



## Devotional



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## **Foreword:**

We all want to experience joy. To have a joyful life. The struggle is, we don't always know what a joyful life is. Let me be clear – joy is not happiness. If you want to read a devotional about how to have a happy life you won't find it here. Happiness is a feeling. Happiness is often predicated on the external realities we are facing. Joy, though, comes not from the external realities of life, but from within. For Paul, joy is not the result of finding himself in comfortable circumstances but of seeing the gospel make progress through his circumstances and the circumstances of the Philippians. That's why you can be going through difficult situations, but still have a joyful life.

Jesus wants us to have, to know, and to cherish our God given joyfulness. Nehemiah 8:10 says, "The joy of the Lord is my strength." It is my hope and prayer that you would experience and know true joy as we go through this journey together.

**August 11, 2019**

Philippians 1:4

“...Constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you.”

## **Longing to Belong**

Relationships matter. It doesn't matter what kind of relationship it is. It matters. We all have an innate desire to belong. To be a part of something allows you to feel things you wouldn't otherwise feel. That's why solitary confinement is a difficult punishment for those who are incarcerated. It removes them from the community.

When you're a part of something like a church, or a club, or sports team you have the opportunity to become a tight community. When Paul writes to the Philippians he tells them, “I thank God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you.” A joyful life is lived in community with others. As Christians we can also be praying with and for everyone, but the flipside is also true. We can be prayed for and supported by others. If you're searching for a joyful life – then get connected to a small group. In a small group you will find you will grow in your faith journey and you will experience the joy of community through prayer.

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## **Questions to consider:**

1. Where or when was a time where I felt I was a part of something?
2. Was there a time prayer helped you?
3. Who is God calling me to lift up and surround in prayer?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank you for creating us for relationships. Help me to lean on and learn from others so that I may experience the joy you intend for me to have. I admit, sometimes it is easier to go it alone, but help me find the supportive community where you are calling me.

**August 12, 2019**

Philippians 1:5

“...because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.”

## **CommUNITY**

Unity. It's a word we don't hear often anymore. It is much easier to focus on what makes a difference rather than what unites us. Division is easier than unity, but it's nowhere near as strong.

One of my favorite wedding verses is Ecclesiastes 4:12 which says, “A threefold cord is not easily broken.” When two people join their lives together and make a covenant with each other and with God – it is not easily broken. There's a unity there that is stronger than they would be separately.

A strong united community is vital for faith growth. The Greek word Paul used for sharing is *koinonia*. It means so much more than sharing, it means partnering in all of life together. It speaks of being united together. Who are your partners walking alongside you, encouraging you, lifting you up, and saying the challenging word when necessary? We all need partners to walk through life with.

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### **Questions to Consider:**

1. When was a time you experienced unity and solidarity in your life?
2. Who are the partners walking alongside you in life? What could be challenging about having that kind of partnership with others?

### **Prayer:**

Father God, open my heart so that I might be willing to have others walk alongside me so that I can experience true community.

**August 13, 2019**

Philippians 1:6-8

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.

**You are a masterpiece.** In Paul's letter to the Ephesians he wrote, "For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago." (2:10 *NLT*). A masterpiece. That's what God considers us. But in Paul's letter to the Philippians he tells us, "I am confident of this, the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ." Though it may seem odd, the two are not mutually exclusive. I don't know about you, but I find solace in that verse from Philippians because it means God's not done working in and through me yet.

The phrase "the day of Christ Jesus" indicates that it is a work that God alone accomplishes, but the notion that it is not yet complete shows that it involves a progressive transformation of the lives of believers. The "good work" of salvation, then, includes God's gift to believers - both of the will and the ability to do good works. The presence of these good works in turn provide evidence of real belief, evidence that God has begun and will complete the work of salvation in the person who displays them.

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### **Questions to Consider:**

1. Do you believe that you are a masterpiece of God? Why or why not?
2. What makes it so challenging to accept that God is working in us so that we may be a masterpiece and complete?
3. How does your life reflect God's presence and work to those around you?

**Prayer:** Almighty God, give me the eyes to see me as you see me. A masterpiece. Until that day comes, by the power of the Holy Spirit – continue you work in me so that I may radiate your love and grace to others.

**August 14, 2019**

Philippians 1:9-10

“And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless.”

### **It all comes down to this: Love**

Love is our marker and our guidepost. As believers in Jesus Christ we are called to exemplify one thing and one thing alone – love. Jesus said, “By this will they know you are my disciples that you love one another.” (John 13:35) All of our actions, all of our words, everything comes down to love. If we are seeking a joyful life we are seeking a life together, a life marked by prayer and love.

Paul’s prayer for the Philippians was that their love would overflow. The church in Philippi knew the love of God in Jesus Christ and that love drives and compels us to love one another. When our love for each other overflows imagine what kind of difference that makes not just in our personal lives, but in the lives of work environment or communities.

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### **Questions to Consider:**

1. If people had one word to describe you – what word would they use?
2. Who is God calling you to love in an overflowing way? How will you show it?
3. What can we do to help love overflow in our communities?

### **Prayer:**

Loving God, you call us to love you and love another. Give us a spirit of overflowing love so that lives would be changed by Christ.

**August 15, 2019**

Philippians 1:12-13

“I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ.”

## **God’s got it.**

Everyone loves to go through challenging circumstances, right? No? I know you’re reading this, but I’m pretty sure I hear crickets. Paul was writing this letter while in jail. Nowadays those in prison have a lot of amenities that prisoners didn’t have in Paul’s day. I’m not just speaking about television or phone calls, but prisoners today get three meals a day. In Paul’s day the only meals you were given were the ones that were brought to you by family members or friends.

It was no cakewalk. Still, Paul assured those that were worried and concerned about him that his problems have helped spread the gospel. Even in while in jail, Paul’s concern was spreading the gospel – and it was happening.

This passage reminds us that even in our challenging circumstances – God is in control. It reminds us that God can use our challenges and difficulties to bring about good. While no one wants to willingly suffer, this passage provides us a glimpse of hope that can fill our hearts with joy.

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## **Questions to Consider:**

1. How do you tend to respond when you go through challenging or difficult moments?
2. What makes it hard for many to accept that God is in control? Do you believe that from your own experience?

## **Prayer:**

Holy God, it’s hard for us to admit that you are in control. Especially when things aren’t going our way. Help us remember you are good and faithful. Help use these challenges and difficulties for your good.

**August 16, 2019**

Philippians 1:14

“... and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear.”

### **God is > fear**

Fear is powerful. When I was younger I had a deep fear of speaking in public. Beads of sweat would run down my face. Sometimes my body shook uncontrollably. I avoided it at all cost.

Fear can prevent us from being the person that God created us to be. It can prevent us from sticking up for someone, it can prevent us from doing something kind for a person in need. As powerful as fear is, it's not as powerful as God. Philippians 1:14 reminds us, “most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident *in the Lord* by my imprisonment *dare* to speak with greater *boldness and without fear*.”

There is no silencing God or his message. Even when there were threats and challenges lobbied at believers – they grew confident and dared to speak with greater boldness. 2 Timothy 1:7 reminds us, “God did not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power and of love and self-discipline.” We have nothing to fear. God is greater than our fears.

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### **Questions to Consider:**

1. What fears are holding you back from being the person God created you to be?
2. What are some ways you can grow confident in the Lord? Is there someone he is calling you to speak to?
3. The source of our strength comes from the Lord. How will you commit to growing strong (and confident) in him?

### **Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, help me cast aside my fears and trust in you fully. When fear comes my way, help me remember the truth that you are greater than my fears.



**August 17, 2019**

Philippians 1:18b-20

“Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance.”

## **Prayer changes things**

Have you ever felt powerless in your life? Maybe you wanted to do something but just felt like you didn't have what it takes? Maybe you or a loved one was given a diagnosis that put you in a tailspin and you just didn't know where to turn.

Pray. Prayer changes things. Prayer gives us a lens through which we can see the world clearly. When we don't know what to do, when we don't know where to go – pray. Paul knew the power of prayer. Paul knew that through the prayers of the Philippians and through the power of the Holy Spirit things would turn out for his good.

We play a powerful role in the lives of others when we pray for them. God hears our prayers and is able to work in and through us because of the power of prayer. Prayer gives us perspective and it can change our attitude. Prayer can help us experience and know the joyful life. Christians are called to be people of prayer – so get praying.

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## **Questions to Consider:**

1. Was there a time when prayer changed your life or your attitude?
2. When have you received an answer to prayer?
3. What are things you can do to improve your discipline of prayer?

## **Prayer:**

Lord, there are many times in which we just don't know what to do. Help us to lean on you in prayer. Give us the courage to pray with and for others so that they may come to know the joy we have in you.

**August 18, 2019**

Philippians 1:21-26

“For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; <sup>24</sup> but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. <sup>25</sup> Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, <sup>26</sup> so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.”

## **Living is Christ, dying is gain**

Everyone likes a win-win. Paul, knowing his circumstance viewed himself in light of a win-win. Either he died and would be with Christ or he lived and would keep on proclaiming the gospel. He never lost his focus. His calling was to preach the gospel and help people progress in their faith.

Paul wanted to depart – he wanted to join Christ, but he had the community in mind. He knew it wasn't quite time for him. There was still much work to be done and he wanted to see it through so that he might share abundantly in their boasting in Christ.

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## **Questions to Consider:**

1. Paul was confident that no matter what happened to him, Christ would be exalted. Do you feel like you live a life where no matter what happened to you, Christ would be exalted?
2. Could you honestly make the statement that Paul made: “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain?” If not, what changes in your thinking would need to occur before you could make such a statement?
3. What is Paul's primary concern?

## **Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, grant me courage and boldness so that in every aspect of my life or death you would be exalted above all.

**August 19, 2019**

Philippians 1:27-28

“Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel.”

### **One Mission. One Mind.**

There are few things that can destroy a community quicker than division. Even the strongest community can be broken if division creeps in. The church in Philippi was a strong community on the verge of being destroyed because division crept in.

A life worthy of the gospel is Christ is marked by love and unity. Paul wanted the leaders in the church to “stand firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind.”

The church has one mission. One calling. One purpose. To love God and to love others.

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### **Questions to Consider:**

1. In your opinion, what does a life “worthy of the gospel of Christ” look like to you? Does your life resemble this?
2. Has there been an instance where you faced a difficult experience and you had to “stand firm in one spirit?” What was the outcome of that situation?

### **Prayer:**

Lord, there are times in which my life does not reflect a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Forgive me. There are times in which my life is not marked by love or unity, forgive me. Help me order my life in such a way where I am marked by love for you and for others.

**August 20, 2019**

Philippians 2:3-11

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore, God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## **A Different Way**

In a world that is self-absorbed it goes against our nature to not put ourselves and our needs first. It seems as if humility can be in short supply sometimes. It's a dog-eat-dog world, right? That is a part of our culture, but it doesn't need to be. Especially within the church.

We cannot truly love God if we don't love others in response to our love for God. Love often involves putting the needs of others before your own.

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## **Questions to Consider:**

1. How does humility differ from being a doormat?
2. What does it look like on a practical level to put others needs before yours – and what do you risk when doing so?
3. What would your family, your workplace, or your relationships look like if you did nothing out of selfish ambition?

## **Prayer:**

Almighty God, you exemplified humility and love when you came down to earth dwelt among us and died for our sins. Help me live a life that reflects that love. Help me put the needs of others before my own and convict me of the times that fail to do so.

**August 21, 2019**

Philippians 2:12

“Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence...”

## **Consistency**

What traits would you use to describe your best friend? Kind? Loving? Fun? Trustworthy? What about consistent? It's an underrated trait, but an important one. You want to be friends with someone who is the same with you as they are with anyone else.

Those who are inconsistent and only there for you when it suits them aren't the best friends for us to keep around. Paul commended the church in Philippi for their consistency. They were consistent in their obedience in Paul's presence and his absence. It is my hope and prayer, that if Paul were writing to us he would say FPC Ambler you are consistent in your love and obedience.

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## **Questions to Consider:**

1. Are you consistent in your relationships? In your obedience to God? What are some ways in which you can grow in this regard?
2. Pretend your Paul. If you were writing a letter to FPC how would you describe the saints at FPC Ambler?

## **Prayer:**

Holy God, help me be a consistent, faithful, and obedient follower of Christ. Reveal to me the ways in which you are calling me to grow so that I may represent you and your love well to the world around me.

**August 22, 2019**

Philippians 2:13

“...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

## **Fear and Trembling**

Sometimes it can be a challenge to understand scripture. Many times, when we encounter challenging words or phrases it causes us to gloss over them, ignore them, or stop reading altogether. In today's verse we read about Paul imploring the Philippians to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.”

Paul does not intend for us to be filled with fear of God. We do not need to hide from him. Quite the opposite. What Paul intends for us is that our fear and trembling of God drives us to seek God in the certainty that without his help we cannot effectively face life.

God is at work in you. God empowers and equips us to do his will. When we seek God and seek to do his will – we are working for his good. His good is always the best option.

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## **Questions to Consider:**

1. What can make it difficult to believe that God is at work in you?
2. How does it affect your walk to know that God enables you to will and act for his good pleasure?

## **Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, thank you for calling and equipping me to do your will. Open my heart and my eyes so that see you and seek you above all else.

**August 23, 2019**

Philippians 2:14-15

“Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation in which you will shine like the stars in the world.”

## **Shine Bright**

Remember when you were a child and your parents told you to do something. Perhaps it was a chore that you always dreaded doing. Every fiber in your being didn't want to do it. You would find any excuse to put it off or you would complain that you would even have to do such a thing.

I bet some of us don't even have to go back to our childhood. There are things in which we are asked (or told) to do which cause us to become frustrated and annoyed. Some things don't change. Paul was telling the Philippians to do not argue or make a stink about things because it would be so radically different from the rest of the world. As a result, they will shine like stars and Christ would be glorified.

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## **Questions to Consider:**

1. Have you ever tried to go a long time (maybe a day or two) without complaining? If you have... you know it's not easy. If you haven't... give it a shot.
2. Why do you think it is important for us to do all things without murmuring or arguing?

## **Prayer:**

Gracious God, grant me humility so that I would not complain or argue. Help me to shine bright for the world to see you through me.

**August 24, 2019**

**Philippians 2:21-24**

“All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

But Timothy’s worth you know, how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me; and I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon.”

**Like Father Like Son**

In a world that can be narcissistic and self-absorbed it is refreshing to encounter people like Timothy. As we read in today’s passage Timothy was a person who was concerned about others. He had a compassionate heart. He looked to the interests of Christ over himself. He was a true leader.

As a church and as disciples we are called to look beyond ourselves. To have compassion on others. To put their needs above our own. To be people of character – working together for the sake of Christ.

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**Questions to Consider:**

1. Reflect on the difference between Paul’s comment that Timothy took a “genuine interest” in the Philippians’ welfare and his comment that “everyone looks to their own interest and not those of Jesus Christ.” Compare these statements to Philippians 2:4
2. How frequently do you encounter people like that? Would you consider your character like that of Timothy’s?
3. Do you agree with Paul that most people look out for their own interests? What causes some people to be more concerned with others than themselves? What characters do they possess?

**Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, it can be hard for me to look to the interests of others above my own. Fill my heart with compassion and concern for others so I can be a blessing to them.



**August 25, 2019**

Philippians 3:7-9

“Yet whatever gains I had; these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ.”

## **Seeing Things As They Truly Are**

Profit versus loss. Value added versus non-value-added cost. That’s how Paul looked at his life now that he knows Christ. Before it was all about his lineage, his accomplishments, his education – all top ranked. Now those things were meaningless because he encountered and knows Christ.

Knowing Christ changes our perspective. It allows us to see the value of things as they really are. That doesn’t mean one shouldn’t strive to get a good education or work hard. It simply means the priority for Paul (and for us) is Christ above all. When we see things as they truly are we can fill our heart with joy by holding onto and valuing that which matters most – Christ.

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### **Questions to Consider:**

1. Paul says that which was once in the profit column is now in the loss column. What did he want the reader to gain from this message?
2. How is knowing Christ more valuable than personal efforts or achievements?
3. Is your relationship with God based on law or by grace? Explain

### **Prayer:**

Holy God, too often I put my own achievements and efforts over the value of knowing and being loved by you. Help me see and know what truly matters – you alone.

**August 26, 2019**

Philippians 3:10-16

“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.

**It Aint' Easy.** Too often we can fall into the trap of thinking that because we believe in Christ means that we don't have anything to worry about. We can sit back, relax, and enjoy the ride. But for Paul knowing Christ wasn't enough. It was only half the battle.

Paul want to know the power of the resurrection *and share of his sufferings* by becoming *like him in his death*. Who wants to experience suffering? Paul wanted to imitate everything he knew about Christ, including following him to the point of death.

Paul kept his eyes forward. Focused on the prize. He strained forward and pressed on toward the goal – where he would behold Jesus in heaven. Knowing Christ means following in his footsteps. Sometimes that is not an easy path for us to go down, but if we keep our eyes focused on Christ we will receive our prize.

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### **Questions to Consider:**

1. What are some things that may be holding you back in your faith journey?
2. What things do you need to let go so that you can press on?
3. What does following in Christ footsteps mean to you?

### **Prayer:**

Father, there are things in my past in which I need to let go but struggle to do so. There are things I cling to that hamper my ability to follow in your steps. Grant me strength and grace so that I can keep my eyes focused on you.

**August 27, 2019**

**Philippians 3:17-21**

Brothers and sisters join in imitating me and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

**By Imitation Only**

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. We've all heard this quote before. There is some truth to it. As a father I want my son to know, love, and experience the grace of Jesus. Therefore, it's incumbent upon me to model the faith I want him to have - otherwise he will never know it.

Whether we realize it or not, we are always imitating someone or something. We pick up both good and bad habits from the people we surround ourselves with. Who are you surrounding yourself with? Who are you imitating? What are you modeling to others?

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**Questions to Consider:**

1. Who imitated the faith to you?
2. Who are you modeling the faith for?
3. How do those who you surround yourself with impact your faith?

**Prayer:**

Heavenly Father, help me be more like you. I want to imitate your goodness and love, but often times it can be hard to do so. Give me strength and courage so that I model my faith for others and surround me with my brothers and sisters in the faith so that I can feel the strength and joy in community.

**August 28, 2019**

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

## **Rejoice!**

The key to knowing and experiencing joy does not rely on our external circumstances of life. It comes from knowing who God is and experiencing his presence. One of the greatest ways we can come to know who God is while experiencing his presence is through the gift of prayer.

In prayer we can give everything over to the Lord. Verses 6-7 remind us that we do not need to worry because when we pray and give it to the Lord, God will fill our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. We will know and experience peace and joy that can only come from God.

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## **Questions to Consider:**

1. When was there a time in your life where you experienced joy or peace because of prayer?
2. Why is it hard for us to “not worry?”
3. How has prayer helped grow your faith?

## **Prayer:**

Lord, you have given us the gift of prayer so that we might know you and be filled by you. I give you today, whatever I have planned and whatever I may be going through. I give it to you. Help me know your peace and joy and be filled with your presence.

**August 29, 2019**

Philippians 4:8-9

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

### **Focus on the Good**

We live in a negative and cynical world. Paul's words to us to remain focused on whatever is good, pure, just, honorable, pleasing, commendable, excellent, or praiseworthy can easily go against the grain of our culture. But there's something simple and beautiful about that. When we focus on the good and positive of things it can help keep our hearts and minds pure.

The devil only needs a crack to open the door and by focusing on the good enables to keep that door shut.

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### **Questions to Consider:**

1. What are some good, honorable, praiseworthy things that are going on in your life? Spend a few minutes thinking and praising God for them.
2. How does focusing on the good further God's Kingdom and help others experience joy?

### **Prayer:**

Almighty God, you are good. All of creation you made good. In this world that's too easily filled with cynicism and negativity, help me focus on the good. Help me be a light that shines in the darkness so that your Kingdom may grow, and others would know your love and joy.

**August 30, 2019**

**Philippians 4:10-17**

I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress.

You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone. For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account.

**Sharing the Load**

One of the benefits of being in a community of faith is knowing that there are others who care for you and will support and love you in your time of need. One of the greatest ways to experience that community and support is through being in a small group. In a small group not only do you grow closer with God, but with others. You have the ability to share your life – the good and the bad.

The Philippians were the only people who supported Paul's work in a trying and difficult time, but it's because of their gift, their prayer, and their support Paul was able to continue to minister. The church is called to share the burdens of one another. In so doing they will experience the joyful life of community.

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**Questions to Consider:**

1. Was there a time in which you felt or saw the church community support you during a difficult time? What was that experience like?
2. Why is it important for the church to share in their members distress?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your church. Your people who support one another during times of need. Help me be a support to others so they may know the joyful life we have in you.





## **Community**

“Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize;  
it is rather a reality created by God in Christ  
in which we may participate.”

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*