

The Joy of Christianity

Studies from Philippians

Introduction

- God Is the Source of Great Joy
 - Nehemiah 8:10 – “Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”
 - Psalm 16:11 – “In your presence is the fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures evermore.”
 - Psalm 43:4 – “Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy...”
 - Habakkuk 3:18 – “Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord. I will joy in the God of my salvation.”
 - Matthew 2:10 – “When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.”
 - Luke 17:10 – “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord even the demons are subject to us in your name.”
 - John 16:24 – “...Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”
 - Acts 5:41 – “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name...”
 - The coming of Christ, the power of God, evangelism, prayer, and suffering are part of God’s joy.
 - Strength, fulfillment, worship, and salvation are part of God’s joy.
- The Apostle Paul’s Book of Joy – The Book of Philippians
 - The letter was written during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome – Acts 28:16-30
 - The letter was written to the church at Philippi that was established on Paul’s second journey – Acts 16
 - Philippians is one of Paul’s more personal letters to the churches of the first century.
 - The word joy is used five times in this short letter.
 - The word “rejoice” occurs 11 times in the text.
- The key verse of Philippians is 4:4 – “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice.”
- The Purpose of this Study
 - To better appreciate the joy that God brings to his children.
 - To learn to love the Body of Christ.
 - To find peace, contentment, and strength in Jesus.
 - To better understand our individual roles in God’s kingdom.
 - To imitate the characteristics of Jesus and his faithful followers.

Lesson One – The Joy of Community Philippians 1:1-11

- **Three Keys to the Joy of Community**
 - **Thinking of Fellow Christians (1:3-6)**
 - Paul thought of his brethren thankfully (3).
 - Paul thought of his brethren prayerfully (4a).
 - Paul thought of his brethren joyfully (4b).
 - Paul thought of his brethren spiritually (5).
 - Paul thought of his brethren confidently (6).
 - **Loving Fellow Christians (1:7-8)**
 - Love is commanded – 1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 4:7-8
 - Love identifies us with Christ – John 13:34-35
 - Love is a characteristic of a spiritual life – 1 John 3:14
 - Love is to be put into action – 1 John 3:18
 - Love is a component of forgiveness – 1 Peter 4:8
 - Love keeps no record of wrongs – 1 Corinthians 13:5
 - Love comes from walking by the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-25
 - **Praying for Fellow Christians (1:9-11)**
 - Pray for abounding love – 1 Peter 2:17
 - Pray for more knowledge of God (Philippians 3:10), His word (2 Timothy 2:15) and His people.
 - Pray for greater discernment in order to make wise choices (Ephesians 5:15-17), to avoid evil practices (Hebrews 5:13-14).
 - Pray for Purity – In the area of teaching (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22), in the area of speech (Ephesians 4:32), in lifestyle choices (1 Timothy 5:22, 2 Timothy 2:22).
 - Pray for godly living – 1 Timothy 4:6-8, 4:12
 - Pray for fruitfulness – Galatians 5:22-23, John 15:8
- **Points to Ponder and Discuss**
 - Major Themes
 - God's community of believers is the church.
 - This community is based on thanksgiving, sacrifice, love, prayer, service, commitment, and confidence.
 - This community is bound and strengthened through relationships with Christ and one another.
 - Discussion Questions
 - How did Paul remember and think of the Philippians (1:1-7)?
 - What motivated Paul to love the Philippians (1:7-8)?
 - What was Paul's prayer for the Philippians (1:9-11)?
- **Journal Suggestions**
 - Write about the people in the church that have influenced you.
 - List the qualities of godly people that remind you of Jesus.
 - Consider ways that your life demonstrates the love of God, the wisdom of God, and your gratitude for God.
 - What is your prayer for your church family?

Lesson Two – The Joy of Hardships Philippians 1:12-18

- Five Reasons We Can Rejoice in Hardships
 - **Hardships Further the Gospel (1:12)**
 - By fueling the fire of evangelism – Acts 5:41
 - By opening doors to teach and serve in different areas than “normal” – Acts 16:16-34
 - By affirming the power and strength of God – 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, 13:4
 - **Hardships Demonstrate Evidences of Christ (1:13)**
 - Christ is seen in us – Galatians 2:20
 - Spirituality is recognized – 1 Timothy 4:15
 - When we shine as lights (Matthew 5:14-16), even seemingly unlikely people can be reached with the Good News.
 - **Hardships Promote Confidence (1:14)**
 - Through a greater reliance on God – Psalm 34:19
 - Through the encouragement of fellow Christians – 1 Thessalonians 5:11
 - Through a commitment to the word of God – Psalm 119:97
 - **Hardships aid in the defense of Christianity (1:15-17)**
 - There is a need for the gospel to be defended – Acts 20:29-30, 1 Timothy 4:1
 - We have a responsibility to defend Christianity – 1 John 4:1, Jude 3
 - God has given us the means to defend Christianity – 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:14-17
 - **Hardships exalt Jesus (1:18)**
 - He is worthy of all praise – Philippians 2:9, Revelation 5:12
 - When we approach hardships in the right manner, Jesus is exalted – Colossians 3:17
- Points to Ponder and Discuss
 - **Major Themes:**
 - Suffering can advance the cause of Christ.
 - Suffering can prove how much we should rely on Christ.
 - Suffering can give others comfort and confidence.
 - Suffering can strengthen personal faith and resolve.
 - Suffering can bring glory to the Lord
 - **Thoughts to Ponder and Discuss:**
 - What had Paul’s personal suffering done for the kingdom (1:12-13)?
 - How did Paul’s suffering affect others, both in the Lord and outside of Christ (1:13-14)?
 - Why did Paul rejoice in his suffering (1:15-18)?
- Journal Suggestions:
 - Reflect upon your personal hardships.
 - How do hardships affect your relationship with the Lord?
 - How do hardships affect your relationship with others?
 - Consider how your hardships can be used to show others the joy in Christ.

Lesson Three – The Joy of Purpose Philippians 1:19-30

- Three Keys to Finding Joy in Purpose
 - **We find our purpose in magnifying Jesus (1:19-21).**
 - From our prayers through Him for deliverance – 2 Timothy 4:16-18
 - By proclaiming Him boldly – Acts 4:29-31, Romans 1:14-17
 - Through a great passion to be like Him – 1 Corinthians 11:1
 - **We find our purpose in ministering to others (1:22-26).**
 - Paul was determined to serve the Lord by serving others – Romans 12:10-11, 1 Corinthians 15:58
 - At times serving means making difficult decisions – Luke 10:25-37, Acts 21:13
 - The key to service is denying self – Luke 9:23
 - **We find our purpose by mastering a Christian lifestyle (1:27-30).**
 - We are to conduct ourselves in a consistent manner – 2 Corinthians 3:2-3
 - We are to possess a spirit of cooperation with others – 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
 - We are to be confident in the Lord – Psalm 34:19
 - We are to be courageous in conflict – 1 Peter 4:12-16

- Points to Ponder and Discuss
 - Major Themes:
 - Our purpose brings glory to Christ.
 - Our purpose leads to godly service.
 - Our purpose is supported by godly living.
 - Discussion Questions:
 - What did Paul see as his purpose in life (1:19-21)?
 - What did Paul determine was best for the Lord's church (1:22-26)?
 - What keys did Paul give for living worthy lives (1:27-30)?

- Journal Suggestions:
 - How do our lives magnify Jesus?
 - How should we approach making difficult decisions?
 - How do Jesus and fellow Christians give us confidence and courage to walk worthy of the Lord?

Lesson Four – The Joy of Unity Philippians 2:1-4

- Five Keys to Joyful Unity
 - **Consolation in Christ (2:1a)**
 - The word consolation in this verse means, to be encouraged and comforted.
 - In Christ the Sufferer, we find great love – Psalm 22
 - In Christ the Shepherd, we find great comfort – Psalm 23
 - In Christ the Sovereign, we find encouragement – Psalm 24
 - In Christ the Savior, we find hope – 1 Timothy 1:1
 - **Communion of the Spirit (2:1b)**
 - From Galatians 5:16-26 we see the key aspects of sharing God’s Spirit.
 - We are to walk in the Spirit (5:16) – Our actions
 - We are led by the Spirit (5:18) – Our direction (Psalm 119:105)
 - We produce the Fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23) – Our attitude
 - We live in the Spirit (5:25) – Our manner of life
 - **Compassion for One Another (2:1c)**
 - The meaning of compassion:
 - The Greek term that is translated compassion or affection literally refers to the organs of the intestines.
 - It is the root word of our English word spleen.
 - The ancient Greeks considered the intestine to be the center of emotion.
 - It carries with it the idea of being moved from deep within.
 - **Cooperation with One Another (2:2)**
 - We are to be like-minded – Romans 12:16
 - We are to be motivated by love – Mark 12:30-31, 1 Peter 2:17, 4:8
 - We are to have one goal and aim – Philippians 3:12-14
 - We are to strive for the spirit of unity – Ephesians 4:1-3
 - **Consideration of One Another (2:3-4)**
 - What to Avoid
 - Selfish Ambition – Matthew 20:20-28, Judas
 - Conceit – Romans 12:3, 3 John 9
 - Setting out to please self or men for personal gain.
 - Looking for what can make you look the best.
 - What to Practice
 - Lowliness of Mind – Humility (Literally crawl on your belly through the dust.)
 - Esteeming others highly – Romans 12:10
 - Self-preservation – That is keeping your spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical properties in good order.
 - Altruistic Service – Seeking the best in and the best for others (1 Corinthians 13:8)
 - In humility we are to serve the needs of others – Titus 3:8, 3:14
- Points to Ponder and Discuss
 - Major Themes
 - The foundation for unity is Christ’s encouragement.
 - Unity is demonstrated through sharing all things, especially the word.
 - Love for one another is the motivation for unity.

- Being likeminded produces great joy.
- To maintain unity, we are to be more interested in the needs of others.
- Discussion Questions
 - List three keys to establishing unity in the body (2:1).
 - How does being like-minded produce joy (2:2)?
 - How does selflessness promote unity and harmony (2:3-4)?

- Journal Suggestions

- Reflect upon ways that Jesus encourages us.
- Compare our selfish actions to our selfless actions.
- Write specific examples of when your selfless behavior helped the body of Christ or helped families come together.

Lesson Five – The Joy of Obedience Philippians 2:5-18

- Two Keys to a Joyful Obedient Life
 - **The Pattern of Jesus (2:5-11) – Six Actions of Jesus**
 - Abdication of His Position (5-6) – Jesus gave up his position in heaven.
 - Abstain from Privilege (7a) – He emptied Himself
 - Attending to Others (7b) – He became a bondservant.
 - Acting with Humility (8a) – He made Himself low.
 - Accepted the Cross (8b) – He died that we might live.
 - Abounded in Glory (9-11) – His humility lead to exaltation.
 - **The Practice of Jesus' Example (2:12-18)**
 - Complete the Race (12) – Work out your own salvation.
 - Commit to God's Power (13) – God working through us.
 - Cease Complaining (14) – Thanksgiving is in the heart of Christians.
 - Chaste and Pure Behavior (15) – To shine as a light to others.
 - Cling to the Word (16) – Being guided by God's word.
 - Compassion for Others (17) – Service for others to the glory of God.

- Points to Ponder and Discuss
 - Major Themes:
 - The attitude and actions of Jesus provide the example for obedience.
 - Our attitudes and actions are the keys to obeying the Lord.
 - Our obedience leads to salvation.
 - Our obedience influences others.
 - Discussion Questions:
 - What did Jesus do to demonstrate His obedience (2:5-8)?
 - What did God do for Jesus because of Jesus' obedience (2:9-11)?
 - How should we approach obedience to the Lord (2:12-13)?
 - What should we do in order to be a positive influence on the world (2:14-18)?

- Journal Suggestions:
 - How can we learn about the mindset of Jesus?
 - What things in our lives demonstrate the sacrificial attitude of Jesus?
 - Compare the results of or complaining about things and attempting to deal positively with them.
 - What can you do to hold on to the word of God?

Lesson Six – The Joy of Example Philippians 2:19-30

- **Five Characteristics Seen in Timothy and Epaphroditus**
 - **Conveyers of Joy (2:19)**
 - Paul looked forward to seeing Timothy – 2 Timothy 4:9, 21.
 - Timothy brought Paul joy and comfort.
 - **Care for Others (2:20-21)**
 - Timothy and Paul shared concern for others.
 - In Timothy we see a sincere concern for others.
 - Timothy was not motivated by selfish ambition.
 - **Character That is Proven (2:22)**
 - Paul personally mentored and trained Timothy.
 - Timothy's progress was evident.
 - His faith was seen in His willing service to the Lord.
 - **Cooperative Attitude (2:25)**
 - Paul used five terms to describe this attitude in Epaphroditus.
 - My Brother – Describing their relationship in the Lord.
 - Fellow Worker – Describing their responsibility to the Lord.
 - Fellow Soldier – Describing their resolve to further the cause of Christ.
 - Messenger – Describing their willingness to reveal the Lord.
 - Minister – Describing their resourcefulness to serve the Lord.
 - **Commitment to the Cause (2:26-30)**
 - Epaphroditus had been ill to the point of death.
 - However, he was more concerned for Paul and the Philippians.
 - His main concern was for the work of the Lord.
- **Points to Ponder**
 - Major Themes:
 - The actions of other Christians give us an example to follow.
 - To be a good example we should show care and concern for others.
 - Having a proven character is important to being a good example.
 - Christians cooperate with each other to carry out God's will.
 - Discussion Questions:
 - Why was Timothy so encouraging to Paul (2:19-21)?
 - Describe the relationship of Paul and Timothy (2:22-24).
 - How did Paul describe Epaphroditus (2:25)?
 - What was so amazing about Epaphroditus (2:26-30)?
- **Journal Suggestions:**
 - Write about the close relationships with others that you have in the Lord.
 - How were those relationships developed?
 - What did each person teach others because of the relationship?
 - How can you prove your character?
 - In what ways do you see yourself in Paul's description of Epaphroditus?

Lesson Seven – The Joy of Priority Philippians 3:1-11

- Four Principles to Maintain Proper Priorities
 - **Exercise Caution (3:1-3a)**
 - One of Paul's reasons for writing this letter was to ensure the spiritual safety of the Philippians (1).
 - Paul warned the Philippians to beware of those that could derail their faith (2).
 - Paul wanted to ensure that the Philippians remained separated from worldliness (3a).
 - The circumcision in verse three refers to the heart – Colossian 2:11.
 - **Examine Your Credentials (3:3b-6)**
 - Paul prefaced his credentials with a warning not to place confidence in earthly credentials (3b).
 - Trust first in God and then in your God-given abilities.
 - Paul's Credentials (3-6)
 - He was devoted to his heritage and his people – A Hebrew of Hebrews.
 - He was trained as a Pharisee – Acts 22:3.
 - He had a great service record as a Jew – Zealous for God.
 - He possessed a great knowledge of the Old Law – Blameless.
 - **Estimate the Value of Your Credentials (3:7-9)**
 - The Cost of Christianity for Paul
 - He lost social position in the Hebrew society.
 - He lost credibility in the intellectual society.
 - He lost a good reputation as a leader.
 - He lost relationships.
 - The Gain for Paul
 - Intimate knowledge of Jesus – To know everything about Jesus (Galatians 2:20).
 - Righteousness through Jesus – Romans 3:10, 10:3
 - Riches of Jesus – 2 Corinthians 8:9, Ephesians 1:18
 - **Emulate the Character of Jesus (3:10-11).**
 - Paul wanted to know Jesus – 1 John 2:3-4
 - Paul desired to be empowered by Jesus – Philippians 4:13
 - Paul was not ashamed to suffer for Jesus – 2 Timothy 1:8-12, 3:12
 - Paul wanted to conform to Jesus – Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18
- Points to Ponder
 - Major Themes:
 - Make certain that priorities are right.
 - Christians are to be mindful to place their confidence in the Lord.
 - The most important thing in life is to have a proper relationship with the Lord.
 - The major goal of Christians is to know everything about the Lord.
 - Discussion Questions:
 - What credentials does Paul possess and what did those mean in his time (3:1-6)?
 - How did Paul view his earthly accomplishments (3:7-9)?
 - What did Paul want to know about Jesus (3:10-11)?

- **Journal Suggestions:**

- What have you accomplished at this point in your life?
- How do you view those accomplishments in light of your relationship with Jesus?
- How can you use earthly successes to bring glory to God?
- What would you like to know about Jesus?

Lesson Eight – The Joy of Progress Philippians 3:12-21

- **Six Keys to Progressing in the Lord**
 - **Discontent with Status (3:12-13a)**
 - Paul's discontent was not with Jesus or his decision to be a Christian.
 - Paul was not satisfied with his personal progress in the Lord.
 - He knew that he still had more to learn about the Lord.
 - **Devotion to the Lord (3:13b)**
 - Paul had a singled-minded purpose – "...one thing I do..."
 - His desire was to please the Lord – 2 Corinthians 5:9
 - Paul's desire was to complete the race – 2 Timothy 4:6-8
 - **Direction in Life (3:13c)**
 - Paul put his past behind him – 1 Timothy 1:12-17
 - He was concerned about the present needs – Titus 3:14
 - He was excited about the future with the Lord.
 - **Determination (3:14)**
 - He was intense in his pursuit of godliness.
 - Paul understood the importance of laboring for the Lord – 1 Corinthians 15:58
 - Paul knew that the prize was worth all the effort – 1 Peter 1:4
 - He knew the prize awaited all of God's faithful – Revelation 2:10, 14:13
 - **Discipline (3:15-19)**
 - Paul did not want to see anyone disqualified from the prize.
 - Paul identifies six areas of life that involve discipline.
 - Discipline involves the right mindset – Philippians 2:5, 1:10
 - Discipline involves walking in the light – 1 John 1:7
 - Discipline involves following the rules – 2 Timothy 2:5
 - Discipline involves setting and following good examples – 1 Peter 2:21
 - Discipline involves serving the true God – Matthew 4:10
 - Discipline involves setting the right priorities – Colossians 3:1-2
 - **Destination in Mind (3:20-21)**
 - Heavenly citizenship is more valuable than earthly citizenship.
 - The word citizenship in verse 20 denotes behaving properly.
 - As citizens we look forward to the coming of our King.
 - As heavenly citizens we transformed people.
- **Points to Ponder**
 - Major Themes:
 - Christians are to continually move toward completion.
 - We must keep our eyes focused on what is important.
 - Prepare for and look forward to the return of Jesus.
 - Discussion Questions:
 - What had Paul realized about his own spiritual maturity (3:12-13)?
 - What was Paul's "one thing" (3:13-14)?
 - What are some signs of maturity (3:15-19)?
 - Where is our true citizenship (3:20)?
 - Why should we look forward to the return of Jesus (3:21)?

- Journal Suggestion:
 - What have you done that demonstrates spiritual maturity?
 - What do you need to leave in the past so you can move forward?
 - What earthly pleasure hinders your spiritual growth?
 - What do you look most forward to in the future?

Lesson Nine – The Joy of Proper Thinking Philippians 4:1-9

- Five Keys to Proper Thinking
 - **Minds that are Secure (4:1)**
 - We can stand fast in the Lord's gospel – 1 Corinthians 15:1-2
 - We can stand fast in God's teaching – Ephesians 4:14, Hebrews 13:9
 - We are to be steadfast in God's service – 1 Corinthians 15:58
 - We can stand fast in God's faith – 1 Corinthians 16:13
 - God's steadfastness helps us remain steadfast – Daniel 6:26, Hebrews 13:8
 - **Minds that Seek Peace (4:2-5)**
 - By finding unity in Christ – 1 Corinthians 1:10
 - By helping others – Galatians 6:9-10
 - By rejoicing always in the Lord – 1 Thessalonians 5:18
 - By an attitude of gentleness – Proverbs 14:17, 29:11
 - **Minds that Solicit Help (4:6-7)**
 - Anxiety and worry cloud the mind – Proverbs 12:25, 14:30
 - Clouded minds make poor choices.
 - God's peace clears the mind of earthly worries – Proverbs 3:5-6
 - We are to seek His peace in prayer – Hebrews 4:16
 - **Minds that Stay Focused (4:8)**
 - We are to protect our minds – Proverbs 4:23, 23:7
 - We are to focus our minds properly.
 - Focusing on truth – John 17:17
 - Focusing on nobility – That which is honest and without hypocrisy.
 - Focusing on purity – 2 Corinthians 7:1
 - Focusing on virtue – That which promotes excellence.
 - **Minds that Shine Bright (4:9)**
 - Producing the fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23
 - Producing godly actions – 1 Timothy 4:12-16
 - Producing godly followers – Matthew 28:19-20
- Points to Ponder
 - Major Themes:
 - The Christian life is a life of joy.
 - To achieve joy in life, our minds must be on the proper things.
 - The prayers of Christians lead to peaceful living.
 - The practice of true Christianity brings real joy and peace.
 - Points to Ponder and Discuss:
 - What did the church in Philippi mean to Paul (4:1)?
 - What problem did Paul bring to the attention of one of his companions (4:2-3)?
 - Why is prayer so important (4:6-7)?
 - What specific things fit the categories that Paul encouraged us to meditate upon (4:8)?
 - Why should we follow the example of others (4:9)?
- Journal Suggestions:
 - Have you ever had to be a peacemaker with other Christians?

- How has Jesus brought great joy into your life?
- What things do you worry about and how are you dealing with the worry?
- How can you keep your mind focused on the proper things?

Lesson Ten – The Joy of Contentment Philippians 4:10-20

- **Five Keys to Contentment**
 - **Caring for Others (4:10)**
 - Care for others involves a proper attitude about the needs of others – 1 Peter 2:17
 - Care for others involves recognizing opportunities – Colossians 4:3
 - Care for others involves taking actions – Galatians 5:6, James 2:14-18
 - **Circumstances Teach Contentment (4:11-12)**
 - Paul learned contentment through various stages of life.
 - Paul had experienced lowliness – 1 Corinthians 4:11-13
 - Paul had experienced prosperity.
 - Paul had a proper approach to both conditions – 1 Timothy 6:6-10
 - **Christ Empowering Us (4:13)**
 - Jesus was Paul’s source of strength – John 15:5, Matthew 19:26, 2 Corinthians 3:5
 - Jesus’ strength helped Paul endure trials – 2 Timothy 4:16-17
 - Jesus’ strength helped Paul overcome temptations – 1 Corinthians 10:13
 - **Cooperation and Appreciation (4:14-18)**
 - The church at Philippi had been generous to Paul.
 - He compared their generosity to a budding tree, fruit, and a sweet-smelling sacrifice.
 - The church shared in Paul’s distress and his necessities.
 - They shared in his work for the kingdom.
 - **Confidence in God’s Provision (4:19-20)**
 - God is the source of all good things – James 1:17, Psalm 84:11, 85:12
 - God is aware of all our needs – Ephesians 3:20
 - God’s goodness is everlasting – Lamentations 3:22-24
- **Points to Ponder**
 - Major Themes:
 - Finding contentment should be the goal of every Christian.
 - Jesus gives us the strength to deal with all facets of life.
 - We should seek to find ways to share in God’s work.
 - God supplies all our needs.
 - Discussion Questions:
 - Why did Paul commend the church in Philippi (4:10)?
 - How did Paul learn contentment (4:11-13)?
 - How did the Philippians share in Paul’s work (4:14-18)?
 - What did Paul promise that God would do for us (4:19-20)?
- **Journal Suggestions:**
 - List ways that you have aided others in the Lord’s work.
 - Do you feel content in life? If not, what areas of life do you feel that you lack contentment?
 - How has Jesus strengthened you to act on your faith?
 - Who in your life is a “sweet-smelling” aroma before God?