

GROWING IN JOY AND PEACE

BIBLE BASIS: Philippians 4:214

BIBLE TRUTH: God's joy and peace are rooted in following God's way.

MEMORY VERSE: 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 (Philippians 4:9).

LESSON AIM: That your student!) will reflect on a situation where God's peace was needed. TEACHER PREPARATION

MATERIALS NEEDED: Quarterly Commentary, Adult Quarterly, Adult resources—charts, worksheets, and other teaching tools, Bibles (several different versions)

OTHER MATERIALS NEEDED / TEACHER'S NOTES:

LESSON OVERVIEW

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

To explain Paul's teaching on the peace of God and how it is achieved.

BIBLE LEARNING

To learn in greater depth, that the Lord is the source of our joy and peace.

BIBLE APPLICATION

To discover different tangible ways how we can share with others that we are "glad to be a Christian!"

STUDENTS' RESPONSES

Students will compare qualities of Philippians 4:89 to their own attitudes and actions.

LESSON SCRIPTURE

PHILIPPIANS 4:214

2. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

3. And I entreat 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.

9. 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 strengtheneth me.

14. Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Another plea for unity is where our lesson ended last week (Philippians 3:16). Paul ended chapter 3 with a tear and a smile (verses 17-21). The tears were for those who refused the truth Paul had taught them; they decided to go their way, and do evil. As a result, Paul predicted that their end was destruction because they had made a god of their appetites, were proud of what they should have been ashamed of, and all they thought about was life on Earth (verse

19, LB, paraphrased). Do you know anyone like that?

TEACHING THE BIBLE LESSON

LIFE NEEDS FOR TODAY'S LESSON

AIM: That your students will rejoice in a disagreement resolved as they trust God to see them through.

INTRODUCTION

Rejoice, Christians, Rejoice!

What does "rejoice in the Lord" mean? It means to be aware that, for us as Christians, the Lord is the Source of our joy. This awareness means that we will not spend time, money, thought, or energy seeking joy in the wrong places, because we know that joy can only be found in the Lord.

It also means to give attention to developing a relationship with the Lord so that we will not cut off, or in any way hinder the flow of the joy that the Lord gives. We must be aware of the Source of our joy; and we must be careful to do those things that help us continually to experience joy.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: That your students will discover that the Lord is their strength in all situations.

I. REJOICE—A DISAGREEMENT WAS

RESOLVED

(Philippians 4:23)

To rejoice in the Lord not only means to be aware and be attentive, but also to be active in our expression of joy. A gospel song of unknown origin says, "If you got the old time religion, you ought to show some sign." This

does not necessarily mean jumping up and down in church, walking the benches, or running the aisles. It does mean every Christian ought to have some way of expressing his or her joy. You decide your expression according to your personality and the intensity of your joy. But everybody should have a way or ways of expressing their joy. And as long as a person's expression is not disruptive, disrespectful, or destructive, we should be tolerant of each other's expressions, following Paul's instructions: "Rejoice with those who rejoice" (Romans 12:15, NIV).

Stop Arguing (verses 23)

23. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I entreat 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.

Two women who were active in ministry in Philippi and who had been a great help to Paul were in the midst of a great disagreement. We don't know what Euodias and Syntyche were arguing about, but it had gotten back to Paul while he was in prison and he knew this had to be patched up. God sometimes blesses ministries in spite of our sinful ways, but arguments will certainly rob us of our joy. So Paul was giving the task to his "true partner" or "yokefellow." We're not sure who this person was, but it may have been Epaphroditis, who was going to deliver this letter to the Philippians.

QUESTION 1

The two names of the women arguing were _____ and _____ (verse 2).

(Answer) Eudoias and Syntyche

LIGHT ON THE WORD

The Source of Our Joy

Apparently, singling out these two women by name indicated such an ongoing lack of harmony on their part (they were "at variance" says one commentator; another, they had a "falling out"), that Paul felt the need for a public, written admonishment. Letters in the ancient world often were circulated among all fellowships within reach. Without any previous, surviving epistles on this matter, we can only surmise that Paul had addressed the matter before, and now felt the situation warranted public pressure. It was highly unusual for him to publicly criticize anyone (2 Timothy 4:10, 14:15), so clearly in his judgment the situation required an extreme measure. He took much greater pleasure in pointing out good examples of service and generosity, and was generous with his praise on several such occasions (2 Corinthians 1:11; 8:16; Romans 16:115; 2 Thessalonians 1:3).

II. REJOICE IN PRAISE AND PETITION (Philippians 4:47)

This section begins with one of the most wellknown verses in the New Testament. In it, Paul encouraged the Philippians (and us) to let the Lord be their Source of joy. Just to make sure we hear it, he repeated: "I know I've said this before (whether he had written them another letter is lost to us, or, he might have been referring to what he wrote in 3:1), but let me say it again—be full of joy" (4:4, paraphrase).

Rejoice and Give Thanks (verses 47)

4. Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

Paul urged his readers to rejoice in all circumstances: "always," and such an important thought bears repeating (see also verses 1112 and Psalm 37:4, "Delight thyself in the Lord"). This positive imperative is followed by a series of similar exhortations, with the flip sides being "If you do these things, you will be well rewarded." Most imperatives are negative, issued with attached warnings for not doing them—obey the speed limit or you will be ticketed, be on time or you will be fired. The opposite kinds, some of which are represented here, usually are better received—smile and the world smiles with you, eat right and your body will thank you, and so on. No such warnings come with Paul's exhortations, only precious rewards for doing them. Someone who does not do these things should not be surprised if they do not experience the same rewards.

Joy, one of the rewards, is also an imperative—as if to say, smile and smiles will be yours. Joy is a prevalent theme in Philippians, this being the last of 12 references to "joy" or "rejoice." Let us take to heart this message of joy that can belong to each of us without limit (see also Nehemiah 8:10, "The joy of the Lord is your strength").

5. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

Paul's instruction isn't intended just for one's friends or fellow believers; clearly, his intent is for Christians to behave this way wherever they go, and with whomever they come into contact (Philippians 2:15). The phrase "be known" (Greek, ginosko, ghinOCEko) implied a personal knowledge, as in one's reputation. Therefore, to have one's moderation known about isn't just to make a show for a first impression, but rather, this behavior demonstrates our character to those who know us. Paul further

underscores the thought by adding "unto all men." Everyone we know must know us by our good reputation. It is a short sentence but a tall order. "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches" (Proverbs 22:1). As though readers would need more inspiration, Paul topped off the thought with a reminder of the Lord's imminent return (Philippians 4:5; see also James 5:8).

6. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Countless sermons on prayer have been taken from this well packed verse, which contains three distinct and important points: 1) take everything to God in prayer, 2) pray for both yours and others' needs, and 3) include thanksgiving with all prayers.

Part 1—"Be careful for nothing" means to be anxious for nothing, or don't worry about anything. In the Greek, merimnao (merim NAHo), can mean "to be troubled or care deeply in a worried way." Paul was quick to provide the remedy for anxiety or worry— PRAYER! As many have said, prayer is the antidote to the poison of worry. It is well known that worries are the weeds that choke the life out of believers (Luke 8:7, 14). An unknown sage once said, "If we would worry less, we would pray more."

Part 2—"in everything by prayer and supplication" resolves the question many have about some things being too small to bother God with. As a wise person once noted, "If it's worth worrying about, it's worth praying about." By the same token, the sooner we pray about a potential worry, the sooner we preclude the worry from taking root, like a weed, and growing to choke us.

Paul added "supplication" (Greek, deeds, DEHaysis), to bolster prayer. A similar, frequently used Old Testament word (Hebrew, tachinnah, tekhinNAW), added the component of "entreaty" (1 Kings 9:3; Psalm 119:170), as in earnest or very sincere appeal for favor or mercy (see Acts 1:14; Ephesians 6:18). Paul could have said, "For each and every concern, pray earnestly for God's favor."

Part 3—"with thanksgiving let your requests be made known," continues the thought that includes praying about everything. In other words, we are to pray with thanksgiving, regardless of the situation about which we are praying (Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:18). This is another short phrase but tall order. We might pray about everything, especially when confronted with serious problems—illness or disaster—but will we pray with thanksgiving during our most dire circumstances? See Acts 16:25 for an example of Paul living what he preached, while in prison; see 2 Chronicles 20:21 for an Old Testament example of prayer before going into battle.

7. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Following his list of positive imperatives or encouraging exhortations, Paul presented one of the rewards for those who would do as he did: "the peace" (Greek, eirene, iRAY nay), that surpasses understanding. Just as prayer is the antidote for anxiety, peace is its replacement—our reward for giving the matter to God. From another perspective, when God's peace is present in our lives, anxiety has a hard time finding a foothold. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isaiah 26:3). Jesus talked in detail about this

peace (John 14:27; 16:33), and Paul's writings are saturated with it (1 Corinthians 7:15; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 5:22; Colossians 3:15; 2 Thessalonians 3:16). See also verse 9 here.

That this gift and reward of peace also guards our hearts is an endearing truth. "Shall keep" comes from the Greek verb phroureo (fruRAYo), and is a military term, meaning "protecting by military guard"—no different than high-ranking officials nowadays, such as our President who is never without a guardian, an escort from the Secret Service or the military. So God posts His spiritual "marine corps"—His own peace—to guard and protect our hearts.

QUESTION 2

Should we tell God what we need and then thank Him or only thank Him (verse 6)?

(Answer) We should tell the Lord what we need and thank Him.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Keeping Our Eyes on the Prize—Jesus

Paul reminded us that no matter what is going on in our lives or our environment, no person or thing should be allowed to keep us from expressing the joy we have experienced in our relationship with the Lord. We praise God not only for what He has done and is doing, but we praise Him for what He is going to do when He returns. Paul wrote, "The Lord is at hand," that is, He is coming back soon and we can praise Him by living in "moderation." To let our "moderation be known unto all men" means to live in such a way that everybody can see our gentle and gracious lifestyle (verse 5).

Another way that we can rejoice in the Lord by trusting Him. Paul reminded us that we cannot rejoice and worry. So in his letter he says: "Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done" (verse 6, NLT).

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.

In verse 8, Paul reminded his readers that living right—victoriously and joyfully—is the result of thinking right. By focusing attention ("Fix your thoughts," NLT) on that which is positive—"true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable"—the outcomes of these patterns of thinking would be shown in words spoken and actions performed. How can we not be joyful if we keep our attention focused on such matters?

9. 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.

Paul had taught the first century believers well, and they had proven to be good students of the Word, producing the fruit that comes only by the Spirit. His sermon continued here, and ended with the peace of God for those who live as he lived, do as he did, and think as he thought. Everything that Paul had, came from God, and it was sufficient for him (see 2 Corinthians 3:5). God's peace cures anxiety, His hope cancels despair, His patience comforts, His encouragement strengthens, and completing the circle, His love grants us peace, which is like no other peace and is found nowhere but in

God (see Psalm 42:11; Romans 15:13; 2 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

But there's more. Paul went on to state, "These are the kind of things that I taught you, the Christian traditions I passed on to you and the kind of things you heard me say and saw me do. And these are the things I want you to practice. If you do, you will experience an increased awareness of God's presence and peace" (verse 9, paraphrase).

Paul uses the simple word "do"—if you really hear, then actually do (Philippians 4:9). The apostle presents himself as an example to follow, rather than merely presenting good ideas. If you want God's peace, then walk the walk and don't just talk the talk. Find your way to good soil and begin to bear fruit!

QUESTION 3

Unscramble the virtues Paul states in verse 8:

1) tonesh 2) eupr 3) olyevl

4) jstu 5) ogdo pretro

1) 2 3

4 5

(Answer) 1) honest 2) pure 3) just 4) lovely 5) good report

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Don't Wait to Rejoice!

The Lord never promises us that in this life "everything is going to be all right." Very, very seldom, if ever, is everything "all right." Usually when we get the roof fixed, the car breaks down. And when we get the car fixed, the plumbing goes bad, and when we get the plumbing fixed, our children or parents or

friends get sick. There's always something. "If it isn't one thing, it's another." So if we're waiting for everything to be all right before we rejoice, we have a long, miserable wait ahead of us.

That is why Paul could rejoice, even while chained to a Roman soldier. As the apostle explained to the Philippians, he had "learned the secret of living in every situation" (verse 12, NLT)—so that whether he had very little ("abased") or quite a lot ("abound"), whether experiencing poverty or plenty, he could be content and keep on rejoicing.

IV. REJOICE IN GOOD TIMES AND BAD

TIMES

(Philippians 4:10-14)

The secret of his rejoicing in the Lord always was in his statement, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (verse 13). Another way of saying it is: "With the power that Christ gives us, we have the strength to face all conditions." And finally, Paul is joyful because the Philippians shared with him ("communicated," verse 15), and here he was thinking about their financial support of his ministry.

An Unshakable Faith in Christ (verses 10-14)

11-12. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 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.

Just to be sure there were no misunderstandings; Paul further explained that no matter what happens in situations like this,

he was not rattled or ruffled. His peace and confidence in God were not shaken, and he knew how to survive lean times by trusting in God implicitly (2 Timothy 6:6, 8; Hebrews 13:5).

He knew something few people ever learn, which is how to truly be "content" (Greek, adjective, autarkes, owTARKas). Paul's contentment was God sufficient, and while he didn't need anything, he was full of peace and joy and his life was rich and rewarding.

13. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

This is succinct, beautiful Scripture at its finest, one of many similar precious jewels scattered throughout the Word. As with all Scripture, care must be taken to avoid taking only a part of the verse out of context. "I can do all things" is inseparably linked with "through Christ" and reinforces, among other verses, John 15:5, "Without me ye can do nothing." Jesus' original "vine and branch" context made the perfect illustration—for instance, a severed branch of an orange tree, with a small green orange on it, would never produce a ripe orange. At the same time, a branch that remained attached did not have to work and strain in order to produce multiple oranges. The vine, Christ, was Paul's "strength" (2 Corinthians 12:9; Ephesians 3:16; 6:10) and his "enabler" (1 Timothy 1:12).

Paul he had such a complete confidence in Christ, He needed nothing from this world and was utterly content with whatever God chose to bless him, whether little or much. Among the many things Paul was able to do, because of the strength of Christ, was to have genuine contentment and to rejoice in every circumstance (Philippians 3:3; 4:4).

14. Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

Along with salutations and blessings that follow, Paul finished his letter with this sincere "well done" compliment, a hallmark of an outstanding mentor and teacher. His humility was expressed in his heartfelt appreciation for each and every grace shown to him. Paul trusted God would bless the Philippians for blessing him, and it is exactly like this that the good, upward spiral of blessings continues in the hearts and lives of the mature and active in faith. The more they are generous, the easier it becomes to be generous, and the easier it is, the more they will do it. God works through His willing followers to prove the many promises in His Word, one of which is that He has no preset spending limits for blessing His obedient children (Malachi 3:10).

Now that we have come to the end of this study of Philippians, what have we learned? (1) To live a worthy life is to be saved and act like it. (2) One of the great challenges of the Christian life is to be truly humble like our Model, Jesus Christ. (3) Persistence is often the crucial component in both our spiritual and material success. (4) Christian joy is a gift from the Lord to be experienced, expressed, and extended to others.

Question 4

Circle one of the underlined words in the following statement that best fits Paul's belief— "I can do partial, half, all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (verse 13).

(Answer) all

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Peace and Joy

Many people grow restless under the demands life makes on them. How can we have peace and joy in life? God's peace and joy are rooted in following God's way.

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: That your students will know how to share the joy of being a Christian with persons who have special needs or concerns.

Where can joy be found? And what is the source of a joy filled life?

Pleasure says, "It is not with me."

Joy cannot be purchased with silver,

Nor can it be bought with gold.

From where does joy come?

And what is the source of a joy filled life?

To truly know the Lord,

Is the source of joy;

And to love Him with all your heart,

That is the source of a joy filled life.

You probably have already recognized the source of the little poem above. It is a paraphrase of Job 28:12—28. Job was asking some questions about wisdom and these questions help us to focus our attention on joy because both wisdom and joy come from the same source. Both Job and Paul agreed that the source is the Lord. For that reason,

Paul could tell his readers in the church at Philippi to rejoice in the Lord.

If you want joy,

Real joy, wonderful joy,

Let Jesus come into your heart.

STUDENTS' RESPONSE

AIM: That your students will discover additional connections between the Christian joy we have and the facial expressions we wear at home or work.

In what ways is a Christian's joy affected (positively or negatively) by people and circumstances? What part do Christians play a role

in whether or not they experience joy? What is the connection between Philippians 4:4 and 4:8? What is the connection between the Christian joy we have and the facial expressions we wear at home and work?

PRAYER

Lord, Thank You for the joy that I have on the inside of me. Thank You for giving me opportunities to express and share my joy with others. You are truly wonderful and delightful in all that You say and do for us each and every day. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

SAY IT

Philippi.fihLIHPai.

Philiipians. fihLIHPihuhnz.

PREPARE FOR NEXT SUNDAY

Read Acts 28:16-25a, 28:31 and study "Upheld by God."

DAILY HOME BIBLE READINGS

MONDAY

God Speaks Peace Psalm 85:4-13

TUESDAY

Facing Danger with Peace Acts 27:33-44

WEDNESDAY

Reap in Shouts of Joy Psalm 126

THURSDAY

Finding Joy and Peace Isaiah 55:6-13

FRIDAY

Peace Be with You John 20:19-23

SATURDAY

Focusing on the Spirit Romans 8:1—8

SUNDAY

Experiencing God's Peace Philippians 4:2-14

COMMENTS / NOTES: