

8. If you start on the Gospel path to joy, what is God's promise to you from verse 6?

9. Additional thoughts, questions and prayer.

Philippians Study 1

Life of Joy

We live in a sad world- a world of despair, depression, lack of fulfillment, and dissatisfaction. The world defines happiness as an attitude of satisfaction and delight based upon present circumstances. It relates happiness to happenings and happenstance. Happiness viewed this way, is an experience: it can be bought, it is always temporary and worst of all it can be robbed. Happiness viewed this way means that when we don't have it we blame others or other things; it is their fault.

Biblical joy however, consists of the deep and abiding confidence that all is well **regardless of circumstance** and difficulty. It is something very different from worldly happiness. Biblical joy is always related to God and belongs only to those in Christ. It is the **permanent possession** of every believer-not a whimsical delight that comes and goes as chance offers it opportunity.

A good definition of joy is this: it is the flag that flies on the castle of the heart when the King is in residence. Only Christians can know true and lasting joy.

A Christian's joy is a gift from God to those who believe the gospel, being produced in them by the Holy Spirit as they receive and obey the Word. It continues through trials with a hope set on future glory.

1. Are you full of joy? Make a list of the things you regularly blame that you feel take your joy.

2. Read Philippians 1:1-10. What is Paul's tone and attitude towards the church in Philippi?

3. Paul gives three main practices that assist him in his attitude towards Joy. What are they from the following verses:

Verse 3:

Verse 4:

Verse 5:

4. In verse 3, Paul says he is 'thankful' as he 'remembers' the Philippians. It is unlikely that Paul did not face the same relational issues that we all do (petty squabbles, selfishness and criticism). If we are bitter, it is likely that we fill our minds with all the problems and ways we have been hurt in the past. What is the solution for this? (Consider: Colossians 3:13, Matthew 18:21-22, James 5:16, Matthew 6:12-15)

5. In verse 4, Paul says he prays for the Philippians, which helps his joy. What is his prayer for them in verse 9? Why is this such an important prayer? How does prayer help us not be bitter?

5. Paul is often considered one of the best evangelists that there has ever been, but the reality is he wasn't alone. What should 'partnership in the gospel' look like for a church? As a small group what are you doing as a 'partnership in the gospel'? If the answer is nothing, what could you be doing (make a list, or come up with a couple of ideas)? Do you think this would help you overcome bitterness?

6. Where does joy come from? (Consider: Verse 7, Psalm 4:7-8, Psalm 16:11, Romans 14:17, Galatians 5:22).

7. An inward-focussed life- always moaning about how other people treat us, about how our circumstances aren't fair, only ever leads to bitterness; getting your own way will only perpetuate that cycle. What should we be focused on instead? (look at verse 10 and 11)