

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Again I Say Rejoice, In Control, Whom Shall I Fear, Jesus Son Of God, Jesus at the Center

WELCOME

When was the last time you smiled? How about the last time you had a really good laugh? What made you smile or who gave you a good laugh?

WORD

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-6, 12-14, 18-20

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus...¹² Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, ¹³ so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, ¹⁴ and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear... ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Is the desire to be happy a good one? Many Christians may feel that it is self-indulgent to do so. But did you know that GOD wants our lives to be filled with joy? He not only wants us to be happy, but He also enables us to be happy. He even commands us to be happy! If we are to be honest, a happy life is something we all desire. **Blaise Pascal** rightfully said that, **“All men seek happiness. This is without exception. This is the motive of every action, of every man, even those who hang themselves.”** Even those who are depressed, troubled, and those who have dark thoughts of ending their lives yearn for happiness. But in a changing world with so many challenges and discouragements, happiness is always elusive for all of us. Yet God **commands us** to be filled with **joy**. **John 15:11** shows the heart of Jesus – He wants us to have joy in Him. In fact, the Bible talks about joy, happiness, rejoicing, and the like **2,700 times!**

In the Bible, we see passages that equate “joy” and “happiness”, and no distinction is made between the two. The question though is, what is our source of happiness or joy? How do we find true and lasting joy? Sometimes, we think that a change in OUR SITUATION is what it takes to make us happy — if we can be richer, or be more recognized, or if we could have the perfect family, or fame and fortune — and then we realize everything seems temporal and fleeting.

A.W. Tozer said that Christians owe it to the world to be supernaturally happy. The Book of Philippians will help us discover the secret of true joy and happiness – **A CHRIST-CENTERED LIFE**. We will see this evident in the life of the Apostle Paul, reflected in what he wrote in probably the last epistle before he was martyred. The first twenty verses of

chapter one teaches us how to be happy in the midst of unfavorable circumstances and even disappointing people. To be truly joyful, we must have these three conditions according to the testimony and teaching of the apostle Paul:

1. CHRIST AS LORD

Observing the first few verses of chapter 1 already points us to the center of Paul’s objective in writing to the Philippians: he always did things for the glory of Jesus Christ. He used the word “bondservant” to connote the nature of his commitment to Him – he was surrendered to Christ, and so whatever happened to him in his missionary journeys, he knew that he was living for the sole purpose of glorifying Jesus in good *and* bad times. You see, Christianity is not a denial of problems. We do not deny that sometimes, bad things happen, and it dampens our spirit or brings down our energy. Jesus Christ Himself in **John 16:33** says that in this world, we will have troubles, but in the Christian life, **“JOY is central, sadness is peripheral”** (GK Chesterton).

Christ has won the victory, and if we are focused on Him, every challenge becomes a moment for us to call upon Him, worship and trust Him, and ultimately, glorify Him!

Philippians 1:6, a familiar verse to many, also shows us that Paul’s confidence is in the continuing work of GOD through Jesus Christ. He remembers the Philippian church when they first received the gospel, and how they have supported him all these years in his missionary journeys. But in all of these, who gets the glory? Jesus Christ alone!

WORD (cont'd)

2. CONCERN FOR OTHERS

In prison, Paul was still thinking of others. Paul understood that circumstances can be instruments so we can be better in our walk with Him, and what better way to measure this than to constantly be praying for, thinking of, and ministering to people! When depressing thoughts could have occupied him in his impending prosecution, or his unjust arrest, Paul chose to think of others and showed genuine concern for them. Notice how Paul prayed for the Philippian church (**Phil. 1:8-11**). He understood that love for others springs from loving God with your whole devotion, and he reminded the Philippian church of this truth. When you go through difficult times, it is a great exercise to process your situation by asking **1) how this is going to glorify God**, and **2) how can you be a light to others who are going through the same difficulties**. True concern for others is a testament of unselfishness and Christ-centeredness!

3. CIRCUMSTANCES AS OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE GOSPEL

From **Philippians 1:12-20**, Paul talked in great detail about how his unfavorable circumstances – instead of creating room for “pity-party” --- became the catapult for gospel-sharing. He found joy in his imprisonment because he had a

perspective of faith– that viewed his dire situation through God’s eyes.

Paul makes mention of the praetorian guards –the elite group of Roman soldiers guarding him (**v.13**). Generally called the “kingmakers” in history, these highly trained military men were Paul’s audience for the gospel story! More importantly, Paul also took note of the believers who became even more courageous to share their faith because of Paul’s imprisonment (**v.14**). The result? The good news about the saving work of Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, began to spread throughout the only world power back then, the Roman empire. In **Romans 8:28-29**, Paul gives this perspective: God works all things together (*the good, the bad, the dangerous, or even the disappointing*) for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose! **To Paul, as long as Christ is proclaimed, he will rejoice, even if there are ill-mannered people preaching in his absence!** We see in this narrative that Paul’s joy is truly made complete in Jesus Christ. His presence in his life was enough to keep the candle in Paul’s heart burning. David, in **Psalm 16:11**, notes that in God’s presence, one can find “**fullness of joy**”. There is only one secret to a life of complete, unwavering joy: **if we live Christ-centered lives, we live truly happy lives no matter what!**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

- 1. Self-Check.** What usually kills your joy? Share about how you faced difficult circumstances in the past when you were not “surrendered to Christ” yet and compare it to now, that you are a follower of Christ.
- 2. Setting It Right.** Circumstances can worry us and make us forget that God is in full control. Share about the times that you gave in to life’s biggest worries and commit to trust God and be centered in His ways, His will, and His word from now on. Pray for one another on this matter.
- 3. Living It Out.** What event in your life can be used as a “catapult” for gospel sharing? Think about it and practice what Paul did, let the light of Jesus shine in the dark places of your journey, touching the lives of people around you.

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for others who may be in the same difficult situation you are in or have gone through in your life. Reach out to them with God’s promises in the Bible and let them know you are praying for them. Take the opportunity to share the gospel to them through your testimony of how God used your difficult circumstances to accomplish His great and good purpose in your life.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants and a God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends