

## Welcome and Reminders

Welcome to any visitors and welcome back to the group members. It is important to remember that everything said and done in this group is confidential. The expectation is that there will not be discussion about our conversations to anyone outside of the group that is represented here and now. We understand that sometimes personal insights or information may be shared by someone who feels comfortable doing so in this group and not around others. Let's be respectful of that and carry our commitment to confidentiality as we leave this group. *(Pass out the confidentiality reminder to anyone who has not yet received one).*

## Prayer and Praises

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## Introduction

In the last study we discussed a brief background of and purpose for the book of Philippians. Paul wrote this “hymn of joy” in the midst of incredibly difficult circumstances.

- *Were you able, in the last two weeks, to seek opportunities for joy in spite of the difficulties of the circumstance? If you feel comfortable sharing, please do.*

### Read Philippians 2:1-11

*<sup>1</sup>Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup>then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. <sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup>not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

*<sup>5</sup>In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; <sup>7</sup>rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! <sup>9</sup>Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Creator.*

- *Discuss anything that stood out to you in this chapter. Share your first impressions. Was there anything that struck you as profoundly inspiring or difficult?*

Paul is writing about exceptional joy in spite of his less than exceptional circumstances. In verse two he lists the ingredient that completes this amazing joy. If we find peace and hope in Christ, we need to live in peace with those who also find peace and hope in Christ. The source of our joy is the amazing love of Christ, but the completion of that joy is the family of God that Christ has unified. When we read this Scripture of the humility and attitude of Christ it is easy to omit the context. This verse is not just about having a humble and meek disposition, but it is referring to how we relate to others. We are to value others **over** ourselves. We are to put the interests of others **above** our own. Which was exactly what Jesus did. His entire mission in life was to sacrifice his will for the salvation of others.

- *How different do you think our world would be if Christians, those who found comfort in the love of Jesus and those who shared in the Spirit of Jesus, showed that kind of humility?*
- *Would your life look different if you made that kind of humility your goal? If so, how?*
- *Share a time you experienced this kind of humility from another person. How did it affect you?*

### Read Philippians 2:12-18

*<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.*

*<sup>14</sup>Do everything without grumbling or arguing, <sup>15</sup>so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky <sup>16</sup>as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. <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.*

It would seem, in the context of the previous verses we just discussed, that we are committing an ‘act of unity’ when we choose to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Note the “therefore” that begins this section. Paul asks us to make his joy complete by being like-minded in a humility like Christ had. **Therefore**, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

- *How does unity and working out your salvation relate in your understanding?*

Can you imagine a world without grumbling and complaining? Ill-tempered dissatisfaction seems to be a default attitude of many Christians today. They put on the face of holier-than-thou pious joy, but then they gather like a pack of wolves and complain about a myriad of

things - from long sermons to disliked church members to unruly kids... and I could go on and on. Remember, this letter is being written to Christians, not others, so this is a responsibility we need to assume for ourselves.

- *What would you do differently if you had a goal to not grumble or complain?*
- *Some assume this means don't grumble or complain out loud. Can it be equally as destructive to grumble and complain to yourself? Explain.*

### **Read Philippians 2:12-18**

*<sup>19</sup>I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. <sup>20</sup>I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. <sup>21</sup>For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup>But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. <sup>23</sup>I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. <sup>24</sup>And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. <sup>25</sup>But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. <sup>26</sup>For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. <sup>27</sup>Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. <sup>28</sup>Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. <sup>29</sup>So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, <sup>30</sup>because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.*

Paul mentions two fellow ministers who served alongside him: Timothy and Epaphroditus. These seem to be two men who were models of the kind of life Paul has been referring to.

- *Discuss the characteristics of both men. What qualities do you most admire in each of them?*

Paul offered detailed descriptions, strategies, and even examples of how to live a Christ-like life filled with joy. I pray that we would re-read this chapter throughout the weeks to come and make it our goal to live in that unifying and uplifting humility.

- *Share any other thoughts regarding the first chapter of Philippians.*

Prior to next CARE night, read Philippians chapter 3.