

# Joy for the Journey (7): Rejoice in the Lord

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(Philippians)

## I. Introduction

- A. Have you ever noticed how annoying happy people are when you not happy?
1. We had this guy at school named John who always energetic, upbeat, happy
    - a. Every time you ran into him on campus, it was always “*Isn’t God great!*”
    - b. One night I was pulling an all-nighter finishing a paper due at 8:30 a.m.
      - 1) Everything went wrong— power failure, lost note cards, migraine, etc
      - 2) I finished at 8:20 the next morning, and was literally running to class
    - c. I ran into John and his smiling, “*Isn’t God great!*” I wanted to kill him!
    - d. Yes, I knew God is great, but I wasn’t exactly feeling the joy of the Lord
  2. I wonder if church can ever feel like that when people are struggling?
    - a. We are all smiles and happy-clappy songs— like “*Sing and Be Happy*”
      - 1) You look around and everyone is “*Just fine,*” and they tell you so
      - 2) It’s like we’re all the “*Church of John.*” All smiles, “*Isn’t God great*”
    - b. Is there pressure to be more upbeat and joyful than we really feel?
    - c. Is church sometimes the art of generated joy when you feel anything but?
  3. Do we need to get plugged in and charged up for church? ([Video Clip](#))
    - a. Do we need “firewire” to give us a jolt of joy when we’re down?
    - b. Is joy something manufactured externally or is it integrated within
    - c. Can we acknowledge our struggle, pain and frustration and still have joy
- B. Good news if you are annoyed by all this talk about joy—series is almost over
1. We’ve been looking at “*Joy for the Journey,*” what Bible says about joy
    - a. In the Bible, joy is not denying that we have struggles and difficulties
      - 1) Jesus said we’d have troubles as long as we’re in the world ([Jn 16:33](#))
      - 2) Paul says we’ll have trouble **because** we live godly lives ([2 Tim 3:12](#))
    - b. Joy isn’t denying problem, it is rejoicing in God despite our problems
  2. Research “*joy*” or “*rejoice*” and you’ll find Paul uses the word 42 times
    - a. Almost a third of those (12x) appear in the small book of Philippians
    - b. So if we are going to understand joy, then we need to look at Philippians

## II. Paul, Philippians and Joy

A. As I said, Paul talks about joy more in Philippians—notice some texts

1. **First**, Paul found joy in his relationship with Christians at Philippi (**1:25-26**)  
*<sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.*
  - a. Paul spent more time in Ephesus and Corinth, but was closer to Philippi
    - 1) He considers them as his “*partnership in the gospel*” (**Phil 1:5**)
    - 2) This church that sent money to fund his work in places like Corinth
  - b. He takes great joy in their growth, and he knows they have joy in him
  - c. We should find joy in relationships with other believers (**Rom 12:15**)  
*Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*
2. **Second**, Paul found great joy in shared service and ministry (**Phil 2:17-18**)  
*<sup>17</sup> But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. <sup>18</sup> So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.*
  - a. Paul rejoiced because of sacrifice and service coming from their faith
    - 1) The language here is that of libation (drink) offering poured out
    - 2) Paul is the sacrificed poured out on Philippians sacrifice and service
  - b. We share joy by sharing our sacrifice and
    - 1) “*Sacrifice*” as in **Rom 12:1**, “*offer your bodies as living sacrifices*”
    - 2) “*Service*” here is λειτουργία; our life is a formal religious service
  - c. This ministry together as “*sacrificial offering*” (ESV) brings us joy
    - 1) It’s not joy unless we’re in it together—what if a few do the work?
    - 2) You may be happy to let others to all God’s work, but there’s no joy
    - 3) If we ask for volunteers (Children’s program)— spreading the joy
3. **Third**, when we rejoice, we stay focused in what’s important (**Phil 3:1**)  
*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.*
  - a. Paul is getting ready to warn the church about the dangers of Judiaziers
    - 1) False teachers that taught Gentiles to proselyte to Jewish rituals
    - 2) To be good Christian, you had to be a good Jew– Circumcision/Law
  - b. His inoculation against heresy is to rejoice in the Lord—safeguard
    - 1) If we are basking in God’s joy, we won’t be open to false gospels
    - 2) The more we see the “joy of the Lord,” the less we can be led astray

4. **Fourth**, Paul commands the Philippians to get some joy... twice (**4:4-5**)

<sup>4</sup> *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!* <sup>5</sup> *Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

- a. This is one of Paul's great 3x5 card statements—paste it up on the fridge
  - 1) We are to rejoice in the Lord; we are to rejoice because He is near
  - 2) Jesus promises, “*I am with you always*” (**Matt 28:20**). *Reason for joy*
- b. Notice the connection that is made between prayer and joy (**Phil 4:6-7**)

<sup>6</sup> *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* <sup>7</sup> *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
- c. So this is that joy that defies circumstance—not “*anxious about anything*”
- d. How? Because we believe God answers prayer; He is in control.
  - 1) John Greenleaf Whittier, “*God is and all is well*” Do we believe that?
  - 2) Peter wrote that our faith is a shield that protects us (**1 Pet 1:5**)

*\who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

B. So the theme of Philippians must be that of “joy” and “rejoicing” in the Lord

1. Maybe not; go back and read these texts again and one point stands out—
  - a. Paul never really accuses the Philippians of having any joy!
    - 1) He stresses joy and tells them they “*should be glad and rejoice*” (**2:18**)
    - 2) He says, “*I'll tell you again—‘Get some joy!’*” (*Can read it that way*)
  - b. Philippi was not a particularly joyous church when Paul writes his letter
2. Like all the churches to whom Paul wrote, there were issues in Philippi
  - a. Look at **Phil 1:9, 1:27, 2:2, 2:14, 2:21, 4:2, 4:5**. *See a pattern here?*
  - b. The problem at Philippi was unity; they had a hard time getting along
    - 1) Two sisters were at odds and their issue had spread to whole church
    - 2) Nothing robs us of “joy in the journey” faster than fussing & fighting
3. Compare these two statements—one the problem, the other the solution
  - a. **Problem:** Two many were focusing only on their interests (**Phil 2:21**)

*For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.*
  - b. **Solution:** Don't just focus only on your needs but on others (**Phil 2:4**)

*Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*
  - c. To focus only on making ourselves happy is a surefire way to lose joy!

### III. Conclusion: What Is the Point?

#### A. Maybe Paul gives us the point early in Philippians (**Phil 1:9-11**)

*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,  
<sup>10</sup> so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,  
<sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

1. Carol Osborne points to a papyri love letter found in Egypt by archeologists
    - a. The letter uses the exact same phrase Paul here— *“This is my prayer”*
    - b. What follows isn’t particularly religious, but it is the main point of letter!
    - c. Osborne: 1<sup>st</sup> century letters used this format to introduce their main point
  2. Paul’s main point in writing Philippians—for them to love each other more
    - a. And for them to do that, Paul wants them to *“discern what is best”* (v. 10)
    - b. Or as the NLT puts it *“I want you to understand what really matters”*
  3. Philippi struggled as a church is because they forgot what really matters
    - a. Joy had gotten lost amid squabbles over who would get their way
      - 1) What do you think those two sisters at Philippi were fighting over?
      - 2) Premillennialism? Bible versions? Who makes best bean casserole?
    - b. Some things are worth fighting for... and some things ARE NOT
      - 1) There’s an old military question, *“Is this a hill worth dying on?”*
      - 2) Most things Christians fight over just aren’t worth fighting over
    - c. Paul wants us to have knowledge/insight to know what really matters
  4. We’re never really going to have joy until we focus on what really matters
- #### B. What is it that is the most important thing in your life? What really matters?
1. Think about it this way—what will you look back with regret at end of life?
    - a. No one ever gets to the end and wishes that they had bought more cars
    - b. No one ever wishes they had worked more or even played more golf
    - c. What many people wish they could redo— focus on their relationships
      - 1) If only I would have spent more time with my children when little.
      - 2) If only I would have tried harder to make my marriage successful.
      - 3) If only I had invested more time in my friends, my church, my God
  2. Joy comes not through things or experiences, but through relationships
  3. The ultimate relationship is with God—what is most important to you?