainly did.

Why did Paul seek the continual giving of the Philippians? (v. 17b)

Any financial advisor worth his fee will tell you from time to time you should evaluate your financial portfolio. You should take a look at your investments and how they performing.

God finds great joy and glory in the generous giving of saints

Week 9 Devotion 2

Read Philippians 4:18-23

Who found pleasure in the gifts sent by the Philippians? (v. 18)

STOP AND THINK

Take a moment and evaluate your spiritual portfolio, that is the physical investment you have made in spiritual markets:

Do you give financially to your local church?

What promise did Paul remind the Philippians of as they gave generously? (v. 19)

How much do you give regularly and how did you come to that number?

To what other mission or ministry organizations do you give?

What did Paul expect and hope would be the outcome of the generous giving of the Philippians? (v. 20)

How much do you give and how did you come to that number?

How would you describe the return on your investments?

Because of their sacrifice incredible things were happening. Caesar was the most powerful human being on the planet. His empire ruled the world, often at the expense of people like the Philippians, the poor and marginalized. The Philippians might have felt small, they might have felt like their gifts to Paul were small and accomplished little. Nothing could be further from the truth. There were followers of Jesus in Caesar's household.

When we give to the advance of the gospel, no matter how big or small, we truly have no idea what God is doing with our investment.

What fruit have you seen in your personal life as result of your giving?

What effects does failure to give generously have upon your heart?

PRAISE AND THANKS

Praise and thank God for the resources he has given you. Thank Him for the opportunity to invest in His kingdom and the spread of His glory. Praise Him for His promise to supply all our needs so that we might give without fear of what may come. Thank Him for the ways He has taken your gifts in the past to bear fruit in the lives of others.

CONFESSION

Confess to God any reluctancy or unwillingness to give. Confess any lack of joy in your giving. Confess the fear or discontentment that may be keeping you from investing more into the kingdom of God.

REQUESTS

Ask God to increase your faith and your capacity to give. Ask God to use your regular giving to bring Him glory and pleasure. Ask God to create in your church a culture of generosity. Ask God to make you content so that you might give liberally and freely.

Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

HEBREWS 13:16





- 1. Have you given in to anxiety, fear or addiction this week? What does this say about who you're trusting in besides God? What truth or promise of the gospel do you need to hear and believe to trust in God again?
- 2. Have you wasted any time this week?
- 3. How have you been resistant to God this week: in your mission to the lost? In your sacrificial love for community?
- 4. In light of God's love for you, are there any broken relationships in which you need to seek reconciliation?
- 5. How have you battled sexual or intimacy temptation and how are you preparing to deal with it next week?
- 6. In what areas of your life have you been spiritually tested this week? Did you trust God in those moments, or did you respond with complaints?
- 7. Have you isolated yourself from important relationships? What is causing this?
- 8. Were you able to spend time in God's word and prayer this week? What did God teach you? Did you obey it?

CELL GROUP CONVERSATIONS

SUMMARIZE WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED FROM THE SCRIPTURES THIS WEEK. WHAT HAS STOOD OUT TO YOU ABOUT GOD? WHY? DID YOU ENCOUNTER ANYTHING YOU STRUGGLE TO BELIEVE OR ACCEPT AS TRUE? WHY? WERE YOU CHALLENGED TO THINK, ACT, OR FEEL DIFFERENTLY ABOUT SOMETHING? IF SO. HOW SO?

SERMON NOTES

