

Pursue:
Pursue Joy
Philippians 4:4-9

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Text Introduction: We have begun this year in the book of Philippians. We are focusing our attention on the word pursue. We learned in chapter one that the greatest aim in life ought to be to pursue Christ. Here's the way Paul issued that challenge. "Just one thing: As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the Gospel of Christ. It's really the core message of the author's life. In chapter two, we considered the idea of pursuing the unity of the church. In fact, Paul declared that the unity of the church would make his joy complete. In chapter 3, Paul shared his testimony. We considered the idea to pursue Christ even more. Make this your aim, we said. Your goal, as was Paul's, should be to know Him and the power of His resurrection. He is worthy of that kind of pursuit. Today, we conclude in chapter 4. This last chapter contains one of the fundamental lessons of the book and of the Christian life—to rejoice in the Lord always. Let's consider that idea today under the heading "Pursue Joy!"

Text:

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things. ⁹ Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Introduction: Pursue Joy! Can we do that? Joy just comes, doesn't it? Joy just happens. We can't really pursue joy, can we?

Even though, one could interpret this passage as something of a rapid-fire list of admonitions as Paul begins to conclude his letter, I do think there is a correlation in these admonitions to the overriding theme of this letter—joy!

And remember, pursuing joy goes all the way back to the main point of this letter—live your life worthy of the Gospel.

So, how do we pursue joy? This passage is so practical. We are going to come to that, but first I want to remind you of the theological foundation to our joy.

Theological Foundation for Joy:

1. Joy is not tied to our circumstances.

This makes our joy unique.

2. Joy is in relationship to the Lord.

So, the greater we give ourselves to the Lord, the greater our joy.

3. The Lord is near.

This seems like a random, passing comment, but it is critical to the list of exhortations.

4. The power of God is actively working in our lives.

This guides our praying in particular.

So, our practice is guided by this theology.

Practical Pursuit of Joy:

- **Pursue grace with all people.**

Being at peace in relationships will bring joy; being at odds with people steals joy.

- **Pursue God in prayer about all things.**

Look at what happens when we pray about all things. We can give up worry. We are thankful. We gain the peace of God which will guard our hearts and minds. You want to have joy in life? Get rid of worry! Replace worry with thanksgiving and peace. That will always bring joy.

- **Pursue Godly Thinking in all private thoughts.**

Replace the things that zap joy for the things that bring joy.

Did you catch the common denominator? All. All people. All things. The whole of everything we dwell on.

A few weeks ago when Clemson won the National Championship for College football, their coach, Dabo Swinney reminded me of an old saying about joy. He said, Joy comes from focusing on Jesus, first, others, second, and then yourself.

I searched a little deeper into Swinney and found this about him. He said "Every year I choose a word that God puts on my heart to help me have a specific focus. This year my word is joy. I have been blessed to have many mountaintop experiences in life and each year we strive to reach another but what I have learned is that we are not made for the mountaintops. We are made for the climb, the journey, the grind, the relationships along the way, the struggles. Those mountaintop experiences are great but life is about having joy in the journey. Finding joy and purpose in our day to day activities is what it's all about. Just having joy in the moment . . . {and that} comes from having the Holy Spirit inside you."