

# A study in Philippians



*"for the joy of the Lord is your strength"*

**Nehemiah 8:10**



# JOY

a study in *Philippians*

## Session 1: JOY IN CHRIST

### Intro:

This week we will be looking at joy in different areas of our life & ministry. We'll be using the book of Philippians as the foundation. It's a book of joy - 15 specific references to joy, and the command (4:4): **'Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say rejoice!'**

### Who was the church / city

Philippi: Leading town for the district. On a major highway. Gold producing. Proud history. Roman colony. Retirement package for Roman soldiers / officers. Set a tone for the town - like Eastbourne!!! Relaxed, easy life, leisure, don't mess with it.

Principle language was Latin (not Greek). Paul could speak Latin, but this was not his natural preaching language. Not many Jews living in the town (less than 10 heads of Jewish families - as there was no synagogue).

The church was started by Paul and team, with the conversion of Lydia, the slave girl and jailor (Acts 16)

### What is Joy?

For those living in Philippi joy was something to be obtained through the circumstances / environment etc. Retirement is all about living well, having a happy life (golf, holidays etc). Same today, people try external things to produce happiness / joy etc... But the joy that Paul speaks about is NOT dependent on the external circumstances. So what is this joy?

*QUESTION: how would you define Christian Joy?*

*Definition (John Piper)*

*'Good emotion in the soul, produced by the Holy Spirit, as he causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the word and in the world'*

1. *Good Emotion* - not an idea, or a conviction, not a decision, but a feeling. We cannot 'make' feelings happen, they bubble up. **Example - Birth, Fear of Spiders!** So in one sense the Bible commands us to do something that we cannot immediately produce by our own power. That is faith

*'Father command what you will and grant what you command'* Augustine

2. *In the Soul* - The joy that Paul speaks about is spiritual. Not a body thing (I might laugh, or cry), but the emotions flow from the soul. And the soul can be led by the Spirit or shaped by the flesh.

3. *Produced by the Spirit* - Gal 5:22-23. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. I cannot make these things happen, it is God's Spirit in me that is transforming me. The same challenge we see throughout Corinthians & Romans - do we conform to the world or are we transformed by the Spirit (Rom 12:2). **Example - Fruit & growth** cannot be made to happen. We can only set the CONDITIONS (we will be looking at the conditions as we explore further this week).

4. *A sight of Jesus* - This is the first condition for Joy. Joy is found **in the Lord**.

- How can we have joy if we don't know the Lord?
- How can we have joy if we don't understand anything about the Lord?
- How can we have joy if we don't see the things about the Lord before us?

### The Foundation of all Joy is being 'In Christ'

**READING: Phil 1:1-11 & 3:7-11**

### Pauls Prayer & Testimony:

Paul starts his letters with thanksgiving. He greets, then worships!

- Relationship with Him - Know Christ
- Worship of Him

1. We are made to worship - worshippers (John 4:23)
2. Worship is a Choice (Phil 3:7-9)
3. Worship is Switching focus (camera on a phone)
4. Worship is Spiritual
5. Worship is Truth (need to know - God's Word)
6. Worship Remembers & Recollects - thanking for what God has done (his actions & promises)
7. Worship Declares who God is (his character)
8. Worship is Adoration
9. Worship is Intimacy
10. ....Worship can be squeezed out

### CONDITION 1 - A Focus on who Jesus is - Worship



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### Session 2: JOY IN RELATIONSHIPS

#### Intro:

If I think through my life, and where there has been real moments of joy, it will have been in relationships. My son (hand drawn picture).

QUESTION: Where has joy been found in relationships.

QUESTION: think of a time where things have gone wrong, where there has been real hurt - what was the cause?

So often in ministry the areas of greatest pain, frustration, disappointment have been because of relationships.

#### READING: Phil 2:1-18

We get a picture of how life in the church was actually like, these things are written to address reality!

#### Nurture Joy:

- Rivalry / Selfish Ambition and Conceit / Vain Glory - will rob joy in relationships. Competition, Pushing to the front, an empty parade, self elevation, wanting glory to swell pride. We see this all the time in the world, what about church?
- Humility - this is not false humility, not a low view of ourselves. BUT seeing ourselves as God sees us. In Christ, forgiven, loved, a child.
- Consider others as more significant - this is the opposite of the above, putting others first, considering their needs.
- Not only to your own interests - we NEED to look after ourselves. We have a phrase '*not a door mat!*'
- But - also to the interests of others. Putting the other first.

Why can we do this? Because this is the precise attitude that Jesus had. He is our model of relationships

Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be 'grasped' or better translation 'exploited' NRSV. He is God, but emptied himself, did not exploit his position but took the nature of a 'bond servant' *duolos*. - *slave*.

#### Attitude of a Bond Servant:

Exodus 21:2-6 (Psalm 40:6)

A servant who would freely return to his master. Have his ears pierced, and belong to the master for ever. That was his identity.

1. A servant belongs to his master
2. A servant lives to serve the master (obey)
3. A servant has laid down his rights
4. Lives under the authority of the master
5. A servant is provided for

Our example for relationships is that of Jesus Christ.

#### Rooting Out:

EXAMPLE: brambles in garden

**(Phil 4:1-4) & (Eph 4:2)** make allowances for faults '*I urge Euodia and Syntyche to iron out their differences and make up. God doesn't want his children holding grudges.*' Msg .... '*Now I appeal to Euodia and Syntyche. Please, because you belong to the Lord, settle your disagreement.*' NLT

There is a reality in all of Paul's letters. The church had not got it all sorted relationally, people fell out, people disagreed. people even parted ways.

Relationships are undermined, joy is robbed through lack of forgiveness, its a way the devil gets a foothold in the church, his scheme is to use un-forgiveness

See **2 Cor 2:10-11**

1. Forgiveness is not forgetting
2. Forgiveness is a choice
3. You don't forgive someone for their sake but for your sake - un-forgiveness hurts us. Not the other person.
4. Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another persons sin (we live with it anyway!)
5. Forgiveness is deciding not to use the past for future battles
6. Acknowledge the hurt and hate & bring to God
7. Don't wait until you feel like forgiving you will never get there

*Illustration - holding a nail.*

**CONDITION 2 - A Focus on How Jesus lived - Service**



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### Session 3: JOY IN SUFFERING

#### Intro:

As we read through Philippians we see that Joy in the LORD is a mandate, a command (Phil 4:4). But how is this even possible in certain circumstances? Telling someone who has just lost a loved one - 'Be joyful!' - how does that even work?

This was the session I was most unsure about! The extent of suffering around the world today is vast.

QUESTION: what suffering have you experienced, and where was God in it?

#### READING: Phil 2:14-15, 4:10-13

When we are in situations where the most natural response is to grumble. The conditions we find ourselves in, the resistance to the gospel, the frustration of sin in the world, in those around and in me. But it's also in those personally tough positions - hunger, suffering, illness, persecution... in these very places Paul has found the SECRET to JOY

#### What is the secret? Its all about FOCUS

Illustration - 3D Pictures.

What we focus on is the direction we will head. So in the place of suffering where is our focus. Paul invites us to focus on 3 areas:

#### A: God's Kingdom Purposes: His Sovereignty

##### Phil 1:12-18,

Paul's focus is the gospel of Christ. Whatever has happened to him, he sees from the perspective of how Christ is glorified and made known. Even those who are sharing the 'gospel' to make it difficult for Paul are seen from this same perspective.

He can see that God is overall, there is a trust that God will be sovereign in all circumstances. His imprisonment has turned to joy.

God has a plan for His Kingdom to prevail. Through the Bible we hear same promise: things intended for bad, God turns around and uses for his glory. In our weakness, God's strength is revealed.

#### B: God's Final Plan: His Eternity

##### Phil 1:19 - 30, 3:20-21

The next focus for Paul is where his eternal destiny will reside. To live is Christ, and to die is gain. Why? because he will be with Christ. The Heavenly riches will outweigh any momentary suffering in this time.

I read these words at every funeral service that I do: '... who will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him to subject all things to himself.' Our citizenship is in heaven, we are already seated with Christ. This world is our temporary residence - we are here on a visa!

BUT: these first two areas are hard to accept when we are in the midst of it... there is a third:

#### C: God's Work in Me: His Sweetness

##### Phil 3:8

For Paul everything was rubbish (Camel's dung) compared to knowing Christ. Suffering, although unpleasant at the time forces us to turn to Christ. In fact this is what God uses to bring maturity.

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

**James 1:2-4**

In this place his grace is enough...

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. **2 Corinthians 12:9-11***

**Kintsugi - The art of broken pieces.** This artwork is taking something broken, and mending it, the broken seems become the pieces of beauty.

#### CONDITION 3 - A Focus on what Jesus will do - the Future

**PRAYER time: Are there things going on now where I need the presence of Jesus - His Sweetness to pervade?**



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### Session 4: JOY IN MINISTRY

#### Intro:

We are called - God has created us as works of art with a purpose to fulfil. (Eph 2:10). We are perfectly designed for this call, part of which is our ministry.

ILLUSTRATION: basket ball, vs. tennis ball

QUESTION: how does this relate to your own experience?

#### READING: Phil 3:12-14

There is this beautiful phrase 'hidden' within this passage: '*...I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me*' v12. **I seize tight hold of, arrest, catch, capture.** We have been seized tightly by Christ, and the overflow of this truth is that Paul now pushes on to seize the purpose for which he is called.

#### What can rob us of the joy we have in ministry?

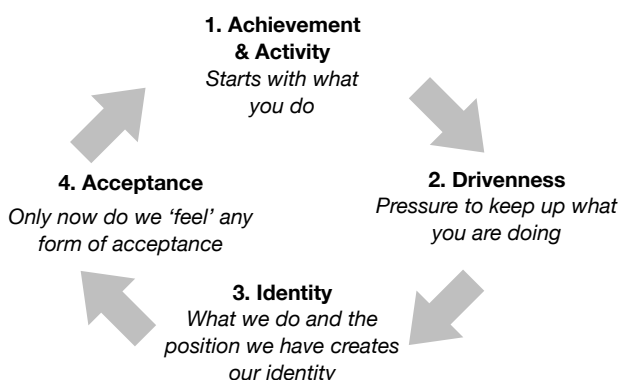
Whenever we are called to serve God, there is that initial sense of excitement, vision, enthusiasm, joy etc. But that can fade! Even in Paul's letters, when he gets personal he reveals his struggles, how he has been let down by others, how people deserted him. I want to look at two things that can rob us of joy:

#### 1. IDENTITY THEFT

From experience there is often a tension that happens in ministry. As we serve God, the role that we do can sometimes become overly tired to our identity. This can be a subtle shift. There is a little phrase that I've heard:

*'Beware when the work we do for God, destroys the work he seeks to do in us'*... that can lead us to:

#### Cycles of Grief



#### 2. COMPARE & CONTRAST

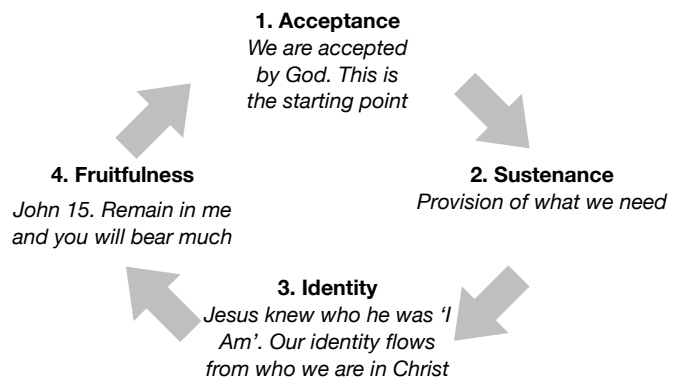
##### 1 Sam 18:6-9

From that day on Saul began to keep a close eye on David. His attention had shifted from the call on his own life, to how he measured up to David. This comparison robs us. We compare, we get dissatisfied, disillusioned and we can develop a 'but me' attitude.

This can lead to a 'shadow' side of ministry where we are driven to compete and our motives have shifted, from service to competition. Joy will ebb away!

#### The Remedy

##### 1. RHYTHMS OF GRACE



#### 2. RUN MY RACE

*'Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.'* **Heb 12:1**

You can't run your race if you are looking at the others around you - Example , Usain Bolt

1. Remember the 'cloud of witnesses'
2. Throw off sin, and hinderances (attitudes, focus)
3. Focus on Jesus: that brings us back to the first session

**Abide in Christ - that is where fruitfulness comes**

**CONDITION 4 - A Focus on how Jesus uses ME - My Call**

**Discussion Time - what drives me?**

# The Drivers

## *Our learned strategies for living*

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We can be 'Driven beyond the call of God'. Because of how we have been brought up, our life experiences can shape us in certain ways - this in turn can develop into things that 'Drive' us. If we allow this drivers to control ministry joy can be robbed. So what are the common drivers?

### **Perfectionist (Be Perfect):**

Typically someone who is purposeful; moral; with very high standards; and task orientated – everything must be exactly right and first time! Their stress levels are raised by perceived poor standards in others, loss of control and failure to achieve goals. There is a danger that they will end up doing everything themselves because they do not trust others to do it right. This makes them poor delegators and may earn them a reputation for demotivating criticism.

In the household in which the Perfectionist grew up the values were success, achievement, autonomy or 'being in control' and competition. Alongside this were the injunctions: 'don't play' (it's the winning that counts, not the taking part!); 'don't be spontaneous'; 'don't fail or make mistakes'; and 'don't rely on others' (they might let you down and cause you to fail). The child believes that unless they behave in the approved way then love and acceptance will be withdrawn and certain fears develop.

#### *Their fears:*

- Loss of control
- Not being told what's going on
- Failure to achieve goals
- Things not being done right

Under pressure Perfectionists can become arrogant, sarcastic and any ability to multi-task disappears as they become more single-minded and rigid.

### **People Pleaser (Please Others):**

A person driven by pleasing others is typically law-abiding; helpful; rescuing; "does the right thing"; people orientated and as pleasant as possible to everyone. Their stress levels are raised by being ignored or criticized. They encourage harmony within the group, but because of their fear of upsetting anyone, will be reluctant to challenge wrong ideas. Their aim is to please other people without asking.

The values of the People Pleasers are co-operation, consideration, and the service of others. Alongside this came the injunctions: 'don't be awkward –fit in'; 'don't say no'; and don't be you, be who we need you to be.

#### *Their fears:*

- Rejection or criticism
- Not being liked or included
- Being thought 'awkward'
- Conflict
- Upsetting people

People Pleasers are very easy to be with or have in a team, but are often pulled this way and that by the different people that are trying to please, finding it very difficult to say 'No'. They are reluctant to challenge wrong ideas and try to anticipate what will please others, without checking first.

Under pressure People Pleasers are likely to become more emotional and go into 'rescuing' behaviour.

### **Activist (Hurry Up):**

Typically someone who is lively; adventurous; the "life and soul of the party" type; enthusiastic; quick; doing lots of things at once. Their stress levels are raised by having time to think and by silence. Their underlying motivation is to do things quickly and get a lot done in a short time. Given time to spare, however, they delay starting until the job becomes urgent. They can appear impatient with others and often make mistakes in their rush to get things done.

The values of the Activist are energy, speed, activity and efficiency. They are always on the go and their idea of relaxation is to go for a run or work out at the gym. Alongside their values are the injunctions: 'don't stop or be still'; 'don't waste time'; 'don't think or plan'; and 'take short cuts'.

*Their fears:*

- Having nothing to do
- Wasting time
- Time to think
- Boredom

An Activist driver is unlikely to have planned their journey, expecting to work things out as they go along, will tend to drive in the fast lane and above the speed limit and will go ten miles out of their way to avoid sitting in stationary traffic

Under pressure Activists become more frenetic, with much visible activity but little achieved.

### **Saviour (Be Strong):**

A "be strong" personality is often self-sufficient; solitary; reliable; helpful whilst unable to accept help. Their stress levels are raised by being 'forced' to say what they feel and exposing their vulnerability. Because of this emotional detachment they are able to problem solve around difficult personal issues and to make 'unpleasant' decisions. They hate admitting any weakness and get overloaded rather than ask for help.

The values of a Saviour are strength, courage, reliability and independence. The dying words of a Saviour are 'I'm fine!' Alongside their values are the injunctions: 'don't be weak or vulnerable'; 'don't show emotion'; 'don't let others down'; and 'don't ask for help'.

*Their fears:*

- Their own vulnerability or weakness
- Not coping
- Letting people down
- Asking for help

Under pressure Saviours withdraw and stop communicating. They don't want help, because if you were close enough to help you'd also be close enough to see the mess. They prefer to sort themselves out in solitude and only reappear when they have got themselves together.

### **Striver (Try Harder):**

Usually someone who is intense; committed to righting wrongs; takes on a lot of tasks but often doesn't complete them; passionate; a hard worker. Their stress levels are raised when criticised for not caring or being irresponsible. They love any new or different task but their initial interest wears off before they finish. In their communication with others they are likely to go off at a tangent and forget their original objective.

The values of a Striver are determination, endurance, and effort. It is probable that whenever, in childhood, they pushed a parental boundary, it moved. Usually they are intense - committed to righting wrongs. They love any new or different task but their initial interest wears off before they finish. In their communication with others they are likely to go off at a tangent and forget their original objective. Alongside their values are the injunctions: 'don't give up or give in'; 'don't succeed or fail' (the job is never over and so cannot be evaluated); and 'don't relax'.

*Their fears:*

- Not having put in enough effort
- Being thought irresponsible
- Giving up
- Finishing

Under pressure they put in more and more effort, but often change course before anything is achieved.

## **Action Points:**

### **Perfectionist (Be Perfect):**

1. Set realistic standards of performance and accuracy
2. Practice asking yourself what the consequences really are – do this whenever you find a mistake
3. Make a point of telling others that their mistakes are not serious

### **People Pleaser (Please Others):**

1. Start asking people questions to check what they want instead of guessing
2. Please yourself more often, and ask others for what you want
3. Practice telling other people firmly when they are wrong

### **Activist (Hurry Up):**

1. Plan your work in stages, setting interim target dates
2. Concentrate on listening carefully to others until they finish speaking
3. Learn relaxation techniques and then use them regularly

### **Saviour (Be Strong):**

1. Keep a task and time log so you can monitor your work load
2. Ask other people to help you
3. Take up a spare-time activity that you can really enjoy

### **Striver (Try Harder):**

1. Stop volunteering
2. Make a plan that includes finishing a task – and then stick to that plan through to a conclusion
3. Check out the parameters of a task so that you do only what is expected