

JOY

- **Enjoy people**
- **Be joyful**

December 9, 2007
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ENJOY THE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE

Philippians 1:3-11

The book of Philippians is a personal, practical and mostly positive letter written by Paul. It deals with a lot of the problems in life that we all face, a lot of examples of day to day decisions. The words "joy" or "rejoice" or "be glad" are used seventeen different times in this book.

Paul starts talking about people. If relationships are bad, life stinks. If relationships are strained, life is difficult. If you have problems with people it kills the joy in your life.

Peter Drucker, the father of American management, said that the number one characteristic of a CEO, of a leader, is that they enjoy other people.

Do you enjoy the people around you? Coworkers? Spouse? Family? The Bible says in *Ecclesiastes 9:9, "Husbands [men] enjoy life with your wife whom you love."*

The problem is that many marriages are more a matter of endurance than enjoyment. We don't really enjoy the people in our lives, we tolerate them, and we put up with them. We endure them. But you know what?

"Each relationship you have with another person reflects the relationship you have with yourself" Alice Deville

Keep this thought in mind as we go back to our passage...

Four keys to enjoy the people in your life:

1. Be grateful for the good in people. V. 3. "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." Paul said I like to remember the good things about people.

Maybe you have been hurt by a parent or a partner in the past and you're still holding on to that hurt. As a result you can't enjoy them today. You're still focusing on the bad and the negative. Be grateful for the good in people. **Remember the best, forget the rest.**

I'm not saying that you deny the hurts or that you excuse the weaknesses in other people. That is even unhealthy. But focus on the **good** and choose to emphasize the strengths.

I hear wives say "He's a good man, **but...**" Anytime you hear "but" it means the emphasis is on the negative not the positive. Be grateful for what you've got! Mr. Perfect does not exist! Be grateful for the good in other people.

Paul appreciated people's loyalty. *V. 5: "for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now."*

Who has been loyal to you? Maybe your spouse, someone at work, a friend. Maybe they didn't do anything really spectacular, but when they had every opportunity to walk out on you, they didn't. When you were going through the crisis at work, the change in careers or when you were just being a jerk -- they stayed with you.

You ought to appreciate that! They haven't left and they've had plenty of good reasons.

If you want to enjoy others, you've got to focus on their strengths and not their weaknesses. With some people it takes a lot of creativity. But you can find something good in everybody.

"Treat your friends as you do your pictures and place them in their best light"

Jennie Jerome Churchill

2. Practice positive praying. V. 4: "always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy." How would you like to have the apostle Paul praying for you?

The quickest way to change a relationship from bad to good is to start thanking God in prayer for people.

This will do two things: change your attitude and change them. Positive praying is much more powerful than positive thinking. **People may resist our advice and reject our suggestions, but they are powerless against our prayers.**

You can pray these for people in your life and you can know that they'll be answered because they are God's will. They are in the Bible.

Four things Paul prays for other people.

1. Pray that they will grow in love. "...that your love may abound..." means to overflow, like a tidal wave.

2. Pray that they make wise choices. "...knowledge and all discernment..."

3. Pray that they will do the right thing. "...that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense..." and have a clear conscious.

4. Pray that they will live for God's glory. "...being filled by the fruits of righteousness..."

Look at the list, by the time God answers anyone of the four, the person we are praying for is a new one, a substantially new and better person.

Paul says if you want to enjoy people in your life, you first must be grateful for the good and then you practice positive praying.

Then you have to be...

3. Be patient with their progress. Paul looked at people's future and not just at their past. He looked at their potential and was patient with their progress. *V. 6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus."* Paul believed in God's power to change the human personality. Paul believed that no person was hopeless. He never gave up on people. This is a great promise of God. Claim it for your kids, for your mate, for yourself.

A common mistake is that we judge people by how much they have to improve rather than how much they have already improved.

Paul says what God starts, God finishes.

Man doesn't always finish what he starts but God always finishes what He starts and then He says, *"It is good."* The Bible says when Jesus Christ starts working in your life He will complete what He started. In spite of the hang-ups, faults, my bad decisions, my sins, in spite of all the circumstances that I face in life God is going to finish what He started in my life.

And in your life too! You are going to make it! The Bible says that one day when you get to Heaven you're going to become just like Jesus because you will see Him as He is. And that's the goal.

What a relief to know we'll all make it, but then of course, obviously...

God is not finished with people.

Again, we need to be patient with people's progress. Paul could say, "I'm not the man I used to be, thank God. But also, thank God, I'm not the man I'm going to be. I'm growing and changing."

In your marriage, if you want to enjoy your marriage, you've got to learn to enjoy your spouse right now while allowing for growth and development.

Parents, if you're going to learn to enjoy your kids you've got to learn to enjoy them in the process, while they're growing. Because there is no such thing as a perfect kid. And there's no such thing as a perfect adult.

If you demand perfection of the people in your life in order to enjoy them you're going to be miserable for the rest of your life because Nobody's perfect.

"There is no way to be a perfect mother and a million ways to be a good one" Jill Churchill

"A father is a man who expects his children to be as good as he meant to be" Carolyn Coats

Paul says that he enjoyed the Philippians because he concentrated on the good, he was grateful for the good that happened and he prayed with joy for specific things in their life. If you want something to change your attitude **start praying for that person who irritates you** at work, that person in your home, child or mate, and see what happens to your attitude. Then be patient with their progress because life is a matter of growth.

John 1:12 "...to them he gave the right to become children of God..." The Christian life is a process. We're all comers, we're all growing. To enjoy people, you've got to enjoy them in the process, not when they've arrived.

4. Love people from the heart. I've discovered that if people are not on my heart, they're on my nerves. If you don't have your kids in your heart, they get on your nerves. If you don't have your husband in your heart, he gets on your nerves.

The reason so many marriages are crumbling is that mates are reacting to each other from their mind rather than their heart. When your wife says, "I feel depressed" listen to her; it's legitimate.

When your husband says, "I don't feel this is the right thing we ought to do. We ought to do it this other way." Listen to him.

Listening and loving from the heart hears the hurt behind the words.

Heart love begins with understanding, knowing why they feel that way. Why does the guy at work act like such a jerk? Maybe you don't know the background he grew up in. Maybe he's tons better than he used to be ten years ago. **Hear the hurt.** You cannot love someone you don't understand. How do you get understanding? **By asking questions and then listening.**

“Friends are those rare people who ask how we are and then wait to hear the answer” Ed Cunningham

How do you love those people that even when you do understand them, they are unlovable?

**“I like long walks, especially when they are taken by people who annoy me” Noel Coward
(A funny but wrong answer)**

**“Love me more when I deserve it the least because that’s when I need it the most”
Me
(uncommon but right answer)**

So the least lovely person who irritates us the most gets our positive prayers, our heart-listening the “hurt behind the words” and even our undeserved love? **How on earth can we actually do this?**

V. 8: "For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ." It is His love that makes me love even the unlovely. That is not a natural kind of love. It is a supernatural kind of love it's the affection of Christ Jesus, the only kind of love that lasts.

Romans 5:5 "...the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who was given to us." God's love is not something you work up. It is something that is poured into each one of us by the Holy Spirit as we let Him live in us day by day.

And probably after someone prayed for us, listened to our hurts with the heart and loved us when we were unlovely and irritating the people around us...

Life is too short to be little... enjoy the people in your life. If you don't learn to enjoy the people that God has placed around you in your life you will be miserable.

BE JOYFUL NO MATTER WHAT

Philippians 1:12-26

Similar than with “the people around us” we think that life must be perfect for us to be happy. Most people don't enjoy life; they just endure it. They don't enjoy happiness... But there's no such thing as a problem free life. If you're going to learn to be happy, joyful, you must learn to be joyful in the situation, in the problems, in the very experiences of life.

“Joy is not in things, it is in us” Richard Wagner

"Happiness" comes from the word "happenstance" from which we get the word "circumstance". It depends on happenings. Joy is internal. Happiness is external. You have a happy time at Disneyland, you leave and you lose your happiness. Joy is constant. How do you have happiness in spite of what is going on in your life?

**“We choose our joys and sorrows long before we experience them”
Kahlil Gibran**

Picture this: Paul for the last four years has been miserable in circumstances. He's spent two years in prison in Caesarea for a trumped up charge. Then he's put on a ship to go to Rome to appear before Nero who is not known for his charm towards Christians. On the way he's shipwrecked, stranded on an island, bitten by a poisonous snake, waits the winter there, continues on to Rome, spends another two years in prison awaiting trial to be executed. During this two year period in Rome he is chained to a guard for 24 hours a day.

He has absolutely no privacy. Every four hours he gets a new guard.

Yet in spite of all of these situations, Paul says in *Phil. 1:18* "...I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice." What's Paul's secret? How does he stay positive in prison, triumph over troubles, delight in difficulties, stay so happy, positive, joyful in spite of the fact that everything has not turned out the way he planned it. Paul gives us four secrets, four essentials for joyful living.

I. I NEED A PERSPECTIVE TO LIVE FROM

Every one of us has problems. We've brought them in here with us. Our problems are not so important as how we are looking at those problems. The way we look at that problem is much more important than the problem. Your perspective makes the difference. *v. 12* **"But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel..."** I can see the best even in the worst. I can see God at work in the problems even when they don't go my way. Non-believers are being witnessed and believers are being encouraged. *v. 13*: **"so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest that my chains are in Christ."**

Paul had always wanted to go to Rome. He meant to have a crusade. Instead, God put him in prison where he would write the New Testament. He's chained to the palace guard, the crack elite troops of the Roman Empire, personally chosen by Caesar were his body guards. They were the highest paid people of the empire.

Here is the chiller one my brothers pay attention:

When these elite guards retired after 12 years they were made leaders in Rome. There is not a more strategic group that Paul could witness to if he's going to reach the Roman Empire. God puts Paul in Rome, Nero pays the bill and chains a future leader of Rome to him every four hours. In two years at four-hour shifts, Paul had witnessed to 4,380 guards. These guards had an inside route to the emperor and as a result even some of Nero's family became believers. History tells us that Nero had his wife, mother and children killed because they became believers. A "chain" reaction. Paul had a captive audience.

v. 14 "and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." My attitude towards problems has encouraged other people. Courage is contagious. It spreads like wildfire. Other believers became bold because of Paul being bold.

The perspective you need to live from if you're going to have joy in your life is **Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work, together for good to those who love God..."**

LESSON: God has a purpose behind every one of my problems.

When you get this perspective you are on the way to joyful living. Paul says that God has a purpose behind all my problems therefore I have a perspective to live from.

II. I NEED A PRIORITY TO LIVE BY

When things get tough I need to know what's really important in order to distinguish the trivial from the significant. I can be living my life either based on problems or priorities. If you don't choose your priorities, you'll go around putting out one fire after another, living your life simply from problem to problem to problem and not choosing what's important.

V. 15-16 "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains" Not only am I in prison, but if you want to kick a man while he's down there are guys out there attacking my ministry. They're jealous, envious, rivaling me. Other ministers are criticizing me while I am in prison. If you want something to steal your joy quicker than anything else, just let other people begin to criticize you.

v. 18: "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice." Paul said he wasn't going to let anybody steal his joy. Not circumstances nor critics.

How many arguments in your marriage are over little things that really don't matter? Is it worth losing your joy over? No! Have a perspective to live from and a priority to live by.

LESSON: Focus on what really counts.

What should I live by? **Proverbs 3:6 "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."** This is what counts -- putting God first.

III. I NEED A POWER TO LIVE ON

I need strength to make it, to keep on going. Life can wear you out. Life can drain you completely. One crisis after another can drain you. You lose your energy and your power. Some of you are ready to throw in the towel. You say, "I've done the best I could, but it's not good enough and I'm tired and sick." You need a fresh power supply.

v. 19: "I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed..."

Paul says, I have two things that give me strength and kept me going in spite of four years of imprisonment. The prayers of other people and the help of God's Spirit.

Circle the word "hope". You can't live without hope. You've got to have hope to cope. Cornell University did a study of 25,000 POWs from WWII. They found that man can handle tremendous stress and pressure as long as he has hope. The moment hope is gone you're doomed.

Where do you get your hope to keep on keeping on? Is that source reliable? God's answer to personal energy crisis: *Phil. 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

LESSON: With God's power nothing can devastate me.

IV. I NEED A PURPOSE TO LIVE FOR

Paul is old and tired and been in prison for four years. He's ready to go on to heaven. They've taken every single thing from him -- friends, ministry, freedom, privacy. They've taken every thing from him except the one thing that cannot be taken from you and that is a purpose to live for.

V. 21 "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He's not suicidal but he's anticipating death.

How would you fill in the blank? For me to live is _____. Most people would fill in the blank in one of three ways:

1. "For me to live is **possessions**." Get all you can, can all you get, set on the can and spoil the rest. Get, get, get. We buy things we don't need, with money we don't have to impress people we don't even like. That's dumb!

2. "For me to live is **pleasure**." If it feels good, do it. Anything to make me pleasurable. Anything to relieve my boredom for one little moment, but then comes Monday... Pleasure doesn't last.

3. "For me to live is **power, position, prestige, popularity**." We dress for success and we drive to impress. Image is everything.

For many teenagers it is popularity. They'll do anything they can to fit into the peer group even if it means to lower their standards. You can be the most popular person on your campus, come back two years later and no one remembers you. One minute you're the hero the next minute you're the zero.

The problem with possessions, pleasure and power is that they don't last. There isn't ultimate fulfillment.

Paul had a long term goal. He looked at things in the light of eternity. *Phil. 3:13-14 "...forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."* The best use of your life is to invest it in something that will outlast it.

Why does God leave you on earth after you become a Christian? Once you are His child why does he leave us here? For the benefit of other people. To tell those who don't know the Lord the good news and encourage each other.

I am convinced that the reason there is so much unhappiness in our culture, so many

discouraged and depressed people is because in our society there is a total preoccupation with self. What's best for me? What will make me happy? What is the best thing for me? The ME generation.

When you learn to have a greater purpose in your life than just yourself, you will have joy. There is no such thing as problem free living. When you base your life on the kinds of values that are going to last, then problems just aren't as significant. So what if things haven't worked out as I've planned. God has a purpose that is bigger than my problems. God wants you to enjoy the rest of your life. But it starts with the foundational values we're talking about this morning.

The secret of joy -- Jesus first, others second, yourself third.

Review:

In Philippians, Paul deals with all the common kill-joys we experience in life. He starts off talking about people because people will rob your joy unless you learn how to respond to them the way Jesus did.

“There is no greater joy nor greater reward than to make a fundamental difference in someone’s life” Sister Mary Rose McGeady

“Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of a joy you must have somebody to divide it with” Mark Twain

Then, Paul gives us 4 essentials to live joyfully:

Have God's perspective on your problems. God has a purpose behind every problem. You need to pray, "Lord, help me to see this problem from Your viewpoint. Help me to see what You want me to learn in this situation. What do You want to teach me?"

Have a priority to live by. Have you settled the issue of what is really important in your life? *Matthew 6:33 "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."* Focus on what is important.

Live on God's power. Have you been trying to live solely on your own power to solve your problems and pressures in your life? God says, relax. You are carrying a burden that was never intended for you to carry. Come to God and give it all to Him, load it all on Him and ask Him to recharge you -- physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Then you can say like Paul, **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."**

Have purpose to live for. Everybody wants to live a long time, but why? Life is not judged by its duration but by its donation, not by what we take but by what we give...

“Try not to become a man of success but rather a man of value” Albert Einstein

“For me to live is Christ”, Paul is talking about having a relationship to the one who made you. God made you for a purpose. When you discover that purpose and get right in the center of it, it fits! And you feel fulfilled and you realize that is why you're here.