



JoyFULL

Part One: Joy in Community

Text: Philippians 1:3-8

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1. In the letter to the church at Philippi, the apostle Paul, wrote the church out of affection to encourage the believers there to live out their faith in joy and unity. (SEE STUDY DEEPER)
 - a. What is the difference between happiness and joy?
 - b. When have you experienced happiness?
 - c. When have you experienced joy?
 - d. How have you found joy in even hard and difficult circumstances?

2. Read Philippians 1:8. Paul says he yearns for the Philippians with the affection of Christ Jesus.
 - a. How did Christ show his affection for his people?
 - b. What would it look like for you to show that affection to your group members?
 - c. Who are you thankful for in the way Paul was thankful for the Philippians?
 - d. How have you expressed your thanks to them?
 - e. What can you do in the next week to express your thanks to them?

3. Read Philippians 1:7.
 - a. What was the common ground held between Paul and the Philippians that was the source of his love for them?
 - b. In what way is your group evidencing a community held together first and foremost by the gospel and not other commonalities?
 - c. How could your group grow in this area? What can you do to pursue that sort of community?

4. Read Philippians 1:6.
 - a. What hardships have you faced as you have sought to advance the cause of Christ?
 - b. How can v. 6 give us hope when our efforts to do work for the Lord becomes difficult?

Challenge: Read Philippians 1:3-5. How can you and your group work together for the advancement of the gospel? Is there are group of people God has given you a heart for that you

can minister to together? Is there a ministry that you and your group can get involved with? How can you and your group reach out to the community around you and invite them into a growing relationship with Christ? Spend time discussing the above question and develop a plan together.

Prayer: God, thank you for the words of Paul and that point us to lasting joy. Thank you for the people in my life both past and present that have loved me and created lasting community with me. God, thank you for this group, that our purpose of advancing the Gospel, of caring for the lost and the least, of building each other, binds us together in love. We pray that we would be a people who known for joy, not because of our circumstances, but because of our deep, abiding relationships with Jesus Christ and each other. Help us take that message of joy to a broken world. Give us eyes to see the ones around us that need you Lord. Give us courage to be the ones who take the message to them. In your Son's name, Amen.

STUDY DEEPER

Philippians

During this first stay in Philippi—he later briefly visited the city on his third missionary journey (20:6)—Paul brought to faith in Christ people who would form the core of the burgeoning congregation in the city. Among them were Lydia, a businesswoman who opened her home to Paul and his coworkers (16:13–15), and the Philippian jailer, who was converted under Paul's ministry after an earthquake miraculously broke open the prison (16:22–34).

Where are we?

Of the four Prison Epistles, Paul likely wrote Philippians last, near the end of his Roman imprisonment in AD 61 or 62. Paul sent the other three Prison Epistles—Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon—by the hand of Tychicus, as their destinations were near one another. However, the letter to the Philippians was to be delivered by Epaphroditus, who had come to Paul in Rome with financial help from the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:25; 4:18). But during his time in Rome, Epaphroditus took ill, which delayed his return home and, therefore, the delivery of the letter (2:26–27).

Why is Philippians so important?

The apostle Paul did not write Philippians in response to a crisis, as he did with Galatians and Colossians. Instead, he wrote to express his appreciation and affection for the Philippian believers. More than any other church, the believers in Philippi offered Paul material support for

his ministry (2 Corinthians 8:11; Philippians 4:15–18). Paul’s affection for these people is clear throughout the letter as he encouraged them to live out their faith in joy and unity (1:3–5, 25–26; 4:1).

What's the big idea?

Philippians brims over with often quoted passages: “He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6), “To live is Christ and to die is gain” (1:21), and “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (4:13) are just a few. But the portrait of Jesus Christ as a humble servant serves as the core of Paul’s teaching in this letter (2:5–11).

Paul’s joy at the mere thought of the Philippian church is undeniable in the letter, and it’s that same joy that he wanted the recipients to possess as well. To lead the Philippians to this truth, Paul took them directly to Jesus, teaching them that a community of believers living in harmony with one another comes only through mutual humility modeled after the Savior. Paul wrote that he poured out his life as an offering for the sake of Christ, leading Paul to find great joy and contentment in Christ’s service. His letter to the Philippians showed them that by centering their lives on Christ, they, too, might live in true joy.

How do I apply this?

Though we all have much to be thankful for, the pace and the pressure of life often squeeze the joy from us. Our shoulders slumped and our heads bowed, we find some days—or months—very difficult to get through. Desperate, we often search for joy in all kinds of ways—acquiring possessions, visiting places, or seeing people. But none of these can provide lasting joy. Where do you find joy in the midst of a trying circumstance?

Paul knew, as did the Philippians, that true joy comes only through humble faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ, joining ourselves in harmony with His followers, and serving others in the name of Christ. This was the life experienced by the Philippian believers, and it is a life available to us today.

Allow the joy you find in Christ to keep you from useless quarrels and divisions and to instead guide you into harmonious relationships with God’s people.

<https://www.insight.org/resources/bible/the-pauline-epistles/philippians>