

Being Disciples: Practicing the Way of Jesus

A STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

Practicing the Way of Jesus Together For Brooklyn

Dear RPS family,

Philippians is a letter filled with joy and celebration. Which is odd because Paul is writing this letter from prison. He doesn't know whether he will live or die, and that makes the joyful tone of this letter all the more astonishing. Oftentimes we think of joy as something that comes from within ourselves and a response to those rare moments when several circumstances all line up in our favor. But Paul's call to "rejoice in the Lord always", is a different and deeper kind of joy.

What Paul is talking about here and actually commanding us is to find joy in the midst of all circumstances including and especially in the midst of suffering. This requires a deeper joy that can meet us even when our external reality and our internal feelings might not lend themselves to this joy.

For Paul, joy is a response formed in disciples who can see, with faith, God's faithfulness and who see themselves and their own lives within the larger story of God's redemptive work. So joy is always the appropriate response when we see God's unfolding work in the world even even in the midst of suffering and opposition, because it means, despite our present realities, God will transform us and our world, into glory (Phil 3:21).

In Christ,
Chris

LOOKING AHEAD:

11.22 | Philippians 4:10-23
The Way of Stewardship

St. Augustine famously said, “Our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee” (Confessions 1.1.1). Augustine believed that even when you seem to be enjoying something else, God is the actual source of your joy. The thing you love is from him and is lovely because it bears his signature. All joy is really found in God, and anything you do enjoy is derivative, because what you are really looking for is him, whether you know it or not.

Tim Keller

The Way of Joy

Study for the Week of 11.15 | Philippians 4:2-9

Look to the Scriptures

- Open in prayer ask God to for wisdom to discern, for eyes to see and ears to hear.

Look to the Text

- What is happening in this passage? What phrases jump out at you?
- Faith - In v. 6-7 Paul addresses one of the main things that robs us of joy: anxiety. He encourages us to pray “in everything”, in other words if it matters to us it matters to God. How does Paul’s invitation and description of prayer lead us into deeper joy? How does the fact that Paul says “the Lord is at hand” shape our prayer life? What does God promise in v. 7? How has he answered that promise for you?
- Love - Consider Phil. 4:8. How might we train our hearts and minds to “think about these things” that Paul describes? How does this lead us to joy, and what are practical ways we can do this?
- Hope - Paul’s concludes with this hopeful promise, the God of peace will be with you. Paul reminds Philippians that the promise of God’s presence is the source of our hope and joy. How might our daily and weekly spiritual practices lead us towards a deeper understanding of this reality?

Listen to one another

- Consider sharing places where you are facing hardship in this season of your life.
- Or pray a version of the Examen such as sharing the following:
 - Consolation: A time in the past week where you felt close to God.
 - Desolation: A time in the past week where you felt far from God.
 - Looking ahead: What are you looking forward to or most worried about in the coming week

Pray

- Spend time praying for one another and our world incorporating both what you have studied and prayer requests in your time of prayer.

Practice

- Paul encourages the Philippians in Phil 4:9 to “practice these things”, so take this time over the next few weeks on 1 or 2 spiritual practices that you would like to work on. It could be something you are currently doing or a new practice you want to take up. You can do this as a group together or as individuals, but consider how you can practice the way of Jesus together during this time. Some suggestions: Daily Scripture reading, keeping Sabbath, fixed-hour prayer, memorize Philippians 2:5-11 together, etc. Talk about how what you have discussed in your group might help your daily/weekly practices.

How are your spiritual practices helping you to have the mind of Christ? How do they lead you out thinking first about yourself and instead thinking and serving others?

