

March 22/23, 2003

Study Questions
Experiencing Joy: A Study in Philippians
The Joy of Peace
Philippians 4:1-9
Pastor Bryan Clark

Opening Discussion

1. Are you at peace in this time of war? Why or why not?
2. Do you struggle with anxiety? If so, what things cause you to feel anxious? What does your anxiety or peace say about your trust in God?
3. What are some “personal wars” that are stealing your peace and robbing your joy?

Bible Study

1. The “therefore” of 4:1 refers to the fact that we are citizens of heaven. Literally, Paul’s statement referring to “conduct worthy of the gospel” (1:27) means to live as citizens. Go back and review again conduct that is fitting for a citizen of heaven.
2. Consistent with what Paul has stated as conduct worthy of the gospel, he urges (pleads with) two ladies in Philippi to live in harmony. He describes these two women as those “who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel.” These were two key women in the body who were at odds with one another. Paul encourages his “true comrade” (which is literally “yoke fellow”) to help restore unity with these women. In other words, as members of the same team, fellow yoke pullers, we need to do whatever we can to restore and maintain unity. How might you go about fulfilling your responsibility to help restore unity to those who are in conflict?

If you are in conflict with someone in the body, what is your responsibility to “fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life”?

3. Are Paul’s words in 4:4 a suggestion or a command?

Why are we disobedient when we grumble instead of rejoicing always?

What is the key to rejoicing always according to Paul in 4:4? What does this mean?

4. Paul commands us in 4:5 to show our “forbearing spirit” to all men. This means a spirit of forgiveness, grace and kindness. In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament (the Septuagint) this Greek word in Phil. 4:5 is used to capture the idea of the Hebrew word translated “ready to forgive” in Ps. 86:5. In what ways do you demonstrate a “forbearing” spirit?

In what ways do you respond differently to people who hurt you, than how those who don’t know Christ respond?

5. Is this forbearing spirit conditional? Is “all men” conditional? Why or why not?

How do Paul’s words compare with Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:38-48?

(Isn’t Jesus’ point that what sets us apart as a Christ follower is how we respond to those who hurt us, regardless of whether that person seeks our forgiveness or not?)

6. What does our anxiety reveal about us?

Is “be anxious for nothing” (v. 6) a suggestion or a command? Why?

What is the solution to anxiety?

7. What is the result of trusting God with our fears and anxieties according to 4:7?

What does an absence of peace reveal?

8. What should our minds dwell on?

What you choose to allow your mind to dwell on largely determines whether you experience peace or anxiety. If we could display what your mind dwelt on this past week, would it pass the test of 4:8? Why or why not?

9. How does an undisciplined mind rob us of our joy?

Application

1. To evaluate whether you are living as a citizen of heaven, review Paul’s checklist from 4:1-9:

- Are you in harmony with everyone in the body?
- Are you joyful?
- Do you demonstrate a forbearing spirit to all?
- Are you at peace rather than anxious?
- Do you let your mind dwell on things that would pass the 4:8 test?

What specific area do you need to work on?

What is your plan to grow in this area?

2. How can your group help you progress in living as a citizen of heaven?