

Rejoice in the Lord!

Messages from Philippians

Participant's Guide

Written by Marilyn Miller, retired Staff Minister, and reviewed for theological accuracy by Prof. James Westendorf.

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Letting Christ Define your life

Opening Prayer

1. Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, we say "thy will be done." God's will is that the gospel is preached, all people are saved and we live holy lives. It follows then that each of us who pray this would want to do all we can to help make this happen. This is neither a small nor an easy task. With some thought, one can easily see how this mission could consume every minute, every thought and every resource of every day. With God's help, all is possible. For the next hour we will talk about the breadth of God's will and how we can spur one another on to commit our lives to fulfilling his will.
2. Read 1:9-11. Put Paul's words into your own words. How does this growth happen?
3. How easy is it to let everyone with whom you come into contact know you are a follower of Christ? What are some of the struggles and barriers?
4. What life encouragement does Paul give us in the following passages:
 - a. Read 1:12-15
 - b. Read 1:27-28
 - c. Read 1:29-30
5. Paul states the very purpose of a Christian's life when he asks the Philippians to be shining stars in a dark world. Read 2:12-16a. How can you be a shining star? What can help you keep your star shining brightly every day?

6. Just in case you're thinking that you are really pretty good at this and this message might be more for others than for you, Paul has a message for you. He had exceptional credentials as a Jew of the highest order. Read 3:7-11 and discuss how he viewed his credentials and what this means for you.

What things might be standing in your way to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus?

7. In 3:12-14 Paul pictures his life as a race. What principles of running a race might prove helpful to you as you make decisions and set priorities, both big and small?

8. What one or two things are you going to do differently based on our study today?

"I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength." (4:13). What an amazing gift of grace!

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. (4:23)

Christian Friends, an Indispensable Blessing

Opening Prayer

1. Paul opens his letter to the Philippians with “I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.” (1:3-5). Paul cherished the people at the Philippi church, this is obvious from his letter. How much do you also cherish the other Christians in your life? Your pastor? Congregation members? Christians around the world? How do you show it?
2. What makes Christian friends different than non-Christian friends? Maybe consider 1:7 in your discussion.
3. Read 1:27-28. Why is it important that Christians “stand firm in one spirit?”

When have you been blessed to “stand firm in one spirit” with your congregation or your Christian family and friends? Have these experiences made your life richer and more joyful?

4. What are some of the things that help us stand together? (2:1-4)
5. In 3:17 and also 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul says it is important to have someone to imitate. This is a natural human behavior—just look how fads and styles come and go, that celebrity t-shirt or shoes the kids must have, the heroes people follow and talk about. Why is it important for Christians to have Christ-focused mentors? Who do you use as a mentor?

How can we teach our children and young adults the difference between friends and Christian friends?

6. Paul cherished the fellowship he had with the Philippians. What are some of the blessings that come from our being in Christian fellowship with one another? What's the greatest one for you?

7. What might you change in your life based on this study?

I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength. (4:13). What an amazing gift of grace!

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Humility – Following Jesus' Example

Opening Prayer

1. Be honest, do you consider yourself humble? Is being humble valued by our culture?
2. Read 2:1-4 carefully. Paul is clearly advocating humility and it seems unconditional. What makes Christian humility different than the worldly humility we just talked about? Consider what we can learn from the role of humility in the life of Moses. (Num 12:3 – “Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.”)
3. How can you reconcile the worldly definition of humility and what Paul tells us? Must I always show Christian humility in all areas of my life? You might consider Paul's comments in Colossians 4:5-6 in your discussion.
4. Now, with our Christian mindset, let's look at Jesus' perfect example of humility. Read 2:5-8. Jesus, from eternity, has always been the all-powerful, all-knowing God of the universe. Yet, at his incarnation, he became fully human as well, though he never gave up his divine attributes. He used them on this earth as he fed the multitude, walked on water, healed the ill, raised people from the dead, and more, but he never used them for his own aggrandizement. To grasp Christ's perfect example of humility, let's fill in the following table based on the verses we just read.

	Our Selfishness	Selflessness of Christ
2:6		
2:7		
2:8		

What do you notice about Jesus' example of humility that we are asked to imitate?

- Paul seems to have laid out an impossible task for us. But we can't just throw up our hands and give up. When looking at anyone as someone to imitate, it helps if we get to know that person very, very well so that we can understand their motivation and how they think, not just what they do. Name some of the ways we can get to know Jesus better, more intimately, and how you think this will help develop your Christian humility.
- One last thought. Read 2:9-11. We do not develop humility so that it can be seen as something good. Then we are no longer humble but proud! We do not earn a share of Christ's glory through our lowliness and suffering for Jesus' sake. Our salvation is a free gift through grace. The life of Jesus shows a journey from humility to glory as he now sits in heaven and every knee bows to him. How can the life of a humble, self-sacrificing Christian also be identified as a path from humility to glory?

"I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength." (4:13). What an amazing gift of grace!

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Rejoice Always! Really?

Opening Prayer

1. Are you a half full or half empty type of person? Why?

Though Paul's life at this time didn't reflect a physical situation that we would usually describe as joyful, he packs his letter, these few pages of Scripture, with many reasons why his joy was genuine and not dampened by the physical situation in which he found himself. Let's see why he could agree with David, the Psalmist, in saying his cup is overflowing (Ps 23:5).

2. Read 1:3-5 and 1:12-14 and 1:18. What is one of the major reasons Paul rejoices? How did he turn his "lemons into lemonade," i.e., his imprisonment in a Roman prison, into a blessing?

Discuss what this means for you and what it would take for you to develop or strengthen a joyful attitude in all things.

I commit to include the following in my life to help me be joyful in all situations because the gospel is being spread in this world.

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3. Read 3:1-3, 3:7-9. What is another of the major reasons Paul rejoices? How does he describe it?

Looking at our own lives, we're much more comfortable when we have a decent balance in our savings account, a degree or career and a source of income, a good health, healthy relationships with those close to us, etc. What might help you see your cup overflowing with joy even in very difficult situations? What Bible promises might you lean on?

I commit to include the following in my life to help me build my strength in God alone:

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- 4 Read 3:10-4:1. What is yet another of the major reasons Paul rejoices? How does he describe it?

Discuss what this means for you and what it would take for you to develop or strengthen your continual focus on heaven.

I commit to include the following in my life to help me focus on the end goal of life in heaven rather than the journey here on earth:

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5. Read 4:4-9. Paul asks that we replace any anxiety with joy. Why?

Paul links joy and gentleness in verses 4 and 5. We do not always let our gentleness be on display but why do you think Paul says it should be?

6. In verse 4:6 Paul tells us prayer and thanksgiving are tools that help us be joyful always. In 4:11b-13 he gives us one more tool—be content. What is his secret to being content?
7. On your own, think of someone who always appears gentle and content with their lot in life. Do they also display a strong faith? Consciously attempt to use them as a mentor as you work on displaying joy *always*.

All of this is ours, through grace.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. (4:23)