



Life Group Series
HARRISONBURG FIRST
CHURCH OF
THE NAZARENE

JOY IN THE FIGHT: THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

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Joy in the Fight

A Note to Life Group Leaders

It takes a lot to be a great life group leader. The leader is part pastor, helping our church pastors care for our people. The leader is part administrator, making sure plans and logistics are taken care of. Then there is the role of an evangelist — the leader ensures that the life group reaches beyond itself. Finally, of course, the leader is a teacher.

As we considered the role of the life group leader, we developed this new series — in a notably new style — to help address two goals.

First, we want to take some of the load off the leader by providing more tools and support related to the leader's efforts as a *teacher*. It's challenging to have to research and prepare a lesson with everything else that's on the leader's plate. So, with this study on the book of Philippians, we're providing help.

Each lesson doesn't just include the text and a suggested ice breaker story telling session, but a teaching video. The session videos walk us through the key texts, ideas and suggested takeaways for the session. They also include possible discussion questions for the group's conversation following the teaching video.

The second goal relates to the role of life group members. Our vision is that the responsibility for leading, coordinating and nurturing the group belongs not just to the leader, but to the members as well. We're hoping that by easing the teaching burden, the focus of the life group leaders can be on sharing responsibility, ensuring that every member of the group does the ministry of the group.

So, in each life group meeting for which teaching will be included, there might now be a four step approach:

- Step 1: Ice breaker/Discussion warm-up
- Step 2: Teaching video
- Step 3: Discussion based on the teaching
- Step 4: Group and/or individual prayer

As always, the most important aspect of the lesson is *application*. Each person should leave the teaching asking God to grant them grace to grow, to actually *do* what is taught.

*Do what God's word says. Don't merely listen to it,
or you will fool yourselves. James 1:22*

Joy in the Fight

Session 1: Joy, Despite it All

Session Text

Philippians 1 1 From Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. To God's people in the city of Philippi and their bishops[a] and deacons—to everyone who is united with Christ Jesus. 2 Good will and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are yours! 3 I thank my God for all the memories I have of you. 4 **Every time I pray for all of you, I do it with joy.** 5 I can do this because of the partnership we've had with you in the Good News from the first day you believed until now. 6 I'm convinced that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it through to completion on the day of Christ Jesus. 7 You have a special place in my heart. So it's right for me to think this way about all of you. All of you are my partners. **Together we share God's favor, whether I'm in prison or defending and confirming the truth of the Good News.** 8 God is my witness that, with all the compassion of Christ Jesus, I long to see every one of you. 9 I pray that your love will keep on growing because of your knowledge and insight. 10 That way you will be able to determine what is best and be pure and blameless until the day of Christ. 11 **Jesus Christ will fill your lives with everything that God's approval produces. Your lives will then bring glory and praise to God.** 12 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what happened to me has helped to spread the Good News. 13 **As a result, it has become clear to all the soldiers who guard the emperor and to everyone else that I am in prison because of Christ.** 14 **So through my being in prison, the Lord has given most of our brothers and sisters confidence to speak God's word more boldly and fearlessly than ever.** 15 Some people tell the message about Christ because of their jealousy and envy. Others tell the message about him because of their good will. 16 Those who tell the message about Christ out of love know that God has put me here to defend the Good News. 17 But the others are insincere. They tell the message about Christ out of selfish ambition in order to stir up trouble for me while I'm in prison. 18 But what does it matter? Nothing matters except that, in one way or another, people are told the message about Christ, whether with honest or dishonest motives, and I'm happy about that. **Yes, I will continue to be happy 19 for another reason. I know that I will be set free through your prayers and through the help that comes from the Spirit of Jesus Christ.** 20 **I eagerly expect and hope that I will have nothing to be ashamed of. I will speak very boldly and honor Christ in my body, now as always, whether I live or die.** 21 **Christ means everything to me in this life, and when I die I'll have even more.** 22 If I continue to live in this life, my work will produce more results. I don't know which I would prefer. 23 I find it hard to choose between the two. I would like to leave this life and be with Christ. That's by far the better choice. 24 But for your sake it's better that I remain in this life.



Step 1 - Life Group Stories

Each person in a life group has stories of their walk with Christ, whether they began their journey in the last five days or the last five decades. So, begin the meeting inviting a few members in the group to discuss one or more of the following:

- A time in your life when, like the Apostle Paul, you were in a hard place (he wrote Philippians from prison). What was it like?
- A point when you finally just had to trust God in a situation. What brought you to that place?
- A time when you were being treated unfairly — or at least that was your perspective — and the frustration that created in you.

Joy in the Fight

Session 1: Joy, Despite it All

Step 2 - The Heart of the Word

Next, play this session's teaching segment from the Life Group DVD. A brief outline follows. In this week's teaching, Pastor Adrian introduces this new series on Philippians and challenges you to consider how to live joyfully in Christ, no matter what life brings.

Key Points

- Consider the background and context of the Book of Philippians - a book the Apostle Paul wrote from a Roman prison cell.
- A central theme for the book focuses on joy in the face of difficult circumstances and struggle.
- There is a joy that is so complete that it brings a peace such that our life really doesn't matter that much to us anymore. *"I will speak very boldly and honor Christ in my body, now as always, whether I live or die."*

The Message

- When you read the Book of Philippians you read about paradoxes — peace when you really shouldn't be peaceful, contentment in every kind of circumstance and joy, even in suffering. Joy, despite it all.
- Read the following passages and you'll see the theme clearly: 1:4; 2:14; 3:1; 3:13-14; 4:11b; 4:14.
- Paul writes those words from a prison cell in Rome. How should that influence how we read a book like Philippians and how we think about our own lives and circumstances?
- The "secret" of Paul's joy is found throughout Philippians Chapter 1.
 - Jesus referenced joy in John 15:11 - **I have told you this so that you will be as joyful as I am, and your joy will be complete.**
 - What does *complete* joy mean? We find an example in this text. 1:21-24 - **21 Christ means everything to me in this life, and when I die I'll have even more. 22 If I continue to live in this life, my work will produce more results. I don't know which I would prefer. 23 I find it hard to choose between the two. I would like to leave this life and be with Christ. That's by far the better choice. 24 But for your sake it's better that I remain in this life.**
 - Imagine a joy so complete that the effect is that you don't care if you live or die. Either is a happy choice.

Step 3 - Questions to Consider

Following the teaching video for this session, ask the group to consider the following questions for discussion.

When you watched the video, what stood out to you?

Who is an example to complete joy in your life (either presently or in the past)? What set them apart as such a clear example?

The video shared two things about joy: 1 It's not about you; 2 it's not about your circumstances. Which of these two do you struggle with when it comes to being truly joyful?

From a worldly perspective, things didn't really turn out all right for Paul, since he was eventually beheaded for the cause of Christ. Would he have changed his mind if he knew how it was going to turn out? Why or why not? What if you were in his place?

If you accept that God has begun a good work in you and that He is faithful to complete it, where are you in the growing process?

Ultimately, do you trust God with your life? How do you know?

Joy in the Fight

Session 2: Unite for the Fight

Session Text

Philippians 1 27 Live as citizens who reflect the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come to see you or whether I stay away, I'll hear all about you. **I'll hear that you are firmly united in spirit, united in fighting for the faith that the Good News brings. 28 So don't let your opponents intimidate you in any way.** This is God's way of showing them that they will be destroyed and that you will be saved. **29** God has given you the privilege not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for him. **30** You are involved in the same struggle that you saw me having. Now you hear that I'm still involved in it.



Step 1 - Life Group Stories

Each person in a life group has stories of their walk with Christ, whether they began their journey in the last five days or the last five decades. So, begin the meeting inviting a few members in the group to discuss one or more of the following:

- A point in your life when the unity of others helped you, when people came together and the result was blessing for you or your family.
- A time of suffering you experienced that God used in your life, when having the "same struggle" Paul references in Philippians 1:30 strengthened you.

Joy in the Fight

Session 2: Unite for the Fight

Step 2 - The Heart of the Word

Next, play this session's teaching segment from the Life Group DVD. You'll find a brief outline below. In this week's teaching, Pastor Kerry helps us understand the importance of unity among us as we fight side-by-side for the "faith that the Good News brings."

Key Points:

- Unity is at the center of what God wants to do with and in His people. Nothing can happen — love, service, care, fellowship — apart from God's people being ONE.
- Maintaining unity is a battle.
- We are called to battle our adversaries.

The Message

- Unity is so important to God, that it was on the Lord's mind as he prayed his final prayer in John 17:21-23:
 - **21 I pray that all of these people continue to have unity in the way that you, Father, are in me and I am in you. I pray that they may be united with us so that the world will believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me. I did this so that they are united in the same way we are. 23 I am in them, and you are in me. So they are completely united. In this way the world knows that you have sent me and that you have loved them in the same way you have loved me.**
- Have you ever thought about what it means to be *one*, what it looks like in real life?
- There are three truths to this call to unity:
 1. It is a lifestyle — "*Live* as citizens who reflect the Good News."
 - Unity is an observable phenomenon. You can watch it being *lived out*.
 2. True unity isn't a human idea, but one of God. We are to be firmly united *in Spirit*.
 - True unity is only possible in and through God. It is a *spiritual* quality.
 3. We are to be united in fighting for the faith. There will be opposition.
 - Expect unity to be difficult, to require a struggle, to be an act of overcoming.
- Our strength in unity teaches our opponents. Our unified fight is a form of evangelism.

Step 3 - Questions to Consider

Following the teaching video for this session, ask the group to consider the following questions for discussion.

- When you watched the video, what stood out to you?
- What is it about Jesus' prayer in John 17 that challenges you most?
- If Jesus' vision for believers was unity, how should that impact our urgency to pursue unity today?
- Why do you think unity was so important to Jesus and, by extension, to Paul? What's the big deal about it?
- If you had to write, *Three Rules for Life Group Unity*, what would they be?
- How can you be the individual that God created you to be, but also lay down your life for others? Can you have both things?
- What does unity look like to you? How can you tell if it's being threatened? Who are the adversaries of unity in the church Harrisonburg/Rockingham County in 2017?

Joy in the Fight

Session 3: The Grow in “Although”

Session Text

Philippians 2 1 So then, as Christians, do you have any encouragement? Do you have any comfort from love? Do you have any spiritual relationships? Do you have any sympathy and compassion? 2 Then fill me with joy by having the same attitude and the same love, living in harmony, and keeping one purpose in mind. **3 Don't act out of selfish ambition or be conceited. Instead, humbly think of others as being better than yourselves. 4 Don't be concerned only about your own interests, but also be concerned about the**



interests of others. 5 Have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. 6 Although he was in the form of God and equal with God, he did not take advantage of this equality. 7 Instead, he emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant, by becoming like other humans, by having a human appearance. 8 He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, death on a cross. 9 This is why God has given him an exceptional honor—the name honored above all other names—10 so that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will kneel 11 and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. 12 My dear friends, you have always obeyed, not only when I was with you but even more now that I'm absent. In the same way continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling. 13 It is God who produces in you the desires and actions that please him. 14 Do everything without complaining or arguing. 15 Then you will be blameless and innocent. You will be God's children without any faults among people who are crooked and corrupt. You will shine like stars among them in the world 16 as you hold firmly to the word of life. Then I can brag on the day of Christ that my effort was not wasted and that my work produced results. 17 My life is being poured out as a part of the sacrifice and service I offer to God for your faith. Yet, I am filled with joy, and I share that joy with all of you. 18 For this same reason you also should be filled with joy and share that joy with me.

Step 1 - Life Group Stories

As we walk through this study together, stories are important. Each person in the group likely has a story or two related to this session's theme. So, begin the meeting inviting a few members in the group to discuss one or more of the following:

- Recall a time when you observed someone take a steady, humble hand in a tumultuous situation. How did they do it?
- A time you remember feeling as if your life was being “poured out” yet, for reasons you couldn't really explain, you felt filled with joy at the same time.

Joy in the Fight

Session 3: The Grow in "Although"

Step 2 - The Heart of the Word

Next, play this session's teaching segment from the Life Group DVD. You'll find a brief outline below. In this week's teaching, Pastor Adrian unpacks what it means to have the same attitude that Christ has and challenges us to transfer that word — "although" — into how we live, not demanding our own rights and privileges, but humbling ourselves before others.

Key Points:

- The word, "although" presents a very important theme in this text and the life we are being called to.
- "Although" Jesus was equal to God and deserving of our honor, adoration and praise, He set it all down, emptying himself.
- The practice of laying down our rights is the lifestyle to which we are being called: *"Have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Although he was in the form of God and equal with God, he did not take advantage of this equality. Instead, he emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant..."*

The Message

- Have you thought much about the word, "although?"
 - The word sets two ideas against each other. And those two ideas are really important in the text.
- In the text, first the Apostle Paul tells us what *not* to do:
 - Don't act out of selfish ambition.
 - Don't be conceited.
 - Don't be concerned about our own interests.
- Instead, we should model Christ who, **Although he was in the form of God and equal with God, he did not take advantage of this equality. Instead, he emptied himself by taking on the form of a servant...**
 - Jesus could have demanded rights and power that he certainly deserved as Lord. Instead, He emptied himself. He humbled Himself. He served.
 - This is a process of growth for us. That's why the title of this session refers to The Grow in, "Although."
 - We are used to demanding our rights. You may feel you deserve certain benefits, because of your education or hard work. What rights did Jesus deserve?

Step 3 - Questions to Consider

Following the teaching video for this session, ask the group to consider the following questions for discussion.

- When we witness a selfless act it's truly inspiring. Can you think of an example you've witnessed? Or even an example from a movie/book/story?
- We can be quick to demand our rights, yet often forget how much grace we have received. Psalm 103:10 says "he does not treat us as our sins deserve". Why do we so quickly forget this? What causes us to "push back" in light of all Christ has done for us?
- Of course you're not Jesus. You couldn't make the sacrifice He made. Yet, in this text you are called to "have the same attitude" as the Lord. How is that possible? What does it look like?
- In a culture so intent on people demanding their rights, how is it possible to lay down what you deserve without getting stepped on by others?
- Does modeling Jesus' attitude of servanthood become easy over time? If you can grow into it, does it eventually become natural? How does that work in you?
- What's the last thing you did that you would consider equivalent to emptying yourself?

Joy in the Fight

Session 4: Beware of Dog

Session Text

Philippians 3 1 Now then, brothers and sisters, **be joyful in the Lord.** It's no trouble for me to write the same things to you, and it's for your safety. **2 Beware of dogs! Beware of those who do evil things. Beware of those who insist on circumcision. 3 We are the true circumcised people of God because we serve God's Spirit and take pride in Christ**



Jesus. We don't place any confidence in physical things, 4 although I could have confidence in my physical qualifications. If anyone else thinks that he can trust in something physical, I can claim even more. 5 I was circumcised on the eighth day. I'm a descendant of Israel. I'm from the tribe of Benjamin. I'm a pure-blooded Hebrew. When it comes to following Jewish laws, I was a Pharisee. 6 When it comes to being enthusiastic, I was a persecutor of the church. When it comes to winning God's approval by obeying Jewish laws, I was perfect. 7 These things that I once considered valuable, I now consider worthless for Christ. **8 It's far more than that! I consider everything else worthless because I'm much better off knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. It's because of him that I think of everything as worthless. I threw it all away in order to gain Christ 9 and to have a relationship with him. This means that I didn't receive God's approval by obeying his laws. The opposite is true! I have God's approval through faith in Christ. This is the approval that comes from God and is based on faith 10 that knows Christ.** Faith knows the power that his coming back to life gives and what it means to share his suffering. In this way I'm becoming like him in his death, 11 with the confidence that I'll come back to life from the dead.

Step 1 - Life Group Stories

As we walk through this study together, stories are important. Each person in the group likely has a story or two related to this session's theme. So, begin the meeting inviting a few members in the group to discuss one or more of the following:

- Share a favorite dog story you have.
- Discuss a time when you were tempted to defend yourself before God based on your earthly accomplishments or credentials rather than faith in Christ by grace.
- Talk about a pattern of thought you deal with where you justify yourself based on being a good person or doing good things.

Joy in the Fight

Session 4: Beware of Dog

Step 2 - The Heart of the Word

Next, play this session's teaching segment from the Life Group DVD. You'll find a brief outline below. In this week's teaching, Brian Charette discusses the reason behind Paul's specific use of the warning, "Beware of dogs" in the text.

Key Points:

- Paul's warning about dogs goes beyond avoiding evil, but a particular kind of religion-based evil.
- The religious Jews referred to the non-Jewish as "dogs." But Paul turns the tables and refers to those who insist on adding human rules and laws (or, religion) to a requirement for salvation as the "dogs."
- The "dogs" of 2017 add certain religious practices as implied requirements for salvation. These things, however, are "worthless."

The Message

- That word "dogs" isn't just an insult, but a religious term.
 - Mark 7: 27 **Jesus said to her, "First, let the children eat all they want. It's not right to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs."**
 - Jesus performs a miracle for a *Gentile* woman. It didn't matter that she wasn't a Jew.
 - This is exactly the point of Paul's thoughts in Galatians 3:28-29: **There are neither Jews nor Greeks, slaves nor free people, males nor females. You are all the same in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants and heirs, as God promised.**
 - When Paul says, "Beware of dogs" in Philippians 3, the irony is that he's NOT referring to Gentiles at all. He's turning the word on its head and referring to some Jews ("Judaizers") as "dogs."
 - Judaizer: In the early church, those who taught a combination of God's grace and human effort were called *Judaizers*. That word means "to live according to Jewish customs."
 - Who are the "dogs" of 2017?
 - Philippians 3:8-9a: **I consider everything else worthless because I'm much better off knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. It's because of him that I think of everything as worthless. I threw it all away in order to gain Christ and to have a relationship with him.**

Step 3 - Questions to Consider

Following the teaching video for this session, ask the group to consider the following questions for discussion.

- As you watched the video, what stood out to you?
- The religious Jews in Jesus' time used the term "dogs" to refer to the Gentiles, the non-Jews. Paul turns that on its head and refers to the religious Jews as "dogs." Why do you think he did that and what would have been the impact?
- What are some examples of modern day "dogs" — those who would insist on certain practices be added to faith in Christ in order for salvation to be available? Are there certain practices that some believe are so important that they come dangerously close to being considered requirements to be a Christian in addition to a life of faith in Christ?
- What was it about the Greek woman who confronted Jesus that you think He liked? What would an approach like hers look like if you were the one approaching him?
- If you could use one word to describe the difference between religion and relationship, what would that word be and why?
- Paul says in Galatians that the coming of Christ means that "there are neither... ..males nor females..." Of course there are still men and women so what does he mean?

Joy in the Fight

Session 5: Don't Look Back

Session Text

Philippians 3 12 It's not that I've already reached the goal or have already completed the course. **But I run to win that which Jesus Christ has already won for me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I can't consider myself a winner yet. This is what I do: I don't look back, I lengthen my stride, and 14 I run straight toward the goal to win the prize that God's heavenly call offers in Christ Jesus.** 15 Whoever has a mature faith should think this way. And if you think differently, God will show you how to think. 16 However, we should be guided by what we have learned so far.



Step 1 - Life Group Stories

Each person in the group should consider sharing stories from their life that relates to this session's theme. So, begin the meeting inviting a few members in the group to discuss one or more of the following:

- Things in your past that tend to want to draw you back in an attitude of regret or despair and how you work at leaving them in the past.
- An example of what "running straight toward the goal" looks like in your life.
- The most important lessons you have learned that hardships have taught you.

Joy in the Fight

Session 5: Don't Look Back

Step 2 - The Heart of the Word

Next, play this session's teaching from the Life Group DVD. This week, Pastor Adrian describes "the race" that Paul is referring to in this session's text, with a focus on what it means to run to win the prize, press on despite distractions and leave the past in the past.

Key Points:

- In order to help us understand the journey that is following Christ, Paul uses the analogy of a footrace.
- The implication of that analogy is that our endurance will be required and that obstacles will need to be overcome.
- We will face distractions, things along the course that could keep us from running straight ahead, toward our goal — the prize that is Heaven.
- A key race strategy is to focus ahead, not looking back and being dragged down by what's behind us.

The Message

- There are two directions that appear to be of concern in the text:
 - Direction #1: What is along *the side* of our pathway.
 - Paul makes a three-word declaration: **I run straight.**
 - What are distractions that cause us to turn left or turn right or slow down or veer off course?
 - Hebrews 12:1-3 - What are our distractions? Sin? Fear? Unbelief?
 - Direction #2: What is *behind* us.
 - Even if you're not a runner you know that you can't run where you're not looking.
 - The course we've run, we've run. What's done is done.
 - Philippians 3:16 - **However, we should be guided by what we have learned so far.**
 - Leave the past in the past. **13 Brothers and sisters, I can't consider myself a winner yet. This is what I do: I don't look back, I lengthen my stride, and 14 I run straight toward the goal to win the prize that God's heavenly call offers in Christ Jesus.**
 - Your past can guide you, your past can weigh you down and distract you. Some become so transfixed by their past that they can't take another step.
- But the prize is ahead of us. And that's what matters.

Step 3 - Questions to Consider

Following the teaching video for this session, ask the group to consider the following questions for discussion.

- Your direction determines your destination. How have you experienced that to be true? How is it that we often believe just because our intentions are good then that's enough?
- What keeps you from keeping your eyes fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-3)? Why is this focus so critical in the fight for joy?
- We don't particularly like pain. And we don't like waiting. The encouragement to be "comfortable being uncomfortable" is not particularly appealing. How have you found this to be true?
- Why do you think Paul used the analogy of a race to describe a life of faith? How does your journey fit that analogy?
- What distractions do you face in your race? What are factors that seem to have the effect of knocking you off course?
- What's the secret to letting your past guide you, but not letting it drag you down? How do you do that, practically speaking?

Joy in the Fight

Session 6: Joy, Again

Session Text

Philippians 4 1 So, brothers and sisters, I love you and miss you. You are my joy and my crown. Therefore, dear friends, **keep your relationship with the Lord firm!** **2** I

encourage both Euodia and Syntyche to have the attitude the Lord wants them to have.

3 Yes, I also ask you, Syzygus, my true partner, to help these women. They fought beside me to spread the Good News along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers, whose names are in the Book of Life.

4 Always be joyful in the Lord! I'll say it again: Be joyful! **5 Let everyone know how considerate you are. The Lord is near.**

6 Never worry about anything. But in every situation let God know what you need in prayers and requests while giving thanks. **7 Then God's peace, which goes beyond anything we can imagine, will guard your thoughts and emotions through Christ Jesus.**



Step 1 - Life Group Stories

Each person in the group should consider sharing stories from their life that relates to this session's theme. So, begin the meeting inviting some to share based on the following suggested questions.

- It's interesting to think of times when your relationship with the Lord felt, as Paul describes it, "firm." What does that mean to you? Can you think of an example?
- Would you describe yourself as a worrier? Why do you think that is?
- Talk about a time when you knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Lord was near you. How did you know?

Joy in the Fight

Session 6: Joy, Again

Step 2 - The Heart of the Word

In this week's teaching, Pastor Kerry addresses the concepts that are so important in this session and for the Book of Philippians overall — the central theme of joy, especially as it overcomes worry and results in a peace that goes beyond our imagination. Next, play Pastor Kerry's session for this week from the Life Group DVD.

Key Points:

- In order to manage all of the challenges and obstacles we face, we are to keep our relationship with the Lord firm.
- Joy is one important facet of a firm relationship. It is not an emotion we control, but an attitude we choose.
- When we pray gratefully, worry is replaced by a peace so broad and deep that we can't understand or imagine it within the limits of our mind.

The Message

- Repetition is important in the Book of Philippians. The theme of this session is not new. It was a message that Paul wanted to be embraced.
- The leading idea: Keep your relationship with the Lord FIRM.
 - **Always be joyful in the Lord! I'll say it again: Be joyful!**
 - Determine that you will be joyful!
 - Psalm 43:5: **Why are you discouraged, my soul? Why are you so restless? Put your hope in God, because I will still praise him. He is my savior and my God.**
 - **Never worry about anything. But in every situation let God know what you need in prayers and requests while giving thanks.**
 - Is this even possible?
 - The battle against worry is won by God Himself working in the grateful prayer of the believer.
 - Want to overcome worry? Pray gratefully.
 - The benefit of a firm relationship: Peace
 - Not just any peace. Not emotional peace, not worldly peace, not peace that is bound in human flesh. **Then God's peace, which goes beyond anything we can imagine, will guard your thoughts and emotions through Christ Jesus.**

Step 3 - Questions to Consider

Following the teaching video for this session, ask the group to consider the following questions for discussion.

- As you watched the video, what stood out?
- In what ways is joy truly a choice? Think back on a time when you had to choose joy, even when it was hard. How were you able to persevere? What was the secret to your success?
- Think on the story of Lazarus. Why was it critical that Jesus praised God before Lazarus was even raised? In what ways does praise precede the resurrection power we hope and pray for?
- Paul exhorts us to maintain a relationship with the Lord that is, "firm." What are some synonyms for that word? What's the opposite of a "firm" relationship?
- Was there a time in your life when you had joy but didn't necessarily feel happy? What was that like? How does it work?
- Is it really possible to never worry? If, yes, why is there so much worry, even in the church? How can a chronic worrier finally have peace?

Joy in the Fight

Session 7: The Thoughts that Count

Session Text

Philippians 4 8 Finally, brothers and sisters, keep your thoughts on whatever is right or deserves praise: things that are true, honorable, fair, pure, acceptable, or commendable. 9 Practice what you've learned and received from me, what you heard and saw me do. Then the God who gives this peace will be with you.



Step 1 - Life Group Stories

Stories are such an important way that we encourage each other. Indeed, we learn a lot about how to live from the stories we read in the Bible and the stories we hear from our loved ones. Begin the life group meeting by inviting members to share stories based on the following prompts:

- Paul's command to "keep your thoughts on whatever is right..." seems easier said than done. Describe a time in your life when your thoughts really hurt you.
- Share some differences between your pattern of thought before you knew the Lord as compared with after.

Joy in the Fight

Session 7: The Thoughts that Count

Step 2 - The Heart of the Word

In this week's teaching, Pastor Kerry helps us think about thinking. It's possible that this small section of Philippians - 4:8-9 — holds the key to the "how to" for the rest of the book, concepts such as joy, perseverance and peace. Next, play this session's lesson from the Life Group DVD. A brief outline follows.

Key Points:

- God has much to say about your mind — about the way you think.
- What you think about matters. (Proverbs 23:7, KJV: *As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.*)
- One of the most important exhortations in Philippians, and perhaps the key to joy in the fight, is keeping our thoughts on the good.
- When you seek God in grateful prayer, He will move your mind.

The Message

- Have you ever thought about thinking?
- The Bible has much to say about the work of thinking.
 - Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 10:3-5, 1 Corinthians 2:16
 - Philippians 4:8-9 **Finally, brothers and sisters, keep your thoughts on whatever is right or deserves praise: things that are true, honorable, fair, pure, acceptable, or commendable.**
 - The message? Think good thoughts. Or better. Think God thoughts.
- How you *are* is tied to how you *think*.
 - We sometimes consider thinking to be passive, that we are simply slaves to our thoughts. But we are to take an active role in thinking. We are to wage the battle of our minds.

Philippians 4:6-7

But in every situation let God know what you need in prayers and requests while giving thanks. Then God's peace, which goes beyond anything we can imagine, will guard your thoughts and emotions through Christ Jesus.

Step 3 - Questions to Consider

Following the teaching video for this session, ask the group to consider the following questions for discussion.

- As you watched the video, what stood out to you?
- "To belong totally to Jesus is to experience an onslaught of our the mind by the enemy." How have you experienced this in your life? Speaking from experience, what is so critical about our mind that the enemy would choose to attack us in this way?
- "We can have bad thoughts, but bad thoughts cannot have us." What is the difference? How is this truly possible?
- Some could say that focusing so much on our minds is a waste of time. It's our actions that truly matter. What would you say to such a person?
- What does the battle for your mind usually look like? In other words, what thoughts represent your toughest fight?
- Make a life group list of thoughts that fall into the categories listed in Philippians 4:8. Share ideas for how you think actively about these things.

Joy in the Fight

Session 8: The Secret of Life

Session Text

Philippians 4 10 The Lord has filled me with joy because you again showed interest in me. You were interested but did not have an opportunity to show it. 11 I'm not saying this because I'm in any need. **I've learned to be content in whatever situation I'm in. 12 I know how to live in poverty or prosperity. No matter what the situation, I've learned the secret of how to live when I'm full or when I'm hungry, when I have too much or when I have too little. 13 I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me.**



Step 1 - Life Group Stories

Stories are such an important way that we encourage each other. Indeed, we learn a lot about how to live from the stories we read in the Bible and the stories we hear from our loved ones. Begin the life group meeting by inviting members to share stories based on the following prompts:

- How do you know when you're content? What kinds of signs do you look for in your life to make that judgment?
- When have you walked through something and you knew it could only have been Christ strengthening you in the situation?

Step 2 - The Heart of the Word

Next, play this session's teaching video from the Life Group DVD. A brief outline follows. In this week's teaching, Pastor Adrian concludes the series by helping us understand Paul's notion of "the secret of how to live." He'll also dig a bit deeper into the overarching theme of Philippians - contentment in the midst of the fight, joy no matter our circumstances.

Key Points:

- The Book of Philippians has much to offer the Christian living in 2017.
- There's a way to be content — to have joy and be at peace — no matter what your circumstances or situation.
- The secret of life really isn't a secret; There are basic principles to being content.
- It is the strengthening work of Christ that empowers us.

The Message

- What message has resonated most with you as we have studied the Book of Philippians? Joy no matter what? The importance of unity in the fight? The call toward humble service? Putting away the past and pressing on? etc.
- Perhaps if the Book of Philippians had a subtitle that would be it: *The Secret of How to Live*.
- Four Principles of Contentment
 1. A contented person is not tied up in material things.

It's almost impossible to be content with your mind focused on yourself or your stuff.
 2. A contented person does not use their circumstances to judge God's working in their life.

If your thoughts about God are tied to your circumstances, you will ride a roller coaster of faith and doubt, joy and fear.
 3. A contented person focuses on the needs of others.

Want more joy in your life? Be more helpful. What more contentment? Find ways to serve other people.
 4. A contented person simply believes that God is enough to strengthen them, no matter the fight.

I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me.

Step 3 - Questions to Consider

Following the teaching video for this session, ask the group to consider the following questions for discussion.

- As you watched the video, what stood out to you?
- Do you know someone who seemed to experience true contentment in spite of their circumstances? What is it about this kind of person that is so unique?
- In order to feel content, we often feel like we need His presence AND something else. Why is that? What keeps us from recognizing that He is enough in the midst of our circumstances?
- What is one thing this group can do to help you put this study into practice in your every day life? What is a step you have taken? What is a new step the Lord may be asking you to take?
- Of all the messages taught in the Book of Philippians, which one has been most impactful to you? What has been most challenging?
- In your own words, what's the secret of life?

