

HOW TO ENJOY THE PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE
How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 1 of 12
Philippians 1:3-11
Rick Warren

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11

Four Keys To Enjoying People

1. _____ (vs. 3)

"I thank my God every time I remember you."

Background: Acts 16

Lesson #1:

"...you have helped me ... from the very first day until now." (vs. 5) GN

2. _____ (vs. 4)

"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ..."

Lesson #2: The quickest way to change a relationship from bad to good is to start:

"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God." (vs. 9-11)

What to pray for others: Pray they will . . .

(vs. 9)

(vs. 10a)

(vs. 10b)

(vs. 11)

3. _____ (vs.6)

"Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Lesson #3

Our Mistake: We judge others by how far they _____
_____ rather than how far _____.

4. _____ (vs.7,8)

"It is right for me to feel this way about all of you since I have you in my heart."

"God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus."

"God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to us." Rom. 5:5 (GN)

Lesson #4: The secret of enjoying the people in my life is to be:

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Today we start a new series. Philippians is a personal book. It tells us the most about Paul. It's a personal letter. It's also a practical letter. It deals with a lot of the problems in life that we all face, a lot of examples of day to day decisions. Most of all Philippians is a positive book. The words "joy" or "rejoice" or "be glad" are used seventeen different times in this book. I'm calling this series "How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life" because it deals with how to be joyful in spite of circumstances, in spite of problems.

In the first chapter, Paul starts right off talking about people. If relationships are bad, life stinks. If relationships are strained, life is difficult. If you have problems with people it kills the joy in your life.

This morning I want us to look at "How To Enjoy the People in Your Life." Peter Drucker, the father of American management, said that the number one characteristic of a CEO, of a leader, is that they enjoy other people.

Do you enjoy the people around you? the people that you work with? the people that you're married to? the people in your family? The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 9:9, "Husbands [men] enjoy life with your wife whom you love." The problem I find is that many marriages are more a matter of endurance than enjoyment. We don't really enjoy the people in our lives, we tolerate them, we put up with them. We endure them.

What does it take to enjoy the people in your life? Four keys:

1. Be grateful for the good in people. V. 3. "I thank my God every time I remember you." Paul said I like to remember the good things about people, focus on the good times we've had, remember the positive experiences. What do you remember about people? The good experiences or the bad experiences.

When Paul said this he had not had an easy time in Philippi. Acts 16 tells us the background of this story. When he went to Philippi he was arrested illegally, whipped, humiliated, thrown in prison. While in prison there was an earthquake. He was asked to leave town. Paul did not have a good time in Philippi, he had a bad time. Yet he says, when I think of you I remember the good things. "I thank God every time I remember you." Paul could have dwelt on the negative. He could have remembered the painful memories. He chose not to remember the painful and he focused on the things he could be grateful for.

Maybe you have, in your past, been hurt by a parent or a partner and you're still holding on to that hurt. As a result you can't enjoy them today. You're still focusing on the bad and the negative. Be grateful for the good in people. Pleasant memories are a choice. I can choose what I'm going to remember about the past.

LESSON #1: Remember the best, forget the rest.

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I'm not saying that you deny the hurts you've had or that you excuse the weaknesses in other people. That is psychologically unhealthy. But focus on the good and choose to emphasize the strengths.

I hear wives say "He's a good man, but ..." Anytime you hear "but" it means the emphasis is on the negative not the positive. Be grateful for what you've got! Mr. Perfect does not exist! Be grateful for the good in other people.

Paul appreciated people's loyalty. V. 5: "You have helped me from the very first day until now." Who has been loyal to you? Maybe somebody at work, a friend, a husband or wife. Maybe they didn't do anything really spectacular, but time and time again, when they had every opportunity to walk out on you, they didn't. They hung in there. When you were going through the bankruptcy, the crisis at work, the change in careers, when you were just being a jerk -- they stayed with you. You ought to appreciate that! They haven't left and they've had plenty of good reasons. If you want to enjoy others, you've got to focus on their strengths and not their weaknesses. With some people it takes a lot of creativity. But you can find something good in everybody.

2. Practice positive praying. V. 4: "In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy." How would you like to have the apostle Paul praying for you? Would that encourage you? Isn't it an encouragement when you know people are praying for you when they are remembering you?

LESSON #2: The quickest way to change a relationship from bad to good is to start thanking God in prayer for people.

This will do two things: change your attitude and change them. Positive praying is much more powerful than positive thinking. People may resist our advice and spurn our appeals and reject our suggestions and not listen to our help, but they are powerless against our prayers.

When you say to somebody, "I'll pray for you" what do you say? What do you pray? Most of us are good at praying in a crisis but on a normal basis what do you pray? God, bless them? That's so general. The more specific you are in prayer the more specific you get an answer.

Paul spells out specifically what he's praying for people. V. 9- 11 "And this is my prayer, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God."

Four things Paul prays for other people. You can pray these for people in your life and you can know that they'll be answered because they are God's will. They are in the Bible.

- 1. Pray that they will grow in love.** "... abound in love ..." means to overflow, like a tidal wave.
- 2. Pray that they make wise choices.** "... discern what is best..."
- 3. Pray that they will do the right thing.** "... be pure and blameless..." and have a clear conscience.

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4. Pray that they will live for God's glory. "... the fruit of righteousness."

Paul says if you want to enjoy people in your life, you first must be grateful for the good and then you practice positive praying.

3. Be patient with their progress. Paul looked at people's future and not just at their past. He looked at their potential and was patient with their progress. V. 6: Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Paul says what God starts, God finishes. What God started in your life at salvation He will bring it eventually to completion.

Mankind is a great starter but a bad finisher. Man leaves unfinished symphonies, unfinished buildings, unfinished books, unfinished projects. Man doesn't always finish what he starts but God always finishes what He starts. He does not make a bird and give him half a wing. He does not make an unfinished flower, an unfinished star. He puts the finishing touches on everything He does and then He says, "It is good." The Bible says when Jesus Christ starts working in your life He will complete what He started. In spite of the hangups, faults, my bad decisions, my sins, in spite of all the circumstances that I face in life God is going to finish what He started in my life. And in your life too! You are going to make it! The Bible says that one day when you get to Heaven you're going to become just like Jesus because you will see Him as He is. And that's the goal. God starts what He finishes.

Lesson #3: God is not finished with people.

We need to be patient with people's progress. To enjoy people we must allow for growth and for development. Paul could say, "I'm not the man I used to be, thank God. But also, thank God, I'm not the man I'm going to be. I'm growing and changing."

In your marriage, if you want to enjoy your marriage, you've got to learn to enjoy your husband or your wife right now while allowing for growth and development. Otherwise, by the time they meet your conditions you will have still another condition for them to meet. You've got to learn to enjoy them where they are right now. Parents, if you're going to learn to enjoy your kids you've got to learn to enjoy them in the process, while they're growing. Because there is no such thing as a perfect kid. And there's no such thing as a perfect adult. If you demand perfection of the people in your life in order to enjoy them you're going to be miserable for the rest of your life. Nobody's perfect.

Paul says that he enjoyed the Philippians because he chose to ignore the bad things that happened and concentrated on the good. He was grateful for the good that happened and he practiced positive praying, he prayed with joy and for specific things in their life. If you want something to change your attitude start praying for that person who irritates you at work, that person in your home, child or mate, and see what happens to your attitude. Then be patient with their progress because life is a matter of growth.

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John 1:12 "To them he gave the power to become the sons of God." The Christian life is a process. We're all becoming, we're all growing. To enjoy people, you've got to enjoy them in the process, not when they've arrived.

V. 6: "Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Circle "confident". Paul believed in God's power to change the human personality. Paul believed that no person was hopeless. He never gave up on people. This is a great promise of God. Claim it for your kids, for your mate, for yourself.

Paul is talking about faith. Faith is expecting the best from other people. There's tremendous power in faith. We are shaped by expectations. We tend to live up to what other people expect of us. Other people tend to live up to what they think we expect of them.

The common mistake is we tend to judge people on the basis of how far they have to go rather than how far they have come.

4. Love people from the heart. I've discovered that if people are not on my heart, they're on my nerves. If you don't have your kids in your heart, they get on your nerves. If you don't have your husband in your heart, he gets on your nerves.

The reason so many marriages are crumbling is that mates are reacting to each other from their mind rather than their heart. When your wife says, "I feel depressed" listen to her; it's legitimate. When your husband says, "I don't feel this is the right thing we ought to do. We ought to do it this other way." Listen to him. Listening and loving from the heart hears the hurt behind the words.

Heart love begins with understanding, knowing why they feel that way. Why does the guy at work act like such a jerk? Maybe you don't know the background he grew up in. Maybe he's tons better than he used to be ten years ago. Hear the hurt, look for the problems, know what makes your mate tick. You cannot love someone you don't understand. Understanding them makes it easy (or easier). You need to understand the moods of the people closest around you, why they act the way they do. If you care, you'll be aware.

If heart love begins with understanding, how do you get understanding? By asking questions and then listening. The most common complaint I hear from people is lack of understanding. What a comfort it is to know that someone fully understands you.

How do you love those people that even when you do understand them, they are unlovable? V. 8: "God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus." Circle "affection". In Greek the word "affection" is the word for "intestines". King James translates this "bowels". In Greek society, the Greeks thought that the seat of the emotions was in your stomach, your liver, your internal organs.

Paul would say, "I've got a gut feeling of love for you." It is intensive love that makes me love even the unlovely. That is not a natural kind of love. It is a supernatural kind of love and that's why Paul said it's not from himself, but it's the affection of Christ Jesus. Human love wears out

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and dries up and dies on the vine. This happens to everybody. The only kind of love that lasts and lasts in spite of heartache and difficulty in tough circumstances is God's love -- the affection of Jesus Christ. That's the only kind of love that lasts.

Romans 5:5 "God has poured out his love into our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to us." God's love is not something you work up. It is something that is poured into me by the Holy Spirit as I let Him live in me day by day. God's love is something He does in me and through me. It is a gift as you let the Holy Spirit live in you moment by moment.

Life is too short to not enjoy the people in your life. If you don't learn to enjoy the people that God has placed around you in your life you will be miserable. As Paul begins this great book about joy (and he's going to deal with all the common kill-joys we experience in life) he starts off talking about people. People will rob your joy unless you learn how to respond to them the way Jesus did.

Review:

1. Who do you need to be thankful for? Who have you taken for granted in your life? Who have you failed to appreciate? When was the last time you wrote a "thank you" note, or bought some flowers, or made that favorite dinner, gave a kind word? How many times has somebody done that for you and you just took it for granted? You've played the balance game so that every time your mate, friend, or boss does something good for you your reaction is "they owe it to me" and you are unpleasable. You won't give them a break to remember the best and forget the rest.
2. Are you praying for those around you everyday? Are you praying for your kids, your husband, your wife? Do you pray that they'll be filled with love and make wise decisions, do the right thing and live for the glory of God? Every one of the books Paul writes usually has a prayer in it somewhere and you can pray it for other people.

LESSON #4: The secret of enjoying the people in my life is to be filled with God's love.

The way you do this is being thankful and praying for those around you. Make a prayer list with specific requests you're praying for.

3. Who do you need to be patient with and their progress? Somebody at work? Your kids? Your husband and his progress? You look at how far he's got to go in being the spiritual leader of your home but you've forgot to look at how far he's already come.
4. Who do you need to start loving from the heart not the head?

Paul started this church; he was the founding pastor. He had these people in his heart. The word in the Bible which means "enjoying other people" is the word "fellowship". That's what it's all about -- enjoying your family, your church. When you really love each other, that's what fellowship is all about.