

A PHILIPPIANS STUDY

# DISCUSSION GUIDE

December 10, 2023

## PHILIPPIANS week 13 - Kelly Roth

This Discussion Guide is designed to help you **think more deeply** about the sermon and **engage with others** through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and **allow God to work** in your life as you apply what you discover.

### ➤ CONVERSATION STARTER

**Do you prefer a real Christmas tree or an artificial Christmas tree? Why?**

### ➤ EXPLORATION

Christmas is coming quickly and there is so much that might keep us busy and distracted if we are not careful. As Christ followers, we know the true meaning of Christmas and that knowledge can shape the way we choose to live in this season.

**Before you go any further, take a few deep breaths and quiet your heart to remember and thank God for the gift of Jesus Christ.**

As we continue in our series on Philippians we are nearing the end of the book. Paul is wrapping up the letter to his brothers and sisters in the Philippian church.

### **Philippians 4:8 (From your bible, read aloud)**

This sounds like good advice, but it is so much more than that. We need to remember that these verses come after Paul reminded them not to be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving to present their requests to

God. It is from this vantage point that we understand his words telling us the importance of where we focus our thoughts.

### **Whatever is...**

- True
- Noble
- Right
- Pure
- Lovely
- Admirable
- Excellent
- Praiseworthy

**...think about these things**

**Take a few moments to name at least one thing for each of these points. (one thing that is true, another thing that is noble...etc.)**

What we think about and how we think matters. Paul says that we are to think – “to carefully take into account,” “to calculate,” and “to evaluate thoughtfully.” It implies mulling things over and sift through them rather than making a snap judgment. Just imagine how different the world would be if we took time to really think before we react to a difficult or stressful situation.

When Paul says that we are to take our concerns to God in every situation, he is inviting us to be authentic, to share the way we actually feel with God and then trust that God will strengthen and guide us through.

It is a thoughtful, prayerful, biblically grounded, God-saturated response that has the power to truly make a difference in the world.

### **Philippians 4:9 (From your bible, read aloud)**

The Philippians knew Paul personally. He had been with them, taught them and shared the Gospel with them. He tells them to take what you have learned or received or heard or seen from me and put it into practice. This is the process of spiritual growth. Just like a tree needs good soil, water and sunlight, we need to be sure we are being spiritually nourished so that we can grow in our faith.

### **What is something you have learned in your faith journey recently that you are putting into practice?**

### **Philippians 4:10-13 (From your bible, read aloud)**

One of the reasons Paul wrote to the Philippians was to thank them for their support both relationally and financially. He is clearly grateful for their generosity, but he makes it clear that his gratitude is first and foremost to God.

Even though Paul was in prison when he wrote, he doesn't seem to be bothered by his circumstances. He is actually joyful and doesn't want them to think that their gift is the source of his joy. God is clearly his source of joy. Paul has learned to be content, no matter what he is going through.

*"I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through him who gives me strength." Philippians 4:12-13*

### **What stands out to you from this passage?**

Paul went through terrible things that none of us would want to face, and yet he says that through it all he has learned to be content. The key here is that Paul **learned** to be content. It was not something that came naturally. He acknowledges that this is only possible through Christ who strengthens him.

The verse that says, "I can do all things through him who gives me strength" is one of the most misused verses in all of scripture. It is often seen on the walls of Christian School gymnasiums or on t-shirts or coffee mugs. It does not say that I can do anything I put my mind to or that I can get whatever I want.

Paul is saying that no matter what my circumstances, no matter what trials I may face, no matter how difficult the road ahead may be, God will give me the strength I need to make it through.

**Godly Contentment isn't denying our feelings** about wanting what we don't have, but instead it is a **freedom from being controlled** by those feelings through sharing them openly and authentically with God.

**Godly Contentment isn't pretending things are right** when they are not, but instead it displays the peace that comes from knowing that **God is bigger than any problems** and that he works them all out for our good.

**Godly Contentment isn't based on external circumstances**, believing you will be content once your circumstances change. Contentment is a deep sense of peace within your heart that **only comes through Christ**.

**When you feel a sense of discontent, what will you do differently this coming week?**

### **> TAKE AWAY**

Godly Contentment does not come naturally - It is only learned through experience with God:

- Think on these things (vs 8)
- Practice what you have learned (vs 9)
- Let God work in your heart (vs 13)

True contentment comes when we are rooted in a deep relationship with God. We practice by taking time to be saturated in God's word, prayer and fellowship with other believers; hearing, learning and then doing the things God calls us to do. Godly Contentment is learned through practice.

No matter where you are in your faith journey right now, you can move forward in learning to be content.

**Take time to pray for one another that you may experience Godly contentment as you put your trust in him this week.**