

Rejoicing in the Lord

Lesson Scope: [Philippians 4](#)

References in brackets relate to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus: Philippians 3 discusses the resurrection. In Philippians 4, the apostle Paul moves on from this thought to discuss the joy the Christian experiences as a result of the “lively hope” (1 Peter 1:3) he possesses. For Paul to write about joy from the confines of a Roman prison cell is evidence that true joy can be experienced in difficult situations. Many people are like Solomon, who found life to be empty of lasting joy, and they discover that a soft life with an abundance of pleasures is vanity and leaves them empty. As Christians, we give the world an example of true joy and satisfaction. True joy does not depend upon pleasant circumstances. By faith the believer enjoys a relationship with the Lord Jesus that enables him to rejoice in all of life.

The joy of the Lord is a powerful motivator in the Christian life. It is true that the Christian needs to practice self-denial and cross bearing. Many of the rewards for godly living are eternal. However, we do not want to have the mentality that the Christian life is a hard life and develop a view of life that is pessimistic and negative. It is still true today that the joy of the LORD is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). On the other hand, the joy of the Lord is not an attitude that acts as if everything is simply great. Rather, it is a product of a faith that sees God at work in the changing scenes of life.

Lesson Aim: To present ingredients of abiding joy.

Theme Verse: [Philippians 4:4](#). Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say, Rejoice.

Lesson Text

Joy in the Heart

[Philippians 4:1-8](#) ^(KJV) Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, *my* dearly beloved. ² I

beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and *with* other my fellow labourers, whose names *are* in the book of life. ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again, I say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord *is* at hand. ⁶ Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

Joy in the Life

Philippians 4:9-23 ^(KJV) Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. ¹⁰ But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. ¹¹ Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. ¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me. ¹⁴ Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. ¹⁵ Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. ¹⁶ For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. ¹⁷ Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. ¹⁸ But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. ¹⁹ But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now unto God and our Father *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen. ²¹ Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. ²² All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. ²³ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

Questions for Study:

Joy in the Heart

1. What was Paul's joy founded on?
2. How can we achieve unity without compromising the truth (4:2)?
3. What are some practical areas where others should be able to see "moderation" in our lives?
4. What are some practical helps for experiencing the thought life taught in verse 8?

Joy in the Life

5. What attitudes are essential so that giving can produce joy in a group (4:10)?
6. How should a content person deal with abundance (4:12)?
7. Does the strength Christ gives need to be developed, or is it a gift (4:13)?
8. What are some threats to experiencing a life of joy?

Analysing the Passage:

Paul calls the Philippian church his joy and crown. Paul did not have much earthly wealth. Material assets, family life, and a secure lifestyle had all been sacrificed for the Lord. Instead, his life was bound up in the ongoing success of the church.

Euodias and Syntyche were two women in the church who were allowing differences to hinder their relationship. Paul entreats them to "be of the same mind in the Lord." The "true yokefellow" in verse 3 seems to be an unnamed church leader at Philippi. The knowledge of the Lord's soon return should produce moderation (appropriate or mild behaviour) in our lives (4:5). Verses 6-8 give direction for a healthy thought life. We live in a world of unrest and turmoil, but these truths are unchanging. Verse 9 adds the assurance that God will be with us as we seek to live out these teachings.

Principles and Applications

Joy in the Heart

1. Abiding joy springs from an enduring relationship with the Lord (4:1). Our relationship with the Lord is what feeds our inner man. While the Christian does experience being "cast down" (2 Corinthians 4:9) at times, the joy of the Lord is a steadying factor that does not desert us in difficult

experiences. The joy of the Lord is produced not by seeking an emotional high but by standing fast in the Lord.

2. Labouring together in unity produces abiding joy (4:2-3). Sometimes it is the little irritations that make it difficult to work together in unity. Whatever the issues may be that divide us, we should not be satisfied to allow such a situation to remain. When we labour together with others in the same cause, it helps us to view our brethren as fellow workers and can put our differences in proper perspective.

3. Prayer and thanksgiving are ingredients for abiding joy (4:6). Rather than fretting and worrying about things we cannot control; we need to cultivate the habit of prayer. Thanking God for what He has done helps to produce praise and faith in our lives. This helps to keep our joy fresh as we surrender the cares of life to God and remember His care for us.

4. As the peace of God keeps our hearts and minds, we experience abiding joy (4:7). The peace of God is a necessity for abiding joy. We can make it difficult for the peace of God to rule if we are not fully satisfied with how God directs our life, or if we are unwilling to entrust difficult situations to Him. The peace of God is not a product of positive thinking; it is a product of having Christ at work in our life.

5. A controlled thought life enables one to experience abiding joy (4:8). While abiding joy comes from God, we do have a part in how much it abides in our hearts. God's part is to give us the Spirit to enable us. Our part is to choose to dwell on the upright things of God. Human nature tends to dwell on the negative. If we want to experience abiding joy, we must allow God to help us rise above our natural tendencies.

Joy in the Life

6. Contentment with one's lot in life produces abiding joy (4:1 1-12). Life does not always seem equal. Some people seem to have more than the normal share of sorrows and reverses. We cannot experience abiding joy if we are unable to accept our lot in life. Like Paul, we all find that this contentment is something that needs to be learned. If we can remember that life brings times of abundance and of need, it will help us not to focus so much on the present situations but instead on God who controls life's experiences.

7. Recognizing our dependence on Christ strengthens us and produces abiding joy (4:13). To adjust to the varying circumstances of life with an unwavering acceptance and peace can look unrealistic. It is unrealistic

without Christ in our life. This peace and joy are not a result of being stoical or unemotional. They are a result of a surrendered will. Only as we daily surrender our will to God's will do we find Christ giving us the strength for each day.

8. Learning both to give and to receive fills one with joy (4:14-18). To give to others and share in the blessing they receive is a joyful experience; so is receiving from others. Giving and receiving work together. If we want to be only a giver or only a receiver, we will miss out on the fullness of joy that is experienced by being willing to give and to receive.

9. Knowing that God is able to supply every need is key to possessing abiding joy (4:19). It is a comforting thought that God not only knows our needs, but He is also able to meet them. His resources are available to us, not according to our needs alone, but according to His abundant riches.

Important Teachings

1. Abiding joy springs from an enduring relationship with the Lord (4:1).
2. Labouring together in unity produces abiding joy (4:2-3).
3. Prayer and thanksgiving are ingredients for abiding joy (4:6).
4. As the peace of God keeps our hearts and minds, we experience abiding joy (4:7).
5. A controlled thought life enables one to experience abiding joy (4:8).
6. Contentment with one's lot in life produces abiding joy (4:11-12).
7. Recognizing our dependence on Christ strengthens us and produces abiding joy (4:13).
8. Learning both to give and to receive fills one with joy (4:14-18).
9. Knowing that God is able to supply every need is key to possessing abiding joy (4:19).
10. Abiding joy is constant regardless of circumstances (4:4).

Answers to Questions

1. What was Paul's joy founded on?

In one sense it was founded on the faithfulness of the believers at Philippi. To a greater degree it was founded on the faithfulness of God and the ongoing success of Christ's kingdom. It was a product of Christ's strengthening his heart for the experiences of life.

2. How can we achieve unity without compromising the truth (4:2)?

Our unity needs to be “in the Lord.” If our brother is in harmony with God’s people and the church, we should be able to work together in unity even if we do not see everything alike. We may need others to help us discern in what areas we should not compromise and in what areas unity can be achieved in spite of differences.

3. What are some practical areas where others should be able to see “moderation” in our lives?

We use moderation in relating to those who differ with us. It affects how we handle joys and sorrows of life. Moderation is related to forbearance. A patient, forbearing attitude should characterize the Christian’s approach to life.

4. What are some practical helps for experiencing the thought life taught in verse 8?

Our thought life is where many of life’s battles are won or lost. We cannot win by only trying to resist wrong thoughts; instead, we push them out with good thoughts. What we choose to focus on is what we think about. We can fill our minds with good things through worship, good fellowship, and a good work environment.

5. What attitudes are essential so that giving can produce joy in a group (4:10)?

We need to see giving as a privilege. The hardships of life that one may face could be sent for the good of everyone and not just for his own good. We also need to be humble enough to receive help. Refusing help, thinking it should go to someone more needy, can be a form of pride and an expression of self-sufficiency.

6. How should a content person deal with abundance (4:12)?

In times of abundance, we demonstrate contentment when we do not live to the full extent of our means. We exercise contentment when we give up opportunities for financial wealth so we can be more available to our families and the church.

7. Does the strength Christ gives need to be developed, or is it a gift (4:13)?

It is a gift. The Lord told Paul, “My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). We can never develop sufficient strength of ourselves. The strength comes from God, but we need to learn to rely on God’s strength. We may feel sometimes as though the strength is not

there, but maybe we need to learn how to access it. It is so easy to hinder God's strength by relying too much on ourselves.

8. What are some threats to experiencing a life of joy?

Contrary to human thinking, too much ease works against experiencing the joy of the Lord. Faith and joy grow together. In a time of so much abundance, there is danger that we will be weak in faith and joy. We can subconsciously substitute joy with a cheap happiness that is founded on the circumstances of life. We can believe that the Christian life spares us the reaping for sin and therefore is a good life without suffering. Such thinking will not prepare us to find joy in suffering.

Summarizing the Lesson:

To many people, joy is a passing emotion that is connected to certain experiences of life. Jesus held out the promise of a continuing joy when He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

Research Guide:

1. In the book "The True Christian" read Chapter 2, titled "Will Find Real Happiness."
2. In Nave's Topical Bible, read various Scriptures under the topic of "Joy."