



Joyful Living in a Grumpy World

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 1
Philippians 1:1

Introduction: Today, we are beginning a new Bible study from the book of Philippians. Over the next few weeks, we will explore three major themes of this book: faith, love, and joy. Since joy is a central theme throughout Paul's letter, it prompts us to ask whether we have the kind of joy Paul describes and, if not, why not.

Thieves that can rob our joy

Joy Thief #1 - Circumstances.

Joy Thief #2 - People.

Joy Thief #3 - Things.

Joy Thief #4 - Worry.

Reasons Philippians is such a favorite book

Reason #1 - Philippians is a positive book.

Reason #2 - Philippians is a practical book.

Reason #3 - Philippians is a prophetic book.

Reason #4 - Philippians is a powerful book.

Let's begin with a bit of background

Question #1 - Who wrote the book?

Answer: Philippians was written by the apostle Paul (Philippians 1:1a) around AD 60-62. Although Timothy's name is mentioned, his name is stated as a greeting of friendship, not authorship.

Question #2 - Who is the book written to?

Answer: Philippians was written to fellow Christians living in the city of Philippi (Philippians 1:1b).

Question #3 - What is the purpose of the book?

Answer: A primary purpose for the writing of Philippians was to remind believers that they could experience Christian joy and peace even in the midst of challenging circumstances (Philippians 4:4-7).

A definition of Christian joy - Joy is an inner confidence that, regardless of my external circumstances, I have the assurance that God knows me and knows how to care for me (Philippians 4:4-7).

Happiness and Joy: There is a difference

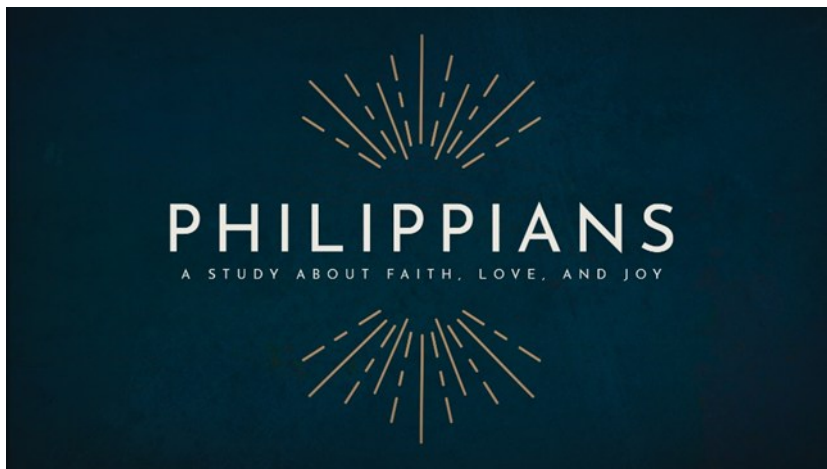
(1) Happiness is EXTERNAL, whereas joy is INTERNAL.

(2) Happiness happens by CHANCE, whereas joy happens by CHOICE.

(3) Happiness is EMOTION-based, whereas joy is FAITH-based. Joy is not an emotion dependent on circumstances but a trust dependent on God, who is always faithful.

Billy Sunday quote: "If you have no joy, there's a leak in your Christianity somewhere."

Conclusion: The Christian's joy doesn't come from this world, and therefore, this world can't take it away. It is based on an inner assurance that God knows me, cares about me, and wants to help me. Knowing "God's got this" allows me to experience joyful living even when the world may seem grumpy.



Making Me What I Ought To Be

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 2

Philippians 1:3-11

Good things happen when we say “yes” to God. (1) We get blessed. (2) We bless others. (3) We please God.

Two Reasons Philippians is a special study

Reason #1 - Although the letter has only four chapters, it covers several important Christian doctrines that every Christian should know.

Some helpful definitions for what we will be studying

(1) Christology. The study of the nature of Christ. Philippians contains one of the most significant Christological passages in the Bible (Philippians 2:5-11). We will examine the pre-existence of Christ, the incarnation of Christ, the “self-emptying” of Christ to take on human form, the death of Christ, and the exaltation of Christ.

(2) Sanctification. The ongoing work of God in our lives to make us like our example, Jesus, in our attitudes and actions (Philippians 1:6; 2:13)

(3) Eschatology. The study of end times. Paul keeps the “day of Christ” in view throughout his letter (Philippians 3:20).

(4) Glorification. When our earthly bodies are transformed to be like Christ's glorious body (Philippians 3:21).

Reason #2 - Philippians teaches us how to experience peace and joy in the midst of challenging circumstances and personal pain.

Note this: The Christian's joy doesn't come from this world, and therefore, this world can't take it away (John 14:27). It is based on an inner assurance that God knows me, cares about me, and wants to help me. Knowing “God's got this” allows me to live joyfully even when the world may seem gloomy and grumpy.

God making us what we ought to be

1. God wants to grow us from being less self-centered to more others-minded (Philippians 1:3-5). Verse 3: “I thank my God every time I remember you.” “*I have you in my mind.*”

2. God wants to grow us from focusing less on people's faults to praying more for people (Philippians 1:7-8). Verse 7: “I have you in my heart.” “*I have you in my heart.*”

3. God wants us to grow us from a limited love to an increasing love for Him and others (Philippians 1:9-11). Verse 9: “And this is my prayer.” “*I have you in my prayers.*”

“**PBPGIFWMY**”. Those cryptic letters stand for an important truth about the sanctification of us and others: “**Please be patient. God isn't finished with me yet.**”

“He's still working on me,
To make me what I ought to be.
It took Him just a week to make the moon and stars,
The sun, and the earth, and Jupiter, and Mars.
How loving and patient He must be,
Because He's still working on me.”



Our Perspective Makes the Difference

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 3
Philippians 1:12-18

Perspective: “As you ramble through life, whatever be your goal. Keep your eye on the donut and not on the hole.”

Today's Key Truth: Paul experienced peace and joy even during tough times because he focused on the bigger picture of what God was doing. His “what God can do” perspective during hard times made all the difference in Paul’s life and will do the same for us!

What Paul knew about the adversities of life and the working of God

1. **Paul knew that God never wastes adversity.** (Philippians 1:12)

★ **Notice this:** To be sure, Paul’s plans didn’t happen the way he had envisioned them. Instead of going to Rome as a preacher, he became a prisoner. His preaching was not in the temple, but in a prison. This reminds us of an important principle - our disappointments are often God’s appointments. Paul’s tough circumstances actually opened up new opportunities to preach Jesus and share the Gospel. He soon realized that his hardships were helping, not hindering, God’s plans for him.

2. **Paul knew his suffering was a testimony to the watching world for both believers and non-believers.** (Philippians 1:13-14)

★ **Notice this:** Paul mentions his chains in verses 13 and 14 because he was literally chained to a Roman guard while in prison. Typically, a rotation was arranged so that every four to six hours, a new guard replaced the previous one. This meant Paul always had a captive (or captured) audience! The Palace guard was highly influential, and Paul took every opportunity to share the gospel with them. Paul’s imprisonment also had a positive impact on believers, encouraging them to speak out more boldly. There was a ripple effect. Paul was sharing the gospel in prison, and the church was sharing the gospel outside of prison.

3. **Paul knew that God could always bring something good out of difficult times.** (Philippians 1:15-17)

★ **Notice this:** How could Paul look at his circumstances in such a positive light? Paul knew that God was always at work behind the circumstances. He wrote to the believers in Rome, “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.” (Romans 8:28) Even when some preached the right message (the gospel) but did so with wrong motives, the gospel of Jesus still continued to be spread.

4. **Paul knew that adversity can remind us what matters most.** (Philippians 1:18a)

5. **Paul knew that the Christian’s attitude comes from an inner gratitude and trust in God.** (Philippians 1:18b)

Conclusion: Remember that Paul initially didn’t see the bigger picture of what God was doing. Until then, he trusted God one day at a time. And Paul’s perspective on the guiding hand of a providential God made all the difference in his life and can do the same for us.



The Key to A Successful Life

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 4
Philippians 1:19-26

Quick quiz: How would you complete the following sentence? "For to me to live is _____." What word or phrase would you put in the blank? If your name were LeBron James, the word might be "basketball." If your name were Aaron Judge, the word might be "home runs." If your name were Bill Gates, the word might be "Microsoft." If you are a parent, the word might be "children," or for grandparents, the word might be "grandchildren." The list of possibilities is endless. But don't miss the point. No one leaves that sentence blank. Everyone finishes the sentence with something.

Introduction: If you want to know the Apostle Paul's key to success in life in just one sentence, here it is from Philippians 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." This verse reveals why Paul did what he did, why he said what he said, and how he found the strength to push past life's challenging circumstances. Today, we will examine "The Key to A Successful Life" from Philippians 1:19-26.

Paul's faith gave him the key to a successful life

1. **Paul's passion - to always honor Jesus.**
(Philippians 1:19-20)

Notice this: When we go through difficult times, Paul says we have two resources to strengthen us: the prayers of others for us and the help of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, here are two questions for us to ask. One, "Am I aware that others are praying for me?" and two, "Am I regularly praying for others?" If I believe that God answers prayers and that prayers change things, shouldn't I be praying daily for others?

2. **Paul's purpose - to live for Jesus.**
(Philippians 1:21)

Notice this: Paul understood that for the Christian, death is not defeat. Death is just a change of address from this earthly life to an eternal one, from earthly struggles to heavenly joys! This is why Paul saw death, not as a loss but as a gain. Whenever and however he died, he knew that the best was yet to come! Paul's death wouldn't place him in a grave; it would send him to Heaven to live with Jesus and other believers forever!

3. **Paul's perspective - we always win with Jesus.**
(Philippians 1:22-26)

Paul's conflict and confession - Paul desired to depart and be with Christ, yet he felt a responsibility to remain and help others know and grow in faith in Jesus. What an example of a well-lived Christian life is the Apostle Paul. He was willing to postpone going to Heaven in order to help Christians grow and lead more people to Jesus! He put aside his own preferences for the cause of Christ and the good of others.

Conclusion: It has been said, "As long as I'm on the right side of the grass, I've got nothing to complain about." That can be true, but it's not complete. Paul was at peace with either side. If he were above the grass, he would keep sharing Jesus with anyone and everyone. If he were below the grass, he knew he would be in Heaven with Jesus. "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1) "For to me to live is _____." What word or phrase would you put in the blank?



Make Sure Your Walk Matches Your Talk

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 5
Philippians 1:27-30

Introduction: Our passage today begins with an important challenge and reminder: “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” We might say it this way today: “Make sure your Christian walk matches your Christian talk.” One way to evaluate the effectiveness of our Christian walk is by asking a thought-provoking question: “If I were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict me? Would I be known for reading the Bible, praying to God daily, attending church, financially supporting Christian work, helping others, and sharing my faith in Jesus?” True Christians live in such a way that no one can deny they are a Christian.

How to make sure our walk matches our talk

1. Whatever happens in life, always try to live like Jesus. (Philippians 1:27a)

Good question to ask: The idea behind WWJD is that, when making decisions in life, we should first ask ourselves, “What would Jesus do?” and then follow His example. The phrase was meant to encourage Christians to consider how Jesus would act in their daily lives, promoting

Christ-like love, compassion, and choices (1 Peter 2:21: “... leaving you an example, that you might follow in His steps.”).

Keep in mind these reminders with WWJD

Reminder #1 - We must make sure that our answer to the question “What would Jesus do?” is based on the objective truth of Scripture and not subjective opinion (what I think or feel).

Reminder #2 - We can't really know what Jesus would do unless we know what He has already done. His past actions, as shown in the Bible, will guide us today.

Reminder #3: We must avoid using “WWJD” as an excuse to follow our desires. The heart (our feelings) can be deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). WWJD should not turn into WDIWTD (“What Do I Want to Do?”).

2. Always be mindful that unbelievers draw conclusions about Jesus by the way Jesus-followers live.

(Philippians 1:27b)



3. When a world in conflict sees people in unity loving each other, it is a witness to the world that we are Jesus followers. (Philippians 1:27c)

4. Don't be afraid to speak up about your faith. It's the good news everyone needs. Some people will oppose the gospel. Don't let that stop you - keep sharing anyway. (Philippians 1:28)

5. As faithful Christians, we don't just say we believe in Christ, but our actions show a willingness to suffer for His cause. (Philippians 1:29-30)



Make Sure Your Walk Matches Your Talk - Part 2

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 6

Philippians 1:27-30

How to make sure our walk matches our talk

1. Whatever happens in life, always strive to live like Jesus. (Philippians 1:27a)

What would Jesus Do? Last week, we looked at the popular acronym “WWJD,” which stands for “What Would Jesus Do?” The idea behind WWJD is that when making decisions in life, a Christian should first ask, “What would Jesus do?” and then follow His example. The question is meant to encourage Christians to think about how Jesus would act in their everyday decisions. As Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:2, Jesus left us an example “that you should follow in His steps.”

WWJD Reminder: We must be certain that our answer to the question “What would Jesus do?” is based on the objective truth of what the Bible says, not on the subjective opinion of what I think or feel. Some people say things like “My Jesus would be okay with that or my Jesus wouldn’t have a problem with that.” We must be aware of not using “WWJD” as an excuse to follow our own desires. The heart (our emotions) can be deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). We must always focus on the Jesus of the Bible when asking, “What would Jesus do?”

2. Always be mindful that unbelievers draw conclusions about Jesus based on how Jesus-followers live. (Philippians 1:27b)

Stand firm: The phrase “stand firm” refers to a Roman military formation in which soldiers stood shoulder to shoulder and back-to-back, shields up. Paul says Christians need to work together like a well-trained army. Christians

should be like a company of soldiers, standing shoulder to shoulder, united in formation. This is not unity just for the sake of unity, but unity for the purpose of effectively sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The problem with the Philippians, as we will see later, is that some of them were fighting with each other instead of fighting for each other. One main reason Paul wanted the Philippians to “stand firm” in unity is that compromising Christian living compromises what others think about Jesus.

3. When a world in conflict sees people coming together and loving one another, it is a witness to the world that we are followers of Jesus.

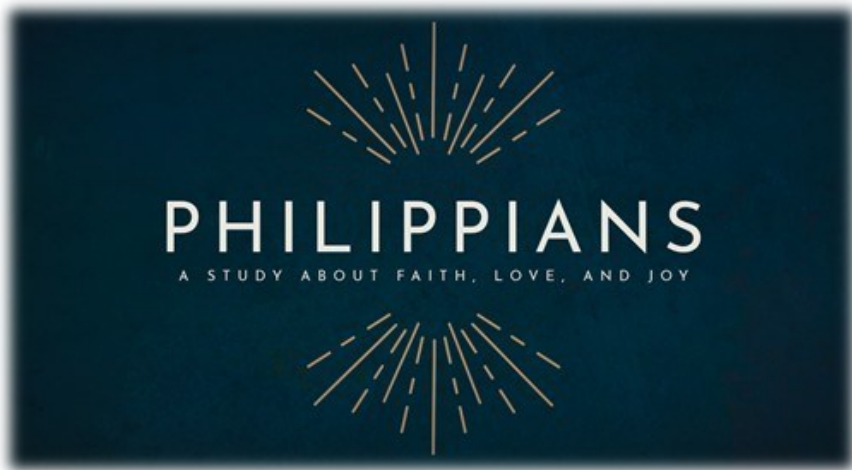
(Philippians 1:27c)

Do you want what we have to offer? Do we understand how the world views fighting Christians and a divided church? When we share with the spiritually lost, “God loves you,” unbelievers hear it through the static of compromised Christian living and internal gossiping. Thus, the message that comes through is, “God loves you, but we don’t because we don’t even like each other.” No wonder they don’t want what we have to offer. When will we realize that loving one another is what makes the gospel beautiful? However, this kind of love doesn’t happen by accident, just because we are Christians. Whether our relationships are strained or strong depends on our choosing to love like Jesus. “Jesus help me to see this person the way You do.”

4. Don’t be afraid to speak up about your faith. It’s the good news everyone needs. Some people will oppose what you share. Don’t let that stop you - keep sharing anyway. (Philippians 1:28).

Look what has come: In one of his books, the famous evangelist E. Stanley Jones noted that the first Christians didn’t wring their hands in despair and say, “Look what the world has come to.” Instead, with great delight, they declared, “Look what has come to the world.” It’s never been easy to be a Christian in any generation. It wasn’t in Paul’s day, and it isn’t now. But blessed are those who are so excited about Jesus that they can’t keep quiet about it!

5. As faithful Christians, we don’t just say we believe in Christ, but our actions show a willingness to suffer for His cause. (Philippians 1:29-30)



Getting Along with Cantankerous Christians

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 7

Philippians 2:1-4

Definition: "Cantankerous." A bad-tempered, argumentative, and uncooperative person.

Introduction: Satan, the spiritual enemy of every Christian and church, enjoys it when Christians fight. First, Christians split hairs by majoring on minor things, and then, if there is no reconciliation, they split churches. The Apostle Paul understood this truth well. He had been told about two women who were acting like cantankerous Christians (Philippians 4:2). He knew that if disunity wasn't repaired in a relationship, the crack of disunity would grow and affect others. That is why today's Bible study from Philippians 2:1-4 is important for us to understand with both our minds and our hearts.

What we need to know about the importance of unity

Principle #1 - Loving others is motivated by God's love for us. (Philippians 2:1)

→ **Notice this:** Paul states that the Christian's love for others is motivated by God's love for us. Paul wants Christians to see in verse 1 that we

have been blessed beyond what we deserve.

His point is this: "Since you've been given all this grace from God, shouldn't you extend grace to others and work to promote peace and unity?"

Principle #2 - Loving others will bring joy to us. (Philippians 2:2)

→ **Notice this:** When we are out of sync with someone in mind and heart, we can experience conflict and feel miserable. However, when we discuss our differences, we can find unity, which brings us joy.

Principle #3 - Loving others gives us a new attitude in the way we see others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

How to deal with difficult people

(1) It may be difficult to do, but pray for the difficult person in your life (Matthew 5:44).

(2) Remember, some people carry baggage, burdens, or broken hearts, and they may express their pain wrongly through anger. Some are like the lion that was always angry because it had a thorn in its paw. Be kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving of one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32).

(3) When possible, try to be at peace even if the other person won't. (Romans 12:18).

(4) Not every difficult person will stop being a difficult person. In Matthew 10:14, Jesus told the disciples to shake off the dust from their feet, symbolizing a formal separation from people who refuse to change. We can continue to pray for difficult people, but we must wisely use our time and energy with the opportunities to love and help others.

Conclusion: Dealing with difficult people is unavoidable. It's easy to respond from our old nature, but that only brings out the worst in us. How much better to respond like Jesus, which will bring out His best in us. God wants us to respond in love to everyone, like Jesus - including difficult, cantankerous people.



Knowing the Full Story of Jesus

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 8

Philippians 2:5-11

Introduction: Before Paul begins the full story of Jesus, he prefaces it with a reminder: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus..." (Philippians 2:5). When we ask the question in our attitudes and actions, "What Would Jesus Do?" we are practicing having the "same mind" or "same attitude" as Jesus, our example for how we are to live. It has been said that our outlook determines our outcome. If our outlook is to strive to live like Jesus, we will make a positive spiritual difference in others' lives. However, if our outlook is "me-minded" and we live a self-centered life, our attitude will be the opposite of Jesus's, and we will miss many opportunities to make a positive spiritual difference in others' lives.

The full story of Jesus tells us about ...

1. **The Deity of Jesus - the Eternal Christ in Heaven.** (Philippians 2:6)

→ **Notice this:** Being the eternal Son of God means long before Jesus was born at Bethlehem, long before the world was created, from all of eternity, Jesus shared eternal glory with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. To the question: Where does the story of Jesus start?

The answer is eternity. Jesus was before Genesis 1:1 because Jesus has always been.

2. **The Humanity of Jesus - the Earthly Christ on Earth.** (Philippians 2:7-8)

→ **Notice this:** When Jesus came to Earth, he set aside His "outward glory." Consider a General removing his uniform and dressing as an ordinary man on the street. No one would recognize the General from anyone else. Is he still a general? Yes. Is he wearing his General's uniform? No. Jesus came wearing the uniform of an ordinary man while bearing within himself the glory of God. No deity was subtracted from His nature when He became one of us; instead, humanity was added to His nature. Because this is true: "We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet he did not sin." (Hebrews 4:15)

3. **The Glory of Jesus - the Exalted Christ in Heaven again.** (Philippians 2:9-11)

→ **Notice this:** Jesus humbled Himself to the lowest place, but God exalted Him to the highest place. There is no one and no thing higher than the Lord Jesus Christ. God exalted Him to the highest place, and He is above all things. Verse 9 also tells us that God gave Jesus "the name that is above every name." What did God give Jesus that He didn't have before? He couldn't give Him supreme glory - He already had that. He couldn't give him deity - He already had that. But there is one thing he didn't have that He now has by virtue of his triumphant return to Heaven. God has ordained that He will eventually be universally recognized as the Lord of all things by all people at all times. Many people didn't recognize Jesus when he walked the earth. There are people today who still don't know who Him is. But a day is coming when that will change, and He will reign forever and ever!



Are You Shining Like the Stars?

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 9

Philippians 2:12-18

To shine like stars in this world ...

Commitment #1 - I will do my part. (Philippians 2:12)

Notice this: Whether we realize it or not, we sometimes put conditions on our obedience to God. We're willing to obey God if He promises to keep us safe and healthy, to keep our children and grandchildren from trouble, and to grant us a long life and an enjoyable retirement. There is only one problem: The God of the Bible makes no such promises, nor does Jesus. The call of Jesus is always the same: "Come, follow me." We are called to obey God and follow Jesus, leaving all other details in His loving hands.

Commitment #2 - I will depend on God. (Philippians 2:13)

Notice this: How can we align our "want to" with God's will, which is always the best? The answer isn't found in keeping rules but in keeping a close relationship with God. It's not about trying harder, but about drawing closer to God. When we get closer to God, it will change not only our actions but also our desires, our "want to."

Commitment #3 - I will strive to show a God-honoring attitude in all situations. (Philippians 2:14)

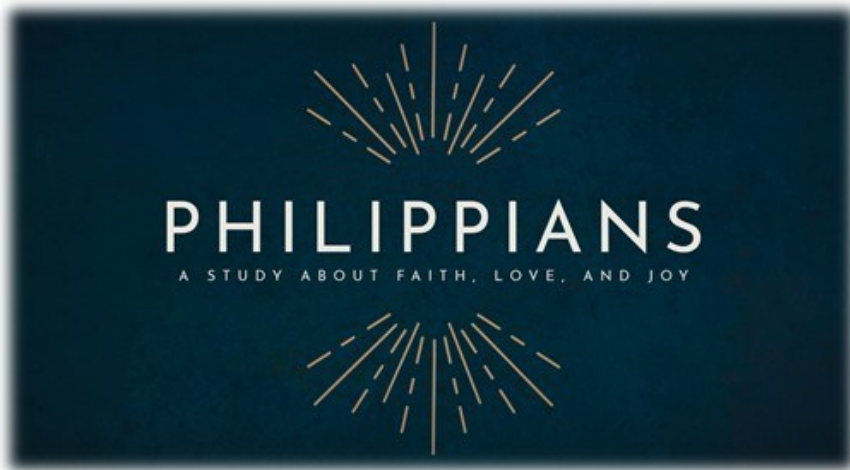
Notice this: Do we realize that complaining is essentially making a negative accusation against God's sovereignty and faithfulness? Every time we complain about our circumstances, we are really saying, "If I were God, I would handle things differently." Israel's grumbling led to their spiritual stumbling. No matter what God did, it was never enough. When God provided manna, they started to complain about it (Numbers 11). When God gave them quail, they questioned whether He cared for them. Psalm 106:25 equates grumbling with disobedience: "They grumbled in their tents, and did not obey the Lord." Complaining is sinful because it leads to a negative view of life. Complaining is sinful because it is contagious and influences others to complain. Complaining is sinful because it discredits the Christian testimony about our God, who loves us, provides for us, and whose faithfulness we can trust.

Commitment #4 - I will be different to make a difference.
(Philippians 2:15-16a)

Notice this: Do you know when stars shine the brightest? It's in the places and times when it is darkest. Christians have the hope our twisted and troubled world needs and searches for. But we cannot shine like the stars in our world if we stay silent about our faith. How real and meaningful is our relationship with God if we stay silent about it? We must always be mindful of the opportunity to share the word of life—the gospel of Jesus—with others through our words and lives.

Commitment #5 - I will live for others. (Philippians 2:16b-18)

Notice this: Paul envisions the future day when he will stand before the Lord and be able to 'boast' about what the Philippians did for their generation as they lived for Him and others. That should lead us to ask, "What would I 'boast' about before the Lord? My job? My bank account? The size of my house or boat? All the important people I knew?" Do we think any of those things will impress the Lord? On that day, the only thing that will matter is how we loved God and loved others (Matthew 22:36-40).



What Living Like Jesus Looks Like in Real Life

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 10

Philippians 2:19-30

Notice this: Paul knew that when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, He replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:36-39). In a very real sense, Jesus was teaching His followers a "I am third" lifestyle. "I am third" is a Christian principle that emphasizes putting God first, others second, and myself third, as demonstrated by the life of Jesus.

Example #1 - Timothy. An example of Christlike unselfishness.

(Philippians 2:19-24)

1. Timothy lived an "I am third" life by the way he showed genuine concern for others.

(Philippians 2:19-20)

2. Timothy lived an "I am third" life by the way he cared about what Jesus cared about.

(Philippians 2:21)

3. Timothy lived an "I am third" life by focusing on serving others rather than being served.

(Philippians 2:22-24)

Example #2 - Epaphroditus. An example of a Christian whose dedication was shown through both words and actions.

(Philippians 2:25-30)

1. Epaphroditus lived an "I am third" life in how he was burdened for those with burdens.

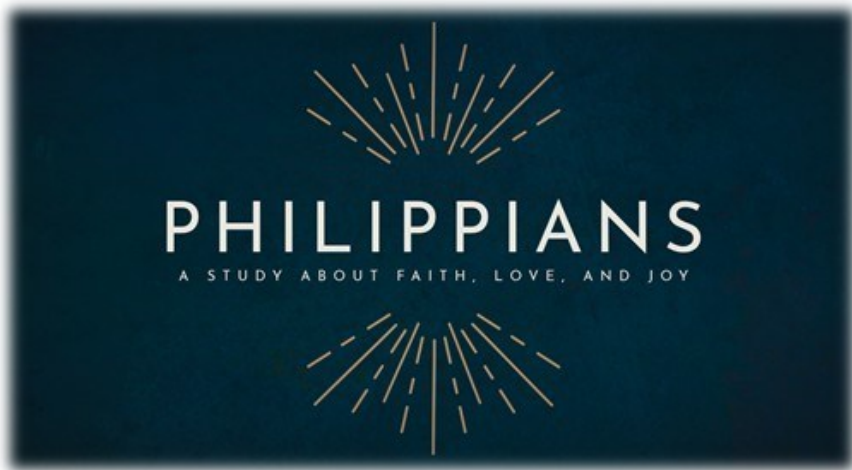
(Philippians 2:25-26)

2. Epaphroditus lived an "I am third" life in how he was willing to suffer for his faith.

(Philippians 2:27-28)

3. Epaphroditus lived an "I am third" life in how he was willing to give all for the One who gave all for him.

(Philippians 2:29-30)



What We Need to Want

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 11

Philippians 3:1-11

Introduction: How would you complete the following sentence: "I want _____." That's a pretty open-ended statement, isn't it? If you feel unhappy, you may finish it with: "I want to be happy." If you're deep into debt, you may finish it with: "I want to be debt-free." If your life is filled with stress, you may finish it with: "I want peace." In Philippians 3:10, here's how Paul finished that sentence: "I want to know Christ." Paul already knew Christ as his Savior and Lord. He came to know Him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-18). Paul expressed that his overarching desire was to know Christ more fully and deeply.

To know Christ more ...

1. Watch out for anyone or anything that could draw your attention away from Jesus. (Philippians 3:1-3)

→ **Notice this:** The principle of rejoicing in the Lord is not rejoicing FOR our circumstances, but rejoicing IN our circumstances because we know that our Lord can work all things together for good (Romans 8:28; Genesis 50:20). We can rejoice in our circumstances because

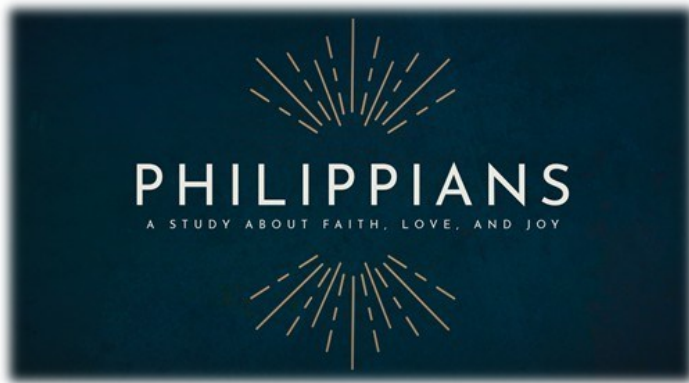
we rejoice in the Lord, who is in control of our circumstances. When we trust in a God we truly believe is in control (Isaiah 46:10), it's no surprise that we are filled with abiding joy!

2. Always place your confidence in Jesus, not in yourself. (Philippians 3:4-6)

→ **Notice this:** Religion without Jesus is dangerous. Millions of people today trust their religion to be right with God and get them to Heaven. They believe that because they were baptized as an infant, child, teenager, or adult, they are going to Heaven. Or they think that because they were raised in the church, they must be saved. It's not so. Religion without Jesus has no saving power. Many religious people have "Jesus-plus" faith. They are trusting in Jesus plus baptism, or Jesus plus church membership, or Jesus plus good works, or Jesus plus giving money. Instead of singing "Jesus paid it all," the Jesus-plus believers sing "Jesus paid almost all of it" because they think they've got to add their part to what Jesus did. Always place your confidence in Jesus for salvation, and nothing else.

3. Make knowing Jesus the ultimate goal of your life. (Philippians 3:7-11)

→ **Notice this:** Where will you be when you get where you are going? When you finally come to the end of your life, what will you have to show for the 50 years or the 70 years or the 90-plus years you were on this earth? Two thousand years ago, Jesus asked the question: "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). We're all on life's journey toward eternity. Sooner than we think, we'll be at the end of life's journey. What will people say about you? "He spent his life on things and self," or "He met Jesus and his life was never the same." What we need to want is the desire to know and grow in a lifelong relationship with our Savior, Jesus.



Keeping Your Eyes on the Prize

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 12
Philippians 3:12-21

Introduction: Did you know the Bible compares the Christian life to a race? Although there are different types of races, the Christian life is best compared to a marathon. It is not a fast 100-yard dash, nor is it a slow walk in the park. The Christian race is a daily challenge that requires focus, effort, and perseverance as we run the race of faith. As Paul wrote in his second letter to Timothy: "*...the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful*" (2 Timothy 4:6-7). The Apostle Paul had run the race of life to the end, faithful to God and others. As we cross the finish line when we pass from Earth, we win the prize of eternal life in Heaven with Jesus and all believers forever!

To keep your eyes on the prize ...

1. Always check the direction you're going. (Philippians 3:12-14)

➔ **Notice this:** Paul's confession of no perfection should put an end to Christians who claim to have reached sinless perfection in their lives (1 John 1:8-10). Paul shares a very honest admission - "I've not reached perfection." Unlike some teachers today, Paul has no problem admitting his shortcomings. He's not perfect and admits it. That humble admission is where spiritual growth can take place. It has been said, "I am not what I should be. I am not what I want to be. But praise God, I am not what I used to be!" Paul always affirmed the Christian's need for God's grace. "By the grace of God, I am what I am ..."

(1 Corinthians 15:10). Instead of thinking he had arrived, Paul says, "I continue to press on."

2. Your goal should not be perfection, but progress in your Christian walk. (Philippians 3:15-17)

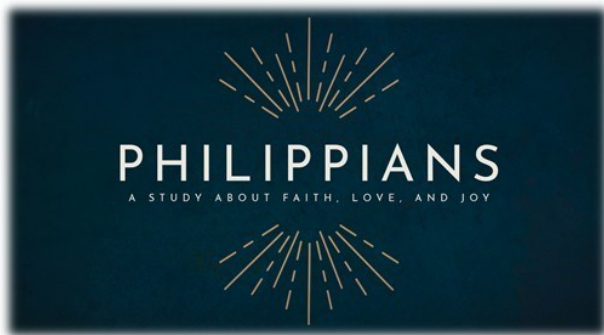
➔ **Notice this:** Mature believers know that they aren't perfect, but they also know they strive to make progress in their Christian walk. Part of Christian maturity is knowing that we haven't arrived yet, and that there's still plenty of room to grow. "He's still working on me to make me what I ought to be."

3. Stay focused on Heaven's values and not on earthly things. (Philippians 3:18-19)

➔ **Notice this:** Colossians 3:2 says, "Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." The enemies of the cross were professing believers who believed that as long as your soul was saved, it didn't matter what you did with your body (1 Corinthians 6:12-20). When Paul calls these men enemies of the cross, he means they are enemies of the biblical truth of the atonement Jesus made for us on the cross. They believed in Jesus but behaved however they wanted. This reinforced the legalists' accusation that Paul preached a cheap grace that required no commitment. These professing believers lived for the things of this world rather than for the eternal values Jesus taught.

4. Know who you are, whose you are, and where you're going. (Philippians 3:20-21)

➔ **Notice this:** We live on earth, but our hearts are in Heaven. One day in Heaven, we will receive from God a glorious new body. Philippians 3 ends with a ringing declaration that in Heaven God will transform our imperfect bodies into a perfect body. No more glasses, no more walkers, no more hospitals, no more cancer, no more strokes, no more diabetes, no more Alzheimer's, no more diseases, and no more death (Revelation 21:4). Our response to God's goodness? Hebrews 12:1: "... let us throw off everything that hinders, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us."



Living the Joy-filled Life

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 13

Philippians 4:1-9

Introduction: Philippians is often called the happiest book in the Bible, yet it was written by Paul while he was in prison. When our faith and trust are in God and in what He can do, our circumstances do not determine our joy.

A definition of joy. Happiness depends on what is happening in a person's life. If a person's circumstances are good, they may be happy. If a person's circumstances are not good, they may be unhappy. However, for the Christian, joy is an inner peace and satisfaction rooted in God's presence and promises rather than in outward circumstances.

Experiencing the joy-filled life

1. We can experience joy-filled living when we are in right relationships. (Philippians 4:1-5)

→ **Notice this:** Christians cannot experience a joy-filled life if they are bickering with others. No matter what their disagreement, Paul said they were to agree with each other "in the Lord." In other words, we don't need to agree on every single detail. But we must agree to stand united for the sake of Christ and work together as partners in the gospel. It seems these two women were disagreeing over a nonessential matter and were not doing so in a Christlike manner. They were mature believers in the faith, but even mature believers can get off track at times. Instead of taking sides, Paul urges these two Christian women to settle their differences and be agreeable with each

other for the sake of the Lord. Until they reconciled and returned to a right relationship with each other, the joy-filled life would be missing from their lives.

2. We can experience joy-filled living when we are praying right. (Philippians 4:6-7)

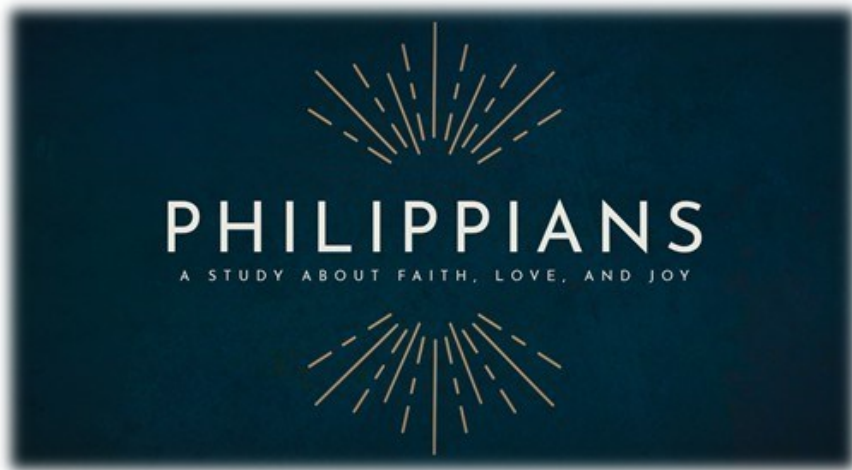
→ **Notice this:** "Do not be anxious about anything." To which our first human response might be, "You gotta be kidding!" However, Paul is right. Did you know that most of the time we spend worrying is basically wasted emotional energy? Worry is stewing without doing. Worry is wrong because it says that God can't take care of me. God promised to care for you, but when you worry, you are saying, "God, I'm really not sure You can take care of me." However, when we take our worries to the Lord, He replaces our panic with something far greater: His peace that passes all human understanding.

3. We can experience joy-filled living when we are thinking right. (Philippians 4:8)

→ **Notice this:** Studies show that the average person has 10,000 separate thoughts each day. The principle behind Paul's words is simple: Right thinking always begins in the mind, but so does sin. Our thoughts work like garbage-in, garbage-out. It's a computer term that means if you put poor programming in, you will get poor results. That's true of our thought life as well. If we put garbage into our minds, we will get garbage out in our lives. When Paul says "think about such things," the command is in the present tense, which means: "Keep on thinking about these things." What we feed our minds will impact our lives.

4. We can experience joy-filled living when we are living right. (Philippians 4:9)

→ **Notice this:** The goal of reading or hearing the Word of God is not information but transformation. The goal is not merely getting into the Word but the Word getting into us. The blessings and benefits come from putting truth into practice. When we put God's truth into practice, we will have God's peace with us and experience a joy-filled life.



The Key to Contentment

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 14

Philippians 4:10-13

Introduction: We find contentment in life when we are thankful for what we have because we trust in God's goodness and faithfulness. Some people always complain about what they don't have (Philippians 2:14: "Do everything without complaining ..."). Another thing the complainer won't have is contentment. Contentment is found in a thankful and trusting heart (1 Thessalonians 5:18: "Give thanks in all circumstances ..."). We may sometimes feel we don't have everything we want, but if God is our provider (Genesis 22:14), He will provide for all our needs (Philippians 4:19). Are we going through life taking blessings for granted, which leads to discontent, or counting our blessings with gratitude, which leads to contentment?

A definition of contentment. Contentment is an inner peace that comes from being satisfied with what we have (Hebrews 13:5; 1 Timothy 6:8). It is based on the belief that God will provide for all our needs and supply everything we need today and tomorrow (Philippians 4:19).

To experience a content life ...

1. Rejoice in God's provisions. (Philippians 4:10)

→ **Notice this:** The Philippian Christians met Paul's needs for his missionary travels in the past and again in the present. But who ultimately provided for Paul's needs? Paul rejoiced greatly "in the Lord" because God ultimately prompted the Philippians to give. The Bible tells us in James 1:17: "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father ..." Although we should appreciate any gift given to us, this verse reminds us to also be thankful to the Lord, from whom all blessings flow. To rejoice is a choice, and a key to contentment is to rejoice in God's provisions.

To experience a content life ...

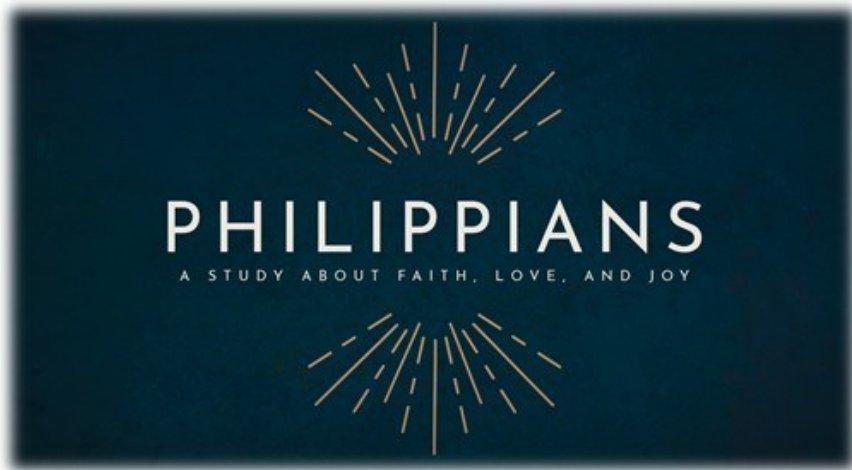
2. Have confidence in God's provisions, whatever the circumstances. (Philippians 4:11-12)

→ **Notice this:** Christian contentment does not mean simply accepting your circumstances and stoically saying, "Whatever will be will be." We can go through life asking, "Why did this happen?" or "Why didn't this happen?" and end up disappointed or frustrated, because there are rarely satisfactory answers to some of our questions in this life. But a key to contentment comes from our confidence not being in our circumstances, but in our God.

To experience a content life ...

3. Rely on Christ for the strength He can give us. (Philippians 4:13)

→ **Notice this:** This verse has sometimes been misused. Occasionally, people say things like "I can do all things," as if you can do anything if you believe and try hard enough. The verse is actually saying, "I can't, but Christ can." Paul was content in all circumstances because he had learned to handle life's ups and downs by relying completely on Jesus, who always provided him with more than enough strength for whatever he faced and placed contentment in his life.



God Our Provider Will Provide

Philippians: A Study about Faith, Love, and Joy - Week 15

Philippians 4:14-23

Introduction: Does God really provide for all our needs? Philippians 4:19 says God will meet all our needs. This is a wonderful promise of God's great care and abundant provisions for His children (see Matthew 6:25-34). However, this verse is sometimes misunderstood to mean that God will provide for all our WANTS. We may not have everything we want, but God will provide us with everything we NEED. It is also sometimes misinterpreted to mean that God will meet all our "greeds" – anything we ask for – rather than all our needs. To understand why we can trust that God will meet our needs, we must first recognize the vastness of God's riches. The Bible consistently affirms that God owns everything. For example, Psalm 24:1 declares, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it ..." God's ownership of everything assures us that He can meet all our needs.

How God provides for our needs

1. Sometimes God provides for our needs through others. (Philippians 4:14-16)

2. Sometimes God provides for our needs through circumstances. (Philippians 4:17-18)

3. Sometimes God provides for our needs supernaturally, such as extra grace, peace, strength, and wisdom, especially during challenging times. (Philippians 4:19)

The promise of Philippians 4:19

(1) First, there is the source of the promise - "My God."

(2) Second, there is the statement of the promise - "Will meet all your needs."

(3) Third, there is the sufficiency of the promise - "According to His glorious riches." This is God's way of saying, "You can always come back for a second helping. There's plenty more where that came from."

Remember this: For all the needs that God meets, to Him be ALL the glory. (Philippians 4:20)

Final words with important reminders

Reminder #1 - Each person in the family of God matters to God and should matter to us as well. (Philippians 4:21)

Reminder #2 - No one is beyond God's reach, so always share the gospel with everyone. (Philippians 4:22)

Reminder #3 - The Christian life begins, ends, and continues through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Philippians 4:23)