



Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. The Journey Resources
- IV. Support for the Leader

How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

If your group meets over Zoom:

- Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

Group Leader Support:

- Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
- If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#).

LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on June 30, 2024
by Pastor Tom VanAntwerp

PARTNERS IN JOY – Philippians 4:4-9



I. Introduction

Welcome to the last message in our sermon series, *Dear Church*, where we've spent the last several weeks reflecting on the words of a letter that Paul wrote around 60 AD from a Roman prison cell to the church 800 miles away in the Roman city of Philippi. Paul is thanking them for a money gift that the church sent to him. At the same time he is reminding them of the nature of their partnership together, partnership in the gospel, the good news, the euangelion, or pronouncement that Jesus is Lord and the Kingdom is here.

Questions: How can we experience joy regardless of our personality, place, or circumstance? Where does this joy come from and how can we access it?

Bottom Line: When we place our trust in Jesus, by giving our allegiance to him and living the way of Jesus, we bring the qualities of heaven here to earth. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we can choose to do God's will. Joy is the product of bringing God's Kingdom here on earth through our actions and interactions with people we encounter in our everyday lives.

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

Main Scripture Readings: Philippians 4:4-9

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

II. **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Pastor Tom began the message a simple question: Are you a joyful person? Before answering this question, perhaps it would be worthwhile to discuss:

- How do you define joy?
- Do you regularly experience Joy?
- Do you express joy or share it with the people around you? If so how?

2. Read Philippians 4:4-5

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

- How is it that Paul has found such joy while in prison? What is it that he's tapped into that leads a person in his set of circumstances to be so alive with joy that he speaks of it as "a peace that surpasses all understanding"?

3. Developing a personal relationship with God, through prayer, is the first portal of entry into the Kingdom. Read Philippians 4:6-7 together:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- How would you describe your relationship with God right now?
- How often do you spend time in prayer?
- If you have a desire to spend more time with God, or do so more routinely, ask members of your small group to share their experience.

4. Pastor Tom shared a personal story of how, on a recent family trip to York Beach, his joy was stolen by a new scratch on his prized red Mazda CX-9.

- Can you think of a time when you became preoccupied by a mishap and lost sight of the bigger picture? If so, share it with your small group.

5. Pastor Tom suggested an exercise of reframing our thoughts from the realities of this world to viewing them through the lens of heaven. You could hand out paper and a pen for people to write down their answers.

- Think of something in your life that is making you feel anxious, worried, angry, or fearful. Then take a few minutes to answer the following questions:
 - What is true that I may be missing here?
 - What is beautiful that I am overlooking?

- What is pure?
- What would it take for me to be noble?

6. Perhaps the most important part of Philippians 4 is a call to action. Read Philippians 4:9 together:

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

- As you close in prayer, take a few minutes to think about your family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, or members of your church community. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to any who might need love, forgiveness or mercy from you. Then, make a choice to do God's will this week.

Take Home Message:

A life of joy doesn't mean a life of ease and comfort. It means courage and sacrifice, perseverance and reliance on each other, and a deep love and care for those who are most vulnerable. Life is hard. But joy is always near – because the realities of heaven are always at play in the world today. Joy gets multiplied when we see ourselves as partners in this kind of joy.

Let's Pray

III. The Journey



We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships and

- The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

Launching by the end of September: The newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

IV. Support for the Leader

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

Teaching Points:

There are 3 portals of entry into the Kingdom:

1. *Our prayers:*
When we turn to God, we discover that God delights in us and brings delight to us
2. *Our thoughts:*
What your mind chooses to dwell on determines which world you live in
3. *Our actions:*
Joy gets fully realized only when we put into practice what we think and know

Supplementary Scripture:

1Thessalonians 5:16-18

¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray continually, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:11-13

¹¹I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Matthew 6:10:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.