

# SEQUOIA NOTES

## Today's Sequoia Message...

### Finding Joy When Life is Hard

With Ryan Dawson - Lead Pastor  
April 26, 2026



- **Joy is not found in the absence of hardship—it is found in the presence of God within hardship.**

Philippians 1:12-18 (NLT) And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. <sup>13</sup> For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ.<sup>14</sup> And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear. <sup>15</sup> It's true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. <sup>16</sup> They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News. <sup>17</sup> Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me. <sup>18</sup> But that doesn't matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice.

### What can we learn about finding joy in hardship?

#### 1) God uses our difficulties to advance His good purposes.

v. 12 "Everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News."

- **Paul's chains became a witness.**

v. 13 "Everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ."

- **Paul's suffering strengthened others.**

v. 14 "Most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear."

v. 14 (AMP) "Because of my chains [seeing that I am doing well and that God is accomplishing great things], most of the brothers have renewed confidence in the Lord, and have far more courage to speak the word of God [concerning salvation] without fear [of the consequences, seeing that God can work His good in all circumstances]."

**Question: What are people learning about God from the way I handle my trials?**

#### 2) God uses hardship to refine our character.

v. 15-17 "It's true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. <sup>16</sup> They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News. <sup>17</sup> Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me."

v. 18 "But that doesn't matter... the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice."

- **Hardship reveals what is really inside us. Our trials can make us: Bitter or Better.**

Luke 22:42 (NLT) "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine."

#### 3) God invites us to trust His loving leadership.

v. 16 "I have been appointed to defend the Good News."

***"My circumstances may be painful, but they are never pointless."***

Romans 8:28 (NLT) "And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."

**Big Idea: Joy comes when we trust God is with us & working through every circumstance.**

#### Application questions.

- **Am I trusting my plan or God's plan?**
- **Are my current circumstances making me bitter or better?**
- **Am I resisting God or resting in His loving presence & purpose?**

The Translation of the Bible Scriptures used today is the New Living Translation (NLT), and the Amplified Bible (AMP).



**Sequoia Impact Communities are where we  
live out our identity as a  
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To get plugged in email:

**impactcommunities@sequoiachurch.org**

**Finding Joy When Life is Hard  
#3 of 15 - April 26, 2026**

### **Context**

1. Read Philippians 1:12-18. What hardships was Paul facing when he wrote Philippians 1:12–18, and why is that important for understanding his joy?
2. How would Paul's imprisonment have appeared from a human perspective, and why might others have assumed his ministry was being hindered?

### **Observation**

3. According to verses 12–14, what unexpected ways did God use Paul's suffering to advance the gospel?
4. In verses 15–18, what different motives did Paul identify in those who were preaching Christ, and how did Paul respond to them?

### **Meaning**

5. What does this passage teach us about the relationship between hardship and God's purposes?
6. How can suffering reveal and refine what is truly in our hearts, making us either "bitter or better"?

### **Application**

7. Can you share a difficult season in your life where you later saw God working through it for good?
8. Which of these questions speaks most to you right now:
  - Am I trusting my plan or God's plan?
  - Are my circumstances making me bitter or better?
  - Am I resisting God or resting in His presence?  
Why?



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