

Steps to Peace

Philippians 4:4-7, CSB

Rejoice Rather than Complain

Rejoice in the **Lord** always. I will say it again: **Rejoice!** (Philippians 4:4)

When you complain rather than rejoice, that reveals you're pursuing something above Christ.

Relax Rather than Control

Let your **graciousness** be known to everyone. The **Lord is near**. (Philippians 4:5)

When you're controlling rather than relaxed, that reveals you've forgotten Christ's nearness.

Release Rather than Concern

⁶Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

1. Don't worry about anything

Don't **worry** about anything. (Philippians 4:6)

²⁵Don't **worry** about your life ... ²⁸why do you **worry** ... ³¹So don't **worry** ... ³⁴Therefore don't **worry**. (Matthew 6:25-34, CSB)

Worry can't change the past, worry can't control the future, worry can only ruin the present.

2. Pray about everything

Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through **prayer and petition** with thanksgiving, present your **requests to God**. (Philippians 4:6)

3. Give thanks in all things

Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with **thanksgiving**, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



SILVERDALE BAPTIST CHURCH

40 DAYS OF JOY

JOYFUL PRAYER (HOW TO RELEASE A BURDEN)

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

10/08/2017

MAIN POINT

When we find our joy in God, we will find peace that passes understanding.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What, in your own words, is the difference between joy and happiness?

Was there a particular experience or season of life when you learned the difference between those things?

Why is it important to recognize the difference?

Most everyone in the world is seeking after happiness in one way or another. The problem with happiness, though, is that it's built on circumstance. And all circumstances are just a moment from changing. God has something far deeper in mind for the Christian. When we look to God rather than our circumstances for our joy, we will not only find what true joy is, but also peace that surpasses understanding.

DISCUSSION

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about our topic.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PHILIPPIANS 1:12-17.

What do these verses tell you about Paul's circumstances when he wrote the Book of Philippians? Why is it important to understand those circumstances?

Given those circumstances, what are some of the things that must be true about Paul's own source of joy?

Paul was under house arrest when he wrote these words. He had been arrested because he refused to stop preaching the gospel. Even knowing that he would likely never be free again, Paul told the Philippians who were also undergoing persecution that they should rejoice.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7.

Why is it important to see that “rejoicing” is a command? Does it mean that you have to be happy about whatever is happening in your life?

What’s the difference between seeing rejoicing as a command and seeing it as an emotion? Why is that difference significant?

Is there any circumstance in your life right now in which it is difficult to rejoice?

It’s important to see that Paul didn’t just tell the Philippians to rejoice; he told them to rejoice in the Lord. While most of the world looks to their circumstances for the source of their happiness, Christians look to what is absolutely unchanging—the Lord. In case we missed it the first time, Paul said it to us again.

What do we demonstrate about Jesus when we rejoice in Him even when our circumstances are going badly?

What role does prayer play in our ability to rejoice in the Lord?

Why is it essential that we both give thanks and let our requests be made known to God?

It’s essential that we pray during times that threaten our joy. When we pray, we not only must make the choice to give thanks; we should also tell God what we need. Many times, though, there is a deeper need behind what we think we need. We might, for example, pray for a job, but the deeper need is security. We might pray for a relationship but our deeper need is about our loneliness. As we pray, we should look behind our requests to see the true desires of our heart.

What do you think is the true desire of your heart that’s behind your requests?

How does it change your relationship with the Lord to know and admit what’s truly in your heart?

Do you think it’s hard to be truly honest and transparent in prayer to God? Why or why not? Why do you think God wants you to do so?

God already knows what we need; the question is whether we know what we really need. It’s at this deep, heart level where God meets us, and it’s at this level that we find true peace.

Why is the kind of peace described here beyond understanding?

Does that mean everything is comfortable in your circumstances?

When God meets us in our true need, we find the peace that only He can give. This kind of peace is bigger than our understanding. In fact, when we have this peace from God that comes even when our circumstances aren’t perfect, we become a powerful testimony to those around us that Jesus is enough.

APPLICATION

Identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to our lives.

What are you anxious about right now? What is the true need behind that worry?

What are some practical ways you can pursue a more honest and transparent relationship with God?

How might God be growing your trust right now? How can you embrace what He's trying to do in your life?

PRAYER

Pray and thank God that He already knows what you truly need. Pray that you and your group would be truly honest with Him and would find the peace that can only come from Him which surpasses understanding.

COMMENTARY

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

4:4. Again Paul returns to the key theme of this letter: joy. He calls believers to rejoice at all times and repeats the call for emphasis. This includes the bad times as well as the good (compare Jas. 1:2–5). Christians should be known as joyful people. Such joy resides not in circumstances or positive attitudes toward life. Joy reigns in the heart only when Christ is Lord of life. Joy is always in the Lord.

4:5. A practical way to have joy is by exhibiting gentleness to all. This lets the church and world see that you belong to the Lord. The Greek word *epieiks* means “yielding, gentle, kind.” It includes the ability to go beyond the letter of the law in treating others, to provide something beside strict justice. It does not insist on personal rights or privileges. Christ embodied such gentleness in his dealing with all people (2 Cor. 10:1; compare 1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 3:2; Jas. 3:17; 1 Pet. 2:18). Why should we surrender personal rights for others? The Lord is near. In both time and space, God is available to us. He is not far removed in heaven but present in our hearts to hear and relate to us. His nearness also means he knows us and what we are. In time, God is near, for he is coming again. Then we will receive our rewards for living like Christ rather than like the world.

4:6. Joy replaces anxiety in life, so Paul advises the Philippians not to be anxious about anything. The cure for anxiety? Prayer! Worry and anxiety come from focusing on your circumstances such as imprisonment or persecution which Paul and the Philippians faced. Anxiety or worry doesn't accomplish anything, but prayer does (Jas. 5:16). Jesus warned against worry which demonstrates a lack of trust in God (Matt. 6:25–34).

4:7. The peace of God comes from prayer involving both asking God for earthly needs and thanking God for his presence and provision. The expression appears only here in the New Testament. God's peace reflects the divine character, which lives in serenity, totally separate from all anxiety and worry. Such peace is like a squad of Roman soldiers standing guard and protecting you from worry and fret. Such peace is not a dream of the human mind. The human mind cannot even comprehend this kind of peace, wholeness, and quiet confidence. Such peace protects the two organs of worry—heart and mind that produce feelings and thoughts. Such protection is real, available in Christ Jesus. Those who do not trust and commit their life to Christ have no hope for peace.