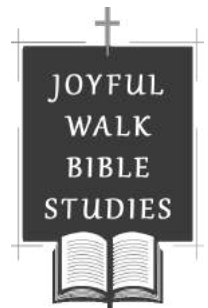


Knowing Jesus... Knowing Joy!

Are you hungry for joy in your life?

A study of Philippians

MELANIE NEWTON



We extend our heartfelt thanks to the many women who served as the contributors to the original version of this study guide, especially Liz Church, Lori Schweers, Phyllis Neal and Penny Semmelbeck. Thanks also to my Thursday morning Bible Study group whose insights helped me to prepare this revised version, especially co-leaders Marlo Brazeal, Susan Lewis, and Connie Crowley.

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Melanie Newton is the author of “Graceful Beginnings” books for anyone new to the Bible and “Joyful Walk Bible Studies” for established Christians. Her mission is to help women learn to study the Bible for themselves and to grow their Bible-teaching skills to lead others. For questions about the use of this study guide, please visit melanienevton.com to contact us.

Joyful Walk Bible Studies are grace-based studies for women of all ages. Each study guide follows the inductive method of Bible study (observation, interpretation, application) in a warm and inviting format.

We pray that you and your group will find Knowing Jesus...Knowing Joy! a resource that God will use to strengthen you in your faith walk with God.

Grace-based Bible Studies • Always Relevant • Never Fluff





MELANIE NEWTON

Melanie Newton is a Louisiana girl who made the choice to follow Jesus while attending LSU. She and her husband Ron married and moved to Texas for him to attend Dallas Theological Seminary. They stayed in Texas where Ron led a wilderness camping ministry for troubled youth for many years. Ron now helps corporations with their challenging employees and is the author of the top-rated business book, *No Jerks on the Job*.

Melanie jumped into raising three Texas-born children and serving in ministry to women at her church. Through the years, the Lord has given her opportunity to do Bible teaching and to write grace-based Bible studies for women that are now available from her website (melanienewton.com) and on Bible.org. *Graceful Beginnings* books are for anyone new to the Bible. *Joyful Walk Bible Studies* are for maturing Christians.

Melanie Newton loves to help women learn how to study the Bible for themselves. She also teaches online courses for women to grow their Bible-teaching skills to help others—all with the goal of getting to know Jesus more along the way. Her heart's desire is to encourage you to have a joyful relationship with Jesus Christ so you are willing to share that experience with others around you.

"Jesus took hold of me in 1972, and I've been on this great adventure ever since. My life is a gift of God, full of blessings in the midst of difficult challenges. The more I've learned and experienced God's absolutely amazing grace, the more I've discovered my faith walk to be a joyful one. I'm still seeking that joyful walk every day."

Melanie

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Using This Study Guide

This study guide consists of 10 lessons covering Paul’s letter to the Philippians. Each lesson begins by asking you to read the whole Bible passage for the lesson to get the “big picture.” The lessons are divided into 4 sections (about 25 minutes in length). The first 3 sections contain a detail study of the passages. The last section is a podcast that provides additional insight to the lesson.

If you cannot do the entire lesson one week, please read the Bible passage being covered and do the “Day One Study.”

THE BASIC STUDY

Each lesson includes core questions covering the passage narrative. These core questions will take you through the process of inductive Bible study—observation, interpretation, and application. The process is more easily understood in the context of answering these questions:

- What does the passage say? (*Observation: what’s actually there*)
- What does it mean? (*Interpretation: the author’s intended meaning*)
- How does this apply to me today? (*Application: making it personal*) **Your Joy Journey** questions are the application questions in this study. These questions lead to introspection and application of a specific truth to your life.

STUDY ENHANCEMENTS

Deeper Discoveries (optional): Embedded within the sections are *optional* questions for research of subjects we don’t have time to cover adequately in the lessons or contain information that significantly enhance the basic study. If you are meeting with a small group, your leader may give you the opportunity to share your “discoveries.”

Study Aids: To aid in proper interpretation and application of the study, six additional study aids are located where appropriate in the lesson:

- Historical Insights
- Scriptural Insights
- From the Greek (definitions of Greek words)
- Focus on the Meaning
- Think About It (thoughtful reflection)

Other useful study tools: Use online tools or apps (blueletterbible.org or “Blue Letter Bible app” is especially helpful) to find *cross references* (verses with similar content to what you are studying) and meanings of the *original Greek words or phrases* used (usually called “interlinear”). You can also look at any verse in *various Bible translations* to help with understanding what it is saying. Feel free to add your own study at the end of each lesson.

PODCASTS

Find podcasts coordinating with these lessons at melaniemewton.com/podcasts. Choose “5: Knowing Jesus...Knowing Joy! (Philippians).” Or, follow the links in the eBook version to access

the podcast for each lesson. Listen to the first podcast as an introduction to the study.

NEW TESTAMENT SUMMARY

The New Testament opens with the births of John and Jesus. About 30 years later, John challenged the Jews to indicate their repentance (turning from sin and toward God) by submitting to water baptism—a familiar Old Testament practice used for repentance as well as when a Gentile converted to Judaism (to be washed clean of idolatry).

Jesus, God's incarnate Son, publicly showed the world what God is like and taught His perfect ways for 3 – 3½ years. After preparing 12 disciples to continue Christ's earthly work, He died voluntarily on a cross for mankind's sin, rose from the dead, and returned to heaven. The account of His earthly life is recorded in 4 books known as the Gospels (the biblical books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John named after the compiler of each account).

After Jesus' return to heaven, the followers of Christ were then empowered by the Holy Spirit and spread God's salvation message among the Jews, a number of whom believed in Christ. The apostle Paul and others carried the good news to the Gentiles during 3 missionary journeys (much of this recorded in the book of Acts). Paul wrote 13 New Testament letters to churches & individuals (Romans through Philemon). The section in our Bible from Hebrews to Jude contains 8 additional letters penned by five men, including two apostles (Peter and John) and two of Jesus' half-brothers (James and Jude). The author of Hebrews is unknown. The apostle John also recorded Revelation, which summarizes God's final program for the world. The Bible ends as it began—with a new, sinless creation.

DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDELINES

Anyone can do this study alone. If you are doing this as part of a group, we suggest you use the following guidelines to maintain a safe environment for your group members to learn together.

1. **Attend consistently** whether your lesson is done or not. You'll learn from the other women, and they want to get to know you.
2. **Set aside time** to work through the study questions. The goal of Bible study is to **get to know** Jesus. He will change your life.
3. **Share your insights** from your personal study time. As you spend time in the Bible, Jesus will teach you truth through His Spirit inside you.
4. **Respect each other's insights.** Listen thoughtfully. Encourage each other as you interact. Refrain from dominating the discussion if you have a tendency to be talkative. 😊
5. **Celebrate our unity** in Christ. Avoid bringing up controversial subjects such as politics, divisive issues, and denominational differences.
6. **Maintain confidentiality.** Remember that anything shared during the group time is not to leave the **group** (unless permission is granted by the one sharing).
7. **Pray for one another** as sisters in Christ.
8. **Get to know the women** in your group. Please do not use your small group members for solicitation purposes for home businesses, though.

Enjoy your Joyful Walk Bible Study!

Paul's Letter to the Philippians (NIV)

Paul and Timothy, servants of **CHRIST JESUS**, to all the saints in **CHRIST JESUS** at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord **JESUS CHRIST**.

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, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of **CHRIST JESUS**.

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the **gospel**, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of **CHRIST JESUS**.

And this is my prayer that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of **CHRIST**, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through **JESUS CHRIST** —to the glory and praise of God.

Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the **gospel**. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for **CHRIST**. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

It is true that some preach **CHRIST** out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the **gospel**. The former preach **CHRIST** out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, **CHRIST** is preached. And because of this I **rejoice**.

Yes, and I will continue to **REJOICE**, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of **JESUS CHRIST**, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always **CHRIST** will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is **CHRIST** and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with **CHRIST**, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and **joy** in the faith, so that through my being with you again your **joy** in **CHRIST JESUS** will overflow on account of me.

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the **gospel** of **CHRIST**. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in **one spirit**, contending as **one man** for the faith of the **gospel** without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved —and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of **CHRIST** not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

If you have any encouragement from being **united** with **CHRIST**, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my **joy** complete by being **like-minded**, having the **same love**, being **one in spirit and purpose**. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should

look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Your attitude should be the same as that of **CHRIST JESUS**: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of **JESUS** every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that **JESUS CHRIST** is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed —not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence —continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of **CHRIST** that I did not run or labor for nothing. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am *glad* and *rejoice* with all of you. So you too should be *glad* and *rejoice* with me.

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of **JESUS CHRIST**. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed, he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore, I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be *glad* and I may have less anxiety. Welcome him in the Lord with great *joy*, and honor men like him, because he almost died for the work of **CHRIST**, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

Finally, my brothers, *rejoice* in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in **CHRIST JESUS**, and who put no confidence in the flesh — though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of **CHRIST**. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing **CHRIST JESUS** my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain **CHRIST**

and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in **CHRIST** —the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know **CHRIST** and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which **CHRIST JESUS** took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in **CHRIST JESUS**.

All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of **CHRIST**. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord **JESUS CHRIST**, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my *joy* and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends! I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to *agree with each other* in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the *gospel*, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again *rejoice*! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in **CHRIST JESUS**.

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable —if anything is excellent or praiseworthy —think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me —put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

I *rejoice* greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the *gospel*, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in **CHRIST JESUS**.

To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Greet all the saints in **CHRIST JESUS**. The brothers who are with me send greetings. All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord **JESUS CHRIST** be with your spirit. Amen.

Paul and Timothy

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[A Joyful Beginning](#)" as an introduction to the whole study. Use the listener guide below.

A Joyful Beginning

ABOUT PAUL

- When Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians that we'll be studying together, he had been a Christian for almost 30 years. From the beginning, Jesus told him that Paul was to go to those who were called Gentiles (that is, anyone who was not Jewish) and preach the gospel to them. Paul spent the first three of those years just getting to know Jesus and learning what to teach about Him to others.
- Then, Jesus sent him on mission to Cypress and southern Turkey where many people believed the gospel and new churches were formed. Then, God directed him through a vision to northern Greece so he could preach the gospel there. When Paul arrived in Philippi, he was about 45 years old. He had been a believer for around 15 years and in ministry for 12 of those.

ABOUT PHILIPPI

- Philippi was a commercial center of possibly 15,000 residents in the province of Macedonia in northern Greece along the Roman interstate highway called the Egnatian Way.
- Philippi was a Roman colony. Those born there were automatically Roman citizens.
- The Philippians, who were mostly Greek and Roman, were so proud of this privilege that they modeled their city after Rome, dressed like Romans, and spoke Latin as often as Greek. There were very few Jews living there.
- As a Roman citizen himself, Paul understood everything these people felt and thought about their citizenship.

THE JOYFUL RELATIONSHIP BEGINS

- Philippi had so few Jews that there was no synagogue. So, any Jews living there met for prayer on the Sabbath outside the city walls along the banks of the river to get away from idolatry.
- As Paul shared the gospel with a group of women meeting for prayer, the Lord opened Lydia's heart so that she accepted the gospel readily and brought it to her home. She knew Jesus so could know joy. The new church met in her home.

- God healed a demon-possessed girl through Paul, causing an uproar which led to Paul and Silas being severely beaten and chained in jail. At midnight, while they were singing praises to God in the hearing of other prisoners, God answered with an earthquake.
- Overwhelmed with their Christian testimony and their unquenchable joy, the jailer asked the most important question any sinner can ask God, “What must I do to be saved?” Paul’s answer was, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” The jailer and his family believed and were saved.

THE JOYFUL RELATIONSHIP CONTINUES

- When Paul left Philippi, a church was established in Lydia’s house, a church of servants and givers who had what Paul described in 2 Corinthians as “overflowing joy.” Paul visited these believers again 3 years later. The church sent Paul a financial gift several times.
- Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, then after a long time of waiting was sent to Rome to be imprisoned there. Paul was in his own rented house for two years. While he was in prison, the Philippian believers once again had collected a gift of money and sent it to him along with their pastor, Epaphroditus, so Paul’s confinement would be more comfortable.
- This church was closer to Paul than was any other church. His love for them and their love for him are evident throughout the letter.
- Paul rejoiced as he wrote this letter to thank the church and to express his love for them. They lived out the joy of knowing Jesus.
- It is possible that Paul visited the Philippian church again a few years after the writing of this letter. His life ended in 67/68 AD, but his legacy continued in Philippi into the 2nd century we know for sure.

THE JOYFUL LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Paul’s letter to the Philippians is a well-crafted expression of gratitude and joy. This joy comes through your relationship with Jesus Christ. He is the one who promises to complete His work in you. The one who supplies your every need. The one who gave Himself up for you on the cross. The one who gives you the motivation and the power to serve Him with joy. The one who strengthens you in every circumstance. The one who causes you to be content. The one who supplies your every need from His glorious riches. The one whom you can know well. The one who longs to produce joy in your life. The deeper your relationship with Jesus and with His people the greater the joy that awaits you and the less your joy is dependent on external circumstances. This study of Philippians will encourage you to **know Jesus** and **know joy!**

Want to have joy in your life?

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!

1: A Joy-Filled Letter

Philippians 1:1-2

DAY ONE STUDY

The ABCs of Philippians—Author, Background, and Context

Like any book you read, it always helps to know a bit about the author, the background setting for the story (i.e., past, present, future), and where the book fits into a series (that's the context). The same is true of Bible books.

AUTHOR

Paul identifies himself as the author of this letter written to the church in Philippi. Paul, whose Hebrew name was Saul, was born in Tarsus, a major Roman city on the coast of southeast Asia Minor. Tarsus was the center for the tent making industry. Paul was trained in that craft as his occupation (his primary paying profession). As a Jewish Pharisee from the tribe of Benjamin, Paul was educated at the feet of Gamaliel, a well-respected rabbi of the day. Paul was an ardent persecutor of the early church until his life-changing conversion to Christianity

After believing in Jesus Christ as his Savior, Paul was sent by God as an apostle to take the gospel to the Gentiles. This was an amazing about-face for a committed Pharisee like Paul who ordinarily would have nothing to do with Gentiles. Paul wrote 13 letters that are included in the New Testament. Tradition has it that Paul was beheaded shortly after he wrote 2nd Timothy in 67 A.D. (*You can glean more about Paul's background from Acts 8:3; 9:1-31; 22:3-5; 26:9-11; and Galatians 1:11-24.*)

BACKGROUND

Philippi was a city in eastern Macedonia, or modern northern Greece, 10 miles inland from the Aegean Sea. Much traffic to Rome from the east went through Philippi, which served as a gateway city to Greece and Italy (a major crossroad on the Egnatian Way—one of the empire's highways linking the Aegean and Adriatic Seas). Philippi was a transplanted Roman colony. The citizens in the colony were given the same rights and privileges as those who lived in Italy. They were able to maintain their own senate and magistrates and were not subject to regional government. Most importantly, this excluded them from taxation. Luke refers to Philippi as a "leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony" (Acts 16:12). This is an interesting comment since Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia. The reason for this is that Philippi was a Roman colony and Thessalonica was not, which gave it more status. There was also a school of medicine in Philippi and some think that Luke may have attended there. But we don't know for sure.

The church at Philippi was founded around 51 A.D. during Paul's second missionary journey. During this visit to Philippi, Paul and Silas shared the gospel with a group of women outside the city gates by the riverbank gathered for prayer. The good news of Christ was embraced by Lydia and her household, which possibly included her servants and children. Lydia became the first believer in Philippi and was a gracious hostess to the first church in Europe, which met in her home. Others believed the gospel message including a jailer and his family. When Paul and Silas left, a small church was already meeting in Lydia's home. At the end of Paul's third missionary trip, Paul visited Philippi again.

Paul had a very close relationship with the Philippian church. They were a source of encouragement to him and they also provided financially for his ministry more than once. Paul calls this church his

“joy and crown.” Sixty years later, a church leader named Polycarp wrote a letter to the Philippians. We learn from it that after 2 generations, the Philippian church was still standing firm and that it cherished the memory of its great founder.

CONTEXT

The letter to the Philippians was written by Paul around 61 or 62 A.D. during his house arrest in Rome (Acts 28). Being under “house arrest,” Paul was chained to a Roman soldier 24 hours a day, but was free to receive visitors and write (Acts 28:17-31). The guard was changed every 6 hours, which gave Paul an excellent opportunity to share his faith with many different guards. Philippians was apparently the last of the four letters Paul wrote from the Roman prison (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians), as Philippians 1:21-28 seems to indicate a decision about his fate would be made soon.

1. What grabbed your attention from the ABCs above?

2. Read Acts 16:9-40. What do you learn about the founding of this church in Philippi?

Scriptural Insight: The story of Lydia is a great example of God’s providence and His care for believers. Lydia was a worshiper of God but, like Cornelius in Acts 10, had not yet heard the gospel. As Paul shared the good news of Jesus, God opened her heart so that she received the life-giving message. After Lydia’s conversion and baptism, she insisted that Paul and his friends come to stay at her home. Luke says that “she prevailed upon us,” which indicates the fervency of her desire to be hospitable. The missionaries did indeed judge Lydia to be a true believer, and they stayed at her home while in Philippi. We also see the immediate bond that a new believer has with other believers in Christ—Lydia showed hospitality to those who brought the good news, and she wouldn’t take “no” for an answer. Evidence of joy!

Lydia, although a native of Thyatira in Asia Minor, is the first person recorded to have been saved in Europe. Later in biblical history, we discover there is a church in Thyatira (Revelation 2:18). We have no record of Paul visiting that city on any of his missionary journeys.

IS IT HAPPINESS OR JOY?

Paul’s letter to the Philippians is a well-crafted expression of gratitude and joy. So, what exactly is joy? How does joy differ from happiness? Happiness is a fleeting emotion based on **external circumstances**. But true joy is different. It is something that comes from within you. Joy is a deep abiding peace and sense of contentment and strength that is due to something **internal**.

True joy is based on a saving relationship with God and enjoying fellowship with Him. The believer's joy is found in the inner work of the Holy Spirit. Even non-believers in Jesus can know happiness as they find it in the good things that God has given to all human beings so generously. The Christian knows a heightened joy that is rooted in the bond that exists between the believer and the Lord and the bond that exists with other believers whom we have come to love. The deeper our relationship with Jesus and with His people the greater the joy that awaits us and the less that joy is dependent on external circumstances.

Scriptural Insight: In the Old Testament, joy is cast in terms of the worshipping community's response to God. A relationship with God was the key. In the New Testament, the most common use of joy (Greek, *chairo*) indicates both a state of joy and that which brings us joy. Our relationship with Jesus, particularly abiding in Him and being obedient to Him, is a source of joy (John 15:10-11). Joy is produced in us by the Holy Spirit and is a fruit of His presence (Galatians 5:22; 1 Thessalonians 1:6). It is not linked with material possessions, but rather is an overflow of salvation (Acts 8:8; 16:34). Joy is not dependent on external circumstances and is applied to suffering as well as to salvation (Acts 13:50-52; 2 Corinthians 7:4; James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6-7)." (Adapted from *The Teacher's Commentary*, p. 934)

While Paul is writing these words of joy in his letter to the Philippians, he is in prison in Rome and chained to a Roman guard! What does Paul know about joy that transcends his circumstances? Are you hungry for joy in your life? Find out how this special letter encourages all who read it to **know Jesus and know joy!**

"Joy is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of Christ." (William Vander Haven)

3. **Your joy journey:** Where in your life are you hungry for joy?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Today, you will get an overview of the letter to the Philippians.

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Get the Big Picture

4. Read Paul's letter to the Philippians (only 4 chapters long). A copy of the letter is included in this study guide before Lesson One. This is the best way to see the entire message and get the "big picture" before we divide it into smaller pieces to enjoy it more slowly.

If you read the letter included in this study guide, you saw the highlighted words and phrases. They represent common themes in the letter.

- "Christ" or "Christ Jesus"—How often does Paul mention Jesus Christ?

- "Joy," "rejoice(d)(s)", and "glad"— How many times does Paul express joy in his letter?

- "Gospel"— How often does the word "gospel" occur?

- References to unity (i.e.: one mind, same, united, harmony, etc.)—How often is unity emphasized?

Think About It: Jesus Christ is central to everything about life. He is the focus of the gospel, the reason you can have joy, and the way to have unity of heart in a group of diverse individuals.

5. What do you learn about the Philippian church from your first reading of the letter?

Focus on the Meaning: Paul mentions joy or rejoicing at least 15 times in this letter so it is an excellent mini-study of joy. That means that on average joy or rejoicing appears every 7 verses.

6. What else grabbed your attention?

7. What do you learn about Paul just from reading this letter?

8. **Your joy journey:** What do you hope to learn from your study of Philippians?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read Philippians 1:1-2. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

What does the Bible say? (This is the "Observation" step in the process of Bible Study.)

9. How do Paul and Timothy describe themselves in verse one?

Think About It: "Don't you find it amazing that a great leader like the apostle Paul and his right-hand man, Timothy, chose to evaluate and describe themselves as "servants" of Jesus Christ? The Greek word Paul uses for "servant" was *doulos*, which refers to a slave who had no will, no rights, and no possessions of his or her own. Instead, he was the possession of another...forever! A slave's role in life was singular: to obey his or her master's will quickly, quietly, and without question." (Elizabeth George, *Experiencing God's Peace*, p.20)

10. To whom was the letter of Philippians addressed? Notice the words used in verse 1.

From the Greek: The word “saint” here literally means “holy ones” or “set apart ones,” and refers to anyone who is a believer in Jesus Christ. (Acts 9:13,32; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1)

11. In Philippians 1:2, Paul writes of two spiritual blessings he desires to impart to the readers by writing this letter. What are these?

What does it mean? (*This is the “Interpretation” step in the process of Bible Study.*)

12. Read the following verses to compare Paul’s salutations in other letters. Galatians 1:1-3 (Paul’s first letter); 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; Romans 1:1, 7-8; and Ephesians 1:1-2 (one of Paul’s last letters). What is consistently the same?

Focus on the Meaning: “Grace” was a common Greek salutation that meant “greetings” or “rejoice.” The Jews said “shalom” to each other, meaning “peace and prosperity.” Paul used both words when he greeted the recipients of his epistles. For the Christian, these terms took on a deeper meaning. God has chosen to set His love upon the believer in Christ (grace) resulting in something that the world cannot give (peace).

13. Being confident in the authenticity of what you read in the Bible is important to your faith. How would the consistency you just found help to prove the authenticity of those letters?

What application will you make? (This is the “Application” step in the process of Bible Study.)

14. Your Joy Journey:

- When you introduce yourself to others, how do you describe yourself? Or, put another way, what are the top 3 or 4 words you usually use to tell people who you are?

- Do you think the words you choose to describe yourself reflect what is most important to you? Explain your answer.

Respond to the Lord about what He’s shown you today.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast [“A Joyful Walk”](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

A Joyful Walk

Throughout the Bible, our lives are referred to as a “walk” although some days you may feel like yours is a sprint. Am I right? Though you may feel like you are sprinting, your whole life experience is considered a walk.

And, those who place their faith in Christ are living a “faith walk.” But, here’s the catch: a lifetime faith walk must be walked daily. Choices are made daily, weekly, and yearly to follow pathways that lead you to a joyful walk (the kind you pictured in your mind) or to one that is frustrating and disappointing. Along life’s journey, you have to know how to choose the walk that will be joyful.

WHAT IS JOY?

- Most people define joy as a feeling of happiness when you’re smiling and laughing a lot. And, they think that happiness comes from “good happenings.” But, what happens if things are not so good?
- Biblical joy refers to having a **deep inner gladness, regardless of the circumstances** going on around you.
- Biblical joy is supernatural. It is inseparable from the character of God and comes only from a relationship with Him.
- Biblical joy is a fruit of the Spirit of Jesus living in us. That means joy is available to every Christian.
- Biblical joy is a deep abiding peace and sense of contentment and strength.

JOY IS IN GOD’S CHARACTER.

- Joy is part of the character of God.

“The joy of the Lord is my strength.” (Nehemiah 8:10)

- God has joy whenever anyone comes to Him to have his or her sins forgiven by faith in His Son Jesus. The Bible describes lots of rejoicing in heaven at that time.
- God has pleasure in His creation. The Father God has joy in what His hands have made, especially His creatures.
- God expresses His joy.

The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.” (Zephaniah 3:17)

GOD GIVES US HIS JOY.

- A sense of joy pervades the Bible. In the Old Testament, joy is seen in worshiping and praising God—the enthusiastic response of the worshiping community.
- God’s joy comes to us from a relationship with Him through knowing Jesus Christ. Jesus, who was God, had God’s joy **in** Him. He gives it to us. *John 15:11; 1 Peter 1:8*
- The moment you believe in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit comes to live inside of you. And, He gives you God’s glorious, uncontainable joy. Joy is a **fruit of His presence**. When we know Jesus, we will know joy.
- Joy is most often linked in the New Testament with God’s work in fellow believers whom we love and whom we serve. Joy in knowing Jesus is contagious. It wells up within us and motivates us to serve others in love.
- The deeper our relationship with Jesus and with His people the greater the joy that awaits us and the less that joy is dependent on external circumstances.
- We can “rejoice **in** the Lord” when our focus is on our living Lord, the one who promises to complete His work in us. The one who supplies our every need. The one who gave Himself up for us on the cross. The one who gives us the motivation and the power to serve Him with joy. The one who strengthens us in every circumstance. The one who causes us to be content. The one who supplies our every need from His glorious riches. The one whom we can know in a personal relationship. The one who longs to produce joy in our lives.

Jesus paid for your sins on the cross so you could have eternal life and have it more abundantly. That truth is enough to rejoice in the Lord regardless of anything going on in your life. But, knowing Christ more and more will increase your joy. You can know Jesus and know joy. That will lead to a joyful walk.

Want to have joy in your life?

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!

2: The Joyful Bond of Love

Philippians 1:3-11

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

What does the Bible say?

Let's start digging into this wonderful letter from God to us. For every lesson, we will begin with reading the whole passage to get the big picture before we study the verses more closely. Sometimes, we will include verses from the previous lesson to show continuity.

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Read the Bible passage below (NIV, including verses from the last lesson). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) anything repeated in this passage. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect. Put a star ✱ next to anything that contributes to joy or rejoicing.

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

² *Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

³ *I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

⁷ *It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.*

⁸ *God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

⁹ *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

1. What grabbed your attention from these verses?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

- Those born there were automatically Roman citizens. Roman citizenship was highly prized in the early 1st century.
- They answered directly to Rome and not a provincial governor – less bureaucracy.
- They had the right to appeal to the emperor (which Paul does and that's why he is in Rome awaiting trial).
- They were protected under Roman law against punishment, execution or torture without trial (this is key when we see what Paul endures in Philippi in Acts 16).
- Most important and best of all: they paid no taxes!

This elevated status and wealth gave them pride that often bordered on arrogance. Since Paul came from a Roman colony, he understood their civic pride about their Roman citizenship. Paul appealed to this pride in the way he addresses their citizenship in Phil. 1:27 and 3:20-21 when he reminds the Philippians that their true citizenship was in heaven and not the Roman empire.

Read Philippians 1:3-8. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

6. Focus upon the words Paul chose to express what was on his heart.

- How would you describe Paul's attitude and feelings toward the people of the church of Philippi from these verses?
- Why did he feel that way?

From the Greek: The word “partnership” translates the Greek word *koinonia*, meaning “fellowship, joint participation.” The use of this word in the New Testament stands for the sharing together of their partnership with God and with other believers that the gospel makes possible. It is what they have in common—Christ and His work on their behalf.

7. **Your Joy Journey:** In what relationships do you participate or partner in God's service, as Paul describes here? Spend time in prayer thanking God for them, using some of the wording from vv. 3-8.

8. Focus on Philippians 1:6. Having “confidence” in someone or something is wonderful.

- Using a dictionary, define confidence.

- What are the reasons Paul gives in verse 6 for his confidence concerning the saints in Philippi?
9. Read Philippians 1:6 in several translations. As you reflect upon this verse, what do you learn (or are reminded) about the character of God?

Scriptural Insight: Twice in this passage Paul uses the phrase the “day of Christ.” Simply put, the “day of Christ” refers to the culmination of the Lord's work of salvation in the believer and points to the day when He will return for His own. There are at least 18 references to this day in the New Testament. It will be the time when Christ returns for His church, salvation is finally completed, and believers' works are examined and the believer rewarded. Paul probably referred to "the day of Christ," rather than "the day we die and see Christ," because for Paul the return of Christ was imminent, and he fully expected the Lord to call all Christians home before he died. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on Philippians 2019 Edition*, pp. 19-20)

10. **Your Joy Journey:**

- How can having confidence in God, that is, the assurance of His willingness and His power to complete His good work in our lives and in the lives of people we love, help to bring you contentment and joy?
- How could a lack of confidence in God's ability to work in people's lives rob you of joy?

11. **Your Joy Journey:** In the busyness and distractions of daily life, how might remembering that Jesus is coming again bring joy to your life?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read Philippians 1:3-11. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

12. Read vv. 9-11 in the ESV translation.

- For what does Paul pray in v. 9?

- What is the desired result in vv. 10-11?

13. Define the following words so we can truly understand Paul's prayer.

- Knowledge—

- Discernment—

- Approve—

14. Why are each of these qualities important in a Christian's life?

Think About It: We need to have knowledge of truth (the facts) plus discernment of what we read and hear so that we can test it and approve any actions we take that would lead to approaching life God's way rather than the world's way or our own way.

15. Consider why you should become a woman of discernment.

- What are some positive benefits of having discernment?

- What are some negative consequences of having a lack of discernment?
16. How do you Christians grow in knowledge and discernment? See also Romans 12:1-2 plus other verses that you apply.
17. **Your Joy Journey:** Most prayers recorded in the Bible are in agreement with God's will for us. It is a good practice to use the prayers in the New Testament in your own prayer life. Spend some time praying vv. 9-11 for all your loved ones. Using your favorite translation or the one below, write this prayer on a card and use it often to pray for them.

I pray that _____'s love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that _____ may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

18. **Your Joy Journey:** Looking back over Philippians 1:1-11, which one thought most brings joy to your heart? Explain your answer.

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[Joy in Letting God Be the Perfectionist](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

Joy in Letting God Be the Perfectionist

THE LOST CAUSE OF A HUMAN PERFECTIONIST

GOD IS THE ULTIMATE PERFECTIONIST

- God determines what He considers good. None of our little checklists measure up.
- The only human who was ever good enough for God was His Son, Jesus.
- The moment you say “no” to our own attempts and say “yes” to trusting in Jesus and His death on the cross to take away your sins, God clothes you with Jesus and His goodness. *Galatians 3:27*
- Through faith in Christ, God looks upon you as already perfect, as flawless as the most perfect diamond. The Bible calls this Sanctification.

GOD PERFECTS THROUGH SANCTIFICATION

- To be sanctified means to be made holy, “set apart for special use.” The two English words *sanctified* and *holy* mean the same thing.
- Through sanctification, we are separated from the world and separated to God. *Acts 26:17-18*
- God makes us holy in His sight by our faith in Jesus Christ. His love chooses to do that for us. *Hebrews 10:10*
- Through sanctification, every believer has been set apart as God's special, beloved possession for His exclusive use.

GOD DECLARES YOU HIS SAINT

- Paul addressed his letter “to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi.” Some translations say “holy ones” or “holy people,” but it means the same thing. All of those are translating a derivative of the Greek word *hagios*, meaning “set apart from sin.”
- All believers are called “saints” based on their faith in Jesus Christ. You as a saint are identified by position, what God declares to be true about you. Every believer is one of God's saints, totally loved and accepted by Him. That is part of your new identity.

- You are considered a saint of God by His declaration, not because of your behavior. Some influential Christians have been titled “Saint” through the years as an honor for their service to God. This in no way negates the truth that every believer is a saint in God’s eyes.
- Your status before God is perfected...no longer flawed in His sight.

GOD WORKS TO TRANSFORM YOU AND WILL COMPLETE THAT WORK

- Believers are “being made holy” in their thoughts, words, and actions by the work of the Holy Spirit. This is ongoing from the moment of salvation until the Lord comes or the believer dies. *Philippians 1:6b*
- The goal of the Spirit’s work is to transform us into the likeness of Christ) so that we become in thought and behavior what we are in status—holy as God is holy. *2 Corinthians 3:18*
- God is at work to perfect us. It is totally **His work** to make us acceptable again in His sight. Your proper response and my proper response is to **trust** and **rest in His work** and to continually offer Him thanks from a grateful heart along with our willing service. *Philippians 2:13*
- Our motivation for being “good” should be a heart filled with love and gratitude for what God did for us. God’s empowering presence enables us to do that which is good in God’s eyes.

BELIEVERS ARE PERFECTED...NO LONGER FLAWED

Dear Christian, you can dwell on the FACT that God declares you holy because of your faith in Christ. *You are set apart by Him, for Him.* This is your status before God because of your faith. You can rejoice in that!

Your behavior matches your position when you submit to the Spirit’s work to intentionally separate you from what God calls sin and to enable you to live your life God’s way instead.

As one of God’s saints, commit yourself to being used for His purposes throughout a typical day as you care for your household, work for an employer, interact with people around you, and spend your leisure time. You will know joy.

Want to have joy in your life?

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!

4. What verses illustrate or help you understand what knowing joy looks like?

5. **Your joy journey:** From this lesson's passage, choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read Philippians 1:12-18. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

The little letter to the Philippians was written by the apostle Paul around late 61-62 AD. Paul would have been around 60 years old and he would have been a believer in Jesus Christ for approximately 25-30 years. Paul wrote this letter from Rome while he was under house arrest. House-arrest meant that he lived in his own rented quarters and was free to have visitors come and go and was able to freely share the gospel with all who came. However, he was chained to a member of the elite Roman guard that changed every 4-6 hours.

Historical Insight: How did Paul end up in chains in a Roman prison? While he was visiting Jerusalem, some Jews had him arrested for preaching the Good News, but he appealed to Caesar to hear his case (Acts 21:15-25:12). He was then escorted by soldiers to Rome, where he was placed under house arrest while awaiting trial- not a trial for breaking civil law, but for proclaiming the Good News of Christ. At that time, the Roman authorities did not consider this to be a serious charge. A few years later, however, Rome would take a different view of Christianity and make every effort to stamp it out of existence. (*Life Application Bible Studies, Philippians and Colossians*, p. 5)

Today, we will focus on vv. 12-14.

6. As in most letters, Paul tells what is going on in his life. What did Paul say were his "circumstances"?

DAY THREE STUDY

Read Philippians 1:12-18. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Today, we will focus on vv. 15-18.

11. As Paul continues to describe his circumstances in this letter, he tells of two groups of teachers who are preaching the gospel of Christ in his (Paul's) absence due to imprisonment. In the space below, describe each group and their differing motives in sharing the gospel.

- Group one:

- Group two:

From the Greek: "Selfish ambition" (v. 17 and 2:3) translates the Greek word *eritheia*, meaning "to canvas for office, to get people to support you." It's one use in ancient Greek literature was for a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means.

12. Even though these two groups had very different motives in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, what was most important to Paul?

Scriptural Insight: In contrast to the situation in Philippians 1:15-17, Paul describes preachers in Galatians 1:6-9 who are preaching a different gospel than the true gospel of Jesus Christ. Those were Judaizers who were preaching that a Gentile that trusts in Christ must also be circumcised and follow the Jewish Law to be saved. Paul's response to the Galatian situation is that he hopes that the preacher who distorts God's truth is "accursed" or that his message be destroyed.

13. A popular saying in the 1970s was "Bloom where you are planted." Note the many ways Paul "bloomed where he was planted"—even when he was "planted" in prison! What lessons can you learn from Paul in this situation?

Think About It: Paul the prisoner found time to write this marvelous and uplifting epistle that blessed the Philippian church and extends the blessing of encouragement to us today. The four sparkling chapters of this little book have brought joy, faith, hope, love, and peace to Christians for almost 2,000 years!" (Elizabeth George, *Experiencing God's Peace*, p. 36)

14. Consider the many possible ways in which a person could respond to unfair circumstances (*i.e.*: anger, self-pity, blame game, impatience). Then think about why Paul chose to rejoice, to “bloom” where he was planted. Write down your thoughts.

Think About It: Have you ever stopped to consider how few of the circumstances of life are really under our control? We have no control over the weather or over the traffic on the expressway or over the things other people say and do. The person whose happiness depends on ideal circumstances is going to be miserable much of the time! And yet here is the Apostle Paul in the worst of circumstances, writing a letter saturated with joy! His circumstances cannot rob him [Paul] of his joy because he is not living to enjoy circumstances, he is living to serve Jesus. (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Joyful*, P. 15,16, and 18)

From Paul’s example, we can learn this:

Bloom where you are planted and rejoice at what God has done or is going to do instead of complaining about what God did not do.

Your Joy Journey:

15. Are there circumstances in your life today that are difficult for you, to which you seem “chained,” or perhaps even seem to “imprison” you? Or, has there been a time in your life when you would have said this was the way things seemed to be? Describe how you felt.
16. Especially in light of your answer to the previous question, read Romans 8:28 and answer the following multiple-choice questions according to what this verse promises.

To whom is this verse addressed?

- a. Every person who is alive and breathing
- b. Only people whose lives are successful and full of good things
- c. People who love God and are called according to his purpose
- d. Only the people to whom this letter of Romans was addressed originally

Do you personally qualify for this promise? (That is, do you love God and are thus called to His purpose?)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I’m not sure

What is God's involvement in your life?

- a. God leaves me alone and doesn't know what is going on in my life
- b. God knows what's going on in my life but He doesn't care
- c. God knows but isn't powerful enough to do anything about it
- d. God cares, God knows, God is powerful, and God is actively involved in my life

How many things (or circumstances, people, other) in our lives are included in God's purpose?

- a. Some things
- b. Only the obviously good things
- c. All things
- d. Nothing

What are these "things," or specific circumstances, doing in our lives? (Circle as many as apply.)

- a. Working together for good
- b. Becoming part of the "big picture" of the fullness of the life God has given me
- c. Helping me better anticipate my future in heaven

17. **Your Joy Journey:** Looking back over this lesson from Philippians 1:12-18, how can the truths from God's Word help you to transform your perspective and lead you to greater trust in Jesus Christ and help you choose "to bloom" where our all-wise God plants you? (The byproduct of this transformation will be greater joy in your life.)

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[Joy in Releasing Expectations](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

Joy in Releasing Expectations

EXPECTATIONS CAN BECOME SINKHOLES FOR US

- Two types of storms hit us—those caused by our own disobedience and those that hit through no fault of our own.
- When we go through such difficulties of life, we all have what we would consider acceptable outcomes. But, those expectations can become sinkholes if we try to hold onto them too tightly.

JOY REQUIRES US TO RELEASE OUR EXPECTATION OF ACCEPTABLE OUTCOMES

“Joy requires us to release our expectation of what is an acceptable outcome.” (Jenny Heckman, *Just Between Us* magazine, Spring 2018, p. 44)

- When we approach troubles with expectations of what we think are acceptable outcomes and then something else happens, our disappointment and anger can explode like geysers shooting out of a “now-empty pond.”
- We need to hold onto those expected answers with open fingers. We must release them to Jesus, and let Him decide what to do.
- Paul gave us an example of how to do that regarding his own life and ministry. *Philippians 1:12-18*
- Paul released his expectation of only one acceptable outcome. Getting out of prison would be great. But, if God chose to leave him there or to have him executed, Paul considered those as acceptable outcomes as well. And, he could rejoice at any one of God’s acceptable outcomes.

“[Paul] could maintain a truly joyful attitude, even in unpleasant circumstances, because he derived his joy from seeing God glorified—rather than from seeing himself exalted.” (*Dr. Constable’s Notes on Philippians 2019 Edition*, p. 32)

REJOICE AT GOD’S ACCEPTABLE OUTCOME

- When you release your expectation of acceptable outcomes, you can rejoice at what God has done or is going to do instead of complaining about what God did not do.

- We can avoid the sinkholes of unreleased expectations by releasing them. Trust in His goodness in whatever He chooses to do in that situation.
- It's okay to ask for your heart's desire. But, leave the decision in His hands. Accept the outcome that He provides. And, let Him fill your heart with joy in whatever He chooses to do.

What trials are you going through right now? What in your mind do you expect to happen as acceptable outcomes? Maybe it's time to release those expectations and stay on solid ground.

Want to have joy in your life?

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!

4: Joyous Perspective

Philippians 1:19-30

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

What does the Bible say?

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Read the Bible passage below (NIV, including vv. 15-18 from the last lesson). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) anything repeated in this passage. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect. Put a star ✱ next to anything that contributes to joy or rejoicing.

1 ¹⁵ *It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. ¹⁶ The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. ¹⁸ But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.*

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,

¹⁹ *for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. ²⁰ I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.*

²⁷ *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.*

1. What grabbed your attention from vv. 19-30?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

From the Greek: The Greek word translated “deliverance” here was used in different ways in the New Testament. It often meant spiritual deliverance—salvation, being born again. Here (v. 19) Paul used the word to refer to either the final stage of his salvation (cf. Romans 5:9) or future vindication in a Roman court. The word translated ashamed means “to disfigure, dishonor, suffuse with shame.” It is used in 2 Corinthians 10:8 and 1 Peter 4:16. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary NT*, p. 651)

7. How could Paul bring shame rather than exaltation to Christ in whatever happens to him?

8. **Your Joy Journey:** When you think about the last years of your own life, what are some of your most “earnest” expectations and hopes for yourself? Are they anything like Paul’s? Explain your answer.

9. According to Philippians 1:19, though Paul is limited in his own abilities by his current chains, what are two elements that he knows are at work on his behalf?

Think About It: What is the relationship between the prayers of the believers and the work of the Spirit? We know that we cannot manipulate God. But, we are called upon to pray for God to work in the lives of others according to His purposes for them. Paul’s prayer in vv. 9-11 are for things that God wants to do already. Could it be that knowing others are praying specifically for him adds to his confidence in what the Spirit is doing behind the scenes on his behalf? By our prayers, we join God in the work He is already doing. When we see His answers, we give Him the glory.

Focus on vv. 21-26.

10. What is Paul’s great struggle/conflict in this passage?

11. What are the benefits and liabilities to each side of this struggle?

BENEFITS

LIABILITIES

- To live:

- To die:

12. In your own words, what do you think Paul means in verse 21 when he says that “to live is Christ and to die is gain?”

Think About It: death had no terrors for Paul. It simply meant, “departing.” Soldiers used this word; it meant, “to take down your tent and move on.” What a picture of Christian death! The “tent” we live in is taken down at death, and the spirit goes home to be with Christ in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:1-8). The sailors also used this word; it meant, “to loosen a ship and set sail.” ... But departure was also a political term; it described the setting free of a prisoner. God’s people are in bondage because of the limitations of the body and the temptations of the flesh, but death will free them. Or they will be freed at the return of Christ (Romans 8:18-23) if that should come first. (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Joyful*, p. 45-46)

13. **Your Joy Journey:** If you said the same thing as Paul about yourself, how could that affect your life?

14. In vv. 25-26, Paul reflects upon his own usefulness to the Philippians if he were to keep on living. What is it?

15. **Your Joy Journey:** Has God placed people in your life who need you for their “progress and joy in the faith?” What are some of the ways in which you currently help those around you to grow and have joy in their faith?

Respond to the Lord about what He’s shown you today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read Philippians 1:19-30. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Focus on vv. 27-30.

Historical Perspective: In v. 27, Paul says conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. The Greek says to “live as citizens.” The Philippians knew the rights and privileges of Roman citizenship and were proud of it. They took full advantage of their privileges and acted as they thought Romans should act.

16. Write out three or four qualities which Paul encouraged the Philippians to continue to develop in their lives.

Scriptural Insight: In Philippians, Paul chooses words that convey the idea of unity 16 times.

17. What do you think Paul means in verse 27 when he exhorts the believers to “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”? (See John 13:14, 15 and Ephesians 4:1-3 for help in answering this question.)

18. In Philippians 1:29, what has been “granted” to the saints?

From the Greek: The word translated granted is *charizomai* meaning, “to do a favor to, gratify, give graciously.” It is related to the word for “grace” and is often used to refer to God granting forgiveness.

19. Both of these seem to be presented as privileges. What do you learn (or are reminded of) concerning suffering from the following verses?

- Romans 8:16-18—

- 2 Corinthians 1:3-7—

- 1 Peter 3:14-17—

20. **Your Joy Journey:** How could this kind of mindset, in your current society, make a difference in your life?

Think About It: Sometimes we have unrealistic expectations of what life should be (i.e.: everyone will like me, life will always be good, I can find security in this world, etc.). The natural result of these unrealistic expectations is disappointment when we are confronted with life’s realities (insult, injury, rejection). We can certainly suffer if we hold onto these unrealistic expectations, but much of this kind of suffering is unnecessary and can be corrected by biblical thinking and perspective. Jesus Himself said that in this world we will have trouble, but we can still experience joy as we trust Jesus and walk in truth day by day.

21. **Your Joy Journey:** What did you learn from this week's lesson that most helps to deepen your understanding of joy through living for Jesus?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[Joyous Perspective: To Live Is Christ](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

Joyous Perspective: To Live Is Christ

TO LIVE IS CHRIST

- For Paul, since the moment Jesus confronted him on the road to Damascus and he responded by faith, Jesus was Lord of his life. *Galatians 1:15-16a*
- Paul dynamically preached Christ from the get-go. It was not only his message but his whole being was wrapped up in Jesus.
- Paul wanted to keep on living so that he could preach the gospel, establish churches, and continue discipling believers in those churches just as he was doing for the Philippians with this letter.
- Since Paul's life focus was so totally on Christ, either life or death was fine. His location didn't affect his purpose or the desires of his heart. He was not tied to this world by material things, only people whom he loved with Christ's love. *Romans 14:8*
- Christianity is Christ! It's not a lifestyle. It's not rules of conduct. It's not a society whose members are initiated by the sprinkling or covering of water. We are called first and foremost to a relationship with a **Person—Jesus Christ**.
- To live is Christ doesn't mean to deny the world and those good things that God has given us. The message of the church is to preach Christ. It's not to preach that we can make the world better for them.

TO DIE IS GAIN

What doesn't happen at death.

- Your soul is not annihilated. It doesn't disappear or cease to exist. *Luke 16:19-31; Philippians 1:23*
- Your soul doesn't just sleep or become a floating spirit. You will have conscious enjoyment of life after you die, clothed in an immortal body. *Philippians 1:23; 1 Corinthians 15:2*
- Your soul is not reincarnated into another life form as a second chance to improve your afterlife. *Hebrews 9:27*
- You don't go to a place called purgatory until you are purified enough to get to heaven. Your entrance immediately into heaven is guaranteed by your faith in Jesus Christ. *Colossians 1:22; 2 Corinthians 5:5*
- You don't become an angel. Angels are beings that were made by God at Creation and are entirely different from humans. They are God's special agents to carry out His plan and to minister to the followers of Christ. *Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:13-14*

What does happen at death

Death begins a new phase of existence for all believers, that will be far superior to what we experience now.

- You fall asleep on earth and wake up in heaven. The Bible teaches no time delay in the transition. *1 Thessalonians 4:14*
- Your soul leaves your earthly body; you get a heavenly dwelling fashioned for us. All Christians who die will receive an immortal body like the one Jesus has. *1 Corinthians 15:35-54; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2*
- You will be immediately at home with the Lord. You will be able to enjoy all the blessings of heaven forever. *2 Corinthians 5; Philippians 1:23*

TO LIVE IS CHRIST MEANS TO LIVE AS CHRIST

- When Paul said, "To live is Christ," it not only meant that Christ was the focus of everything he did. He was literally referring to Christ's presence in him. *Galatians 2:20*
- This life of Christ is in you from the moment you said yes to Jesus. You are made alive by the indwelling Holy Spirit who unites you to Christ so that "Christ in you" is a fact of your new existence. *Colossians 1:27*
- You begin a new adventure of learning how to live while abiding in Christ. Abiding means to make your home with Him so that He is the dominant influence in your thoughts, words, and behavior. Abiding also means to live dependently upon Him 24/7.

"Jesus Christ **laid down** his life **for** you...so that he could **give** his life **to** you...so that he could **live** his life **through** you." (Ian Thomas, *The Saving Life of Christ*)

That's to live as Christ.

You can dwell on the FACT that God's life is now indwelling you forever. You are alive in Christ. Christ is alive in you. Now you can enjoy the life given to you by Christ Himself as your power for daily Christian living. That is to live **as** Christ. In this life choice, you will experience freedom and joy. The rest of Philippians will show us what that looks like.

Want to have joy in your life?

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!

5: Joy in Unity

Philippians 2:1-11

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

What does the Bible say?

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Read the Bible passage below (NIV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) anything repeated in this passage. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect. Put a star ✱ next to anything that contributes to joy or rejoicing.

2 ¹Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1. What grabbed your attention from these verses?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

8. Consider that term “like-minded” and its relationship to unity. Let’s look at the difference between unity and uniformity.

- Using a dictionary, define unity and uniformity.
- How is unity different from uniformity?
- In what are the Philippians (and we) to be like-minded (displaying unity)?

9. In verses 3-4, we learn that our attitude towards others affects everyone around us and directly impacts the church.

- What sort of mindset or behavior hinders unity and why?
- What sort of mindset or behavior promotes unity and why?

Focus on the Meaning: In the New Testament, humility is how you think of yourself. It’s not referring to feeling low, down, or depressed. The word “humility” pictures a servant bowing before her master. The Greeks did not desire or reward humility so it was a rare word in that culture. The New Testament writers took that word humility and elevated it because it is so totally associated with Jesus and being with Him. See also Romans 15:1-7.

10. According to Philippians 2:5, whose attitude are we to share?

11. **Your joy journey:**

- In what ways do you think women in general, or you specifically, might struggle with thoughts of “selfish ambition” or “vain conceit?”
- What Bible verses have you found to help you overcome such sinful thoughts? Ask Jesus to show you how to be like Him in your thought life regarding yourself.

Respond to the Lord about what He’s shown you today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read Philippians 2:1-11. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Philippians 1:5-11 is called the “Christ hymn” of Philippians. We will enjoy this hymn today!

12. In verses 5-11, Paul describes the attitude of our Lord Jesus Christ as the ultimate example of humility and selfless concern for others. According to verses 6-8, who is Jesus? See also John 10:30; 17:5.

Scriptural Insight: The incarnation was the act of the preexistent Son of God voluntarily assuming a human body and human nature. Without ceasing to be God, he became a human being, the man called Jesus. He did not give up his deity to become human, but he set aside the right to his glory and power. (*Life Application Study Bible*)

13. How did He view His deity during His time on earth (v. 6)? Look in several translations.

Think About It: Although Jesus Christ was Himself the Creative Deity, by whom all things were made, as man He humbled Himself—set aside His divine prerogatives and walked this earth as man—a perfect demonstration of what God intended man to be—the whole personality yielded to and occupied by God for Himself. (Major Ian Thomas, *The Saving Life of Christ*)

14. Jesus’ love and concern for the human race resulted in His enduring a series of specific humiliations, culminating in a terrible death, otherwise termed His condescension. God ultimately rewarded Christ’s obedience by exalting Him. Using any resources available to you, define these words:

- Condescend—

- Exalt—

18. **Your Joy Journey:** Read Mark 10:45. Jesus' motivation for living was to serve, not to be served, and to ultimately give His life as a ransom for many.

- Are you grasping things that keep you from selflessly serving others? A title, perhaps, or a position? Will you voluntarily set any of these aside, emptying yourself, so that you can serve others?

- How can you more fully demonstrate the attitude of Jesus in your...?

Home—

Workplace—

Church—

19. **Your Joy Journey:** How do you think this week's lesson concerning unity and the attitude of humility might relate to your knowing peace and joy in your own life?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[To Live as Christ in Joyful Service, Part 1](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

To Live as Christ in Joyful Service, Part 1

In Philippians chapter 1 verse 27, Paul urges the church to, “Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ and stand firm.” How does one do that? And, what would it look like?

From the beginning of chapter 2, Paul answers those questions. You are conducting yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ when believers in a church community are one spirit in heart and mind, are united in focus to make more and better followers of Christ, and are serving one another.

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

We believe in one God Who exists in three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three are one God; each is not the other. This is how God has revealed Himself in the Scriptures. We don’t have to understand it or explain it. It is truth to accept and backed by evidence. There are many verses in the New Testament where all three are mentioned together in their various roles.

- We believe that Jesus Christ is One Person, who possesses two natures: divine and human. He is 100% God and 100% human.
- Jesus Christ is fully God in His eternal divine nature. Our passage today equates Jesus with God.
- Jesus Christ is fully human but without sin. The second person of our triune God took on a human nature and body when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary.
- The Council of Nicaea in 325 AD confirmed Jesus’ complete divinity and humanity. Since then, all Christian denominations—Protestant and Roman Catholic—agree on these 2 issues. God is one in essence, three in person; Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man.

HOW IS JESUS THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF A SERVANT?

Jesus is our perfect example because He illustrates in Himself four characteristics of a true servant.

Servant example #1. Jesus thought of others before Himself.

- Although God, He did not consider that high position as something that He could not give up. So, He emptied Himself, poured Himself out and gave Himself away.
- As God, He could not and did not give up His divine attributes or nature. But, He laid aside His glory and the **independent** use of His own attributes as God.
- He chose to accept human limitations—the body and nature of a man—and live on earth **dependent** on the will of God the Father. He needed to do that for us, to fulfill our need.
Hebrews 2:14,17

Servant example #2. Jesus used that physical body of His to be a servant.

- Jesus became a bondservant for us. Jesus did not pretend to be a servant nor was he an actor playing a role. Throughout the Gospels, we see Him serving others. *Philippians 2:7*
- While on earth, Jesus demonstrated that He loves women by serving them. He spoke to them publicly when a rabbi wouldn't even speak publicly to his wife. He let women travel with Him during His public ministry. A definite no-no for rabbis. He let women be the first witnesses to His resurrection. He was sensitive toward women, performing miracles for them out of His compassion. He never spoke condescendingly to women, never made derogatory jokes about women, never humiliated or exploited women.
- Women who know Him love Him and want to serve Him out of love and gratitude for what He has done for us.

Servant example #3. Jesus sacrificed His body on the cross and willingly died.

- As God, Jesus experienced the ugliness of evil by His own choice.
- With the joy of our redemption and His glorification set before Him, He endured the cross. *Hebrews 12:2*
- His human body died; His human soul and His divine nature did not.

Servant example #4. Jesus glorified God as He sacrificed for us.

- Because Jesus humbled Himself, God the Father "super-exalted" Him. This process included Jesus' resurrection, His ascension, and His glorification in heaven when He took back to heaven His glorified human body.
- God exalted His name. When you say "Lord Jesus," the name of Jesus now embodies the whole blessed, glorious revelation of our Savior.
- Jesus Christ's purpose is, and always has been, and always will be to glorify "God the Father."
- We are to submit to God and to one another for the glory of God, as Jesus did.

If you have never chosen to bow your knee to Jesus and say that He is Lord, now is the perfect time. You know who this Jesus is, you can decide to trust in Him today. And, you will receive not only eternal life and the life of Christ in you, but God will also fill your heart with His joy.

Want to have joy in your life?

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!

6: Joy in Attitude and Actions

Philippians 2:12-30

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

What does the Bible say?

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Read the Bible passage below (NIV, including vv. 5-11 from the last lesson). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) anything repeated in this passage. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect. Put a star ✱ next to anything that contributes to joy or rejoicing.

2⁵ *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

⁶ *Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

⁹ *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

¹² *Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

¹⁴ *Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸ So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.*

¹⁹ *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. ²⁰ I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. ²¹ For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. ²³ I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. ²⁴ And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.*

²⁵ *But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. ²⁶ For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. ²⁷ Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. ²⁹ So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, ³⁰ because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.*

1. What grabbed your attention from vv. 12-30?

- If we don't give in to complaining and arguing, what is the result, according to vv. 15-16 (first half)?
9. In vv. 17-18, Paul shows us what a life of purpose and sacrifice looks like.
- What is Paul's attitude toward his own personal suffering?

 - How does he encourage the Philippians to respond to what he is sharing about himself?

Scriptural Insight: A drink offering consisted of wine poured out on an altar as a sacrifice to God (Numbers 15:1-10). It was the last act of the Jewish sacrificial ceremony and a personal dedication of worship to God. Paul's view was that his life was not being taken from him; he was laying it down. "Even if he had to die, Paul was content, knowing that he had helped the Philippians live for Christ. When you're totally committed to serving Christ, sacrificing to build the faith of others brings a joyous reward." (*Life Application Study Bible*)

10. How do you think Paul's attitude compares with your attitude in the following areas?

- Personal suffering —

- Living a life of sacrifice and service —

- How you typically find joy in this life —

11. **Your Joy Journey:** A transformed life is an effective witness to the power of God's Word.

- When are you most tempted to grumble and complain?

- When are you most tempted to argue?

- If your shining brightly can be clouded by complaining and arguing, what practical steps can you take to shine for God in a greater way?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read Philippians 2:12-30. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Today, we will focus on vv. 19-30 and look at the two men Paul referenced.

Timothy

12. Read Acts 16:1-3; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2-5; 1 Corinthians 4:17 and Philippians 2:19-24.

- Describe Paul's relationship with Timothy.

- How did Timothy exhibit the attitude and mind of Christ?

Epaphroditus

13. From Philippians 2:25-30,

- Describe Paul's relationship with Epaphroditus.

- How did Epaphroditus exhibit the attitude and mind of Christ?

14. Why do you think this is so?

15. **Your Joy Journey:** Timothy and Epaphroditus were both examples of someone passionate to serve Christ by serving others.
- We as believers can get sidetracked by our own interests and drawn away from living out our purpose. Do you think your schedule and personal concerns tend to crowd out your Christian service to others? What steps can you take to remain focused on the interests of Jesus Christ?
 - Have you discovered an area of passionate interest in God's service yet? Explain your answer.
16. What were Paul's reasons for sending Epaphroditus back to the Philippians?
17. Focus on vv. 29-30. Contrast the kind of people the church should honor with those the world honors.

Scriptural Insight: Paul admonishes the church to honor him [Epaphroditus] because of his sacrifice and service. Christ gets the glory, but there is nothing wrong with the servant receiving honor. (Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13.) There is no contradiction between Philippians 2:7 ("made Himself of no reputation") and 2:29 ("hold such in reputation"). Epaphroditus was a blessing to Paul and to his own church, and he is also a blessing to us today! He proves to us that the joyful life is the life of sacrifice and service...He and Timothy together encourage us to submit ourselves to the Lord, and to one another, in the Spirit of Christ. Christ is the Pattern we follow. (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Joyful*, p. 87)

18. Philippians 2:19-30 gives us insight into spiritual mentoring. In Paul's case, his mentoring of younger, less experienced men resulted in the blessing of sharing the workload of ministry and growing closer to the Lord together. Describe how Paul was mentoring Timothy and/or Epaphroditus.

Think About It: If we want to impact lives as Jesus did, we will give people opportunities to grow, and then encourage them if they fail. It means taking the time to pray with them, train them, and encourage them. Sometimes it means watching them fail the first time they try a new task...Let's not let fear hold us back. Let's be more like Jesus. Let's see people as He saw them – people with great potential. (Adapted from *Becoming a Woman of Influence* by Carol Kent)

19. **Your Joy Journey:** A spiritual mentor can be a discipler in the faith as well as someone who encourages a growing Christian to do the work of the Lord in their lives.

- Have you had a spiritual mentor in your life? Describe the impact this person has had on you.

- Have you been a spiritual mentor to someone in the past? Describe the impact this relationship has had on your life.

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[To Live as Christ in Joyful Service, Part 2](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

To Live as Christ in Joyful Service, Part 2

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE AS CHRIST IN HOW WE SERVE ONE ANOTHER?

- All believers are united into the Body of Christ—the Church—since the day of Pentecost (33 AD). The Church as the Body of Christ transcends all cultures, languages, national boundaries and time periods.
- What each of us does can affect positively or negatively the other members of the universal Body of Christ. We are to preserve and encourage that fellowship among all believers produced by the Spirit who is indwelling each of us.
- It is too easy to approach a local church as a consumer. God designed the Church to depend on the individual members serving one another. *Philippians 2:3-4*

Choice #1. We should think of others before ourselves.

- We need to consider others as worthy of preferential treatment. The scripture doesn't say we are not to look out for our own interests, but only that we should have equal or greater concern for the interests of others.
- Jesus has enabled us to be others-oriented. We have been cared for very richly so that we don't need to be thinking about ourselves all the time.

Choice #2. We should serve out of love and worship for God.

- Take your everyday, ordinary life—sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around-life—and place it before God as an offering, a spiritual act of worship. Our service is to be an extension of the worship we render to God. *Romans 12:1*
- God doesn't dwell in buildings anymore. He dwells in people. So, there is no sacred/secular division in any Christian woman's life.
- A servant Christian is the freest person on earth because you are serving willingly. Like Jesus did. It is living as Christ.
- Service opportunities exist in every area of life in your family and in your church. To live is Christ leads to live **as** Christ.
- Remember that the focus of serving should be love for Jesus and a heart of worship.

Choice #3. We should willingly sacrifice as we serve.

- Serving others usually costs something. Time, money, mental energy, physical work.
- Humans are more likely to buy into an idea that costs something. Wise Christian leaders know that sacrifice is necessary if there is going to be true growth and ministry. Service can't always be easy.

- There is a difference between sacrifice and suffering. Suffering is usually imposed on you by someone else. Sacrifice is something you are willing to give through time, money, skills, and physical labor.
- Grumbling and arguing can cleave unity as much as the San Andreas Fault is splitting California. Grumbling springs from an inner dissatisfaction or discontentment. It is expressed in muttering, whining, & griping. Arguing springs from an arrogant and ungrateful attitude. It starts out as grumbling then leads to outright disputes.
- Joyful servants don't whine. Doing a job and then griping about it is not service. There is a difference between complaining and seeing a problem and working toward a solution. Even then, watch out for grumbling when others don't see it your way.

Choice #4. We should glorify God more than ourselves as we serve one another.

- Paul exhorted believers to be patient with one another, try to please one another, accept one another, and seek unity with one another so that God would be glorified. *Romans 15:7*
- We are the living, breathing, walking, talking representatives of the living God. We are living letters to the world around us. We are telling the truth about who God is by the way we live as well as by what we say. To live is Christ means to live **as** Christ means to let Christ live His life through us. The world sees Him through us. And, that glorifies God.

Serving one another is not the main goal. Letting Christ live His life through us as we serve is the main goal. Serving one another is the means. Jesus is our source of joy. Therefore, we can be joyful servants for Him. Serving Jesus is from the heart, not a task. Joyful servants willingly sacrifice and don't whine about it. True Christian service should be fun for you. And, it gives glory to Him.

Want to have joy in your life?

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!

7: Joyful Freedom

Philippians 3:1-11

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

What does the Bible say?

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Read the Bible passage below (NIV). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) anything repeated in this passage. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect. Put a star * next to anything that contributes to joy or rejoicing.

3 *Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. ² Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. ³ For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence.*

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:

⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in ¹⁰ Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

1. What grabbed your attention from these verses?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

3. What topics are repeated either in this passage or from earlier in this letter?

4. What verses illustrate or help you understand what knowing joy looks like?

5. **Your joy journey:** From this lesson's passage, choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read Philippians 3:1-11. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Today, we will focus on vv. 1-7.

6. Look at v. 1.

- What wonderful reminder does Paul give the Philippians (and us) in verse 1?

- Who is to be the source of their (and our) joy? See also Psalm 32:11, Psalm 34:1-5 and John 15:9-11.

7. It is unclear whether Paul was referring to what he had written before this or what he was about to write when he says it is a safeguard to write the “same things.” If it is about joy, he has written about joy, rejoicing, and being glad 12 times before this verse. How could the reminder to rejoice be a safeguard for them? See Hebrews 12:2-3.

Think About It: It is easy for believers to let circumstances discourage them. The cure for discouragement is to rivet one’s attention on the Lord and rejoice in Him. It is significant too that a Roman prisoner would beseech people who were free to be joyful in their Savior. It seems that it should be the other way around. Paul learned what every child of God needs to learn—there can be rejoicing in the Lord even when outward circumstances are contrary to the Spirit of rejoicing. (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament*, p. 658-659)

8. False teachers (v. 2) can rob Christians of joy. The church at Philippi was made up primarily of Gentiles. They were mostly Roman citizens who did not come from a Jewish background. However, traveling teachers known as Judaizers would infiltrate these young churches and spread their message that the Gentiles had to become Jews to be saved.
- Read Acts 15:1-11. What started happening with the first Gentile churches (vv. 1-2), and who were the primary instigators of the trouble (v. 5)?
 - In Philippians 3:2, what did Paul call these instigators?

Scriptural Insight: The Judaizers were convinced that God was merely adding Gentiles to the Jewish community so the Gentiles had to be circumcised and follow the Mosaic Law in order to receive the blessings of eternal life from God. However, Jesus Christ fulfilled the Mosaic Law. God’s new plan took the Jews out of their old way of life based on the Law and took the Gentiles out of their old way of life outside of the Law and put them together into one new body called the Church. The Mosaic Law was no longer the barrier nor the center of worship of God. You can read more about this in Ephesians 2. The Jerusalem Council confirmed this to be true for all Christians—Jews and Gentiles. After this council, most Judaizers were likely not true believers.

9. In contrast, how are the people of the “true circumcision” described in Philippians 3:3?
10. In verse 4 Paul says, “If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more.” What reasons does he give for this statement?

11. Looking at vv. 7-8.

- How did Paul view his privileges and achievements?
- Except for persecuting the Church, were most of his privileges and achievements bad things?

Think About It: Like most 'religious' people today, Paul had enough morality to keep him out of trouble, but not enough righteousness to get him into heaven! It was not bad things that kept Paul away from Jesus—it was good things! He had to lose his 'religion' to find salvation. (*Dr. Constable's Notes on Philippians 2020 Edition*, pp. 81-82)

12. Things are not very different today. Legalism or religious tradition can rob us of joy and freedom in Christ. We can begin to focus on ourselves and what we do to make God “pleased” with us. But, what is God’s desire for us? What are things we do that truly please Him? Search throughout Philippians for your answers.

13. *Your Joy Journey:*

The hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," was written by Isaac Watts and published in *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* in 1707. Reflect on these beautiful lyrics that mirror Paul’s words then answer the questions below.

When I survey the wondrous Cross, On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss, And pour contempt on all my pride.
Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast, Save in the death of Christ my God:
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to his blood.

Are there any “gains” in your life (perhaps from a time before you trusted Christ, or perhaps since you’ve come to know Jesus Christ) that need to be counted as loss so that you place your confidence and have security in Christ alone? Explain your answer.

Respond to the Lord about what He’s shown you today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read Philippians 3:1-11. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Today, we will focus on vv. 8-11.

14. Paul gained a great deal in place of his self-righteousness. Read Philippians 3:8-11 in several translations...don't miss a thing!

- What relationship had he gained (v. 8)? The same is true of you as a Christian.
- What righteousness had he gained (v. 9)? The same is true of you as a Christian.
- How had he obtained this righteousness (v. 9)? The same is true of you as a Christian.

Scriptural Insight: “Knowing Christ”—What he had learned to value was Christ Jesus his Lord. Consequently, coming to know Christ, entering into a deeper and fuller appreciation of His person and work, was of primary importance to Paul. This knowledge (Gr. *gnosis*) is the kind that one obtains only by personal relationship. It is different from the knowledge we gain through objective academic study (Gr. *oida*), though information is part of our growing personal knowledge of Christ. It is knowledge of the heart in addition to knowledge of the head (cf. John 17:3; Gal. 4:9; 1 John 2:18, 29; 4:8). (*Dr. Constable's Notes on Philippians 2020 Edition*, p. 84)

15. **Your Joy Journey:** How can anyone really get to know Christ today? What is involved in doing so? How have you gotten to know Christ in your life?

16. Instead of looking for earthly applause,

- What were Paul's new goals (vv. 10-11)?
- How could Paul, and we, know the power of Christ's resurrection?

- How could Paul, and we, participate in Christ's sufferings?

Focus on the Meaning: Paul wanted the power, that resurrected his Savior and was within himself because of the indwelling Christ, to manifest itself in his life for God's glory. And, the Christian, who suffers because of his or her faithful testimony for Christ, can personally relate to Jesus' feelings when He suffered for faithfully obeying His Father. There is a "fellowship" in that kind of suffering (cf. Rom. 6:8; Gal. 2:19-20). Becoming like Him in His death means death to one's own agenda for life (Rom. 6:4-11, Phil. 2:6-7), and it may result in physical death. Paul was certain of his future resurrection so the phrase in v. 11 "and so, somehow" (NIV) expresses expectation: by dying either as a martyr or by a non-violent death. It also connects with Philippians 3:20-21 where Paul anticipates Christ's return and subsequent transformation of his body into the likeness of His Lord's body. (adapted from *Dr. Tom Constable's Notes on Philippians 2020 Edition*, p. 87)

17. **Your Joy Journey:** Now that you've studied this passage, evaluate the goals you have for your life. We take time and effort to reach our goals. Do you long to know Christ more? Do you long to experience His resurrection power in your life? Will you put to death your own agenda for life and take up God's agenda (all that you've seen in Philippians so far) instead? What will you do beginning today to value "things" and "achievements" less and to value knowing Christ more?
18. **Your Joy Journey:** How does this passage of Philippians deepen your security and confidence in joy through knowing Jesus?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[Joyful Freedom](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

Joyful Freedom

LAW AND GRACE

Understanding the difference between “law” and “grace” is the foundation of the gospel you received and the basis for you to experience a life full of freedom and joy. Christ’s finished work on the cross and His resurrection show you how to approach life God’s way in three areas of your Christian life: motivation, power, and relationships.

- **MOTIVATION:** Is your motivation to live the Christian life and please God based on fear of what God will do to you every time you fail? Or, is your motivation to live the Christian life based on love and gratitude for what Christ has done for you?
- **POWER:** Do you think the power to live the Christian life is through your self-effort, trying hard enough? Or, does the power to live your Christian life come from trusting in the Spirit to enable you to do so?
- **RELATIONSHIPS:** In your relationships with others, do you try to motivate people to obedience through fear of punishment? Or, do you recognize the grace God has shown you so you encourage others to obedience out of hearts of love and gratitude?

WHAT IS “THE LAW?”

“The Law” in the New Testament means “the Mosaic Law” —a covenant between God and Israel meant to make Israel a holy nation, teach central truths about God, and lead people to a trust relationship with the Lord, thus preparing the way for the work of Christ. The Old Covenant had limitations.

GOD MADE A NEW COVENANT FOR EVERYONE

- Christ’s completed work on the cross fulfilled the purpose for the Old Testament religious laws. That began God’s New Covenant with everyone—both Gentiles and Jews—that proclaimed freedom from the Mosaic Law. [Graceful Living Bible Study](#), [Graceful Living Today devotional](#), [“Words of the Cross” blog](#)
- When you believe in Jesus, you are changed from the inside as the Holy Spirit comes to live in you. The motivation to please God becomes internal rather than external. Your acceptance before God is because you are in Christ.
- God commits Himself to complete the work He began in you until you are conformed to the image of his Son. *Philippians 1:6; Romans 8:29*

WHAT IS LEGALISM?

- Legalism is the addition of any other conditions to faith in order to gain and maintain acceptance from God and to stay saved. You recognize it as “faith plus” other things, such as good works, refraining from certain sins, church membership, sacraments, and more. Whenever God’s acceptance of you has an “IF” attached to it other than faith in Jesus Christ, you know you are in the vicinity of legalism.

- Legalism includes insistence that you follow the Mosaic Law, human-created “religious” laws, or self-imposed rules that you feel make you more spiritual than others.
- You know you are trapped in legalism whenever you try to approach God on the basis of your own merits or performance. *Galatians 1:6; Colossians 2:19*

WHY DOES LEGALISM PERSIST IN THE CHURCH?

- Legalism persists because we think that we can control sin through lots of rules.
- Legalism persists as we use it to motivate people to obedience by fear of punishment and as we try to interpret problems in our lives as signs of God's anger or favor.

GOD’S PLAN IS FOR YOU TO LIVE BY GRACE

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

- Out of God’s mercy comes His grace—God’s unmerited favor, an undeserved gift. Grace is a gift God chooses to give apart from works to earn it.
- Because you live under the grace of God in Jesus Christ, you can rest in the fact that all of God's purposes for you are good. You have a loving Father who teaches, trains, and corrects. Our God is good all the time to us—even in the tough times, in different ways to each of us, and in what He allows and doesn’t allow into our lives.
- The answer to human sinfulness is not that we should keep believers under law. It is teaching and exhorting believers to “live by the Spirit”—the better way.
- Through our adoption as sons and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we have received a status as spiritual *adults*. Adults live on the basis of *mature character* with freedom and responsibility. We are united with Christ with a new identity and status based on all that Christ has done for you and what you have in Him.
- Living by grace motivates you to live a godly life out of gratitude for God’s great love for you. *Romans 5:8*

Think back to your Christian life so far and try to recognize the influence of *legalism* on what you’ve been taught. Let it go and cling to the truth of your identity in Christ. God wants you to relate to Him on the basis of His grace, so that your motivation to obey Him is based on His love for you, your love for Him, and gratitude for what Christ has done for you. And, that will lead to a life of joyful freedom!

Want to have joy in your life?

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!

8: The Joy of Pressing On

Philippians 3:12-21

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

What does the Bible say?

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Read the Bible passage below (NIV, including vv. 7-11 from the last lesson). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) anything repeated in this passage. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect. Put a star * next to anything that contributes to joy or rejoicing.

3 ⁷ *But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

¹⁵ *All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.*

¹⁷ *Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

1. What grabbed your attention from these verses?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

7. Based on the context of vv. 10-14 and his admittance in v. 12,
- For what purpose did Christ take hold of Paul? Read 2 Corinthians 3:18 for help with your answer.
 - Is that any different from why Jesus takes hold of you? Explain.

Think About It: Transforming Paul to become like Christ was the purpose. Taking the gospel to the Gentiles was his role. We all have the same purpose for which Christ takes hold of us—to be transformed into His likeness and bring God the glory. But, we have different roles to fill as we live out our lives.

8. What is the goal (vv. 10-11, 14 and Ephesians 4:12-13)? What is the prize (v. 21)?

Focus on the Meaning: The prize in the context of this passage is perfect righteousness in soul and body, something he won't get in his earthly life but will happen immediately upon his death. He will know Christ fully and be fully Christlike at that time. Through his life, God works to change him. God completes His work when this life is over.

9. What actions does Paul take to see God's work in his life knowing that he was still imperfect (vv. 13-14)? See also 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

10. "Forgetting" in this context does not mean losing all memory of his sinful past but leaving it behind him as **done with and settled**.

- What did Paul need to "forget?" See also 1 Timothy 1:13-14.
- What happens when we dwell on past mistakes?
- What do you need to "forget?"

11. In Philippians 3:15, Paul uses another Greek word in reference to believers that means, “relative development, maturity.”

- What are some of the characteristics of a maturing Christian? Look throughout Philippians for your answer plus any other verses you find.
- Read 2 Timothy 3:6-7. What characteristics describe someone who is not maturing?

Scriptural Insight: How should we understand Philippians 3:15-16? It could mean that those who are mature should agree with vv. 12-14, that we have not arrived yet at our perfection. The emphasis is on v. 16 where we are exhorted to live out what we have already learned and attained in our relationship with Christ. That would include knowing Christ and staying on the path of pursuing Him.

12. Perseverance is “holding to a course of action, belief, or purpose without giving way.” It refers to active staying power and tenacity to hold up under some long-term burden. What part do you think perseverance plays in Christian maturity? See also Romans 5:3-5 and James 1:2-4.

Focus on the Meaning: Paul describes the three aspects of sanctification in Philippians. In 1:1, he calls all the believers at Philippi “saints,” which refers to their positional sanctification as set apart from sin in God’s sight. I covered this in the podcast for lesson 2. In 1:6; 2:13; and 3:13-14, he describes progressive sanctification, which is the work of God during our lifetime to make us holy in our behavior as we are in our position. In 3:20-21, Paul refers to our ultimate sanctification when we will be completely rid of sin in our new bodies that resemble Christ’s immortal, sinless body. Woohoo!

13. **Your Joy Journey:** How would you advise another believer to press on to Christian maturity?

Respond to the Lord about what He’s shown you today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read Philippians 3:12-21. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Today, we will focus on vv. 17-21.

14. Paul says that the Philippians can follow his example and others like him who follow Christ (v. 17).
- What are the advantages to those who follow other believers who are following Christ? See Proverbs 19:20; John 13:13-17; Titus 2:3-5 plus any other verses you find.

Think About It: In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul says, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” That’s the kind of statement that gets the apostle Paul slapped with labels like “arrogant” and “egotistical.” Maybe that bothers you, too. Why didn’t Paul just take himself out of the equation and tell people to follow Christ? The answer is that Paul knew we all need a role model, a picture of Christ that makes the heart, mind and ways of Christ visible and tangible. To step into a role of leadership is essentially to state, “Follow me as I follow Christ.” If people are going to follow us, our primary task is to lead ourselves well ... The first step toward leading yourself well is following well ... And if you are a Christ follower, the practice of following [Him] well may be one of the greatest tests of your character. (Heather Zempel, *Community Is Messy*, pages 67-68)

15. **Your Joy Journey:** Now consider taking the challenge to be one who models following Christ to others. What do you think that would/should look like in you?

16. Look at vv. 18-20.

- Paul warns them again about what? See also v. 3.

- How can such people steal your joy?

17. Re-read Philippians 3:20-21. Don’t miss a thing!! Summarize these verses in your own words.

18. **Your Joy Journey:** Paul can rejoice in all things, see death as gain, press on to maturity, and stand firm because of the truth of these two verses. How do these verses motivate you to persevere and mature and increase your joy in your walk with Christ?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[The Joy of Knowing Christ](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

The Joy of Knowing Christ

But, Paul pursued the Christian life with the enthusiasm and persistence of a runner in the Greek games. To Paul, to live **is** Christ. That means to live **as** Christ. The Christian life is like running a marathon on a designated course but with Christ in you directing the run.

*“Brothers I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 3:13-14)*

What is the course?

- The course is your life as a believer. It is whatever personal course God has given to you.
- It is different for each person and contains the idea of stewardship—managing the things that God has placed in your care.

What is the finish?

- The finish line for the believer is our physical death.
- Our citizenship is in heaven not here on earth, and we should all be eagerly awaiting our Savior’s coming for us—whether in life through the Rapture or at our last breath.

What is the purpose of running this race?

- The purpose is to live as Christ by faith in Him—to know Him and love Him and be faithful in whatever He gives us to do.
- We glorify Him in our lives. And, our lives should actually be Christ living His life through us.

What gets us off the course?

- Not forgetting what lies behind can get us off course. Dwelling in past mistakes. *1 Timothy 1:12-16*
- Lack of discernment can lead to reliance on false teaching and bad counsel. My podcasts on the book of [Colossians](#) cover a lot of these false teachings. *Philippians 1:9-11*
- Expectations. Being caught up in the materialism of our society. Taking our eyes off Jesus and what we have in Him. Then, we fall into self-pity.
- Perfectionist tendencies can get us off course.

- We need to recognize those things that get us off course and give them up! Release them!

How do we stay on course?

- We have learned from Philippians that it is God who is working in us. He started it, He is working now, and He will complete it. He does the working to make us like Christ because it gives Him pleasure.
- God knows what we're going through, He can get us through it and back on course if we only ask. We need to respond to Him by faith.
- We should make it our goal to know Him as Paul did. Recognize Christ in every area of our lives.

What is the prize?

- Pressing on to the goal. That's what Paul says he is doing and that we should do. The goal is the object at the end of the course on which the runner fixes her gaze. For us, that is knowing Jesus Christ.
- The prize is given to everyone crossing the goal line. This is not about salvation here. All Christians get salvation.
- The prize is given for the pursuit of knowing Christ and for living as Christ. We don't know what the prizes are but we do know they will be good because they'll be given by a good God. Paul would only reach that goal when he entered the Lord's presence and saw Him face-to-face. Any reward comes to us at that time.
- We are not responsible for the prize. God is. He determines what is given to each believer. We are responsible for running the course, staying true to the course and being faithful all the way to the time when we cross the finish line. We are not in competition with anyone else. It is our own personal course.

Our being in heaven would be reward enough. But for the time being, Paul exhorts the Philippians and us to live up to what we already have—a righteous position in Christ. He exhorts us to forget the past and stretch forward to the future as a runner leaning forward to reach that goal. What goal? To know Christ and to live as Christ. How? By following the upward call which is our own personal course to run. And the prize will be there when we cross the finish line—physical death—after which we experience spiritual eternity, bliss, joy, and contentment. Now, we want to glorify God—do what He has created me to do on earth. Then we will enjoy Him forever—that's doing what He created us for then.

Want to have joy in your life?

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!

9: Joy in Conflict and Stress

Philippians 4:1-9

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

What does the Bible say?

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Read the Bible passage below (NIV, including vv. 17-21 from the last lesson). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) anything repeated in this passage. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect. Put a star ✱ next to anything that contributes to joy or rejoicing.

3 ¹⁷ Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

² I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

1. What grabbed your attention from these verses?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

3. What topics are repeated either in this passage or from earlier in this letter?

4. What verses illustrate or help you understand what knowing joy looks like?

5. **Your joy journey:** From this lesson's passage, choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read Philippians 4:1-9. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Today, we will focus on vv. 1-3.

6. Notice all the affectionate terms Paul uses to describe the Philippians! Re-read verse one. *Therefore* in v. 1 means that "because of what was just said, now we need to do something." The something in this case is to "stand firm in the Lord." Review Paul's initial exhortation in Philippians 1:27-28 (first part). In *what* were they to "stand firm"?

Paul instructed the Philippians on *how* and *why* to “stand firm in the Lord” in Philippians 1:27-3:21. Review the following verses and summarize Paul’s instructions to the Philippians (and to us) on *how* and *why* to stand firm.

7. *Being in one spirit* (especially 2:1-8, 14-15)

- How?

- Why?

8. *Not being alarmed by opponents* (especially Philippians 3:12-14, 17, 20-21; 2:9-11)

- How?

- Why?

9. What were the chief obstacles to standing firm? Review Philippians 2:3-4, 14-15; 3:2-3, 15-19.

Focus on the Meaning: *Standing firm* means steadfastly resisting the negative influences of temptation, false teaching, or persecution. To stand firm requires perseverance when we are challenged or opposed. With the Holy Spirit’s help and with the help of fellow believers, we can stand firm in the Lord. (*Life Application Bible Commentary*, p. 108)

Paul’s usual style whenever he addressed a problem or “sticky” issue was to first teach through the truth that applied, then address the specific concern in the church. The letter to the Philippians was written 10-11 years later after Paul’s first visit to Philippi. Women were significant in the founding of the Philippian church as well as other churches. Paul greatly esteemed his female co-laborers in the Lord as seen in Romans 16:1-3, 6, 12-15.

10. Paul speaks directly to two women here in Philippians 4:2-3. Paul asks them to do what he taught in 2:2. What was it?

11. Apply what you just learned about standing firm in the Lord to the existing conflict between the women. How would that help the existing conflict and benefit the church as a whole?
12. As long as there are fallible humans on this earth, there will be relationship challenges. No church is immune to this. Notice the request Paul makes of a friend to help resolve the conflict. What responsibility does the local church body have (individually or as a whole) to encourage reconciliation of any of its members? See also John 15:12-13, 17; Galatians 6:1-2 and Ephesians 4:14-16.

Scriptural Insight: The Book of Life, first mentioned in the Old Testament (Psalm 69:28; 139:16), referred to a register of all citizens in God's kingdom. The "book" symbolizes God's knowledge of who belongs to Him. Ancient cities had roll books that contained the names of all who had a right to citizenship. Under the New Covenant, Christians are on God's register, and He will admit all on the roll into heaven (Philippians 3:20)...No believer will be forgotten, for the names are listed for eternity. (Adapted from *NIV Study Bible*, p. 1948; *Life Application Bible Commentary*, p. 112)

13. **Your Joy Journey:**

- How can Paul's admonition in Philippians 4:2-3 help you in your own relationships within the church?
- Should you experience a problem relationship, how best can you respond when others attempt to counsel you? (See also Proverbs 12:1; 13:10; 19:20.)

Think About It: Oh, beloved, pray! Pray that **you** may not be the cause of any disruptions in your church, that **you** may not be a part of hindering the work of the church for the cause of Christ! And pray to follow in Paul's wise footsteps if you must ever be a part of helping to solve a dispute between others. (Elizabeth George, *Experiencing God's Peace*, p. 111)

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read Philippians 4:1-9. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Today, we will focus on vv. 4-9.

14. Once again (see also 3:1), in verse 4, we are reminded of the attitude that is to be the response of all believers.

- What is it?

- Why can we do this? Support your answer with other verses from Philippians.

15. Paul sums up the principles he has been teaching in his letter thus far in this one word: *gentleness*. Gentleness means, “strength under control.” It is willingness to yield one’s own rights to show consideration to others but without sacrificing truth. Considering what you have learned in this lesson, and in light of the expected return of Christ (“the Lord is near”), why let your gentleness be evident to all? For help, review Philippians 1:10, 27; 2:15-16; 3:20-21.

Taking action through prayer

16. Let’s look at Philippians 4:6.

- What could cause you not to have joy?

- What is the difference between having legitimate concerns and being anxious?

- What does Paul tell the Philippians, and you, to do about this potential joy-stealer?

- Why is having an attitude of thanksgiving in prayer important?

19. Why is it so important for us to focus our minds on true and excellent things? See also 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 and Colossians 3:1-3.

20. Look at Philippians 4:9.

- What is Paul's instruction regarding our actions?

- What is the reward?

Think About It: Paul says to consider whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy in a situation to direct your thoughts about it. This will give you God's peace about that situation. The peace is not from the positive thinking. The peace is from aligning yourself with the mind of Christ in that situation. The Holy Spirit takes what we learn from the Word of God and helps us to think rightly the way Christ would think. When you approach life God's way, including how you think about people or circumstances, God promises to guard your mind and heart with His peace.

21. **Your joy journey:** You are the boss of your thoughts. That means, you can intentionally choose your own thought life. You shouldn't let others do it for you. Is there a particular instance in your daily life that tends to breed anxiety in you? Follow the process in vv. 6-9 to give your anxiety to God and get back to right thinking.

22. **Your Joy Journey:** What have you learned from this passage in Philippians about the connection between practicing right thinking and knowing joy in your life?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[Joy in Conflict](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

Joy in Conflict

CONFLICT IS NORMAL

- Because we are human and sin still dwells within us and because we still live in this fallen world, conflict is normal. Having conflict or not having conflict isn't the issue. For believers, it's what we do when we are faced with conflict. That's the issue.
- Outside pressures often cause friction to develop within a church. Conflict wounds the Body of Christ and minimizes the effectiveness of the church to advance the gospel.

RESOLVING INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT GOD'S WAY

- In today's passage, the two women in conflict were laborers in the spread of the gospel at Philippi. We don't know the reason for their conflict. Whatever happened affected the unity of the congregation.
- Paul speaks directly to this situation in his letter, and from his wise advice, we can draw three principles regarding conflict resolution.

Principle #1: "In the Lord"

- Both of these women are "in the Lord." Just as our human bodies respond immediately to repair a wound whether minor or major, so should the body of Christ.
- The members of Christ's body don't always know what to do. Yet, the Word gives us direction and guidance so that we can be obedient in helping to resolve a conflict. In the Lord, we can help to heal.

Principle #2: Agree with each other.

- As soon as you recognize that you are in a conflict with a sister, then you are responsible to do something. Agree to work on it. That's obedience. Give up your rights to be right. That's humility. The reason you do that is for the good of the relationship and for the church family.
- Follow Jesus' instructions. *Matthew 5:23-24; Matthew 18:15-17*
- Avoid crossing the line to complaining and gossiping. I call it **sharing sensitive information in inappropriate settings**. It's sensitive because anything negative said about a person or a ministry plants seeds of doubt in the other woman's mind about that person or the ministry as a whole. That is not beneficial to the Body. Someone always gets hurt. It's an inappropriate setting when that person you are telling has no oversight or authority to do something about the situation.
- Be motivated by love for her and for the Body. *Ephesians 4:15-16*

Principle #3: Help them through Intervention.

Recognize the two stages of conflict: 1) Developing and 2) Situational.

- **Developing** conflict means that over a period of time, the relationship between two women is gradually creating more friction. Recognize clues that this is happening and speak the truth in love to both parties in hopes of heading off an explosion.
- **Situational** conflict is an emotional crisis situation that usually occurs if the developing conflict has been ignored. What has built up is now brought to a head by a wrong word, look, or a sudden change of plans. A crisis exists.
- Help them through intervention when the two women have not been able to resolve their differences on their own, when the conflict endangers the safety or welfare of the body of Christ, and/or when there is an emotional explosion.

USE THE A-B-Cs OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION FOR A CRISIS CONFLICT

Achieve trusting contact with each conflicting party.

- ✓ Talk to them separately—to the one most agitated first; then to the calmest.
- ✓ Get them together in a setting that is private and undisturbed for confidentiality.
- ✓ Don't let them vent on each other or on you. You are the unbiased party.
- ✓ Be relaxed and genuinely kind and concerned.

Boil down what the presenting problems are (simplify the issue).

- ✓ Feed each woman's own words back to her in the form of clarifying questions such as "Are you telling me...?", "Did I hear you say...?", "What I am hearing you say is...?"
- ✓ Help them see the real presenting problems that they face. Collect the facts related to this crisis only. What actually caused the conflict this time.
- ✓ Let the pauses come. It's not your time to talk. Listen carefully.

Cope actively by making a way out of the conflict.

- Establish goals that are possible and short-term. Suggest some non-threatening options:
 - ✓ What do you want to see happen?
 - ✓ What can I do to help you out?
 - ✓ What will you do? How will you do it? By when will you do this? How are we going to evaluate this later on?
 - ✓ Be willing to follow-up and ask, "How is it working? What do we need to change in the plan if anything?"
- Pray for each other, asking the Lord's help to do the work to resolve the conflict.

Oh, beloved, pray! Pray that **you** may not be the cause of any disruptions in your church, that **you** may not be a part of hindering the work of the church for the cause of Christ! And pray to follow in Paul's wise footsteps if **you** must ever be a part of helping to solve a dispute between others. (Elizabeth George, *Experiencing God's Peace*, page 111)

Want to have joy in your life?

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!

10: Joyful Living and Giving

Philippians 4:10-23

DAY ONE STUDY—GET THE BIG PICTURE

What does the Bible say?

Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Read the Bible passage below (NIV, including vv. 4-9 from the last lesson). Use your own method (colored pencils, lines, shapes) to mark 1) anything that grabs your attention, 2) words you want to understand, and 3) anything repeated in this passage. Draw arrows between thoughts that connect. Put a star * next to anything that contributes to joy or rejoicing.

4 ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

¹⁰ I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵ Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷ Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸ I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

²¹ Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. ²² All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

1. What grabbed your attention from these verses?

2. What verses or specific words do you want to understand better?

3. What topics are repeated either in this passage or from earlier in this letter?

4. What verses illustrate or help you understand what knowing joy looks like?

5. **Your joy journey:** From this lesson's passage, choose one verse to dwell upon all week long. Write it in the space below. Ask God to teach you through this verse.

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY TWO STUDY

Read Philippians 4:10-23. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Today, we will focus on vv. 10-13.

6. What caused Paul to rejoice again? See also v. 18.

7. In verse 12 Paul uses several pairs of opposites to describe what he has learned. List the pairs here.

8. What had Paul learned through all those experiences (vv. 11-13)? Note: The phrase translated “learned the secret” means “to be fully instructed, to have an intimate acquaintance with something.”

Focus on the Meaning: The word *content* in Greek means “self-sufficient” and independent of others. Paul used this term to indicate his independence of everything but Christ, since Christ was the sole source of Paul’s life (Philippians 1:21, 4:13). This contrasted with the Stoic philosophy (of the day) that used the word “content” to describe a person who impassively accepted whatever came. ... Paul explained that his sufficiency was in Christ alone, who provides strength to cope with all circumstances. (*Life Application Commentary, Philippians*, p. 121)

9. The Greek term for “learned” is used only here in the New Testament. It was an expression used to describe an initiation by experience over time. Paul knew firsthand about wealth and privileges that come with being a prominent Pharisee in the Jewish community and also of being a Roman citizen.
 - Read 1 Corinthians 4:11-13 and 2 Corinthians 11:23-29. What in these verses describe his times of need?

 - Read Acts 18:1-3 and 20:33-35. What in these verses describe his times of plenty?

10. How could Paul, a prisoner and one who had experienced so many difficulties, possibly be content? See the following passages for hints.

- 2 Corinthians 4:7-10—
- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18—
- 2 Corinthians 12:8-10 –

Summarize what Paul's words teach you about contentment.

Think About It: All of nature depends on hidden resources. The great trees send their roots down into the earth to draw up water and minerals. Rivers have their sources in the snow-capped mountains. The most important part of a tree is the part you cannot see, the root system, and the most important part of the Christian's life is the part that only God sees. Unless we draw upon the deep resources of God by faith, we fail against the pressures of life. Paul depended on the power of Christ at work in his life. "I can through Christ!" was Paul's motto, and it can be our motto, too. (Warren Wiersbe, *Be Joyful*, p. 137)

11. How is being content different from being passive?

12. **Your Joy Journey:**

- In what circumstances do you struggle with being content? Why do you suppose it is such a struggle?
- Read Habakkuk 3:17-18. What decision did Habakkuk make? What decisions can you make now so that you are prepared to endure those times of struggle?

Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.

DAY THREE STUDY

Read Philippians 4:10-23. Ask the Lord Jesus to teach you through His Word.

Today, we will focus on vv. 14-23.

13. What do we learn about the Philippian church in...

- Philippians 4:14-18—

- 2 Corinthians 8:1-5—

Scriptural Insight: Paul didn't always accept aid. In 1 Corinthians 9:11-19 Paul wrote that he had not accepted money from the Corinthian church in order to avoid being accused of preaching only to get money (preaching for the wrong reasons). In fact, while he was in Corinth, the Philippian believers helped him (2 Corinthians 11:9). He accepted their offering because they gave it willingly in order to help Paul.

14. Paul writes that he likens their gifts to investments credited to an account that paid dividends (v. 17). What does he mean by that? In what are they investing? See also Matthew 6:19-21 and Philippians 1:5, 7.

15. Paul calls their gifts a "sacrifice, pleasing to God" (verse 18). In what sense was their gift an offering to God? See also Hebrews 13:15-16 and 2 Corinthians 8:5.

Scriptural Insight: The priest in the Old Testament went into the holy place to put incense on the altar, and it ascended with a sweet smell. A Christian in his giving is like a priest making an offering to God. (J. Vernon McGee, *Through the Bible Commentary, Philippians*, p. 105)

16. As you read in 2 Corinthians 8:2, the Philippian church was not wealthy, though they gave with a heart overflowing with generosity.

- What promise does Paul give in Philippians 4:19?

- Does this promise always mean financial riches? Why or why not? Consider what you have learned about the Philippian church plus any other verses.

17. What is the connection between the first part of today's passage on contentment with the last part regarding giving?

18. **Your Joy Journey:** From your study of this passage and the entire letter to the Philippians:

- What interferes with your believing that God will meet all of your needs? (List them here and **replace them!**)

- What helps you believe that God will meet all of your needs? (List them here and refer to them when you need help!)

Recommended: Listen to the podcast "[Live Joyfully While Trusting God to Meet Your Needs](#)" after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

JOY IN SUMMARY

19. **Your Joy Journey:** Take a few minutes and look back over your study through Philippians. Think about the truths you know about Jesus, or about your relationship with Jesus, that bring joy to your heart. Use a creative medium (song, poem, prayer, drawing, craft, other) to illustrate "Knowing Jesus...Knowing Joy!"

Live Joyfully While Trusting God to Meet Your Needs

“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” (Matthew 6:31-33, NLT)

Regarding God’s provision, Jesus basically said Christians should think differently.

Lesson #1: God’s provision is His to give and take away. Regard it humbly.

We need to understand several facts about this lesson.

Fact: Everything we have comes from God.

- There isn't anything we have that we did not receive from God.
- Yet, we humans boastfully live as though we had anything to do with our genetics or privileges at all. When they are stripped away, we resent being stripped of our "rights."

Fact: What we have is not a measure of our goodness or our faith.

- How God chooses to provide for you or me at any time in our lives is His sovereign choice. We are to give ourselves first to Him and trust Him with our daily needs as we do the work He gives us to do. *Philippians 4:12-13*

"God is in the human development business. How is God going to teach us faith if He never allows us to have needs?!"

- God’s method of learning is to prepare by instruction (knowing His Word) and then to learn by experience (living what you believe about God). Christians having needs is part of God’s plan. Don’t let anyone deceive you by equating prosperity with your faith walk.

Fact: God determines our provision—the how, when, and why

- Most of the time, God’s provision is going to come through people, not miraculously appear from the sky.
- God chooses how He provides for His own. We must learn to trust whatever manner He chooses.

Fact: It belongs to God. Hold onto it loosely.

"The God who gave the water has chosen to take the water. It's His sovereign right! He gives the child; He can take it away. He gives the business; He can take it away. He gives the house; He can take it away." (Chuck Swindoll, sermon series on Elijah)

Lesson #2: God's provision is always enough. Receive it gratefully.

- When you have the Lord's provision, you lack nothing that you need at this time in your life. It's what you have, not what you don't have. Rejoice at what you have instead of complaining about what you don't have. *Deuteronomy 2:7; Deuteronomy 8:7-9a*
- Our hope is to be in our God, not in prosperity—current or future.

Lesson #3: God's provision is meant to be shared. Give it generously.

"In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us." (2 Corinthians 8:2-5)

- Out of the most severe trial, the Philippians' overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. They gave themselves first to the Lord in keeping with God's will.
- They imitated God's generosity.

*"And, my God shall supply all your needs according to **His riches** in glory in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)*

- God's riches to us are supplied through us to meet others' needs.
- Those early Christians are an amazing example to all believers including you and me of the dynamic difference that God's grace can make in the mindset of His people when it comes to provision. They gave themselves first to the Lord. Gratefully receiving and generously giving comes from the overflowing joy of knowing Jesus Christ and what He's doing in our lives. Whether you are the receiver or the giver, how you do both should be different than what the world does. That is to live as Christ.

Lesson #4: God's provision brings Him glory. Praise Him openly.

When we live as Christ and trust God to meet our needs, we can live joyfully through anything.

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the fullness of His joy. Then, live in that joy!

Keep reading to get a peek at Lesson One of the first study in the "Fear to Faith" series, *Everyday Women Ever-Faithful God.*

Preview of “Everyday Women Ever-Faithful God”

Everyday Women, Ever-Faithful God: Join Old Testament Women on Their Walk from Fear to Faith

Introduction Podcast: Old Testament Women Walk from Fear to Faith

Recommended: Listen to the podcast [“Old Testament Women Walk from Fear to Faith”](#) before doing this lesson to get some background for the whole study.

Many Christians today have very little knowledge of the Old Testament. That might your experience. Do you look at the front half of your Bible and think, “What’s written in it happened so long ago? What do those women have in common with me? They are just names on a page. They didn’t live in my world.” Is that how you feel?

- Studying Old Testament women is like reading biographies or doing genealogy work on your family tree. It makes that person come alive for you. It helps you to feel a connection to that great-great grandmother when you learn a little bit about her life.
- For some of the Old Testament women we’ll be studying together, their names will be familiar to you—such as Sarah, Miriam, and Rahab. Others are strangers to you.

OLD TESTAMENT WOMEN WERE EVERYDAY WOMEN WITH FEARS LIKE OURS.

- These Old Testament women were everyday women, just like you and I are, with many of the same experiences and challenges that we have. They cooked meals, did laundry, and raised children. They had responsibilities inside and outside of their homes. Some even had home businesses. They experienced hormone fluctuations and menopause. They laughed with their kids, differed with their mates, and cried when a loved one died. They wrote songs and played musical instruments. They all found ways to use their 20,000 words per day!
- At one time, they were 20-somethings, then 40-somethings, then 60-somethings and more. They wore beads, earrings, and bracelets. Their hair needed to be combed and fixed, and it turned grey as they aged. No doubt, some of them, if not all, had something on their bodies that sagged.
- These Old Testament women also experienced fear at various times in their lives just like we do. They had to face invading enemies, sick husbands and children, and empty pantries. They faced creditors and surprise houseguests. They even had “bad” days when things didn’t go right, sometimes due to their own choices.

- Their stories are just snippets of their biographies and have been preserved for us to get to know them. And through their stories, we get to know their God who is also our God.

THE OLD TESTAMENT GOD IS THE SAME EVER-FAITHFUL GOD.

- As we study their lives, we'll see an **EVER-FAITHFUL GOD** in action. He's our faithful God whose character never changes.
- He's as faithful now in our everyday circumstances of life as He was years ago to those women. We can feel confidence in His presence and active involvement, even when we can't see it. And, knowing this, we can trust in Him whenever we are afraid.

WE CAN TRUST GOD WITH OUR FEARS.

- Fear is an ever-present emotion with us. Real fears and imagined fears. Is it realistic to think we can live without fear? I don't think so.
- Fear is a normal human emotion designed by God to alert us to danger so that we will take action against it. Yet, sudden fear can cause us to be terrified. God knows this about us.
- The psalmist says in Psalm 56:3-4,

"When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid."

- When we are afraid, God wants us to trust Him and not give way to fear. Learning to do so is our walk from fear to faith.

SHARING YOUR STORY OF WALKING WITH YOUR EVER-FAITHFUL GOD FROM FEAR TO FAITH.

- Each of those Old Testament women had a story, and that story has been shared over and over and over to millions of eager listeners. You might be surprised how many times the scriptures refer to them actually telling their story in one form or another. You're going to get to know it as you get to know them. It's a connection with real women, **everyday women**.
- Each one of you has a story. There will be opportunity throughout the study for you to recall parts of your story, write about it, and share it with others. That will give you more reason to praise your **ever-faithful** God as you see and hear how He has been faithful to each of you through the years.

It's going to be a great journey. And, I'm so glad to be walking beside you!

Notice that David doesn't write, “**If** I am afraid.” He says, “**When** I am afraid.” Fear will happen. We can let fear take root in us so that we give way to panic and hysteria. Does that ring any bells with you? Are you prone to hysterics? God knows this about us. When we are afraid, God wants us to trust Him and not give way to fear. Learning to do that is your walk from fear to faith.

Trusting a Faithful God

Since God understands the tendency to fear and panic in us, the Holy Spirit inspired Peter to write encouragement and instructions to women in 1 Peter 3:3-6.

3. Read 1 Peter 3:3-6. What does God consider of great worth in His sight (verse 4)?

Although the context of this passage is a marriage relationship, the principles apply to any woman's character (“inner self”), especially the qualities of a GENTLE and QUIET spirit that are precious in God's sight. These enable a woman to “do what is right and not give way to fear” (verse 6). But, you may be thinking, “How can that apply to me? I have a bubbly personality. I'm not naturally quiet.” Before you start feeling put out about these words or afraid that you could never measure up to this, let's find out what “gentle” and “quiet” actually mean.

Scriptural Insight: “GENTLE” means “**controlled strength.**” It does not mean passive, weak, or someone who cannot help herself. Picture a mother cradling a newborn. She has the physical strength to harm that child but doesn't because her strength is under control. If you are going to have a gentle spirit, what will you need? Strength under control. A woman with a gentle spirit has a humble heart that bows itself before God, recognizes God's dealings with her as good, and chooses not to be contentious or resistant against Him.

“QUIET” means “tranquility arising from within.” It does not mean whisper, silent, or bland. “Quiet” includes the idea of causing no disturbance to others. Think how a woman's hysterics affect those around her—family, friends, and coworkers. A woman with a quiet spirit has an inner peace and calmness in the midst of any circumstances. We can have a tranquil spirit in the midst of chaos. See how it fits with the “strength under control” attitude?

Gentleness and peace are fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5: 22-23) in a believer's life and available to every Christian woman who desires them—that includes you and me! Now that you know the real meanings of these words, are you more likely to desire these qualities?

4. Why do you think these qualities in a woman would be so precious – of great worth – to God?

5. Read 1 Peter 3:5-6 written below and underline the three choices women can make, identified by (1), (2), and (3).

“For this is the way the holy women of the past who (1) put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you (2) do what is right and (3) do not give way to fear.”

Peter identifies these examples for us as “holy women of the past.” The word “holy” means set apart for God’s special use. These women are holy because they’ve learned to trust in God when they were afraid. As holy women, these women were beautiful in God’s eyes (regardless of their outward appearance, age or social status). This beauty attributed to them by God Himself was based on three choices they made (“used to make themselves beautiful”) that every woman can make today:

- Choice #1: You can put your hope in God—in God and His Word rather than the fickleness of ourselves or others.
- Choice #2: You can do what is right—according to God’s way of approaching life, not the world’s way, especially those cultural practices that go against God’s Word.
- Choice #3: You can choose to not give way to fear. Let’s examine this one more closely.

Choose to Not Give Way to Fear

What does that mean—not give way to fear? We know this: God is not saying, “Don’t ever feel fear.” God gave us the gift of fear as a normal human emotion designed to alert us to danger so we can take action against it. God is saying, “You don’t have to stay terrified and paralyzed by your fear.” We are to TRUST GOD—in whom we have put our hope and by whose Word we are taught to do what is right.

6. Have you ever felt terrified? How did you respond?

7. God says that having a gentle and quiet inner spirit will make it easier for us to not get so terrified and stay that way. What’s harder for God: rescuing us from desperate circumstances or developing in us a gentle and quiet spirit? Why?

Did you select the “developing in us a gentle and quiet spirit?” I agree because it involves our cooperation! Is it too difficult for Him? No! But here’s the key: a humble, peaceful heart makes it easier for us to make that choice to trust in the faithfulness of God rather than the fickleness of ourselves or others when we are tempted to panic and succumb to hysteria.

We have a faithful God. That's not imaginary. In 1 Peter 3:5, Sarah represents several other everyday women who lived in Old Testament days who put their hope in God and found Him worthy of their trust. This was their walk from fear to faith. What is that? We'll find out in the Day Two Study.

Think About It: "When we experience anxiety or fear, the enemy can try to use it as an opportunity to make us feel guilt or shame. That's when we pause and ask God for help, knowing He understands and never condemns us." (Holley Gerth, "Fear Not," *Homelife Magazine*, March 2016)

8. **Your Life's Journey:** What might be holding you back from trusting God whenever you are afraid?

DAY TWO STUDY

The Walk from Fear to Faith

In the Bible, "walk" refers to following a certain course of life or conducting oneself in a certain way. It's your daily life. How you choose to live daily. What motivates you. What guides you. What decisions you make in how you will respond to life. Will your daily walk (life) follow God's way of approaching life or the world's way of approaching life (usually very different)? Your walk is your choice.

For the purposes of this study, your choice will involve moving away from fear and toward faith. Most of us have a pretty good understanding of fear in our lives. But, what is faith? God defines that for us Himself through the writer of Hebrews.

9. Read Hebrews 11:1 and 6.

- What is faith (v. 1)?

- What must you believe about God in your faith (v. 6)?

Did you notice that faith is related to confidence? Confident hope and assurance that what we believe is true. Confidence that our God exists and is good to anyone who seeks Him. This confidence pleases Him. Hebrews 11 continues to relate the lives of men and women who had this confidence in God.

10. Read Hebrews 11:11, 23, and 31. Who chose faith in God over giving way to fear?

11. Read Hebrews 11:35 (first half of verse). By faith, what did these women receive?

Think About It: “When we look at life just with our own eyes, we become fearful, pessimistic, & negative. We become people who feel, ‘I don’t know if that can work. I don’t know if I can get through this.’ When we look at the Scriptures and begin to...see how God empowered normal average people like you and I, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and strengthens us and gives us courage that we didn’t know we had.”

These women are our examples of choosing faith in God over giving way to fear (1 Peter 3:5-6). By studying their lives, God’s Spirit will strengthen us and give us courage we didn’t know we had.

Connecting with Old Testament Everyday Women

If you have limited knowledge of the Old Testament, those women who lived so long ago may be strangers to you. Some you may have heard about—Sarah, Hannah, Abigail and Bathsheba. Everyone of Jewish birth can consider Sarah to be a great-great-grandmother. Others are unknown—Jael, Mrs. Manoah, and the Shunammite woman. Yet, they were still women like you and I are.

As everyday women, they cooked meals, did laundry, and raised children. They had responsibilities inside and outside of their homes, including home businesses. They experienced hormone fluctuations and menopause. They laughed with their friends, differed with their mates, and cried when a loved one died. They wrote songs and played musical instruments. I bet they all found ways to use their 20,000 words per day. ☺

At one time, they were 20-somethings, then 40-somethings, then 60-somethings and more. They wore beads, earrings, and ankle bracelets. Their hair needed to be combed and fixed, and it turned grey as they aged. No doubt, some of them, if not all, had something on their bodies that sagged!

These women also experienced fear at various times in their lives just like we do. They faced invading enemies, sick family members, and empty pantries. They faced creditors and surprise houseguests. They even had “bad” days when things didn’t go right, sometimes due to their own choices. These were EVERYDAY WOMEN, just like we are.

12. As women in general, what kind of life experiences for them might have been the same as your own life experiences?

13. What kinds of fears did these women probably face that you also face?

Each one of these women had a story, and that story has been shared over and over to millions of eager listeners. You might be surprised how many times the scriptures refer to them actually telling their story to others around them. Their stories—snippets of their biographies—are preserved for us to get to know them, and to know their God who is also our God—an **EVER-FAITHFUL** God whose character never changes. He’s as faithful now in our everyday circumstances of life as He was years ago to those women. We can feel confidence in His presence and active involvement, even when we can’t see it. And, knowing this, we can trust in Him whenever we are afraid.

14. Using a dictionary, write the definition of trust that fits best with the concept of trusting God.

Trusting an Ever-Faithful Personal God

Trust is usually defined as a firm belief in the character, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something. In our walk from fear to faith, that trust is in God. As we study the lives of Sarah, Miriam, Rahab, and others, we’ll see an ever-faithful personal God in action. These Old Testament women knew God by the personal name *Yahweh*. In our English translations, it is usually written as LORD in capital letters. In the Old Testament, you’ll find the phrase “the LORD your God” or “the LORD our God” at least 500 times. Every time, that phrase is emphasizing, “We have a personal God. His name is *Yahweh*.” It’s the name by which God wished to be known and worshiped in Israel and by Israel. *Yahweh* means, “I am.” This name expressed His character as constant, dependable and faithful.

Several times in the gospels, Jesus applied God’s name “I am” to Himself (John 4:26; 8:58). So, the ever-faithful, promise-keeping God of the Old Testament is embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ of the New Testament and forever. We still have a personal God.

15. Read John 14:27 and 16:33. What does Jesus promise to you?

Take heart! He is with you through any trouble. You can trust Him. Our God is trustworthy.

16. **TELL YOUR STORY:** Has there been a problem in your life where you needed to make a choice to do right, but the possible consequences filled you with fear? Have you learned to trust God and live by faith in that area, or are you still struggling with it?

Since the angel lives in heaven with God, he should know. So, is anything impossible for the Lord? The answer is, NO! Notice that both of these often-quoted statements are made to women concerning the deepest hurt a woman could experience at that time—barrenness. What is the deepest hurt you can experience in your culture? Your God can do something about that, too.

Jesus said to the men and women following Him, "All things are possible with God." (Mark 10:27) Our God is all-powerful. He is capable of doing anything He chooses to do that is in agreement with His character and His will. We can count on Truth #3 — God can do something about it. Whatever IT is.

Truth #4: You Can Trust His Goodness in Whatever He Chooses to Do

This is the sticky part, isn't it? Is God good? Can I believe that He is good all the time?

The day before my dear friend died of breast cancer, she softly spoke to me these words, "God is good." I finished her sentence with "all the time" because I had heard her say that repeatedly. She replied, "I don't understand all of this." And, most of the time, we can't understand. But, we've got to bank on God's goodness.

20. Read Psalm 119:68. What is declared about God?

21. Read Proverbs 3:5. What wisdom is given to us?

God is good all the time. That's a fact. What He does is always good. As we study each of these women, we'll see that during her faith walk, a loving God said "no" to some things. Yet, she chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. And, God rewarded her faith with an outpouring of His blessing in other ways. You can do the same. So, here's Truth #4 — You can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do!

Sweet friends, God may not choose to rescue you from everything that is threatening you at this time. But, in any and all situations, you can count on these truths...say them aloud, making them personal:

- God loves me
- God knows what is going on in my life
- God can do something about it
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do

The 4 Truths Illustrated by Jesus Himself

22. Read John 11: 1-15. This is one of the best biblical examples of these four truths in action.

The need: Martha informed Jesus that her brother Lazarus was sick.

- Truth #1: Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus (John 11:5).
- Truth #2: Jesus knew what was going on in Martha's life—Lazarus died (verses 6, 11, 14).
- Truth #3: Jesus could do something about it—He had healed from a distance (John 4:50-53).
- Truth #4: But, Jesus chose to do something different, even better than what anyone could imagine though it caused pain and suffering to those He loved and a lot of waiting, too (John 11:14-15).

After 4 days of being dead, Lazarus was brought back to life, and good things happened. God's goodness showed up—Lazarus had his life restored, his sisters saw their now healthy brother returned to them, the disciples witnessed an amazing work of God, and many people now believed in Jesus who had not yet believed in Him. Martha could now say to herself with assurance, "God loves me. God knows what is going on in my life. God can do something about it. I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do." And so can you!

23. **Your Life's Journey:** What will be your biggest challenge when it comes to believing these four truths apply to you and your situation? Be honest with the Lord. It's okay to say, "Lord Jesus, I have a hard time believing that _____ (fill in the blank). I ask you to help me learn to trust you in your choice of how to be good to me and my loved ones." Then, watch what He does!

DAY FOUR STUDY — THE WALK FROM FEAR TO FAITH

*24. **Your Life's Journey:** read the words to the song below. Then pick one thing that is causing you fear today. What are your choices for acting on that fear? Apply the 4 truths you learned in the Day Three Study to your situation. Respond to the Lord about what He's shown you today.*

When You don't move the mountains I'm needing You to move
When You don't part the waters I wish I could walk through
When You don't give the answers as I cry out to You
I will trust, I will trust, I will trust in You! (Lauren Daigle, "Trust in You")

Recommended: Listen to the podcast ["The Walk from Fear to Faith-4 Essential Truths"](#) after doing this lesson to reinforce what you have learned. Use the listener guide on the next page.

The Walk from Fear to Faith—4 Essential Truths

Fear is a normal human emotion designed by God to alert us to danger so that we will take action against it.

When we look at life just with our own eyes, we become fearful, pessimistic, & negative. But, when we look at the Bible and see how God helped everyday people like you and I, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God to strengthen us and give us courage that we didn't know we had. As you join these Old Testament women on their faith walk, you will see consistent truths that you can embrace and apply to your life today in your walk from fear to faith. You can count on them.

If you have done the lesson already, see how much you remember. ☺

TRUTH #1: _____

- What John 3:16 says about this—
- What Romans 5:5 says about this—

TRUTH #2: _____

- What Matthew 6:31-32 says about this—
- What Psalm 139 says about this—

TRUTH #3: _____

- What Genesis 18:14 says about this—
- What Luke 1:37 says about this—

TRUTH #4: _____

- What Psalm 119:68 says about this—
- What Proverbs 3:5 says about this—
- It is a choice to trust God and bank on His goodness.

As we study each of these women and let them teach us, we'll see that during their faith walks, a loving God said "no" to some things. Yet, they chose to trust Him rather than submit to fear. And, God rewarded their faith with an outpouring of His blessing in other ways. You and I can do the same.

God may not choose to rescue you from everything that is threatening you. But, in any and all situations, embrace these four truths essential to your walk from fear to faith. Make them personal:

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do.

You can count on those truths to lead you on your walk from fear to faith!

Get *Everyday Women, Ever-Faithful God* at melanienewton.com as well as most online bookstores.

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