

Philippians: God's Joy On Display.

Week #1: Introduction to Philippians

April 8, 2018

Joy can seem elusive in a world that seems to be growing in sadness, lacking in hope and seething in anger. But joy is an essential ingredient to a meaningful life. In fact, joy is often that proof that a person has found life's real meaning. Happiness comes and goes, depending on circumstances ... but not joy. Joy endures through even the most difficult days. People facing tragedy, heartache and even death are joyful when their purpose has been found. Nothing, for them, interrupts their joy.

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, we find an individual who bathing in the hot tub of joy. Though he finds himself in prison, he is filled with joy. Though people have let him down, he remains joyful. When his plans don't work out, he continues to rejoice. He has lost all his possession, but (you guessed it) he keeps on rejoicing. Throughout his letter to a congregation very dear to him, Paul urges those he writes to remain joyful. "Rejoice in the Lord, always," he writes. "And don't worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition - with thanks - present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Php 4:4-7)

What was Paul's secret? Knowing Christ, and leaving everything else behind.

Study Questions: #1 - Introduction to Philippians

1. As we begin our study, take a moment to reflect on the level of joy you've been experiencing.
 - What is the source of any joy you've had? How has it differed from moments of happiness?
 - Read Philippians 4:4. Paul urges the Philippians believers to rejoice in the Lord, always.
 - How are we doing as a congregation with our rejoicing? Is New Life a joyful Christian Community? ... would you go to a church that is not joyful?
2. Read Philippians 1:12. Paul is writing these people from prison in Rome, yet he is vibrant and full of life.
 - What is your prison ... poor health? an unhappy marriage? a dead-end job? financial peril? How can God's joy, in Jesus, through the Spirit, for you, amidst of your trials and burdens, set you free and provide abundant joy in your circumstances?
 - Read Hebrews 12:1-2. Pray this week for a greater measure of the joy of Jesus Christ - a joy our Lord experienced even as He walked deliberately towards the cross.
 - Read Jude (v.24), and James 1:2-4. In the end, is joy actually a deliberate choice you make - is it an act of the will, coupled with God's transforming power in Jesus Christ?
3. Though joyful, Paul did not live with his head buried in the sand. He saw life coming at him, fully knowing that the events of each day were uncertain.
 - Read Philippians 1:21-23, and 2 Timothy 4:6-8. What is the secret of Paul's ability to remain joyful in every circumstance?
4. If there's one thing our world needs today, it's the joy of God's people being lived out in every context, every trial, every moment.
 - Pray for one opportunity this week to explain to someone that joy that you have in Jesus Christ.
 - Pray for the persecuted Church in the world. Millions of Christians are living in very difficult conditions, and need our prayers to keep their eyes on Jesus, and the joy they have in Him.