

## Joy Filled Life Part 1 Philippians 1:1-11

### Community Group Questions

1. Who brings joy to your life when you think about them?
2. Is there anyone that you have helped when they were suffering and it brought you joy to see the outcome?
3. Has anyone helped you when you were suffering and it brought joy to know you had that support?
4. Do you have a prayer partner? How is it going? If not what is keeping from signing up to get one?

Today we are starting a 9 week study through the NT book of Philippians and Commentator Warren Weirsbe states the promise of this letter penned by the Apostle Paul through the Holy Spirit... ***“if you master the truths taught in this letter you will live a life that is filled with joy”.***

What is Joy? – a feeling of great pleasure or happiness. Is joy possible in world that is wrought with sin? I believe the letter to the Philippians lets us know that joy is possible.

Start with Background: **Vrs 1** The traditional view was that Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Philippi during his imprisonment in AD 60-62

In 42 BC during the establishment of the Roman Empire Philippi became a Roman colony and many veterans of the Roman army settled there. A person that lived in Philippi was considered a Roman citizen and with Roman citizenship came a sense of pride. Philippi was the first town in Macedonia where Paul established a church during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:12-40)

Despite Paul's difficult situation He was writing to the church because he sent Epaphroditus to minister to him and he was thankful for that but then Epaphroditus became ill and he was sending him back to them and with him this letter to assure his fellow believers that he was ok and even better he was filled with joy.

**Vrs 2** This was a standard greeting of Paul reminding the recipients of their relationship with God...Grace, by God's grace we are saved and because of that grace we have peace with God.

Now in transition Paul in verse 3 starts to explain the first reason he has joy...it is **Christian Fellowship**...Joy can come from fellowship...Fellowship means "*to have in common*" the GOSPEL message brings us into fellowship with one another.

Now we see Paul in a situation in which his circumstance seems bleak but rather than focusing on himself and his own complaints, he focuses on his brothers and sisters in Christ and their needs and how their faith encourages him.

Paul has joy because he has his fellow Christians on his mind, in his heart and in his prayers. *Today we will learn how we can experience joy by having fellow Christians on our minds, in our hearts and in our prayers.*

Before we get into this passage you may say..."so wait...other people can bring me joy? Most of the people I know bring me pain, grief and problems". I would say two things to that...maybe you are around the wrong people or maybe you focus on the wrong things.

The first reason Paul has joy is because his fellow Christians were on his mind.

**On our minds vrs 3-6** Here we have an example of Paul feeling joy because of the fellowship he has with those that he had ministered to and now are ministering to him.

Imagine for a moment Paul sitting in a dark prison cell awaiting trial...He could be thinking...this is unfair, this stinks, woe is me, I am uncomfortable and I am afraid. Whether those types of thoughts were

shooting into his mind or not, what Paul was doing was thinking about the special bond in ministry he had with these other believers. In verses 3-4 we see that the very remembrance of them brings him joy.

What are some of the things he remembers? Acts 16 records some events...

- Paul and Silas preached to the women that were meeting in the place of prayer a wealthy women named Lydia became a Christian and started meeting for worship in her home.

- Paul and Silas cast a demon out of fortune telling slave girl and when the master found out he was mad because he could no longer make money off her fortune telling so he had them thrown in jail because they were charged with the threat of Roman customs. (side note fortune telling etc demonic)

- While Paul and Silas were in jail they were singing hymns and praying at midnight...(tell the account of earthquake etc)

Paul was thinking...great times of ministry.

In verse 5 when he states their “*partnership in the gospel*” many think this may be in regards to their financial support of Paul as he journeyed around to preach the gospel

Who should be on our mind? Two questions to ask yourself

Who are the people around you that are following the Lord that when you think about them it brings you joy? It can be someone that you helped in their faith, someone that has helped you in your faith or just simply someone that you can look to for an example of faith.

Who are the people that support and encourage you in ministry?

Paul was in a difficult circumstance but he decided to think about the fellowship or “what he had in common” with the believers in Philippi rather than wallow in his circumstance.

Think about this...does being negative or feeling sorry for yourself in bad circumstances make it better?

Then Paul turns his thoughts to what Jesus is doing in and through his fellow believers...vrs 6 *“He that began a good work in you will bring it to completion”*

Sometimes when our circumstances are difficult it is hard for us to see or understand what God is doing...even though He is working in and through us. In Paul’s case he is looking back and seeing what God did in Philippi and saying “well God started this work, I have confidence that He will finish it.

You may think “nothing is going right” and I think Paul would say “really?” I would suggest that when we are going through something difficult we have to think of the work that God has done, is doing and will do in our lives...when we do...it brings joy.

The second reason Paul has joy is he kept his fellow believers in his heart...**In our hearts vrs 7-8** Paul had a deep love for his fellow believers...so much so that he was actually in prison on their behalf awaiting trial. Because Philippi was a Roman colony Paul’s trial would affect the believers in Philippi. Paul was confirming his love for his fellow believers by standing strong in defense of the gospel and not wavering in his faith.

Imagine for a moment that Christianity became illegal and all that professed Jesus were thrown into prison, but all that denied Jesus were released...how would you feel if I was like...you have to stand strong but then when my time came I was like “wait Jesus who?”

I would suggest that would be a very unloving thing to do not only to Jesus but also to my fellow believers.

In verse 7 Paul reminds them that “they are partakers in his imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel” Basically what Paul is saying here is what he taught in 1 Cor 12 when he says if “one part of the body suffers the entire body suffers”

If you love someone you suffer when they suffer...and you rejoice when they rejoice. Jon Foreman of the band Switchfoot said it this way *“if it doesn’t break your heart it isn’t love”*

How do I have this type of love for other Christians? I think sometimes the Christians around us let us down, embarrass us or are not very loving toward us.

Verse 8 answers that...channel the love of Jesus...He is our example and His love should inspire us to love.

How do you know if you are loving fellow believers?

*-Do you have a concern for other believers?* In Philippians 2 we see that they sent Epaphroditus to minister to Paul while he was in jail because they knew he was suffering. What are you doing when you hear your fellow Christians are suffering?

*-Are you willing to forgive other believers that wronged you?* Maybe they are not suffering but you are suffering because they have wronged you. Reinhold Niebuhr said *“Forgiveness is the final form of love”* Christians that practice love will experience joy

We should have fellow Christians on our minds, in our hearts and finally we should have fellow Christians...**In our prayers...**Paul prays for them but notice the content of the prayer...it focuses around Christian maturity

\*Abound in love\*Knowledge and discernment\*Pure and blameless

Are you praying for your fellow Christians? I have an opportunity for you. Prayer partners...introduced in Feb 2014...some of you have a prayer partner

*We can experience joy by having fellow Christians on our minds, in our hearts and in our prayers.*