



JOY TO YOUR WORLD

It's a Choice

#NPJOY

Week 1

1 of 3

December 11, 2016

Bottom Line: We can choose to be joyful. It's not a feeling or an emotion. Joy is a choice. It's a conviction about who God is (His character). It's a confidence in Him (His promises). It's a choice to express gratitude to God through generosity.

Icebreaker: What is your favorite Christmas memory? Why?

Key Verse: *I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.* Philippians 4:11

The Book of Philippians is filled with joy. Commentators, pastors, and scholars alike bring this reoccurring theme to the surface when they write and speak about Philippians. This might seem like an odd theme when you consider that Philippians was written from the confines of a jail cell. Paul was imprisoned awaiting trial but did not waste any of his time. Instead, he gave himself to sharing the joy he found in Christ with others as he wrote letters to encourage, strengthen, rebuke, and teach various churches.

Philippians 4:11 begins with the affirmation that Paul is not in need. You would think that a man in prison had plenty of needs, not least of which would be freedom. Yet Paul chose to find joy in his circumstances. He was convicted by what he had seen in God's character; his knowing God intimately motivated him to seek God's will even in prison. Earlier in this letter, Paul commented that the entire guard knew he was imprisoned for Christ (1:13).

Paul preached Christ in prison through his words, his character, and his relationships with the guards because he had confidence in what Christ had done for him and what the gospel promised to all who believed. During the Christmas season, we focus on the joy of God that has come to us in Christ. The joy we find in Christ on earth is merely a glimpse, a profound taste, of the joy we will experience in heaven.

THINK IT OVER >>>

Thinking back on Dwight's message, what stood out to you?

Dwight said there are three things that keep us from joy: selfishness, bitterness, and fear.

He also said there are three things that bring us joy: conviction about God, confidence in God, and choosing to give thanks.

What must Paul have believed to be true about God that he was able to find joy in prison?

Read 2 Corinthians 1:20. What perspective should we take as we read and think about the promises of God that are available to us in Jesus?

LOOK IT OVER <<<

How have you experienced the character of God in your own life? How has it led you to find joy in all circumstances?

Though it is likely easier to find joy when things are going well for you, how often do you look for joy during hard times?

Setting his mind on Christ enabled Paul to persevere in prison. When you think about God, what do you think about? What is He like?

What is the biggest obstacle to contentment in your life? How might you be able to address this problem?

What do you have to thank God for today? How will you focus on these things in order to choose joy?

NEXT STEPS

This week, consider taking some next steps together as a group:

1. Praise God that we can be content when we find our source of contentment in Him. Ask that He would give you grace and blessing to find your hope and fulfillment in Him and Him alone so that you can choose joy.
2. One of the ways we can choose joy is by holding on to the promises of God in Scripture. What are some of the promises from God that we find for believers? Have a few people list their favorites. Do any of these resonate with you right now? Consider memorizing them and holding one another accountable to learn them.

EVALUATION/ACTION Realizing and reaching your full potential in Christ

Bottom Line: We can choose to be joyful. It's not a feeling or an emotion. Joy is a choice.

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| Rate yourself from 1 to 10 1 (never), 10 (always) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Why did you give yourself this rating? | | | | | | | | | | |
| What benefits will you obtain by raising your rating? | | | | | | | | | | |
| Do you know someone who demonstrates this bottom line well? What do you admire about that person? | | | | | | | | | | |
| What specific action can you put into practice to raise your rating? | | | | | | | | | | |
| At the end of this week, reflect - where did you see the bottom line show up in your actions throughout the week? | | | | | | | | | | |

PRAYER

List group members and their prayer requests for this week:

DAILY STUDY

Want to dig deeper? Check out **The Daily** this week at newpointe.org/daily:

- Day 1: Romans 8:31-39
- Day 2: James 1:26-27
- Day 3: Psalm 136:1-2
- Day 4: Psalm 139:13-15
- Day 5: Hebrews 4:14-16

Don't let the conversation stop here. Keep talking it over with others throughout the week.
(Don't forget to bring this paper to your next small group meeting)