

Church & Kingdom | Philippians

Mark Allen | 11.22.26

Small Group Guide: The Secret to Rejoicing

Based on Philippians — Church and Kingdom Series

Overview

In this message, we explored the book of Philippians and the central theme Paul returns to again and again — rejoicing. Written while Paul was in chains awaiting trial before Nero, this letter is a remarkable testimony that joy is not dependent on circumstances. Through four key truths drawn from the four chapters of Philippians, we discovered the secrets to living a life marked by genuine, lasting joy.

Key Takeaways

1. Christ is our life (Philippians 1) Joy is not found in people, circumstances, or possessions. When Christ becomes the center of our lives rather than what surrounds us, we can praise God even in the most difficult seasons.

2. Christ is our example (Philippians 2) Jesus did not cling to his rights or his position. He humbled himself completely. When we stop demanding our rights and follow his example of humility, unity in the church becomes possible.

3. Christ is our confidence (Philippians 3) Every achievement, credential, and earthly advantage Paul had, he counted as worthless compared to knowing Christ. Our confidence must rest in who Jesus is, not in who we are or what we have accomplished.

4. Christ is our strength (Philippians 4) The famous promise that we can do all things through Christ is not a blank check for personal ambition. It is a declaration that we can endure, persevere, and even rejoice in whatever God calls us to walk through, because his strength sustains us.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Go around the group and finish this sentence: "When life gets hard, I tend to look for joy in _____."

Section 1 — Christ is Our Life (Philippians 1)

1. Paul wrote Philippians while chained to a Roman guard, yet his letter overflows with joy. What does that tell us about the relationship between our circumstances and our joy?

2. Paul saw his imprisonment as an opportunity — the entire praetorian guard heard the gospel because of his chains. Can you think of a difficult season in your own life that God used in an unexpected way? What did that teach you?

3. Paul says in Philippians 1:21 that to live is Christ. What does it practically look like for Christ to be your life rather than the people or things around you? What has to change for that to be true?

Section 2 — Christ is Our Example (Philippians 2)

4. Philippians 2:6 describes Jesus as one who did not grasp his equality with God as something to hold onto at all cost. In what areas of your life are you most tempted to hold tightly to your rights or your position?

5. Pastor Mark referenced the story of the old Scottish man who said, "If you got what was your rights, every one of us would be in hell." How does remembering what we deserve change the way we handle conflict with others?

6. Philippians 2:2 calls the church to be of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, and intent on one purpose. What is one practical step your group or your church could take to move closer to that kind of unity?

Section 3 — Christ is Our Confidence (Philippians 3)

7. Paul listed his impressive credentials — his heritage, his education, his religious zeal — and then called all of it worthless compared to knowing Christ. What credentials, achievements, or identities do you tend to find your confidence in? How does Paul's example challenge that?

8. Philippians 3:10 expresses Paul's desire to know Christ, the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings. Most of us are drawn to the power of the resurrection but less eager for the fellowship of sufferings. Why do you think that is, and what might it mean to embrace both?

9. Pastor Mark pointed out that those whose confidence is in earthly things set their minds on earthly things. What are some signs in a person's life that their confidence has shifted away from Christ and toward something else?

Section 4 — Christ is Our Strength (Philippians 4)

10. The sermon pointed out that Philippians 4:13 is often misunderstood. Rather than meaning we can accomplish anything we set our minds to, it means we can do all that God calls us to do when we are walking in his will. How does that reframing change the way you read that verse?

11. Paul says in Philippians 4:11 that he learned to be content in whatever circumstances he faced. Contentment is described as something learned, not something that comes naturally. What experiences have taught you the most about contentment?

12. Pastor Mark acknowledged that holidays like Thanksgiving can be genuinely painful for people carrying grief or loss. How can your group be a source of real support for those who find this season difficult? What does it look like to rejoice alongside someone who is hurting?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice this week:

- **Identify your source.** Write down two or three things or people you tend to rely on for your sense of joy and security. Spend time this week in prayer, intentionally releasing those things and asking God to help you find your joy in Christ alone.

- **Practice humility in a specific relationship.** Think of one relationship where you have been holding tightly to your rights or your perspective. This week, take one concrete step toward humility in that relationship, following the example of Christ in Philippians 2.

- **Recount your pedigree — then lay it down.** Like Paul in Philippians 3, make a list of your accomplishments, credentials, or advantages that you are most proud of. Then spend time in prayer acknowledging that none of those things define your standing before God or the source of your confidence.
- **Find your "six-hour guard."** Paul turned every guard rotation into an evangelistic opportunity. Ask God to show you one person in your regular routine this week who needs to hear about Jesus, and look for a natural moment to share your faith.
- **Memorize Philippians 4:4.** Paul says to rejoice in the Lord always, and then repeats it. Commit that verse to memory this week and say it aloud each morning before your feet hit the floor.

Closing Reflection

Paul wrote the word "rejoice" from a prison cell while waiting to stand trial before one of history's most brutal emperors. He was not rejoicing because his life was comfortable. He was rejoicing because his life was Christ.

As a group, close your time together by going around the room and having each person share one thing they are genuinely grateful for this week — not because life is easy, but because Christ is their life, their example, their confidence, and their strength.

Then close in prayer, asking God to make Philippians 4:4 the defining verse of your week.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say it — rejoice. — Philippians 4:4
