

HOW TO BE JOYFUL NO MATTER WHAT
How to Enjoy the Rest of Your Life - Part 2 of 12
Philippians 1:12-26
Rick Warren

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-26

"... *I rejoice ... and I will continue to rejoice.*" (vs. 18)

THE 4 ESSENTIALS FOR JOYFUL LIVING

I. I NEED A PERSPECTIVE _____ (vs. 12-14)

Paul's view of his circumstances:

"Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel."

When I face problems joyfully

It (vs. 13)

It (vs. 14)

"And we know that in ALL things God works for the good of those who love Him ... "
Rom. 8:28

LESSON:

II. I NEED A PRIORITY _____ (VS. 15-18)

Paul's response to his critics:

"But what does it matter? THE IMPORTANT THING is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice." (vs. 18)

"In everything you do, put God first, and he will direct you and crown your efforts with success." Prov. 3:6 (LB)

LESSON:

III. I NEED A POWER _____ (vs. 19-20)

Paul's source of strength:

"... I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed ..."

"I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me."
Phil. 4:13 (GN)

LESSON:

IV. I NEED A PURPOSE _____ (vs. 20-26)

Paul's reason for living:

"For me to live is Christ and to die is gain" (vs. 21)

"Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."
Phil. 3:13-14

Paul's concern:
(vs. 22-26)

LESSON: J

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Most people don't enjoy life; they just endure it. They don't enjoy happiness. We think that life must be perfect for us to be happy. If I could just change my situation life would be great. If I could just get rid of all my problems... But there's no such thing as a problem free life. If you're going to learn to be happy, joyful, you must learn to be joyful in the situation, in the problems, in the very experiences of life.

"Happiness" comes from the word "happenstance" from which we get the word "circumstance". It depends on happenings. Joy is internal. Happiness is external. You have a happy time at Disneyland, you leave and you lose your happiness. Joy is constant. How do you have happiness in spite of what is going on in your life?

The background of the story today is that Paul for the last four years has been miserable in circumstances. He's spent two years in prison in Caesarea for a trumped up charge. Then he's put on a ship to go to Rome to appear before Nero who is not known for his niceties towards Christians. On the way he's shipwrecked, stranded on an island, bitten by a poisonous snake, waits the winter there, continues on to Rome, spends another two years in prison awaiting trial to be executed. During this two year period in Rome he is chained to a guard for 24 hours a day. He has absolutely no privacy. Every four hours he gets a new guard. Yet in spite of all of these situations, Paul says in Phil. 1:18 "I rejoice and I will continue to rejoice." What's Paul's secret? How does he stay positive in prison, triumph over troubles, delight in difficulties, stay so happy, positive, joyful in spite of the fact that everything has not turned out the way he planned it. Paul gives us four secrets.

THE FOUR ESSENTIALS FOR JOYFUL LIVING

I. I NEED A PERSPECTIVE TO LIVE FROM

Everyone of you have problems. You've brought them in here with you. Your problems are not so important as how you are looking at those problems. The way you look at that problem is much more important than the problem. Your perspective makes the difference.

v. 12 "Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel." I can see the best even in the worst. I can see God at work in the problems even when they don't go my way. Non-believers are being witnessed to in my attitude toward them, believers are being encouraged. v. 13: "As a result it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ."

Paul had always wanted to go to Rome. He meant to have a crusade. Instead, God put him in prison where he would write the New Testament. He's chained to the palace guard, the praetorium guard with the crack elite troops of the Roman Empire, personally chosen by Caesar were his body guards. They were the highest paid people of the empire. When they retired after 12 years they were made leaders in Rome. There is not a more strategic group that Paul could witness to if he's going to reach the Roman empire. God puts Paul in Rome, Nero pays the bill

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and chains a future leader of Rome to him every four hours. In two years at four-hour shifts, Paul had witnessed to 4,380 guards. These guards had an inside route to the emperor and as a result even some of Nero's family became believers. History tells us that Nero had his wife, mother and children killed because they became believers. A "chain" reaction. Paul had a captive audience.

v. 14 "Because of my chains most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly." My attitude towards problems has encouraged other people. Courage is contagious. It spreads like wildfire. Other believers became bold because of Paul being bold.

The perspective you need to live from if you're going to have joy in your life is Romans 8:28 "And we know that in ALL things God works for the good of those who love Him..."

LESSON: God has a purpose behind every one of my problems.

When you get this perspective you are on the way to joyful living. Paul says that God has a purpose behind all my problems therefore I have a perspective to live from.

II. I NEED A PRIORITY TO LIVE BY

When things get tough I need to know what's really important in order to distinguish the trivial from the significant. I can be living my life either based on problems or priorities. Either you'll decide what's important in your life or you'll let other people decide what's important. If you don't choose your priorities, you'll go around putting out one fire after another, living your life simply from problem to problem to problem and not choosing what's important.

V. 15-16 Paul was saying, "Not only am I in prison, but if you want to kick a man while he's down there are guys out there attacking my ministry. They're jealous, envious, rivaling me. Other ministers are criticizing me while I am in prison." If you want something to steal your joy quicker than anything else, just let other people begin to criticize you.

v. 18: "But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice." Paul said he wasn't going to let anybody steal his joy. Not circumstances nor critics. He said their motives may be wrong, their style may be wrong, but if the message is getting out, so what? This is the only question in the book of Philippians. A question of priority. In Greek it literally means "so what". What does it matter? Paul said he had to set his priorities, his values, not let little things steal his joy.

How many arguments in your marriage are over little things that really don't matter? Is it worth losing your joy over? No! Have a perspective to live from and a priority to live by. Know what is important.

What should I live by? Proverbs 3:6 "In everything you do, put God first and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success." This is what counts -- putting God first.

LESSON: Focus on what really counts.

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III. I NEED A POWER TO LIVE ON

I need strength to make it, to keep on going. Life can wear you out. Life can drain you completely. One crisis after another can drain you. You lose your energy and your power. Some of you are ready to throw in the towel. You say, "I've done the best I could, but it's not good enough and I'm tired and sick." You need a fresh power supply.

v. 19: "I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed."

Paul says, I have two things that give me strength and kept me going in spite of four years of imprisonment. One, the prayers of other people. And two, the help of God's Spirit.

Circle the word "hope". You can't live without hope. You've got to have hope to cope. Cornell University did a study of 25,000 POWs from WWII. They found that man can handle tremendous stress and pressure as long as he has hope. The moment hope is gone you're doomed.

Where do you get your hope to keep on keeping on? Is that source reliable? God's answer to personal energy crisis: Phil. 4:13 "I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me."

LESSON: With God's power nothing can devastate me.

If I am going to make it in life I need a perspective to live from -- something so I can see the way things really are not the way I feel they are, the way they appear to be. I need a priority to live by so that I do first things first and I'm not taken away by non-essentials. And I need a power to live on that gives me the strength to keep going and keep on keeping on.

4. I NEED A PURPOSE TO LIVE FOR

Paul is old and tired and been in prison for four years. He's ready to go on to heaven. They've taken every single thing from him -- friends, ministry, freedom, privacy. They've taken every thing from him except the one thing that cannot be taken from you and that is a purpose to live for.

V. 21 "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain." He's not suicidal but he's anticipating death. He's not afraid of dying. Death is just on to better things, out of the prison. "But while I'm here," he says, "I have a purpose for living."

How would you fill in the blank? For me to live is _____. The ads on television tell us what the values are in our society for they tell us what we want to hear. Based on advertising I'd say most Americans would fill in the blank in one of three ways:

1. "For me to live is possessions." Get all you can, can all you get, set on the can and spoil the rest. Get, get, get. We buy things we don't need, with money we don't have to impress

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people we don't even like. That's dumb! I've got to work to keep up with the Jones and just about the time I catch up with them they refinance and I'm in trouble again.

2. "For me to live is pleasure." If it feels good, do it. Anything to make me pleasurable. Anything to relieve my boredom for one little moment, but Monday morning back at work, life is still the pits. Pleasure doesn't last.

3. "For me to live is power, position, prestige, popularity." We dress for success and we drive to impress. We pay for our power lunch with our power card. Image is everything. For many teenagers it is popularity. They'll do anything they can to fit into the peer group even if it means to lower their standards. You can be the most popular person on your campus, come back two years later and no one remembers you. One minute you're the hero the next minute you're the zero.

The problem with possessions, pleasure and power is that they don't last. Not a lifetime, much less an eternity. There isn't ultimate fulfillment. If it were true then the people who had the most pleasure would be the happiest. The people who could

afford to have the most experiences would be the most joyful. And it isn't true.

Paul had a long term goal. He looked at things in the light of eternity. Phil. 3:13-14 "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." The best use of your life is to invest it in something that will outlast it. It's great to be a Christian, but I'm not a Christian because I'm afraid I'm going to die tonight but because I've got to live tomorrow. Even if there weren't a heaven it would be worth it becoming a believer just for the joy here on earth. The fact is that there is more to it than cars, stereos and nice homes and things that are here and now. Only a fool would go all through life unprepared for something he knows will eventually happen at death.

Why does God leave you on earth after you become a Christian? Once you are His child why does he leave us here? For the benefit of other people. To tell those who don't know the Lord the good news and encourage each other. Paul says those are two things I've seen in my own life.

LESSON: The secret of joy -- Jesus first, Others second, Yourself third.

I am convinced that the reason there is so much unhappiness in our culture, so many discouraged and depressed people is because in our society there is a total preoccupation with self. What's best for me? What will make me happy? What is the best thing for me? The ME generation. When you learn to have a greater purpose in your life than just yourself, you will have joy more than you can handle. There is no such thing as problem free living. When you base your life on the kinds of values that are going to last, then problems just aren't as significant. So what that things haven't worked out as I've planned. God has a purpose that is bigger than my problems.

I believe God wants you to enjoy the rest of your life. But it starts with the foundational values we're talking about this morning.

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Review:

1. Do you have God's perspective on your problem? Are you looking at the problem from God's viewpoint or just your viewpoint? God has a purpose behind every problem. You need to pray, "Lord, help me to see this problem from Your viewpoint. Help me to see what You want me to learn in this situation. What do You want to teach me?"
2. You need a priority to live by. Have you settled the issue of what is really important in your life? Have you learned to distinguish what is important and what should come first? There are so many people with mixed up priorities. They don't know where they're coming from or where they're going. They go from one problem to the next. Matthew 6:33 "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these other things will be added unto you." Proverbs 3:6 "In everything you do, put God first and He will direct you and crown your efforts with success." Focus on what is important.
3. You need a power to live on. Have you been trying to live solely on your own power to solve your problems and pressures in your life? God says, relax. You are carrying a burden that was never intended for you to carry. Come to God and give it all to Him, load it all on Him and ask Him to recharge you -- physically, spiritually, emotionally. Then you can say like Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
4. You need a purpose to live for. Can you sum up the purpose of your life in a single sentence? Everybody wants to live a long time, but why? Life is not judged by its duration but by its donation -- what you put into it and into the lives of other people. So many people I meet are giving first class allegiance to second class causes. Those causes are betraying them. They climb the ladder of success and get to the top and find it's leaning against the wrong wall. And you'll say, "Is that all there is? I gave my life for this? What a waste!" Other people couldn't care less about you. While you're so busy impressing everybody they're not even watching you. They're looking at themselves. Don't worry about what other people will think.

Now, how would you complete the sentence: "For me to live is _____."

Some of you men would say "For me to live is my career." You're going to give your blood, sweat and tears for your career and then it's going to be over.

Some of you would say, "For me to live is popularity." or "For me to live is to have a nice home" or "For me to live is sex" or "For me to live is food" ...

I'm going to suggest there is only one answer to that blank that is going to last 100 years from now or even 50 much less 10,000. You're going to spend more of your life on that side of death than you are on this side. There's only one answer: For me to live is Christ.

He's talking about having a relationship to the one who made you. God made you for a purpose. You're not here by accident and to take up space. When you discover that purpose and get right in the center of it, it fits! And you feel fulfilled and you realize that is why you're here. Not

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religion but relationship. Paul did not say, "For me to live is religion" or church, Bible study, or ministry. No, he said the only thing worth living for is a relationship with the one who made me.