



HOW TO STOP THE ENEMY FROM STEALING YOUR JOY

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

THE MAIN POINT

The Apostle Paul wrote four prison epistles: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians. The letter to the church at Philippi stands out as different from all the rest. They have a unique and special bond with Paul that nobody else has. Why? The answer to the main point of the letter to the Philippians can actually be found in 2 Corinthians 8:1.

*Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: ²that in a great trial of affliction the **abundance of their JOY** and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality.*

They had great trials of affliction and deep poverty, but none of that moved them. None of that made them stop trusting in God and supporting Paul's ministry. They still had joy in spite of the pressures of life. As a child of God, the joy WE have should exceed the joy of unbelievers. The world can have joy, but we should have SUPERabundant joy!

Matthew 5:45 - *He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

DISCUSSION

People in the world can experience what God has given to all mankind and be happy about it and rejoice in it, but they're only happy about the *stuff* that God created. The word 'happy' comes from the word 'hap', which means luck or fortune; it's a 'chance occurrence'. Happiness comes from being blessed by things or circumstances. Happiness depends on *happenings*, but JOY depends on Christ! **Talk about the differences between what makes you "happy" and what brings "joy."**

The idea of 'joy' appears sixteen times in the four chapters of Philippians. Paul also refers to the mind sixteen times in the four chapters of Philippians. There are sixteen references to joy and sixteen references to the mind, telling us that the level of your JOY is equal to the level of your THINKING! Proverbs 23:7 said, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." *If you don't think any better, you won't feel any better.* **Discuss why it's important to understand that OUTLOOK determines OUTCOME.**

What are some of the ways that circumstances and/or life works to steal our joy? How can you change the narrative of your life to stop the "joy thieves" from stealing your joy?

BEYOND THE GROUP

Read Philippians 1:12-13 on your own. Paul is changing the narrative about his situation to let us know that we might see chains, but he sees God's will. We might see imprisonment, but he sees opportunity. The key to having a single mind is understanding that it's not always about the situation *changing* as much as it is about our faith growing stronger. We want change, but God wants GROWTH. This week, we challenge you to stop trying to simply "go through it" and decide to "GROW THROUGH IT." Change YOUR narrative!

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Father, in the Name of Jesus, I thank you that I can come boldly to Your throne of grace for help in a time of need. You have give me joy unspeakable and full of glory through your Son, Jesus Christ. I believe that Your peace is garrisoning and protecting my heart and mind from all pressure, worry and fear because I cast every care onto You today. I choose to rejoice and not think about those things about which I have released to You. Thank you for my joy. From this moment on, I look ahead to all of the many blessings you have for my life. Thank you Lord for caring about me today!