

PHILIPPIANS

Introduction

1. Image.

- a. Is there a time in your life when you were really searching for the secret to joy, peace, and contentment?
- b. For me, it was during university and my year in China....

2. Felt Need.

- a. Why do human beings crave joy, peace, and contentment so much?
- b. Why are there so many ideas out there on how to have true joy?
(1) Mindfulness in New Zealand public schools....
- c. We need:
 - (1) A way to have joy, peace, and contentment in every circumstance.
 - (2) An antidote to anxiety, discouragement, and sadness.
 - (3) The feeling that we're making progress toward an ultimate goal.
 - (4) To know that God isn't finished with us.
 - (5) To be part of a team that is going somewhere, that is making a difference.



3. Subject.

- a. Philippians gives us the key to joy, peace, and contentment from God's point of view.
- b. In Philippians we have a greater self-help book, a greater psychology, a greater motivational speaker, a greater guru than any thing the world is able to produce.
- c. Philippians should be read along with the other prison epistles: Ephesian, Colossians, and Philemon.

Philippians at a Glance	
Book Theme	Progress and Joy in the Faith/Joyful Advance in Messiah/Rejoice in the Lord
Author	Paul
Recipients	Believers in Philippi
Date	62 ad
Historical Setting	Paul imprisoned in Rome because of the gospel (1:7). The gospel is spreading in Rome (1:13). The Philippians have sent Paul a financial gift through Epaphroditus (4:18). Paul is sending Epaphroditus back to the Philippians with this letter (2:25). Paul plans to send Timothy soon (2:19). Paul expects to be released from prison and to see the Philippians again (2:24). The Philippians are experiencing disunity (4:2). Overall, Paul is pleased with the Philippians as a church (1:3-6).
Key Words	Gospel, in the Lord, joy/rejoice, Messiah Jesus, mind/think, partnership
Purpose	To thank the Philippians for their financial partnership. To urge them to unity and spiritual maturity. To commend Epaphroditus and Timothy and express hope for Paul's release. To encourage the Philippians to imitate Paul's own example in thought and life.
Message	Joy, peace, and contentment are available believers in Messiah as they partner in the gospel and advance to spiritual maturity.

Eight Secrets of Real Joy

1. Knowing Jesus intimately.

- a. Paul counts all things as rubbish that he may know and gain Jesus.
 - (1) **Php 3:7-8** 7 ... Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Messiah. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Messiah 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 Messiah....
- b. The goal Paul strives to is knowing Jesus intimately.
 - (1) **Php 3:13-14** 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Messiah Jesus.
- c. For Paul, all Christian activity is to be done “in the Lord [Jesus].”
 - (1) Paul uses the phrase “in the Lord” nine times in Philippians, including:
 - (a) **Php 1:14** 14 ... Most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold....
 - (b) **Php 2:19** 19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon....
 - (c) **Php 3:1** 1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.
 - (d) **Php 4:1** 1 ... Stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.
 - (e) **Php 4:2** 2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.
 - (f) **Php 4:4** 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice.
 - (g) **Php 4:10** 10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.
- d. *Intimacy with Jesus.*
 - (1) The Christian life is not a philosophy or program, but a person.
 - (a) “Though the Gospel is capable of doctrinal exposition, though it is eminently fertile in moral results, yet its substance is neither a dogmatic system nor an ethical code, but a Person and a Life.”¹
 - (2) Joy comes from having the right goal in life—knowing and gaining Jesus.
- e. Application.
 - (1) Is your number one goal in life knowing and gaining Jesus?

2. Taking charge of our thought life.

- a. Paul prays the Philippians’ love will abound with knowledge and discernment.
 - (1) **Php 1:9-10** 9 ... It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent....
- b. Paul uses the term ἡγέομαι (regard, consider) six times.
 - (1) **Php 2:3** 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count (ἡγέομαι) others more significant than yourselves.
 - (2) **Php 2:6** 6 ... Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count (ἡγέομαι) equality with God a thing to be grasped....
 - (3) **Php 2:25** 25 I have thought (ἡγέομαι) it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother....

¹ J. B. Lightfoot, quoted in Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, vol. 43, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2004), xxviii.

- (4) **Php 3:7-8** 7 ... Whatever gain I had, I counted (ἡγέομαι) as loss for the sake of Messiah. 8 Indeed, I count (ἡγέομαι) everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Messiah Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count (ἡγέομαι) them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Messiah....
- c. Paul uses the term φρονέω (think) 10 times.
- (1) **Php 1:7** 7 It is right for me to think (φρονέω) this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart....
- (2) **Php 2:2** 2 ... Complete my joy by being of the same mind (φρονέω), having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind (φρονέω).
- (3) **Php 2:5** 5 Have this mind (φρονέω) among yourselves, which is yours in Messiah Jesus....
- (4) **Php 3:15** 15 Let those of us who are mature think (φρονέω) this way, and if in anything you think (φρονέω) otherwise, God will reveal that also to you.
- (5) **Php 3:19** 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds (φρονέω) set on earthly things.
- (6) **Php 4:2** 2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree (φρονέω) in the Lord.
- (7) **Php 4:10** 10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern (φρονέω) for me. You were indeed concerned (φρονέω) for me, but you had no opportunity.
- d. Paul introduces two model mindsets for the Philippians to follow.
- (1) Jesus' mindset (Php 2:6-11).
- (2) Paul's mindset (Php 3:4-14).
- e. The concern in Philippians is with the moment-by-moment Christian experience—perhaps more than any other biblical book.
- f. *Thoughts.*
- (1) “One's manner of life is truly a reflection of what occupies his mind.”²
- g. Application.
- (1) To think like Jesus and Paul, we have to spend time with Jesus and Paul. The best way to do that is inductive Bible study on a daily basis.

3. Advancing to spiritual maturity.

- a. Paul wants to advance to spiritual maturity.
- (1) His one ambition is to gain Messiah (Php 3:8).
- (a) **Php 3:8** 8 For [Messiah's] sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Messiah....
- (2) He strains forward to what lies ahead (Php 3:12-14).
- (a) **Php 3:12-14** 12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Messiah Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and



² R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:646-647.

straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Messiah Jesus.

- b. He wants the Philippians advance to spiritual maturity.
 - (1) **Php 1:6** 6 I am sure of this, that he [God the Father] who began a good work in you [Philippians] will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Messiah.
 - (2) **Php 1:25** 25 I [Paul] know that I will remain and continue with you [Philippians] all, for your progress and joy in the faith.
 - (3) **Php 2:12** 12 ... Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling....
- c. He wants the gospel message to advance everywhere.
 - (1) **Php 1:12** 12 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel....
 - (2) **Php 1:18** 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Messiah is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.
- d. Regression/retreat is unthinkable for Paul.
 - (1) **Php 3:16** 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.
- e. *Spiritual Advance*.
 - (1) The Christian life isn't designed for regression/retreat.
 - (2) If we are regressing spiritually, something is wrong. We need to fix it right away.
 - (3) Like Paul, we are to toil to present everyone mature in Messiah.
 - (a) **Col 1:28-29** 28 [Jesus] we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Messiah. 29 For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.
- f. Application.
 - (1) Do we know what we need to do to advance to spiritual maturity?
 - (2) Are you advancing to spiritual maturity?
 - (3) Are we advancing to spiritual maturity as a church?
 - (4) Are you exhorting/encouraging believers around you to spiritual maturity?
 - (5) Is the gospel message advancing around you and through you?

4. Imitating the best examples.

- a. Paul asks the Philippians to imitate him and those like him.
 - (1) **Php 3:17** 17 Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.
- b. The Philippians are to practice what they learned, received, heard, and saw in Paul.
 - (1) **Php 4:9** 9 What you have learned, received, heard, and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.
- c. *Imitation*.
 - (1) We need to reach a point in our spiritual advance where we can say, "Follow me."
- d. Application.
 - (1) Who are you imitating?
 - (2) Are you spending quality time with spiritually mature believers?
 - (3) Have you reached a point in your advance to spiritual maturity that you can confidently say to another, "Follow my example"? If not, why not?

5. Pursuing unity as a team.

- a. Image: NZ All Blacks Scrum Practice: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dt9MuKZGOiA>



- b. Paul wants the Philippians to stand firm in one spirit, with one mind.
(1) **Php 1:27** 27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Messiah, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel....
- c. The Philippians will complete Paul's joy by being in full accord and of one mind.
(1) **Php 2:2** 2 ...Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.
- d. Paul urges Euodia and Syntyche to agree in the Lord.
(1) **Php 4:2** 2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.
- e. Paul asks Epaphroditus to be a peacemaker.
(1) **Php 4:3** 3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have laboured side by side with me in the gospel....

- f. Paul likens the Philippians to a Roman phalanx.
(1) See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Icdm7-df64k>



- g. *Unity*.
(1) Jesus prayed for us to become perfectly one.
(a) **Jn 17:20-23** 20 I do not ask for these [apostles] only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, 21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.
(2) Unity requires the constant exercise of biblical conflict resolution.

6. Showing affection for one another.

- a. Image: New Zealand men apparently used to hug more: <http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/life/8426339/Men-used-to-hug-more>.
- b. Paul readily displays his affection for the Philippians.
(1) He remembers them.



- (a) **Php 1:3** 3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you....
- (2) He prays for them regularly with joy.
 - (a) **Php 1:4** 4 ...Always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy....
- (3) He holds them in his heart.
 - (a) **Php 1:7** 7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart....
- (4) He yearns for them all with the affection of Jesus.
 - (a) **Php 1:8** 8 God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Messiah Jesus.
- (5) He and Timothy are genuinely concerned for their welfare.
 - (a) **Php 2:20** 20 I have no one like [Timothy], who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.
- (6) He loves and longs for them.
 - (a) **Php 4:1** 1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.
- c. *Affection.*
 - (1) As disciple-makers, we are to care deeply about those we are discipling.
 - (2) Elders and pastors are to care deeply about church members.
- d. *Application.*
 - (1) Who do you need to pray for/check up on/write an email to/make a phone call to?
 - (2) What former mentee do you need to get in touch with?

7. Anticipating the day of Messiah.

- a. Paul mentions “the day of Messiah” three times.
 - (1) **Php 1:6** 6 I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you [Philippians] will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Messiah.
 - (2) **Php 1:10** 10 ...So that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Messiah....
 - (3) **Php 2:16** 16 ...Holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Messiah I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.
- b. Paul wants the Philippians to be ready for the day of Messiah.
 - (1) **Php 1:6** 6 I am sure of this, that [God] who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Messiah.
 - (2) **Php 1:10-11** 10 ...So that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Messiah, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Messiah, to the glory and praise of God.
 - (3) **Php 2:15-16** 15 ...That you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life....
- c. He himself want to be ready for the day of Messiah.
 - (1) **Php 2:16** 16 ...So that in the day of Messiah I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.
- d. *The Judgment Seat of Messiah.*
 - (1) On the day of Messiah, Jesus will evaluate our labour and reward us accordingly.

- (a) **1 Co 3:8-11** 8 Each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's co-workers. You are God's field, God's building. 10 According to the grace of God that was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Messiah.



- e. Application.
(1) Is the day of Messiah at the forefront of your mind?

8. Making the choice to rejoice.

- a. Paul uses "joy" terminology 14 times in Philippians (3.5 times per chapter).
(1) Paul prays for the Philippians with joy.
(a) **Php 1:4** 4 ...Always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy....
- b. Paul rejoices that Messiah is proclaimed, even by his opponents.
(1) **Php 1:18** 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Messiah is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice....
- c. Paul knows he will be released from prison for the Philippians' joy.
(1) **Php 1:25** 25 ...I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith....
- d. By being unified, the Philippians will complete Paul's joy.
(1) **Php 2:2** 2 ...Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.
- e. Paul chooses to rejoice, and he asks the Philippians to rejoice with him.
(1) **Php 2:17-18** 17 Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.
- f. Paul instructs the Philippians to welcome back Epaphroditus with joy.
(1) **Php 2:29** 29 Receive [Epaphroditus] in the Lord with all joy....
- g. Paul's most frequent command to the Philippians is to rejoice.
(1) **Php 3:1** 1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.
(2) **Php 4:4** 4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice.
- h. The Philippians are Paul's joy.
(1) **Php 4:1** 1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown....
- i. Paul rejoices at the Philippians' concern for him.
(1) **Php 4:10** 10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.
- j. Paul is very concerned about the Philippians' morale.
- k. As disciple-maker, Paul sets the example by choosing to rejoice.
(1) "Paul's hardships made him better, not bitter."³

³ R. P. Lightner, *BKC*, 2:649.

1. *Joy.*

- (1) It's easy for us to be discouraged by circumstances.
- (2) Morale and esprit de corps matter in the church.
- (3) Leaders must be joyful people, and they must encourage all to be joyful.
- (4) We need to be reminded to rejoice.
- (5) The cure for discouragement is to focus on Jesus and rejoice in him.

Discussion Questions

1. Hook.

- a. Describe a time in your life when you were really searching for joy, peace, and contentment.
- b. Why do human beings crave joy, peace, and contentment so much?
- c. What are some ideas out there about how to find joy, peace, and contentment?
- d. What are your circumstances right now? Are they difficult or easy? How are you handling your circumstances?
- e. Philippians gives us the key to joy, peace, and contentment in all circumstances.

2. Inductive Bible Study.

- a. How did you find marking key words and making lists?
- b. How did you find the process of reading through the book several times?
- c. Did you try to do a little each day, or did you cram?

3. Philippians at a Glance.

- a. Did anything speak personally to you as you studied the lesson?
- b. What is Philippians about? What's the book theme?
- c. Who wrote the letter and what are his circumstances?
- d. How does the author's circumstances relate to his emphasis on joy?
- e. What is the purpose of the letter?
- f. Who was with Paul when he wrote the letter?

4. Philippians 1.

- a. What did you learn about Paul and the Philippians from vv. 1-11? How would you describe their relationship?
- b. What did you learn about Paul's circumstances from vv. 12-20?
- c. What was Paul's focus, according to vv. 21-26?
- d. What do vv. 27-30 say about the Philippians' circumstances?
- e. Did you develop a draft chapter theme?

5. Philippians 2.

- a. Look at vv. 1-11. How does the flow of thought continue from Php 1:27-30?
- b. What does Paul say in vv. 1-11 about joy and mind/attitude?
- c. What do vv. 12-18 say about Paul and Philippians?
- d. Whom are vv. 19-24 about?
- e. Whom are vv. 25-30 about?
- f. Is there any application for believers today from ch. 2?
- g. What is a possible chapter theme?

6. Philippians 3.

- a. How does the chapter begin? What is it about?
- b. What does this chapter say about mind/attitude?
- c. What did you observe about Christ from vv. 20-21?
- d. What is a possible chapter theme?

7. Philippians 4.

- a. How does the chapter begin? What do we learn about the Philippians?
- b. What do vv. 4-9 teach about our thought life?
- c. What do vv. 10-23 say about Paul and the Philippians?
- d. What is an application from this chapter?
- e. What is a possible chapter theme?

8. Closing.

- a. Any more thoughts about the book theme?
- b. On Sunday, what do you want to hear more about?
- c. What do you look forward to studying more about in Philippians?
- d. How do you think the truths of the book Philippians could help you in your current circumstances?

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Notes