



A Joyful Life – Message 1

Warm-up

What's the difference between happiness and joy? Tell of something you are happy about and then give a reason why you are joyful.

Overview

Our new study is in the Book of Philippians. If you were to put this book in a nutshell, it would read like this: *You'll get through this--even when the circumstances are overwhelming and the conflicts are painful. You can experience true joy through the power of Jesus Christ.* In our first message, we will learn that we can live a life filled with joy regardless of what we're going through.

Word and Application

The apostle Paul wrote the Book of Philippians. In the four short chapters of this epistle (epistle means letter), the word “joy” or “rejoicing” appears nineteen times. Fifteen times, Paul talks about thinking. The joy Paul wrote about, the joy he lived out, was based first in his mind followed by his heart.

The Mind of Christ

Paul calls for the people in Philippians to have the mind of Christ. One of the most important components in understanding joyful, successful Christianity is this: **We cannot change our heart, but we can change our mind.** God can change our heart, but He won't change our mind. Therefore, if we choose to change the way we think about a given situation, God will change our heart.

- **Read Philippians 2:5.** When we embrace the attitudes and thinking of Jesus, we are allowing God to work on our heart. Describe several characteristics of Jesus' way of thinking and His attitude. Which one characteristic do you feel most compelled to embrace?
- **Read Proverbs 23:7a.** We become what we think. Identify a situation or relationship which could benefit from a change in your thinking?

Four Truths about Joy

1. Joy is divine.

Joy is divine because it comes from God. It is possessed and given only by God. **Read Galatians 5:22, 23 and John 15:5.** How do we produce the fruit of joy?

2. Joy does not depend on circumstances.

Read Philippians 1:12-18. What was Paul's experience in prison? How did his joy impact the palace guards, prisoners and other brethren? How did Paul's joy influence the preaching of the Gospel? Did Paul's circumstances have any bearing on his joy or what God called him to do?

3. Joy springs from faith.

Read Romans 15:13. A faith-filled mindset releases the joy of the Holy Spirit and helps us gain a new perspective--God's perspective. What are we doing when we are filled with joy and hope?

4. Joy is both our present and future reward.

Read Psalm 16:11. Positionally, where is the fullness of joy found? How is this possible for now and the future?

Life Challenge

Evaluate a current difficult circumstance. In what way can you embrace the mind of Christ and think differently about it? What is your goal for this situation? Is your goal happiness or joy?

Prayer

*Father, thank You for joy. We get to experience joy in Your Son, Jesus Christ. May we be mindful to rejoice in our salvation and all that You have given us. Thank You that Your Holy Spirit is our Helper, Comforter, and Strengthener. We praise You that we can live joyfully no matter what life brings our way.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

Pray for the specific needs of the group.