

Creative Living Bible Study

JOY

A study from the Book of Philippians

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Before you begin...

Welcome to this life-enriching study for men and women who already know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and others who may be seeking Him.

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Joy is something we all desire, and something God wants us all to experience. Yet the joy He has for us is more than a feeling of pleasure. The joy He gives is characterized by an *inner well of strength*. It is a joy that cannot be shaken by circumstances, regardless of how difficult our circumstances may become.

This is the type of joy Paul knew and gave us the keys to in his wonderful epistle to the believers at Philippi. His writing, inspired by the Holy Spirit, imparted the wisdom of God regarding the experience of joy.

As you embark on this brief study, may you discover or rediscover the principles for life that lead to the inner well of strength that is God's gift of indestructible joy.

Diana Schick
Author
Creative Living Bible Studies

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From the Book of Philippians

Preface

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LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION

"Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: rejoice!" These words were not written by a contemporary person sitting in a plush chair surrounded by books on how to achieve happiness. The apostle Paul was writing from the physical and emotional discomfort of a prison as he awaited news of a possible death sentence. Not only this, but he at one time or another had faced misunderstanding, sickness, abandonment by friends, persecution by enemies, imprisonment, doubts and despair. But in spite of the uncertainties and tensions, we see a man whose life was filled with joy.

Almost everyone is seeking more joy in life, and the book of Philippians has been called God's guide to joy. In the face of difficulty and discomfort, how could Paul say it is possible to: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice!" What were his secrets to a life filled with joy? This is what we will seek to discover as we briefly study this wonderful letter written to the cherished church at Philippi.

JOYFUL IMPRISONMENT

Philippians 1

Philippi was an important city because it straddled the great east-west highway between Europe and Asia known as the Egnation Way. The city population was cosmopolitan, made up of Tracians, Greeks, Romans and a small number of Jews. The city was of typical Roman

structure, with a central forum surrounded by fountains, temples, monuments, public baths and a library. Because there were only a few Jewish families in the city, there was no synagogue in Philippi.

Antony had made Philippi a Roman colony in 42 B.C., which provided the Philippians with special rights and privileges as Roman citizens. For this reason, its people were proud of and loyal to the government in Rome. The women enjoyed high status and positions of public and business responsibility, and correspondingly important responsibilities in the Philippian church to whom Paul is writing.

Paul founded the church at Philippi sometime around the year A.D. 50, during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:12-40). From his letter to the Philippians, we learn that this church was taking its share of suffering. It was in some danger of division (1:27; 2:2; 4:2) and may have been leaning toward a doctrine of perfectionism (3:12-13). It was also being threatened by the teaching of Judaizers, a group that insisted that all Christians adhere to Jewish laws and customs.

But despite its problems, Paul loved this church and rejoiced in its successes. As he encouraged the Philippian believers and reported his own circumstances, Paul taught them to rejoice in the face of trial and persecution.

Scholars are not sure from which prison and when Paul wrote this letter, but they have assumed it was either from Rome around A.D. 61-63, or possibly from Ephesus around A.D. 54.

Read Philippians 1:1-11.

1. a. Which associate was with Paul, and to whom did Paul write (1:1)?

b. What was Paul's desire for the believers at Philippi (1:2)?

2. a. How did Paul feel about the Philippians, and why (1:3-5,7-8)?

b. Of what was Paul joyfully confident (1:6)?

c. What was Paul's prayer for the believers at Philippi (1:9-11)?

Read Philippians 1:12-26.

3. On what positive results of his imprisonment did Paul choose to focus (1:12-14)?

Note: The Praetorian Guard or palace guard was an elite group of soldiers loyal to the Roman emperor. Although Bible scholars are not sure that Paul was imprisoned in Rome at this time, it is likely that he was under house arrest there, probably chained to a Roman guard continually.

4. a. What were the various motives of those who preached the gospel of Christ around Paul (1:15-17)?

b. How did Paul choose to respond to the situation (1:18)?

5. a. How would you describe Paul's attitude toward being in prison (1:18b-20)?

b. Although there was the possibility that Paul's forthcoming trial could end in his death, what two kinds of help gave him confidence (1:19)?

c. What was Paul's hope for the future (1:19-20)?

6. a. What perspective did Paul have on dying (1:21,23)?

b. What was Paul's purpose for living (1:21-26)?

7. What did Paul encourage the Philippians to do in the face of the persecution they were experiencing (1:27-30)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Joy in the Midst of Difficulty

1. a. What does the word "joy" mean to you? Is it the same as happiness? Explain.

b. Why is joy important according to Proverbs 17:22?

2. What might have been Paul's attitude during his imprisonment?

3. a. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul described the hardships he had faced. What were they (II Corinthians 6:4-5,8-9)?

b. What did Paul practice in the midst of these hardships (II Corinthians 6:6-7,10)?

c. What perspectives helped him through the hardships according to II Corinthians 6:10?

4. a. According to James 1:2-4, what is possible in the midst of difficulty?

b. Why would developing these qualities produce joy in one's life?

5. What does Job 20:4-5 say about joy for those without God?

6. What sources of joy are found in the following verses?

Psalm 16:11

Psalm 30:4-5

Isaiah 12:2-3

John 16:24

Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22

Summary

7. a. Is your life joyful--always? sometimes? never?

b. If sometimes or always, when are you joyful? Is this joy temporary or lasting?

8. Paul says, "For me to live is Christ," stating the central commitment of his life. At this point in your life, what would you say is the central commitment of your life?

9. Paul was able to rejoice even when he was under extreme pressure. Think of one area in which things don't seem to be working out for you as you would like. How can this pressure point lead to rejoicing in your life?

10. What key to joy stands out to you in Philippians 1?

LESSON 2

STRENGTH FOR UNITY

Philippians 2

In the church at Philippi, as with any group of people, the powerful foes of selfish ambition and vain conceit threatened the health of the group. To secure unity and promote the joy he longed to see in the midst of these believers, Paul encouraged the Philippians to practice unselfish consideration in their relationships to each other. The cultivation of this kind of consideration would not only strengthen congregational unity, but also make them stand out in a world that needed to know the love of Christ.

Read Philippians 2:1-11.

1. a. To what sources of joy and harmony does Paul refer (2:1)?

b. What choices did Paul encourage the Philippians to make (2:2)?

2. What does Philippians 2:3-5 suggest about the nature of humility?

3. a. What phrases describe the high position Jesus Christ held before His incarnation (2:6)?

Reference: Note 1, the *Trinity*, page 17.

b. What phrases describe the low position Jesus Christ chose to take (2:7-8)?

Reference: Note 2, *purpose of Christ's cross*, page 18.

c. What was the result of Jesus' humility (2:9-11)?

Read Philippians 2:12-30.

4. As we seek to imitate the attitude of Christ in our own lives, what does God promise (2:13; also 1:6)?

5. What is the result of an attitude of consideration for others (2:14-16a)?

6. What phrases describe the humility of Epaphroditus and Timothy. List as many as you can find (2:17-30).

Note: In speaking of being "poured out like a drink offering," Paul refers to the possibility of an imminent death sentence for preaching the gospel (cf. II Timothy 4:6; II Peter 1:14). See also note 3, *drink offering*, page 18.

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Joy and Humility

We all need healthy relationships in order to experience joy in life. Yet because of the complexities of human nature, we often find healthy relationships hard to sustain. Paul was speaking to the issue of group and interpersonal relationships as he addressed the church of Philippi on the subject of humility. He endeavored to convince the Philippians that consistent humility, or consideration, in relationships was the only way for them to know unity and joy. Paul used the example of Christ to show that this consideration could be costly but would be well worth the rewards.

Many people have misconceptions about what the word *humility* really means. They see it as assuming a doormat position, never confronting,

always pleasing. But was this the position of Jesus Christ, the One who came to show us how to live life to the fullest? Was His concept of Himself strong or weak? Did He suffer in the world because He was confused or because He was accomplishing a mission by willful choice? Self-concept--our view of ourselves and our mission in life--is strongly linked to our ability to be considerate of others. In the example of Christ, we are able to find answers to questions of self-worth and humility.

Joy is linked to relationships, and relationships are forged by the practice of humility. Let's look more closely at this very important biblical truth.

1. How would you define *humility*? Do you view humility as a weakness or a strength?

2. What characteristics or results of godly humility are found in the following?

I Peter 5:5-6

James 3:13,17 (*humility* is sometimes translated *gentleness*)

Colossians 3:12-14

3. What rewards follow a Christ-like humility?

Proverbs 11:2

Proverbs 15:33

Proverbs 22:4

4. What evil results of arrogance are described in the following?

Psalms 10:2

Proverbs 13:10a

Proverbs 16:18

5. Why is a healthy self-concept necessary in order to have a healthy form of humility toward others?

6. Jesus knew who He was and was fully aware of His purpose on earth. What do you think His perspective was as He underwent ridicule and disrespect from those around Him?

7. Review the "Liking Ourselves" chart on page 19.

a. What factors in your life have contributed to a positive self-image?

b. What factors in your life have contributed to a negative self-image?

c. What do you see as the main source of a truly healthy self-image?

8. Refer to "God's Perfect Love" on the bottom of page 19. If you really believe God loves you in this way, how does it affect your self-image and why?

9. How does a healthy self-image help one to practice Christ-like humility toward others? How is a healthy self-love conducive to serving others unselfishly?

Summary

10. What about humility has stood out to you from this lesson?

11. a. Describe the kind of humility you want to characterize your life?

- b. How will this humility affect your relationships with others?

12. What keys to joy have you seen in Philippians 2?

LESSON 2 NOTES

1 *The Trinity*. While "Trinity" as a word is not in the Bible, Christian doctrine historically has used this term to describe God as He has revealed Himself. The Bible explains that God is one God in three equal persons: Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Certain passages in the Old Testament hint of a plurality in God (Genesis 1:26-27, 3:22, 11:7; Isaiah 6:8). The Old Testament also speaks of someone coming from God who is God (i.e.

Christ, Isaiah 7:14, 9:6). The New Testament clearly portrays Jesus Christ as God (John 1:1; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:8) and the Holy Spirit as God (Luke 1:35; Acts 5:3-4; Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14). All three persons of the Trinity share the divine characteristics of holiness, power, goodness, omniscience, omnipotence, etc. While they all may be involved in an activity such as teaching, for instance, each is associated with certain specific works. The Father is associated with the work of creating, the Son with the work of redeeming, and the Holy Spirit with the work of sanctifying believers. In many New Testament passages, mention of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit occurs in the same sentence (Jude 20-21; Ephesians 4:4-6, I John 4:2; I Peter 1:2; Titus 3:4-6; II Thessalonians 2:13; Galatians 4:4-6; Romans 5:5-6; John 15:26).

2 *Purpose of Christ's death on the cross.* The blood sacrifices in the Old Testament represent death as punishment for sin (Genesis 2:16,17; Romans 6:23; Leviticus 17:11,14; Hebrews 9:22). These sacrifices establish the principle that shedding of blood is necessary for forgiveness of sins. The Old Testament sacrifices also point to the blood of Christ shed on the cross as He became "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). His death on the cross for the sins of those who would believe in Him paid the penalty for sin. Christ's death on the cross made it possible for the one who trusts in Christ to receive the forgiveness of God (Ephesians 1:7), become a child of God (John 1:12), and experience the holiness and victory of God in his life. Christ's voluntary death on the cross was the supreme example of His love for us as individuals.

3 *Drink offering.* In Old Testament times, one might pour a *drink offering* on the ground by his main offering to God (Numbers 15:1-10). In Philippians 2:17, Paul refers to his death as a drink offering to accompany the sacrificial giving of the Philippians.

LIKING OURSELVES*

False Foundations

1. We look to the world--a foundation that will crumble.
2. We look to what we have and do.
 - a. Possessions
"What do I have?"
 - b. Performance
"How well do I do?"
 - c. Position
"How important am I?"
 - d. Appearance
"How do I look?"
3. We look to people--limited love.
4. We try to prove we're special. We try to earn a sense of worth.
5. We try to change ourselves. Yet, we change ourselves on a deep level.

These foundations cannot satisfy because:
They are based on externals,
are superficial.

They don't last.
We always want more.
We have to keep striving.
They cause separation by
comparison and competition

True Foundations

1. We look to the Word of God--a permanent and stable foundation.
2. We look to what we are "in Christ."

forgiven	Satan defeated
accepted	access to God
eternal life	have an inheritance
child of God	completeness
new creation	have a different
identified	value system
indwelt by the Holy Spirit	
3. We look to God--perfect love.
4. We already are special. We are created with great worth.
5. We let God change us. With Christ in cannot us (the power of the Holy Spirit), we are able to see deep and lasting change.

These foundations do satisfy because:
They are based on God's Word and
His ability to meet our deepest
human needs.

They are eternal.
We already have everything in Christ.
We can relax.
They cause unity, love, understanding
and acceptance.

*Alice Movius Painter, *The Challenge of Being a Woman*, page 16.

God's Perfect Love I Corinthians 13:4-7 (Living Bible)

Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy.

It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him.

LESSON 3

WARNING AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Philippians 3

Judaizers threatened to divide the church at Philippi. A Judaizer was a Jewish Christian leader who insisted that faith in Christ was not sufficient to make the Gentile believers right with God. They argued that the observance of Jewish laws and rituals was also necessary for salvation, beginning with circumcision.¹

In Philippians 3, Paul forcefully reprimanded the Judaizers and their teachings. He explained that prior to meeting Christ, he excelled as a Pharisee² who faultlessly kept the Jewish law. However, his zealous legalism and religious achievements had only been obstacles to a personal relationship with God as they blinded him to God's free *gift* of salvation in Jesus Christ.

After his conversion³ experience, Paul completely denied any claims to self-righteousness and trusted solely in the work of Christ on the cross⁴ to make him right before God. His greatest treasure became knowing Christ personally, his greatest desire to know Him better, and his greatest goal to reach his potential for God's glory. Comparing his Christian experience to a race, Paul declared the one motivation of his life: to finish the race and receive the prize awaiting him in heaven for remaining faithful.

Read Philippians 3:1-11.

1. a. Where did Paul say rejoicing should begin (3:1)?

b. How does rejoicing in the Lord differ from other motivations for joy?

2. How did Paul describe the men he criticized in Philippians 3:2,18-19?

Reference: Note 1, *circumcision*, and note 5, *Paul's words against Judaizers*, page 28. Also note 2, *Purpose of Christ's cross*, page 18.

3. Who did Paul say were the truly circumcised (3:3)? Compare Romans 2:28-29.

Reference: Note 7, *The Spirit of God*, and note 8, *flesh*, page 29.

4. a. What did Paul mean when he said he had been *faultless* in his *legalistic righteousness* (3:6)? A dictionary definition of legalism may help.

b. How can religious legalism be an obstacle to knowing Christ personally?

5. Contrast Paul the Pharisee (3:4-6) with Paul the believer in Christ (3:7-9). How did his values change?

Reference: Note 2, *Pharisee* and note 3, *Paul's conversion*, page 28.

6. What did Paul declare to be the only source of righteousness before God (3:9)?

7. What new desires motivated Paul's life (3:10)?

Reference: Note 6, *Paul's desires*, page 29.

Read Philippians 3:12-21.

8. Paul compared his Christian experience to a race. What does this word picture suggest about the Christian life?

Note: Although the word *race* is not used in Philippians 3, the imagery of a goal and prize ahead alludes to the Greek races. Paul used athletic imagery often (I Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 4:7-8).

9. a. What perspective did Paul model and encourage others to practice in "running the race" of the Christian life (3:12-14)?

b. How did Paul describe such a viewpoint (3:15)?

10. Where did Paul see his citizenship and future hope (3:20-21)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Indestructible Joy

Many have been deceived, as Paul had been, into believing that righteousness before God requires striving to "be good" or to perfectly follow a set of religious rules and regulations. Yet the Bible clearly states that righteousness before God is His *gift* to us, received by putting faith in His word. This gift is freely given to those who personally trust in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross.⁴ When Paul discovered this truth, he could not stop rejoicing about it, even in the face of imprisonment and possible execution.

We all long for a joy that is indestructible--that follows us through any and every challenge of life. Let's look more closely at reasons why the believer in Christ can "rejoice in the Lord *always*."

1. Paul found joy in the Lord in spite of his *past*. Even though he had assisted in the execution of Christians before he met Christ, Paul was able to put the past behind him. When we trust Christ to make us right with God, what can we know?

Colossians 1:13-14

Colossians 2:13-14

Romans 3:23-26

Ephesians 2:8-9

2. God's grace has been described in an acrostic:

God's
Riches
At
Christ's
Expense

Because of God's grace, Paul was able to put his own imperfection aside and pursue God's purposes for his life. What does Paul encourage us to do in the following verses?

Romans 5:1-5

Colossians 2:6-7

Philippians 3:13-14

3. Paul found joy in the Lord with regard to his *present* circumstances. What did he know about the present?

Romans 8:28

Romans 8:31, 38-39

II Corinthians 12:9-10

4. Paul found joy in the Lord with regard to the *future*. What did Paul know about the future?

Hebrews 11:13-16

Note: *All these people* refers to men of faith gone before us.

John 14:1-3 (Jesus Christ speaking)

5. On what did Paul choose to focus that allowed him to continually experience an indestructible joy and hope?

Colossians 3:1-4

Hebrews 12:2a

Summary

6. a. Are there past actions or attitudes toward God or others that are painful for you to remember?

b. What biblical truths help you to put these behind you so that you can "press on" in life?

7. a. Are there present circumstances or fears of the future that threaten your joy?

b. What verses or truths from this lesson encourage you?

8. a. What is God's way of making you right with Him?*

b. What indestructible joy and hope does this knowledge give you and why?

*If you have never personally put faith in Jesus Christ to make you right with God and would like to do that now, the following is a suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for the sins of my life. I now put my trust in you, not my own efforts, to make me right with God. I invite you to come into my life and make me the person you created me to be. Amen.

LESSON 3 NOTES

1 *Circumcision* was the cutting off of the foreskin, a practice that originated in various western Semitic cultures as a religious act. The Hebrew rite was instituted by God as a sign of the covenant between Him and Abraham. God commanded Abraham and all his household to be circumcised. The rite was required of every male Jew (descendant of Abraham) and any foreigner joining themselves to the Hebrew nation. This act assured the recipient of admittance to the fellowship of the covenant people and of a share in the promises of God to Israel.

In the New Testament, Judaizing Christians argued that Gentiles must be circumcised, over and against Paul's teaching of faith in Jesus for salvation. The Apostolic Council took up the problem and decided against the doctrine of the Judaizer (Acts 15).

2 *Pharisee*. Paul had been a member of this group as his father before him (Philippians 3:5; Acts 23:6). The name *Pharisee* means "separated ones." This was a legalistic and separatist group who strictly, but often hypocritically, kept the law of Moses and the unwritten "tradition of the elders." They numbered about 6,000 in Palestine, about one percent of the population. Pharisees, although nowhere appointed by God, were respected by people as the "unofficial religious leaders." They were teachers in the synagogues, religious examples in the eyes of the people and self-appointed guardians of the Old Testament law and its proper observance. Their "interpretation" of the laws, handed down as traditions for generations, was regarded by them to be as authoritative as the Scripture itself.

3 *Paul's conversion* is recorded in Acts 9:1-30. There is no explanation for this brilliant and zealous Pharisee's preaching and death for the gospel of Christ apart from this personal encounter with the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

4 Reference: Note 2, *Purpose of Christ's cross*, page 18.

5 *Paul's words against Judaizers*. At the time Paul was writing, Jews often referred to Gentiles as *dogs*, a term of great abuse. Paul turns this terminology back on the Judaizer to say, "No, you who insist on the rite of circumcision for salvation are the real *dogs*."

In Philippians 3:2-3, Paul made a play on the word *circumcision*, a word symbolic of following Jewish law in order to be acceptable to God. Paul suggested that true circumcision is in the heart of those who put faith (or *glory*) in Christ for salvation. The *false circumcision* are those who merely *mutilate* the flesh in the physical act of circumcision.

In Philippians 3:3-4, Paul also made a play on the word *flesh*. The *flesh* involved in physical circumcision became symbolic of all the wrong things in which one might put confidence for righteousness before God. Paul and Margaret Fromer, *A Woman's Workshop on Philippians* (The Zondervan Corporation Lamplighter Book, Grand Rapids, Michigan), page 51.

Paul's words show his zeal for protecting the vulnerable new believers in Philippi. Their simple faith in Christ was threatened by the false teachings of the legalistic Judaizers.

6 *Paul's desires* (Philippians 3:10-11). Paul wanted to know Christ intimately through experiencing the resurrection power of Christ in his life and ministry. He also wanted to suffer with and for Jesus and even to die for the gospel as Jesus did.

The word *somehow* (3:11 *NIVSB*) is not an indication of doubt or uncertainty about his eternal destiny, rather an expression of Paul's feelings of passion and humility with regard to his eternal life with Christ. His certainty of being resurrected to be with Christ is evident in Philippians 1:21,23 and 3:20-21, as well as throughout his other New Testament writings.

7 *The Spirit of God* (Philippians 3:3). God has made Himself known in the Bible as a Trinity, three divine persons with the same essence as God. The Holy Spirit, known as the Third Person of the Trinity, indwells every individual who personally receives Christ (John 1:12, John 14:16,17).

When we ask God (Luke 11:13) to "fill" us with His Spirit (Ephesians 5:18b), He responds by supernaturally instructing and empowering us to live the Christian life (Ephesians 3:16-20; Ezekiel 36:26-27). Sometimes the Bible refers to this as "Christ in us," as in Colossians 1:27b.

8 *The flesh* (Philippians 3:3-4). This word is often used by Paul to speak of our sinful nature. In this passage, however, he uses the word *flesh* to refer to human weakness in regard to salvation; i.e., we cannot save ourselves by our frail human efforts.

LESSON 4

EXHORTATION AND APPRECIATION

Philippians 4

In the last chapter of Philippians, Paul discussed many ingredients of a joyful life. He finished this wonderful letter with instructions to the Philippian church on contentment, openness with a loving God, giving to the needs of others and positive thinking. Paul had discovered the keys to experiencing peace in every situation, and he wanted the beloved Philippians to have them, too. We will be observing the important principles Paul shared as we complete our study on *joy*.

Read Philippians 4:1-9.

1. What words and phrases demonstrated Paul's feelings toward the Philippians (4:1)? What was his desire for them?

2. Paul gently addressed a disagreement between two prominent women in the church at Philippi as he urged fellow believers to help them reconcile their difference. Of what did Paul remind them (4:3c)? What may he have wanted to achieve by this emphasis?

3. As Paul began his final words to the Philippians, what important exhortation did he repeat (4:4)?

4. What characteristic did Paul encourage the Philippians to cultivate (4:5)? How would you define this quality?

5. a. How did Paul instruct the believers at Philippi to deal with anxiety (4:6)?

b. What did Paul guarantee would result from choosing to deal with anxiety in this way (4:7)?

6. a. What were Paul's last instructions to the Philippians?

Philippians 4:8

Philippians 4:9

b. What results did Paul guarantee (4:9b)?

Read Philippians 4:10-23.

7. The Philippians sent a gift of money to Paul in prison. For what was he most thankful (4:10)?

Note: Apparently, the Philippians were not able to reach Paul with their gifts until he reached Rome. This was probably because they had no messenger or because of Paul's uncertain itinerary.

8. a. While Paul genuinely appreciated the generosity of the Philippians, what did he state (4:11-12)?

b. Where had Paul learned to put his confidence (4:13, also 4:19)?

9. a. What was most important to Paul with regard to the generosity of the Philippians (4:17)? Compare the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:19-21.

b. What did Paul know would result from their generosity (4:19)?

BUILDING ON THE BASICS

Joy and Peace

Unquestionably, the joy in Paul's life was the result of choices that gave him peace and contentment. He had learned to deal with financial lacks, frustrating problems, physical discomfort and emotional torment in such a way as to sustain peace within. From a prison cell with a possible death sentence before him, Paul's peace of mind allowed him to focus on building up the Philippian believers miles away.

In the face of pain, human nature often moves toward consuming self-centeredness and counterproductive worry. But God desires that we experience peace and joy in every circumstance of life. As we conclude our study, we will observe some biblical principles that promise a necessary ingredient of joy: peace.

1. What are the most prevalent causes for anxiety that you or those you know experience?

2. What effect does anxiety have on us:

physically?

emotionally?

in relationships?

in our productivity?

3. As you scan Philippians 4, list phrases or principles that stand out to you as positive ways to deal with anxiety.

4. In his instruction to the Philippians, Paul gave insight into the choices that brought him peace in the midst of the unnerving situation he was enduring. The following are some of the decisions Paul encouraged. Why do these choices bring peace (or the opposite cause turmoil)?

rejoicing in the Lord (4:4) and a *thankful heart* (4:6):

gentleness (consideration) in the treatment of others (4:5):

open and honest *prayer* (4:6):

5. a. What happens to the person who does not follow the instructions of Philippians 4:8?

b. Why does *dwelling on positive things* promote peace in our lives?

6. How can emulating the good qualities of other believers, i.e. having *positive role models* (4:9), help us in dealing with life's pressures?

7. a. How does *giving* to the needs of others (4:10,14-16) promote peace in our lives even in times of personal difficulty?

b. What do the following verses suggest?

Proverbs 11:25

Luke 6:38

8. a. It is easy to fall into the trap of feeling we need certain material things in order to be happy. Why does this rob us of peace?

b. What must we know in order to experience the *contentment* which Paul had attained (Philippians 4:19)?

Luke 12:15b

I Timothy 6:6-8

Matthew 6:33

9. According to the following verses, where is the Christian's ultimate source of "peace that passes understanding?"

Galatians 5:22-23

John 14:27 (Jesus speaking)

Isaiah 26:3-4

Summary

10. a. How does a lack of peace affect the joy in your life?

b. Is there an area of your life where you are currently not very peaceful? Which principles from this lesson would be most helpful for you to practice in order to find peace in this area of your life?

11. a. As you reflect upon your study of *Joy from the Book of Philippians*, what are the sources of joy that stand out to you?

b. What is your greatest desire for your own life as you complete this study? Make it your prayer.

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JOY

FROM THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

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