



Happiness is a chance; joy is a choice. The book of Philippians is full of wisdom regarding how we can learn to rejoice in the Lord regardless of our circumstances. Life is full of potential joy killers, but faith is full of joy fillers. And we get to choose!

These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.

1 Paul mentions *joy* or *rejoicing* sixteen times in the four chapters of Philippians (he understood the importance of always *rediscovering joy*). What time in your life would you say was the most joyful? What were the contributing factors to your joy?

2 LIFE CAN put joy in jail. All of us deal with many things capable of incarcerating our joy. Paul actually wrote this book from jail. No matter what life threw at him, Paul kept discovering joy. **Read Philippians 1:1-2.** Paul mentions Jesus 3 times in these 2 verses and will mention him 51 times in 104 verses. Rick mentioned that *“Joy is your present possession when Christ is your constant obsession.”* How have you seen that to be true in your life? What is one thing you currently do to keep Jesus on your mind constantly?

3 JESUS IS... my purpose. Paul's goal was not a comfortable life but a meaningful life, and he found meaning in exalting Jesus. **Read Philippians 1:12-13.** What was clearly the most important purpose Paul had in life? What does a person's purpose have to do with the joy he or she experiences in life?

4 JESUS IS... my pattern. Paul knew that there is no joy to be found in pity parties. That's why he intentionally kept the focus off himself and on others. He learned that from Jesus. **Read Philippians 2:3-7.** Putting others first seems counterintuitive to pursuing personal joy. Why does it work?

5 JESUS IS... my prize. Paul was obsessed with pursuing the One who had pursued him. **Read Philippians 3:10-14.** If you are missing joy, maybe it's because you're aiming at the wrong prize. What are some of the “prizes” people often aim at and how do they come up short in providing joy? Follow up discussion: Rick said that *“You find joy not in pursuing happiness but in pursuing Jesus.”* How would you explain that truth to someone else?

6 JESUS IS... my provision. Paul knew Christ would supply all he needed to accomplish the purposes for which he was created, so he refused to live in the prison of pity and resentment and joyfulness. **Read Philippians 4:10-13.** What resonates with you from these verses? What is one provision you've received lately that was unexpected? Did you think about the gift as a provision from God? Why or why not?

7 FAITH CAN find joy in jail. Paul's joy was not a matter of chance; it was a matter of choice. When Jesus is your passion the whole world is your sanctuary. **Read Acts 16:25.** How have you seen God use someone's decision to choose joy become a powerful witness for others to find Jesus (see **Acts 16:31-34** for an example)? What are some practical examples of how you can choose joy today even in the midst of difficult circumstances?





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1 Rick began by reminding us that *“the way to joy begins with the way we choose to think.”* Why is this so crucial to **rediscovering joy**? What role does our perspective play in regards to the way we choose to think?

2 Joy killer: “I must control the outcome.” Many people stay so frustrated because circumstances and people constantly refuse to obey their orders. Paul, on the other hand, realized he had no control over the outcomes he was facing. He also knew they had no control over his joy. **Read Philippians 1:12-21.** What circumstances was Paul facing and how did they open up new areas of ministry for him rather than confine him? Follow up discussion: What would your first reaction be if you were in a similar place? Are you more prone to try to control the outcomes or to trust God in the midst of them?

3 Joy filler: “I can choose my outlook.” There is a kind of reflection that produces resentment, and there is a kind that results in rejoicing. Paul intentionally chose the latter. **Read Philippians 4:8.** What enabled Paul to choose such a positive outlook in the face of hard circumstances? What is one thing you can do to consistently choose a positive outlook?

4 The gospel cannot be chained. Paul does not think about what is being done to him but what is being done through him. Rather than think *“Why has this happened?”* he chose to ask *“How can what happened be leveraged to tell the story of*

Jesus?” **Read Philippians 1:12-13.** How did God use the chains on Paul’s wrists to advance the gospel? What kinds of “chains” in your life has God used to spread the good news about Jesus?

5 Spiritual help cannot be chained. There is no chain that can fetter the prayers of God’s people, and there is no place that can lock out the ministry of God’s Spirit. The filling of the Spirit is prompted by the kneeling of the saints (see **Philippians 1:19**). Share an example of a time when you experienced help as a result of people praying for you. What is one thing we can be praying on your behalf for this week?

6 Courage cannot be chained. The opposite of joy is not sadness; it is fear. A believer can grieve and still have joy, but joy will always be absent where worry and anxiety are present. Paul was courageous because he was certain of his deliverance even if he didn’t know what it would look like. **Read Philippians 1:20-21.** *“To live is _____, and to die is _____.”* What are you putting in those blanks, and does it bring a joy that cannot be chained?

7 JOY IS THE OUTLOOK when Jesus decides the outcome. We go through a lot in life we would not choose, but nothing we go through can keep us from choosing joy. Who is someone you know who does this well? How can we intentionally surrender outcomes to God?





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1 Rick began by reminding us that *“Everybody wants to be happy, and almost everybody thinks the way to get happy is to give the highest priority to the pursuit of their own interests.”* How have you experienced this to be true in your life recently? Why is pursuing our own interests not helpful in finding joy?

2 Read Philippians 2:1-2. Paul called the church at Philippi to complete his joy by pursuing unity with one another. What specific areas of unity did Paul desire for them? How can followers of Jesus show their unity in practical ways?

3 JOY IS... a relational challenge. The believers in Philippi were struggling to be like-minded and one in spirit (Paul even had to tell them, *“Do everything without grumbling or complaining.”* **Philippians 2:14**). Underneath all the frustration was a serious relational breach. **Read Philippians 4:2-3.** Are any of you in a situation like this right now? If so, how have you tried to resolve the conflict? How can one fractured relationship divide a community?

4 Popular wisdom says “looking out for #1” is the path to joy. Real-life experience begs to differ. Paul says the root cause of relational challenges is the failure to put others first. **Read Philippians 2:3-4.** What does it mean to consider someone “better than yourself” (v. 3)? Share a time when putting someone else first brought you and them great joy.

5 HUMILITY IS... an intentional mindset. Read Philippians 2:5. Humility is not something we are born with; it is something we choose to put on. Why is humility a difficult thing to choose? What does this tell us about ourselves?

6 JESUS IS... our counter-cultural model. Read Philippians 2:6-8. Jesus intentionally took an unnatural path to joy. He chose the path of downward mobility. Though culture often views humility as a weakness, in what ways did Jesus’ humility convey and require strength? What are the benefits of choosing this “counter-cultural, counter-intuitive way of Jesus”?

7 TO BE FULL OF JOY I must empty myself. Rick reminded us that *“joy increases when self decreases.”* As you think about the situations you are facing in your life are you willing to try the way of Jesus? How might your life look different if you did? What is one thing you need to empty yourself of this week to become more Christlike?

Close by reading **Philippians 2:9-11** and spending some time in prayer for each other.





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Joy is under attack when we're focused on our spiritual resume. The more we trust in the things we've done, the less we understand what Jesus has done for us. This is why Paul writes in Philippians 3 about how to safeguard your joy by cherishing Jesus over and above everything else in life.

1 To kick things off, share the grossest thing you had to clean up/deal with in the last month. Later, when Paul says everything is "garbage" compared to Jesus, insert the grossest thing of the group at that word when you read verse 8.

2 Read Philippians 3:1-6. Paul warns against a major **Joy Killer: Trusting In How Good You Are.** What is it about people that we want to validate ourselves by what we've done? How might that kill our joy?

3 Read Philippians 3:7-11 (don't forget to replace "garbage" with whatever your group came up with). Paul uses sweeping, strong language to emphasize a **Joy Filler: Trusting How Good Jesus Is.** If you were talking to someone who knew nothing about Christianity, how would you explain this passage? Why does "faith in Christ" matter at all?

4 Read Philippians 3:12-14. Notice how differently Paul talks about himself in these verses compared to verses four through six. How does trusting Jesus keep us humble? Follow up question: what's the point of pressing on if our faith is in Jesus?

5 Read Philippians 3:15-17. We're not striving alone - there are people alongside us and around us who can help us. Paul says to **find people who trust Jesus with their whole lives.** Do you have people like that in your life? If so, who? And if not, what are ways you can seek them out?

6 Read Philippians 3:18-21. To finish, pray a prayer for those who are currently enemies of the cross of Christ. Pray that they would come to know the love of Jesus and trust Him as Lord. Pray also for Jesus to return and set all things right.





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1 Read Philippians 4:6-7. Rick noted that according to Amazon, Philippians 4:6-7 are the most highlighted scriptures in all the Bible. The fact is that anxiety can easily sink your spiritual life. Share a time in your life when anxiety was overwhelming you. How did it change your life? How were you led back to Joy and Peace in that situation?

2 Anxiety says, “What if?” and steals JOY. Anxiety is the result of assuming responsibility for things outside of our control. Discuss the difference between living “*in the natural*”, that is, **drifting** among the “What ifs?” and **choosing** to live “*in the supernatural*” where we can abide in the gift of God’s Joy.

3 We choose to WORRY about NOTHING (4:6a). Read Matthew 6:25-27. The reality is that worry is worthless. It has no value. Rick notes that it “*marks the spot where we are mistrusting our value to God and His ability to handle the future.*” So, Jesus challenges us to look at the world. In what ways does communing in God’s creation help you to release anxiety?

4 We choose to PRAY about EVERYTHING (4:6b). Read 1 Peter 5:7. God loves the sound of your voice and never puts you on hold. The action of casting throws the anxiety toward God’s sovereignty and mercy. He is available all the time! Share some of the “breath prayers” or other prayer habits you use in a moment’s notice when life gets tense.

5 We choose to GIVE THANKS about ANYTHING (4:6c). Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. “In the natural”, we focus on circumstances. “In the supernatural”, we focus on Jesus. Rick notes that we can be thankful “in it”, even when we are not thankful “for it.” Talk about a quick list of things that Jesus has given you right now that tomorrow cannot touch.

6 We choose to THINK about GOOD THINGS (4:8). Our culture, under the influence of our enemy, wants to fill our minds with negative thoughts. But in Christ, we are able to take responsibility for our thoughts through the empowering of the Holy Spirit. **Read Ephesians 4:23.** Share some ways that Holy Spirit has helped you practice “positive thought control”.

7 Peace says, “Even if!” and guards Joy (4:7). Joy is the result of walking in the supernatural promises of God. Rick says, “it is a joy that cannot be explained and it cannot be explained away.” Finish this sentence “Even if...” with a commitment statement to express your faith in the promises of God.

Abide in Joy: Allow each member the opportunity to name one anxiety they are presently carrying then pray together about choosing to walk in the supernatural where there is real joy.





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1 Read Philippians 4:10-13. Rick began by saying, *“It is my conviction that followers of Jesus should be known as the most joyful people on the planet.”* Talk about a person in your life that you would describe as joyous, no matter what. What was it about their joy that made such an impression on you?

2 “I REJOICED GREATLY. . .” (4:10-11). Paul chose contentment whatever the circumstance, even in prison. Our culture however, champions the idea of dissatisfaction. Culture contends that to leave our “wants” unsatisfied means we will never be happy. But, Rick notes that our “wants” can blind us to who God wants us to be and what he wants us to do. Discuss some ways our culture exploits our “wants.” Share a personal example if you can. In what concrete way can we redirect our desires to receive our contentment from God?

3 “I HAVE LEARNED. . .” (4:11) – In real terms “Learn to be grateful.” Read 1 Timothy 6:6-8. Discuss Rick’s statement. *“The truth about our discontent is that it is fed and fueled by a contract mentality that thinks “God owes me because...”* Question: Is God indebted to us? So, state the obvious, what is the result if we get what we really deserve from God? Now, practice some thanksgiving together, name some things that you don’t deserve but that God has given to you anyway.

4 “I HAVE LEARNED..” (4:13) – In lasting terms “Learn to be grace-full.” Read 2 Corinthians 12:8-9. Read Hebrews 4:16. Paul said, *“I can do all things through Him who gives me strength.”* This was Paul’s answer to contentment through every moment of his life. This was true whether Paul was on the mountain top or in the valley. Share some ways we can learn and grow in our capacity to have every part of our lives empowered by Jesus. In other words, What is your “all things” where you need grace the most?

5 “I CAN DO.” Joy is not a result, it is a relationship. You can rejoice in anything when Christ is your everything. Look again at **Philippians 4:1-12**. Name again some of the impressive things from each verse that are possible when we are in a relationship with Jesus. For example, verse 2 – *I can find unity with others.* Verse 3 – *I can receive help from other Christ-followers.* Continue through the verses together and name again some of the possibilities.

Abide in Joy: Pray together about leaving behind a witness that people will remember you for being a joyous person.

