

True Joy - The Wisdom of Philippians
Rejoice in the Lord - Think About These Things (Phil 4:8-9)
7-25-10
Scripture Reading - Phil 4:8-9

The reason I began this series a year ago is because *I think joy is important.*

- For the most part, we do what we do in life because we want to be happy. The search for joy is one of our primary motivators.
 - Getting up / sleeping in
 - Working overtime / go home early
 - Get married / stay single
- Joy is the reason some people turn to Jesus and the reason many people don't.

The Bible claims that true and lasting joy can only be found in Jesus Christ, and if you think about it, this makes all the sense in the world.

- We all know that relationships are the most valuable thing on earth.
- We also all know that because we are sinful, finite beings, even the greatest relationship will eventually fall short of our expectations and disappoint us.
- The Bible claims that through Jesus we can have a personal, eternal relationship with the God Himself!
- Because God is neither sinful, nor finite, He will never fall short of our expectations and He will never disappoint us.
- The apostle Paul speaks of the amazing joy of this relationship in Philippians 3:7-8
 - **Philippians 3:7-8 (ESV)**
⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.
- He encourages the Philippians to pursue their joy in Jesus throughout.

- o **Philippians 3:1 (ESV)**

¹ Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

- o **Philippians 4:4 (ESV)**

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.

Paul's concentrated emphasis on finding our joy in Jesus is why I chose to preach on Philippians one year ago.

- The fact that true joy is found only in Jesus Christ was the spark that really jump started my walk with God about 8 years ago and it is a primary motivator behind all I do today.
- I truly believe it is the missing piece in both the evangelism and discipleship of many churches today.
- It is the message that our friends and neighbors need to hear, *because it makes so much sense.*

But if it makes so much sense, why is it so hard to do?

- The world, the flesh, and the devil
- Those who have yet to come to Christ are slaves to sin.
- Those who have come to Christ are free from the dominion of sin, but are still strongly influenced by it.

- o **Galatians 5:16-17 (ESV)**

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

- o **Romans 7:15-25 (ESV)**

¹⁵ I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰ Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹ So I find it

to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.
²² For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³ but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴ Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.

How can we win this battle and find our joy in the Lord?

- First you have to come to Jesus.
- Second, we have to work at it! God promises to help us, but He won't do it for us.
 - o **Philippians 2:12-13 (ESV)**
¹² ...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.
 - o Israel's taking of the Promised Land.

One of the main things we need to work, if we want to find our joy in the Lord, is controlling our minds. Controlling the things we think about.

- **Philippians 4:8-9 (ESV)**
8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.
- What are these things? God and the things of God.
 - o **Colossians 3:1-2 (ESV)**
¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.
 - o Paul and the Philippians were Gospel-centered, Gospel-focused people. We should be too.

- Though it isn't easy to control the things we think about, it can be done, and the results are amazing!
 - o **2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (ESV)**
 - ⁴For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and *take every thought captive to obey Christ*,
 - o Ex. The brother who has made the choice to assume the best about his brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - Made all the difference!
- So how do we do it?

A huge piece of controlling our minds is controlling what we take into them.

- **Matthew 6:22-23 (ESV)**
 - ²²"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!
 - o If we want to think about good things, then we need to be build-up a storehouse of good things to think about.
 - o Ex. The affects Christian vs. secular music on a brother I talked to this week.
 - Story
 - Stopped thinking about Jesus and becoming like Him
 - Started to think about the secular singers he was listening to and wanted to become like them.
 - o It's so subtle. My experience with the 80's party, my thoughts, and my kids.
 - o Two texts that perfectly describe this phenomenon

- **Psalms 135:15-18 (ESV)**

¹⁵The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of human hands. ¹⁶They have mouths, but do not speak; they have eyes, but do not see; ¹⁷they have ears, but do not hear, nor is there any breath in their mouths. ¹⁸Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them!

- **2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV)**

¹⁸And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

- Just like controlling what we think about takes an extraordinary amount of self-discipline and self-control, so too does controlling what we take into our minds. Because it is so difficult, we need to be willing to take radical action.
 - Ex. the bother who felt bad about having to limit his options.
- Though it isn't easy, once again the results will be amazing! The more we store up good things in our minds the easier we will find it to set our minds on those things throughout the day.
 - My experience

Another huge piece of controlling our minds is putting into practice the things we are thinking about.

- **Philippians 4:9 (ESV)**

⁹What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—*practice these things*, and the God of peace will be with you.

- Only as we *put God's word into practice* will we truly begin to EXPERIENCE the joy and peace that can only be found in Him.
 - Brother who is not only thinking about assuming the best but practicing it.
 - Brother who is not only listening to Christian music again, but putting into practice what he's hearing.

- Witnessing at work
- Seeking fellowship
- Reconciling relationships
- Living purely
- o Brother who is planning to limit his options
 - If he does it, it will bear much fruit.
- The same is true for us.

True joy is found only in Jesus Christ. The world, the flesh, and the devil don't want us to believe it. But if we will trust Jesus, set our minds on Him, and put His Word into practice, we'll come to realize very quickly that it's true.