

THE **crossing** **small groups**

Keith Simon | Philippians 1
Sermon Discussion Participant's Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To absorb Paul's wisdom that the secret to a life of joy is found only in Jesus.

Icebreaker: Briefly share a time when you were surprised by an outcome to some problem you faced.

Discussion:

Transition: We continue to look at the letter Paul wrote to the church in Philippi. Paul's circumstances hadn't quite ended up where he had hoped, but does that slow him down? Paul, called by God to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with Gentiles, non-Jewish, non-believing men and women, continues to proclaim the good news despite his situation. Paul's circumstances would stop most people, make them question, doubt, and perhaps lead them to give up. Not Paul. Empowered with a mission from God, and a security of his position in Christ, Paul remains steadfast, and filled with joy as he reflects on what God is *actually* doing.

Read:

[Acts 12: 12-14](#)

¹² Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. ¹³ As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴ And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

1. What has happened here? IE What is Paul's situation?
2. Keith mentioned that there is a difference between "what actually happened" versus "what happened." What *actually* happened in these verses?

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3. How can having “faith vision” or eyes to see what God is doing, like Paul, change the way you interpret your circumstances?

In his sermon Keith said that we are often missing the point to our successes. Consider Michael Jordan and Kevin Durant’s stories, they achieved what they wanted, but felt something was missing. We want closure when we measure our successes, we want whatever it is (*job, money, relationship, material thing, championships, emotional health, physical health, etc*) to play a major part in our purpose and identity. Paul unlocks where that comes from, and it’s not where we think.

4. What kind of life does joy come from?
5. The surrendered life is trusting that God's plan is better than our own. Can you share a time in your life that didn't go as planned but later realized that God had a different plan, maybe even a better plan?
6. Proverbs 16:9 says, “We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.” How do you manage the tension between making plans for your life while surrendering them to God’s will?

Read:

[Philippians 4:4](#) | Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

[James 1:2-3](#) | Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, ³because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.

[Psalm 118:24](#) | This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

[Hebrews 12:2](#) | Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

7. What do the above verses teach us about joy?

The surrendered life is just one of Paul’s secrets in this passage to a life of joy. The second is seeing what God is *actually* up to, broadening our eyes to have faith amidst difficult

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circumstances and situations. The final is to *focus on that which can't be taken away*, namely our position in Christ. A position of acceptance, forgiveness, significance, and purpose through the work of Jesus Christ.

Read:

[Philippians 1:20-24](#) | ²⁰I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²²If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

8. Walk through Paul's dilemma, explain in your own words the two choices.

9. In what areas of your life do you need strength to live for Christ and choose joy?

Sharing and Prayer:

It might be a good idea to break up into men and women for prayer time. Allowing for the Spirit to work through these ways. It's also ok to stay together.

Let's ask God to open our eyes to see. Open them to see where we are dwelling on our unfortunate circumstances and not seeing what he is doing. Open them to see what hard work and trials he has in store for us, to bring us closer to him. Open our eyes to see that a life lived for Jesus is worth it at every turn, even when we don't feel it.

Find an appropriate method for addressing this prayer time. Here are two additional suggestions:

1. Write on notecards what you want God to open your eyes too and have everyone read it.
2. Pair up and share your request with one other person.