

Life Group Lesson 9

Return to the Source of Your Joy
Philippians 4:1-9

PRESS ON

together

Big Idea:

From Sunday: Persevere with joy!

For Today: Rejoicing builds a bridge for us to have a joyful connection with Jesus and others.

Icebreaker question: Of all that has happened in 2020, what surprised you? Made you grateful? Left you feeling hurt? Prayed the most for? Gave you joy?

Video

This 12-minute video features Pastor Burkey teaching on Paul's wisdom in building joy into all of life's moments.

Read Philippians 4:1-9

In tough times, Paul could have told us to *buck up, life is tough, get on with it*. He could have waxed eloquently on how to grit your teeth, toughen your psyche, and how bad he had it in a prison cell, so stop complaining. He does none of that. He does describe how not only to persevere, but to persevere with joy. He does that throughout Philippians especially in 4:1-9.

In verse 1, Paul expresses his love for them and out of that love, he calls them to **"stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!"** That shows Paul's affection for them and how he's setting them up for what's coming.

One of the biggest joy drainers I know is conflict among friends, so in verses 2-3 he seeks to resolve the conflict from far away and with fellow friends close by.

The name ***Euodia*** can mean "Good Journey" or "Pleasant". ***Syntyche*** means "Good Luck". So Paul tries to get Pleasant and Lucky back together. We don't know what wall has divided this relationship, we do know the bridge to rebuild it: ***to agree with each other in the Lord!***

Yes, the bridge builder is Jesus, but so are the others in this church, Paul, Clement (whose name means *mild!*) and a ***loyal yokefellow*** whose name in Greek would be Syzygus (I'd call him Loyal Yokefellow too, or just Gus). As you look at your life, what are the qualities of some of your friends who are bridge builders in your relationships with others? What relational bridge building qualities might they affirm in you?

Max Lucado book, *Anxious for Nothing*, looks at Philippians 4:4-9. Here are his 4-points:

Celebrate God's goodness (Philippians 4:4)

Ask God for help (Philippians 4:6)

Leave your concerns with God (Philippians 4:6)

Meditate on good things / God things (Philippians 4:8)

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To *rejoice* in the Biblical sense is to return to the source of your joy. How has Philippians reminded you that Jesus is the source of your joy? What words, images, verses have strengthened your walk with Jesus?

In verse 5, Paul calls for gentleness, a rare trait in this political campaign year. Why do you think gentleness is so rare in our world? So needed?

One key I find for joy and gentleness is Paul's comment, **"the Lord is near"**. He will come at the end of time; even more, He is already with you now.

In verse 6, Paul uses 3 different words to describe praying. One is for a request for someone else, another is a request for one's self, and the third speaks of a request from the depth of your soul. What is one prayer request you pray constantly for someone else? For yourself?

Paul could have simply said **"give thanks"**. But he puts **always** before **give thanks**. That's also why Paul can return to the source of his joy. For Paul the path through his pain to hold on to joy is prayers of gratitude. That's why each week I've asked you to pray a prayer of thanks and a prayer of petition. That's a great practice not just for this study, but for daily life. Where do you find it easy to give thanks? What, today, is challenging to give thanks for?

Paul is building a bridge for us to have a joyful connection with Jesus and others, when the bridge is fully-connected the result Paul says in verse 7 is **peace!** Peace is not the absence of conflict, but life fitting together with God in the center.

The way the bridge is maintained and kept strong is Paul's attitude and action advice in verses 8 and 9. In verse 8, he shares the value of thinking good thoughts, thinking God thoughts.

How does your attitude fuel your actions for good or bad? Why do you think Christians do or don't follow Paul's attitude and action plan? How might our witness be stronger if we did?

Action Steps

Follow the closing prayer habit each day for the next week (and beyond!).

Press On Together Prayer

As you close in prayer, I invite you to share with your group, and then take turns praying 2 prayers.

1. A Prayer of Gratitude: Thank you God for ...
2. A Prayer of Grace: Grace: God, I (or ?) need Your grace (help) to ...