

Name: _____



JOY

Philippians

Weeks 9-12

Introduction to the *Joy* series.

One of the unmistakable signs of the presence of God in someone's life is Joy. So, a gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms. Christians should be people of joy. A joyful Christian is a good representative of the good news, the gospel to a world that is often joyless.

Are we the kind of church that brings joy to people here inside our church? Are we the type of church that brings joy to those in our community on the outside of our church? Both are good questions to ask.

Philip Cole
Smithville Campus Pastor

Introduction To The 4G Guide

GATHER – GOD – GROUP – GIVE

It's important that we *GATHER* each week as a church family. Still, God wants us to take what He's teaching and apply it to our daily lives. This is the heart of the 4G Guides. These guides are written to encourage you in your personal *GOD TIME* and in your small *GROUPS*. They are designed to help you understand what God is teaching and apply it to your life. This understanding through application enables you to take what you are learning and *GIVE* it to others.

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are from the *Christian Standard Bible* (CSB Text Edition: 2020).



USING THE 4G GUIDE

Each week is divided into four sections:



Gathering Time

On Sunday mornings we gather to worship, hear God's message, and be challenged to apply His word. You'll find the weekly Gathering Time sermon outlines and notes sections in this booklet.

If you need to join us online, go to cbcfamily.net and click "Watch Live"



Group Time

We learn from one another! 4G Groups meet to dig deeper into the weekly material. Group Time outlines are simple enough for anyone to facilitate. In addition, short videos and other helpful resources are posted often on our 4G webpage.



God Times

Personal worship is vital to the Christian walk, so we've provided five daily devotionals for each weekly topic. This is your time to meet with God one-on-one in a guided devotional format. Once your God Time is finished, pray, seeking direction for the day.



Family Time

Family worship glorifies God. To help, we have created simple Family Time devotionals. In addition, to help get the conversations flowing, video or story guide links will be posted on our 4G webpage.

cbcfamily.net/4g





Gathering Time (Sermon Outline)

Gathering Notes

Date: _____

Philippians 2:14-18

How to _____ In a _____ World.

Philippians 2:14-18

To _____ Our _____

In The Dark.

Philippians 2:15

The _____ of Light is _____

In The Dark.

Matthew 5:16

In Order to _____, You Have to _____.

Philippians 2:14-15

Philippians 2:15-16

Philippians 2:17-18

Romans 12:1

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

Shine, Dark / Understand, Position / Value, Found / Glow, Grow



Group Time

◀◀ LOOK BACK:

1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the coming week.)

2. ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See page 46 for directions)

Y / N	Y / N	_____
_____	_____	

3. Review last week's lesson.

What one thing did you stop or start doing this past week to make yourself more available to God's will and good purpose?

LOOK UP:

Question: Each of these squares contains a white-filled circle. Why is it easier to see the circle on the right?



1. Review your notes from the Gathering Time (Sermon).
2. **Context:** As we come to verses 14-18 of Philippians 2, Paul states the obvious – it's a broken world. Nothing has changed. All we need to do is turn on the television, look at our media feeds, or even just look at our own families. It's easy to see that we live in a broken, dark world. But in such darkness, light shines even more.

Paul tells the Philippians that by forgoing grumbling and arguing, by being blameless and pure, their lights will shine brightly against the backdrop of a dark world. And to see them shine with such brightness affirms his work.

To shine we must hold on to Jesus and His Word. It means being different. It means standing out. While shining brightly in the surrounding darkness will not come without a price, it is worth it.

3. Discussion:

Read Philippians 2:14-16. There's an old expression, "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." How do these verses compare to the expression?

Read the rest of the sentence in Philippians 2:16.

You are holding in your hands one of the best ways we can hold "firm to the word of life." We call it our 4G Strategy (see p. 2):

- Spend time with G_____.
- G_____ with our church family.
- Connect in G_____.
- G_____ our best to God's kingdom.

Share how you are utilizing this resource each week.

▶▶ LOOK FORWARD: Application

Point: *Shining brightly comes with a cost, but what a payoff!*

Read Philippians 2:17-18.

¹⁷ But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrificial service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸ In the same way you should also be glad and rejoice with me.

Because the Philippians were shining so brightly, it caused Paul to suffer, but it led to great rejoicing.

- What will you do this week to give your best to God's kingdom and shine your light for all to see in a dark world?

God Time Day 1: This Little Light of Mine



Read Matthew 5:15. *No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house.*

Read John 1:4-5 (NLT). *⁴The Word [Jesus] gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.*

If you've been a Christian for long, you have likely heard the children's song "This Little Light of Mine." What is this light? The Bible describes it as the light of the Holy Spirit living in us, shining out for others to see.



Think of someone you know you've seen shine for Jesus. In what ways do they shine?

What is their relationship with God like?

Thank God for the work He does in and through them.

God Time Day 2 - Shine in the Dark



As we've been studying Philippians, you've hopefully realized that there's a reason why we are supposed to share the gospel, love others, seek unity among Christians, serve one another, do things without grumbling and complaining, and so on: Christians shine God's light! We are an example to a very dark world.



Read Philippians 2:14-15. *¹⁴Do everything without grumbling and arguing, ¹⁵so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world...*

Underline verse 14. Then ask God to help you *be blameless and pure*, shining in the darkness for Him!

God Time Day 3 - What's Your Position?



As we have already discovered, we shine because God has given us light – His light! We shine with the Holy Spirit for God's glory and to draw others to Him. We could say that Christians are lights *in* the world and Jesus is the Light *of* the World.

Think about light; very bright light is visible even in the daytime. But light is especially visible in the darkness. A good flashlight helps the one who holds it, but it also helps those who walk nearby.



Reread Philippians 2:14-15 from Day2. Now add verse 16. *¹⁴Do everything without grumbling and arguing, ¹⁵so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God who are faultless in a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you shine like stars in the world, ¹⁶by holding firm to the word of life. Then I can boast in the day of Christ that I didn't run or labor for nothing.*



In verse 15 circle the words "so that" and read the rest of the verse again.

Finish this sentence in your own words: "Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that..."

How do we do this? Say the first part of verse 16 in your own words. Compare the "word of life" to the Word who gave life. (John 1:4-5 from Day 1)

Christians are called to be Christ's representatives on earth – demonstrating His love, compassion, patience, hope, peace, etc. We are also called to declare the Good News of who Jesus is and what He has done. These are all ways we can shine His light.



Do you live your life as Christ's representative? Are you a good flashlight holder who shines His light, so others won't stumble in the dark?

God Time Day 4 - Shine in the Dark

 The passage we've been studying in Philippians 2:14-15 tells us that we shine like stars. We've learned that this is because we have God's Holy Spirit dwelling inside of us, shining outward.

 Read Matthew 5:16.
In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

 Circle what this passage in Matthew says others will see when we let our light shine.

Underline what the intended result of seeing these good works will be.

Yes, the intended result is that others will see our good works and then give glory to God. We understand that these good works don't save us or add to our standing with God, they are simply the result of having the Lord in our lives. We do them because of what He's done for us.

All Believers are given the Holy Spirit when they are saved. This happens immediately upon trusting in Jesus and what He has done. If we truly have the Spirit dwelling in us, we will shine. Yet sometimes we allow things like sin, pride, work, distractions, busyness, and so on to get in the way of shining the Lord's light to its full extent. The Bible calls this "*quenching the Spirit.*" (See 1 Thessalonians 5:19 (NKJV))

 Check Up: On a scale of 1-5, how well are you shining His light in this dark world?

Low Beam	1	2	3	4	5	High Beam
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What do you let get in the way of shining His light?

Make a list and burn it.

Watch the light overpower all the stuff that gets in the way!

God Time Day 5 Grow to Glow

 Question: Do Christians have to *try* to shine?

It's a good question. The light of Christ dwells within us, so in some sense, we just shine. But, as we discussed yesterday, we can quench God's work in us. When we do that, it's like we have a flashlight with black tape over the beam. But when we invest in our relationship with God and adjust our attitudes and actions, allowing God to remove the tape and clean the glass, we align more fully with the "shiny" work He's doing in our lives!

It's also a bit like a glow-in-the-dark toy. When we hold that toy up to a light bulb, it absorbs the light and then glows in the dark. Likewise, when we hold ourselves up to Jesus and grow in our relationship with Him, we glow.

 Read Ephesians 5:1-2, 8-9.
¹Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children, ²and walk in love, as Christ also loved us and gave himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.

⁸For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light — ⁹for the fruit of the light consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth...

Underline who we are supposed to imitate.

 Circle how we are to walk.

Put a box around what the "*fruit of the light*" consists of.

As Christians, we are to live a life of sacrifice, laying down our own will to follow God's. His will is about expanding His kingdom. We grow in fruitfulness so we might share Christ and bring others into His fold. We grow to glow.

1. **Grow** - Choose one activity that will help you invest in your relationship with God. (E.g., personal worship, starting a prayer journal, etc.) Add it to your daily routine.

 2. **Glow** - Choose one person that you want to share Christ with. Pray for an opportunity and prepare to share. Who is your one?



Family Time

Main Idea:

Trust



Key Verse: Titus 1:9 (ESV)

He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.



Experiment:

You will need a medium-sized bucket with a strong handle, a drop cloth (unless outside), water, and possibly a mop.

Lay down a drop cloth if inside. You will not need this if you go outside. You will also need to make sure there is plenty of room above your head so you can swing the bucket.

Give the bucket to one of the family members and have them swing the bucket by holding the bucket at their side, using their dominant hand. The motion they need to master is swinging the bucket in a circle, from down by their side, straight up, and then back down (pivoting their shoulder so the bucket goes behind them). Do this several times, so they feel the bucket pulling away from them as they swing it.

Now, fill the bucket a little over halfway with water.

Have the swinger hold the bucket at their side, just like they did when it was empty. Then, they will begin the swinging motion, but don't start slow. They need to keep the bucket moving fast in a circle.



Ask:

- What do you think would have happened if the swinger slowed down with water in the bucket?
- How much water did the swinger lose?
- What surprised you about the experiment?



Read:

Philippians 2:14-18



Discussion:

What do we need to hold firm to?

What does Paul say we need to do?



Pray:

*Lord, help us to trust Your Word to be true. Help us to hold tight to the things we need to hold tight to. Allow us to be glad and rejoice in the things you want us to rejoice in.
Amen.*



Gathering Time (Sermon Outline)

Gathering Notes

Date: _____

Philippians 2:19-24

Three _____ of a _____ - _____:

A Difference-Maker is _____.

Philippians 2:22-23

A Difference-Maker is _____.

Philippians 2:20-21

Matthew 16:25

A Difference-Maker is _____.

1 Corinthians 4:17

Horizontal lines for gathering notes.

Qualities, Difference-Maker / Dependable / Genuine / Faithful



Group Time

LOOK BACK:

1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the coming week.)

2. ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See page 46 for directions)

Y / N	Y / N	_____
_____	_____	

3. Review last week's lesson.

How did you let your light shine this past week? In what way did you give your best to God's kingdom? Rejoice!

LOOK UP:

Question: What's the difference between "Phoning it in" and "Dialing it in?"

1. Review your notes from the Gathering Time (Sermon).
2. **Context:** In his letter to the Philippians, specifically at the end of chapter 2, Paul now turns his attention from encouragement to ministry. He would like to send Timothy to them, both so Timothy can encourage them, and so they can encourage Timothy. It is also a great opportunity for cross-pollination in facilitating a disciple-making-movement. At the same time, Paul gives a warning regarding those who may be like-minded in faith yet still operate from self-interest. Timothy, and the Philippians to whom Paul is writing, have so far proven their character and genuine acts of service in and to the faith.

3. Discussion:

Make a top-ten list of personal characteristics you would want someone to have that you will be working with side-by-side towards an important goal or project:

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

On a scale of 1-10, how important is it for them to be dependable:

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

On a scale of 1-10, how important is it for them to be genuine:

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

On a scale of 1-10, how important is it for them to be faithful:

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Characteristics determine character. How do we measure characteristics?

LOOK FORWARD: Application

Point: *Character matters. How we measure character matters.*

- How are you measuring up? What do you need to do to improve your dependability, genuineness, and/or faithfulness?

God Time Day 1 - Who Brings You Joy?



Think about that godly someone who brings you joy. What is it about them? Perhaps it's their smile or contagious attitude. Some people can bring us great joy!



Read Romans 15:13.
³⁶Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

It isn't the person's power alone that brings us godly joy. It is God working through that person to lift our hearts and fill us with gladness.

Make a list of a few people who bring you joy. Thank God for using them.

Then pray that you can be like the verse above. Pray for God's help in bringing joy to someone else today.

God Time Day 2 - Be a Difference-Maker



Read Philippians 2:19-20a.
¹⁹Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so that I too may be encouraged by news about you. ²⁰For I have no one else like-minded...

In Philippians, Paul gives some examples of those who live Christ-like lives. He first lists himself as an example and now lists his young coworker, Timothy. Paul says they are *like-minded* in their faith.

Paul is writing this letter to the Philippian church from prison. It is a depressing situation. Yet Paul talks about joy 16 times in four short chapters. We can have joy even in pain and distress. Why? Because we have Jesus! When we have Him, we can make a difference in the lives of others.



How would you like to make a difference in the lives of others? If you could do anything to make a difference (dream big!), what would you do?

God Time Day 3: Be Dependable



People who are difference-makers have certain qualities that make them true, valuable, joy-bringing friends. We see these qualities in Paul's coworker, Timothy.



Read Philippians 2:22-24.
²² But you know his proven character, because he has served with me in the gospel ministry like a son with a father. ²³Therefore, I hope to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. ²⁴I am confident in the Lord that I myself will also come soon.



Circle the words "proven character."

Underline the words in verse 22 that describe how Timothy had proven his character.

What does Paul hope to do with Timothy because of this dependable character? (Verse 23)

Being dependable, or having proven character, is a great way to make a difference in others' lives. Paul could trust Timothy to go to Philippi, visit the Believers there, and then bring back a report of how the church was doing. Paul could count on Timothy! All of this would happen if the Lord willed it. Paul trusted it would. (See verse 24)



How dependable do you consider yourself?

Low	1	2	3	4	5	Highly
-----	---	---	---	---	---	--------

Assess and list what gets in the way of your dependability. (Sometimes this means being careful what you commit to in the first place.)

Talk to God about your past failures. Ask forgiveness and let it go. Strive to be more dependable in the future.

When others can trust you, you bring joy. You also reflect a trustworthy God!

God Time Day 4: Be Genuine



Timothy had a dependable character and was also genuine. He serves as a good example for us. Difference-makers should be genuine!



Read Philippians 2:20-21.

²⁰For I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests; ²¹all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

In verse 20, what mindset do Paul and Timothy both have?

In verse 21, underline whose interests the others sought.

Put a box around the interests they should have sought.

Paul doesn't mention names, so we don't know who the self-centered people were. We know that he had trustworthy workers because he mentioned them in other places in the Bible. But at this point, for whatever reason, only Timothy was there to be counted on. And Timothy was genuine; he was the real deal. He had authentic faith.



Read Matthew 16:25.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will find it.

Read Philippians 1:21.

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Reflect on these questions:

- o Do you think most people in the world believe Christians are genuine?
 - o How do we give ourselves a bad rap?
-

Evaluate your genuineness by looking up these godly attributes: Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), actions of love (1 Corinthians 13), the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-16), and works of compassion (James 2:14-17).



Confess your failings and ask God to help you be like Jesus.

God Time Day 5: Be Faithful



There is a third characteristic of a difference-maker: faithfulness. Again, we see this quality in Timothy.



Read 1 Corinthians 4:17.

This is why I have sent Timothy to you. He is my dearly loved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you about my ways in Christ Jesus, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

The verse above is also written by Paul about Timothy. In this short passage, Paul tells the church at Corinth (and us) quite a bit about him.

Underline the second sentence in the verse, then circle the words "faithful child."

What was Timothy supposed to do when he got to Corinth? (Hint: the answer is in the third sentence)

Timothy was so faithful, Paul considered him like a son. They were so close that Timothy could go act on Paul's behalf. The church was new, they needed to know what being a Christian was all about. Timothy could stand in for Paul, reminding them about Paul's ways and teachings.



Look up the definitions of *faithfulness* and *dependability*.

How are they alike?

How are they different?

They are similar, and there is overlap, and Timothy expressed them both! So can you.



God can grow your faithfulness as you invest more into your relationship with Him. How will you invest and be faithful today?

Family Time



Main Idea:
Being a Difference-Maker

**Key Verse: Philippians 2:19-24**

¹⁹ Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so that I too may be encouraged by news about you. ²⁰ For I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests; ²¹ all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know his proven character, because he has served with me in the gospel ministry like a son with a father. ²³ Therefore, I hope to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. ²⁴ I am confident in the Lord that I myself will also come soon.

Talk About it:

A difference-maker is an ordinary person who accomplishes extraordinary things by creating positive change in his or her community and the lives of others. Difference-makers do not have to be famous. Difference-makers can be parents, coaches, or good friends. Qualities that can make someone a difference-maker include determination, leadership, teamwork, inspiration, courage, excellence, integrity, generosity, compassion, etc.

Make it:

Create *difference-maker medals* using the template on the next page and give them to difference-makers in your life!

On the medal, record the following information:

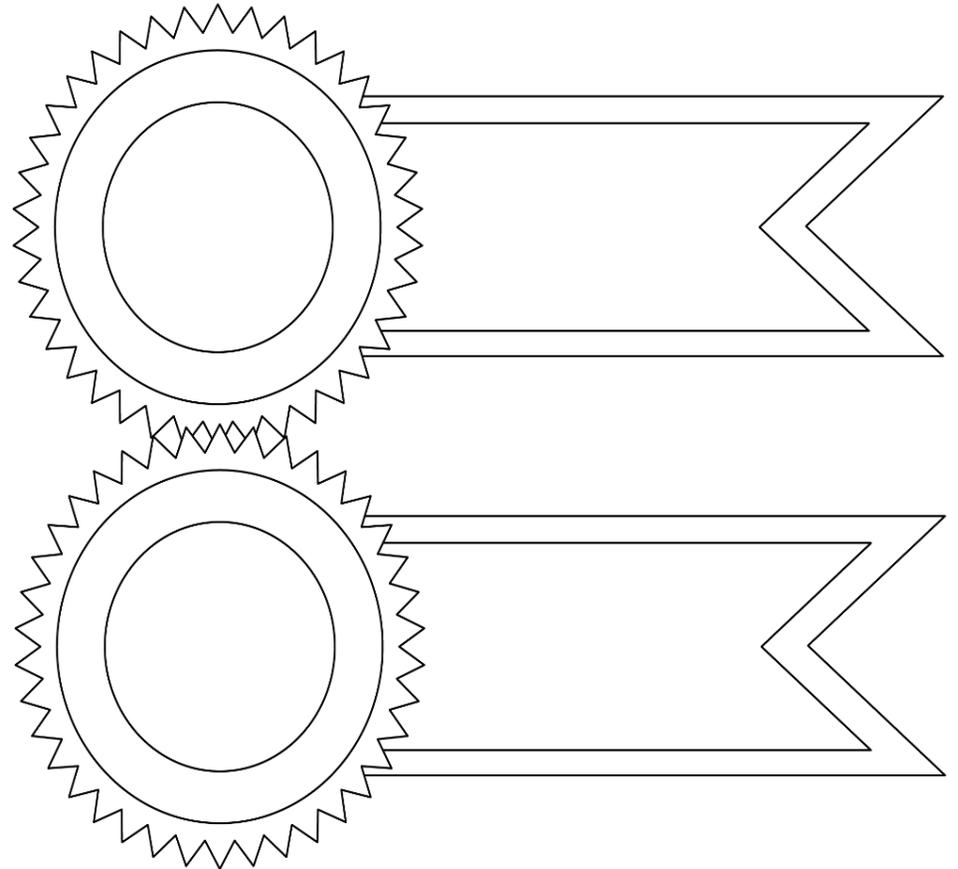
- The name of the person.

- The reason they are a difference-maker. (Example: My basketball coach is a difference-maker because she includes everyone on the team.)

Read: Philippians 2:19:24

Discussion: How was Timothy a difference-maker?

Pray: Lord, help me to be a difference-maker to the people I am around. Thank you for the people that you have put in my life that are difference makers to me. Amen.



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While only two hours away, Houston is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse cities in the country.

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(8:30 AM – 2 PM)

September 16 or October 28

Info meeting: Sunday, August 20, 4 PM Bastrop

Info & Registration: cbcfamily.net/missions

Wednesday Evenings are a “Thing”

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Kids:
4yrs old to Grade 6
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STUDENTS
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*August 16 is off.

New season begins August 23 @ 6 PM

THE BRIDGE
YOUNG ADULTS

The Bridge is a gathering for Young Adults (post HS–30) to Grow their Faith through application-based Bible Study and Fellowship.

Thursday Nights at 7 pm

www.thebridgebastrop.com



Gathering Time (Sermon Outline)

Gathering Notes

Date: _____

Philippians 3:1-3

Three _____ of Joy:

1. Joy Must Be _____.

2 Peter 1:12-15

2. Legalism Must Be _____.

Philippians 3:2

Acts 15:1

Hebrews 11:10

3. Our Identity Must Be _____.

Philippians 3:3

Matthew 7:24-23

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

Defenses / Protected / Prevented / Permanent



Group Time

◀◀ LOOK BACK:

1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the coming week.)

2. ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See page 46 for directions)

Y / N	Y / N	_____
_____	_____	

3. Review last week’s lesson.

What did you do to improve your dependability, genuineness, or faithfulness this past week? How did it go?

▶▶▶ LOOK UP:

Question: How many of you pride yourself in always having a “Plan B,” or always looking for a “both/and” opportunity?

1. Review your notes from the Gathering Time (Sermon).
2. **Context:** It’s good to remind us again of the context. Paul is in prison for his faith and could be executed any day. He is writing to his beloved Philippians who are bold in their faith and are being persecuted for it. Paul reminds them of both the source and direction of their joy – *the Lord*.

Paul warns them of those who are falsely teaching that it takes more than grace to be saved. Specifically, those who were teaching that one must become Jewish to receive God’s Messiah. This is a religion based on more than faith. It is based on outwardly worshiping an identity based on the flesh – circumcision.

Paul reminds them that their faith is true circumcision, a faith not based on one’s physical identity, but in an identity that boasts in Christ Jesus alone.

3. Discussion:

- How hard is it to have a faith that offers eternal salvation but is not earned?
- Have some fun; make a list of what you may have thought, or were told, were definite must-have guardrails regarding true Christian faith that was based on behavior and appearance. I.E., a true Christian would always..., or never... or would always look..., or would never look...

Now, put them in one of three categories:

Biblical

Well-Intentioned

Silly

- Have you ever felt, or do you feel now, that you are not good enough to be worthy of salvation?

Watch this video: FallingPlates.com

The answer is the same for all of us, you now and never will be worthy. But Jesus Rejoice in His love gift to you!



aren’t is.

▶▶▶ LOOK FORWARD: Application

Point: Say “Yes” to Jesus. Boast in Him alone!

- Read Philippians 3:1-3.

¹ In addition, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write to you again about this is no trouble for me and is a safeguard for you. ² Watch out for the dogs, watch out for the evil workers, watch out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³ For we are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and do not put confidence in the flesh—

Have you been trusting in your ability to be good enough to earn your salvation? “Do not put confidence in the flesh!” Boast in Christ alone! Do it with someone today and another this week.

God Time Day 1: Do You Have Joy?



Everyone encounters situations that can result in negative feelings and attitudes. Even Paul said he once faced circumstances where *“we were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life itself.”* (2 Corinthians 1:8b) Yet he did not allow those difficult situations to determine his attitude or steal his joy.

Paul had an unshakeable, never-ending reason for joy: God Himself. The more we dwell on God and recount all the ways He has been good to us, the more secure we will be in our joy. This is what Paul meant when he wrote *“Rejoice in the Lord.”* (Philippians 3:1)

This kind of joy is not forced or fake cheerfulness. Rather, it is a way of reframing one’s experiences.

Consider this example:

- ☹️ Last year my gallbladder was removed. I was in bed for a long time.
- 😊 Last year I finally got rid of my gallbladder which had been giving me pain for years.

We all have known people who seem to make every circumstance something to endure and/or complain about, dragging down those around them (a.k.a.; Debbie Downer). We have also encountered others who seem to radiate joy despite challenges, lifting the mood of those around them.

If you had to choose between the two, which would be the best companion when you are facing a challenge?

How about you? Where would you rate yourself from 1 - 5?

Sour & Bitter	1	2	3	4	5	Radiant & Joyful
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List two ways you can *“rejoice in the Lord”* this week to increase your rating:

1. _____
2. _____

God Time Day 2: Threats to Your Joy



Satan’s goal is to keep us from rejoicing in the Lord in any way he can. He will use a variety of weapons:

- Distract or derail our attention on God with seemingly good things (ex: happiness).
- Overwhelm us with trials and sorrow.
- Keep us so busy we fail to spend time rejoicing.

And why does the enemy work so hard to threaten our rejoicing in God? He doesn’t want us to be strong.



Read Nehemiah 8:10b.
Do not grieve, because the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Take a few minutes to list some of the ways the enemy is trying to destroy your joy.



Pray over each one and rejoice that God has given you this awareness. You will now be better prepared to avoid the enemy’s traps.

God Time Day 3: Protect Joy



Read Philippians 3:1.
In addition, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write to you again about this is no trouble for me and is a safeguard for you.

There is power in repetition (*RE-joice, again*). One of the most proven ways to protect godly joy is to “Count Your Blessings” or otherwise share the many ways that God has acted on behalf of His people. For biblical examples, see Psalm 107, 136, 2 Chronicles 6, and Romans 8.

In this song (youtu.be/DMWraQmWhWs), leader recounts several signs of God’s favor asks, “Is it good that we remind ourselves this? It is.”



the and of



Give thanks and rejoice in what the Lord has done!

God Time Day 4: Prevent Legalism



One way the devil tries to keep us from the joy and strength of the Lord is the trap of legalism, or thinking our salvation is based upon what we do. This false teaching threatened the early church and still threatens the church today.



Read Philippians 3:2-3.
² Watch out for the dogs, watch out for the evil workers, watch out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³ For we are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and do not put confidence in the flesh.



Circle the last three words of v. 2 and the fifth word in v. 3.
 Paul is talking about the false teachers who are trying to require Gentile Christians to follow the Law of Moses and become Jews – relying on their compliance with Jewish traditions like circumcision to gain salvation. All such rule-keeping and works-based salvation is contrary to salvation by grace.

Underline how true believers worship and in whom alone we boast (verse 3).

Here is a quote from C.S. Lewis: “Did you ever know . . . an organizer of charities that had lost all love for the poor? It is the subtlest of all the snares.”

Anytime the devil can get Christians thinking in legalistic terms, it always has the effect of diminishing joy. The reason is that it focuses on “being good enough” instead of delighting in the truth that God has saved us even though we don’t deserve it. Fear of not doing things well or right enough overshadows our reason for joy – our boasting in Christ Jesus.



Have you ever felt, or do you feel now, that you are not good enough to be worthy of salvation?

The answer is the same for all of us, you aren’t now and never will be worthy. But Jesus is. Rejoice in His love gift to you!

Watch this video: FallingPlates.com.



God Time Day 5: A Permanent Identity



In the passage on Day 4, Paul says, “We are the circumcision.” This means that we are the true people of God.



Now read Philippians 3:20.
Our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Put into your own words what Paul means by “Our citizenship is in heaven.”

Knowing with confidence who’s you are and the promise you’ve received is our greatest defense against evil and protects us from the devil’s attempts to destroy our joy. We have a permanent identity as God’s beloved children.

Take time to read all of Romans 8.



Write down at least three things that stand out to you from what you read:

- _____
- _____
- _____

How convinced are you that everything in Romans 8 is true?

How does being reminded of these truths make you feel?

If you have been struggling with doubt or lacking confidence in the salvation God has provided, pray now, and ask God to strengthen your faith in His grace. If you have never surrendered your life to Christ, ask why not?

Watch this video: vimeo.com/389878453.



Commit today to spend more time rejoicing in the Lord and fend off the devil’s attempts to destroy your true identity.





Family Time

Main Idea:

Rejoice



Key Verse: Psalm 64:10

The righteous one rejoices in the LORD and takes refuge in him; all those who are upright in heart will offer praise.



Object Lesson:

You will need a set of dominoes or blocks for this object lesson. Once you have your family all together, start stacking the blocks one on top of the other to build a tower. With each new block, congratulate yourself on your success.

After you have a tower several blocks high, ask your children if they know what you are doing. Once they offer their guesses, tell them you are building a tower to heaven. Ask them if they think you will be successful. When they respond that it is impossible, ask them to tell you why it is impossible. Then share with them that, like building a tower to heaven is impossible, it is impossible to get to heaven by doing good works.



Read:

Philippians 3:1-3



Say: If ever there was a Jewish person who followed the law and could trust their works to get to heaven, it was Paul. You might say that when it came to being a Jew, Paul was pretty perfect. Even from his birth, Paul's parents followed God's law. Paul said he was blameless according to the law. But Paul knew that even he was a sinner and that his only hope, his only way to heaven, was to trust in Jesus.

Even if we could be sinless on the outside, we are full of sin on the inside. We have bad attitudes and live for ourselves and not for God. Even when we do good things, we often do them so that people think well of us. None of us are good enough to go to heaven without Jesus.



Ask:

- What did Paul say he did to live a perfect life as a Jew?
- What does Paul mean when he says that he puts no confidence in the flesh?
- What kind of good works do people think will get them to heaven?



Pray:

Dear God, thank you for giving up your position in heaven to die for us on the cross. Help us to change our hearts and be more willing to give up things for others. Amen.



Gathering Time (Sermon Outline)

Gathering Notes

Date: _____

Philippians 3:4-11

But in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

1 Peter 3:15

The _____ of an Effective _____:

Philippians 3:4-9

Putting _____ the _____.

The _____ of Jesus.

Philippians 3:7

The _____ of the _____.

Philippians 3:8-9

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

Elements, Testimony / Away, Past / Presentation / Proclamation, Present



Group Time

◀◀ LOOK BACK:

1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the coming week.)

2. ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See page 46 for directions)

Y / N	Y / N	_____
_____	_____	

3. Review last week's lesson.

With whom did you *boast in Christ* this past week? How did it go? What was their response?

LOOK UP:

Question: Each person gets three-minutes max to share:

- What was your life like before you met Jesus?
- How did you meet Jesus?
- What is your life like since meeting Jesus?

1. **Review your notes from the Gathering Time (Sermon).**
2. **Context:** As we continue in Paul's letter to the Philippians, he reminds them of his story (his testimony). Before his conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 16), his religious credibility and zeal according to Jewish law and customs was beyond reproach. But when he met Jesus, all of that became worthless. What became valuable is "*knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.*" It's now about knowing, being, and doing whatever Jesus is about and commands.
3. **Discussion:** Read Philippians 3:4-11.
 - What did Paul value before he met Jesus?
 - What happened to the value of those things after he met Jesus?

- What does he value now, as he writes to the Philippians?

▶▶ LOOK FORWARD: Application

Point: *If you have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, you have a story to tell.*

Let's look at your story. Your Story has three parts: your life before Jesus, how Jesus came into your life, and your life since then. (Video help is available at vimeo.com/419998882.)



1. Think of two words that describe your life before Jesus (ex: selfish and depressed) and put them into a sentence. (Be honest, the failures of your past give value to your present.)

There was a time in my life when _____

2. In 2-3 sentences, explain how Jesus came into your life.

But Jesus _____

3. Finally, think of two words that describe your life since then (ex: loving and growing) and put them into a sentence. How has your life been changed, what is different, how do you have joy?

Now I _____

Next, who needs to hear your story? Make a list of family, friends, and coworkers (use the contacts list on your phone). Pray over your list and ask God to place two persons specifically on your heart. Share your story with them this week and share what happens with your group next time you meet.

God Time Day 1: The Power of a Story



People connect with stories. Think about great storytellers such as C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, William Shakespeare, Steven Spielberg, and of course, Jesus Christ. One of the reasons why Jesus taught using parables (i.e., stories) is because stories can connect and unite people in unique and powerful ways. When we connect with a character, relate to their struggles, and see them overcoming adversity, we are inspired to believe, “I can do that too!” It’s a universal experience. Stories based upon real experiences become even more powerful because you are no longer connecting with a fictional character, but someone just like you.

So many people struggle with the fear of sharing their God story for one reason or another. Perhaps you feel your story is not good enough, doesn’t have enough excitement, or maybe you just feel unqualified to tell it to someone else.



Read 1 Peter 3:15.
But in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

What holds you back from sharing your story?

For whatever might be holding you back, it is important to realize this: if you are a follower of Christ, you were once dead in your sin, but are now made alive in Christ. **THIS IS A STORY THAT NEEDS TO BE TOLD.**

Paul shares his story (his testimony) in his letter to the Philippians. As we look at Paul’s testimony this week, we will be focusing on key elements that will help us understand how to share our own stories.



Look through the contacts list on your phone. Then pray and ask God to place two of the contacts specifically on your heart. Pray for them each day this week as God leads.

God Time Day 2: An Effective Testimony



Read Philippians 3:7.
But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ.

In fiction writing, a good story always includes what writers refer to as a character arc; this simply refers to establishing the character’s life before, and then the journey to become someone new.

Paul, in sharing his story, begins by talking about all the things he used to think were important, all the things he built his life upon, and how he has let those things go to pursue a life devoted to Christ.



Take some time to reflect: What things did you pursue or prioritize in the past? How have your priorities changed? Why did they change?

God Time Day 3: Put Away the Past



Paul lists all the things he once used to define himself:



Read Philippians 3:4b-6.
⁴ If anyone else thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; regarding the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ regarding zeal, persecuting the church; regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless.

By all accounts, Paul was a rockstar. His religious credibility and zeal according to Jewish law and customs was beyond reproach. Unfortunately, he was so good at following the rules and regulations that he missed the Messiah.

There was a time in your life, either before you gave your life to Christ or sometime during your journey, when you defined yourself, not according to the will of God. Whose expectations were you trying to meet? How did you feel about yourself then? How do you feel about that time now?



Have you asked Jesus for forgiveness?

God Time Day 4: Present Jesus

 Paul was a righteous man by human standards. But, by God’s standards, Paul was a broken and selfish sinner who deserved to be condemned for his sins. This is the greatness of the gospel, that Jesus died for our sins, not because we earned it, but rather despite ourselves.

 Read Philippians 3:8-9.
⁸ *More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ—the righteousness from God based on faith.*

Underline the phrase “surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus” in verse 8.

 Circle the word “righteousness” in verse 9 (two times).

Paul began his story by telling what his life was like before Jesus. He shared his priorities, his purpose, and his identity. Now, having Christ as Lord in his life, Paul shares how his life has changed. The vain things he once pursued are no longer important. The righteousness he attempted to attain through his efforts was rendered pointless because of the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Paul doesn’t mention heaven or hell. He doesn’t mention some distant future afterlife. Having Christ in his life is of real value in the here and now. (Though salvation promises eternity with God, the goal is now; “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:10)

 Think about how Jesus has changed your priorities, your sense of purpose, and how you see the world.

How has your life changed with Christ in it?

God Time Day 5: Proclaim the Present

 Go back and reread Philippians 3:8-9 from Day 4.

Some of Paul’s story includes some awful things (ex., persecuting Christians), and he does not shy away from talking about them. Why? Because Paul is overwhelmed with joy for how Jesus has transformed his life.

The same is true for us. We were once slaves to sin, but now have freedom in Christ. We were dead, now we are alive.

 Let’s look at your story. Your Story has three parts; Your life before Jesus, how Jesus came into your life, and your life since then. (Help is available at vimeo.com/419998882.)



1. Think of two words that describe your life before Jesus (ex: selfish and depressed) and put them into a sentence. (Be honest, the failures of your past give value to your present.)

There was a time in my life that _____

2. In 2-3 sentences, explain how Jesus came into your life.

But Jesus _____

3. Finally, think of two words that describe your life since then (ex: loving and growing) and put them into a sentence. How has your life been changed, what is different, how do you have joy?

Now I _____



On Day 1, you began praying for two persons God placed on your heart. Share your story with them this week.

Then ask them, “Do you have a story like that?”



Family Time

Main Idea:
Righteousness



Key Verse: Philippians 3:10-11

¹⁰ My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, ¹¹ assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead.



Picture it (or Pitcher it):

One of the greatest accomplishments in baseball is to pitch a perfect game. In the history of baseball, there have only been 24 pitchers that have ever thrown a perfect game. To pitch a perfect game a pitcher must get every single batter out at the plate, with no batters reaching even first base. That means no walks and no errors, and the pitcher can't hit a batter. Throwing a perfect game is so difficult that no pitcher has ever done it twice.

Following God's law is like pitching a perfect game, not just once but every day of your life. Just like one hit ruins a perfect game, so one sin ruins our standing before God.



Read:

Philippians 3:4-11



Talk About It:

Not only did Paul think all his good works were like garbage but he also knew that he could never be made righteous by obeying the law. One person might be better than another, but Paul knew that we all fall short of perfection. Obeying the law to get to God is like trying to jump across the Grand Canyon. Paul placed his hope in what Jesus did for him because he knew a person couldn't obey the law.

Jesus lived a perfect life for us and then died to take away our sins. When we believe in Jesus, His perfect righteousness is added to our account. This is like jumping into a helicopter and it takes you across the Grand Canyon to the other side. We can't get to God on our own by obeying the law, but we can get to the other side by placing our faith and hope in Jesus.



Ask:

- Why can't anyone get to heaven by obeying the law?
- If we can't become righteous by obeying the law, how can we get the righteousness we need to go to heaven?



Pray:

Dear God, I confess that I am a sinner who needs forgiveness from you. Thank you for dying on the cross for our sins. Without you doing that we would not have had a way to heaven. Help us to live each day in your righteousness. Amen.

