

connect 360

**BIBLE STUDY GUIDE
LARGE PRINT EDITION**

Pure Joy

A CHOICE TO REJOICE

A STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

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 **BaptistWayPress®**
Dallas, Texas

*Pure Joy: A Choice to Rejoice—
Connect 360 Bible Study Guide—Large Print Edition*

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First edition: September 2020

ISBN-13: 978-1-948618-27-4

How to Make the Best Use of This Issue

Whether you're the teacher or a student—

1. Start early in the week before your class meets.
2. Overview the study. Review the table of contents and read the study introduction. Try to see how each lesson relates to the overall study.
3. Use your Bible to read and consider prayerfully the Scripture passages for the lesson. (You'll see that each writer has chosen a favorite translation for the lessons in this issue. You're free to use the Bible translation you prefer and compare it with the translation chosen for that unit, of course.)
4. After reading all the Scripture passages in your Bible, then read the writer's comments. The comments are intended to be an aid to your study of the Bible.
5. Read the small articles—"sidebars"—in each lesson. They are intended to provide additional, enrichment information and inspiration and to encourage thought and application.
6. Try to answer for yourself the questions included in each lesson. They're intended to encourage further

thought and application, and they can also be used in the class session itself.

If you're the teacher—

Do all the things just mentioned, of course. As you begin the study with your class, be sure to find a way to help your class know the date on which each lesson will be studied. Here are some suggestions to guide your lesson preparation:

- A. In the first session of the study, briefly overview the study by identifying for your class the date on which each lesson will be studied. Lead your class to write the date in the table of contents on pages 9–10 and on the first page of each lesson.
- Make and post a chart that indicates the date on which each lesson will be studied.
 - If all your class has e-mail, send them an e-mail with the dates the lessons will be studied.
 - Provide a bookmark with the lesson dates. You may want to include information about your church and then use the bookmark as an outreach tool, too. A model for a bookmark can be downloaded from www.baptistwaypress.org under the “Teacher Helps” menu.
 - Develop a sticker with the lesson dates, and place it on the table of contents or on the back cover.
- B. Get a copy of the *Teaching Guide*, a companion piece to this *Study Guide*. The *Teaching Guide* contains additional Bible comments plus two teaching plans. The teaching

plans in the *Teaching Guide* are intended to provide practical, easy-to-use teaching suggestions that will work in your class.

- C. After you've studied the Bible passage, the lesson comments, and other material, use the teaching suggestions in the *Teaching Guide* to help you develop your plan for leading your class in studying each lesson.
- D. Teaching resource items for use as handouts are available free at www.baptistwaypress.org under the "Teacher Helps" tab.
- E. Additional Bible study comments on the lessons are available online. Call 1-866-249-1799 or e-mail baptistway@texasbaptists.org to order the *Premium Commentary*. It is available only in electronic format (PDF) from our website, www.baptistwaypress.org. The price of these comments for the entire study is \$5 per person. A church or class that participates in our advance order program for free shipping can receive the *Premium Commentary* free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org to purchase or for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.
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Premium Teaching Plans free. Call 1-866-249-1799 or see www.baptistwaypress.org for information on participating in our free shipping program for the next study.

- G. Enjoy leading your class in discovering the meaning of the Scripture passages and in applying these passages to their lives.
- H. You can receive the lesson preview each week by signing up for the Baptist Standard weekly newsletter at no cost. Sign up at—www.baptiststandard.com/subscription/email.

Do you use a Kindle?

This Connect 360 *Bible Study Guide*, along with several other studies, is available in a Kindle edition. The easiest way to find these materials is to search for “BaptistWay” on your Kindle or go to www.amazon.com/kindle and do a search for “BaptistWay.” The Kindle edition can be studied not only on a Kindle but also on your smartphone or tablet using the Kindle app available free from amazon.com/kindle.

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Pure Joy

A Choice to Rejoice

<i>How to Make the Best Use of This Issue</i>	3
<i>Writers for This Study Guide</i>	6
<i>Introducing Pure Joy—A Choice to Rejoice</i>	10

DATE OF STUDY

LESSON 1 _____	The Joy of Community PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11	16
LESSON 2 _____	A Choice to Rejoice PHILIPPIANS 1:12-19	28
LESSON 3 _____	To Live Is Christ PHILIPPIANS 1:20-26	39
LESSON 4 _____	Standing Firm PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30	49
LESSON 5 _____	United in Spirit PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4	60
LESSON 6 _____	The Great Example PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11	70
LESSON 7 _____	Working Out Your Salvation PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18	81
LESSON 8 _____	Servant Leadership PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30	90
LESSON 9 _____	Count It All Loss PHILIPPIANS 3:1-11	100

LESSON 10	Press On	110
	PHILIPPIANS 3:12-16	
LESSON 11	Our Citizenship in Heaven	122
	PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21	
LESSON 12	Rejoice in the Lord Always	134
	PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9	
LESSON 13	It Is Well With My Soul	146
	PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23	
	<i>Prayer for Pure Joy</i>	159
	<i>Our Next New Study</i>	161
	<i>How to Order More Bible Study Materials</i>	162
	<i>Ministry Promotions</i>	164

Introducing

Pure Joy: A Choice to Rejoice

A STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

Do your circumstances determine your joy? There is a false conception held by some people that says once a person becomes a Christian, everything in life will be great. That is simply not true. Philippians is seen as the happiest book in the Bible, yet it was written by Paul as he was under arrest and chained to a Roman soldier. Paul would have probably chosen not to be in this situation, but he did not moan, cry, or complain about his situation, but rather encouraged the church at Philippi.

In this study, we will see that this entire epistle is one of rejoicing and joy...**Pure Joy**. Paul had the ability to sort through all the negatives of life and bring out all the beautiful positives. That is why he was able to say, “rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”

Background on the Church at Philippi

According to Acts 16, the church at Philippi, located in the city of Macedonia on the northern shore of the Aegean Sea, was the first church founded (around A.D. 49) by Paul in Europe. It occurred during his second missionary journey, when he went to several key cities to establish churches. The church started as a small house church in Lydia's home (Acts 16:40). The church was known for its generosity to Paul in support of his ministry. Paul apparently again visited Philippi twice during his third missionary journey. About five years after his last visit, while a prisoner at Rome, Paul received a contribution from the church. The church also sent Epaphroditus to minister to him.

About ten years after the founding of the church at Philippi, while Paul was a prisoner, he wrote this letter to his Macedonian friends. His letter had several purposes: He wanted to express his gratitude for the gifts they had sent him; he wanted them to know why he returned Epaphroditus to them; he wanted to inform them about the circumstances in Rome; he admonished the church to be unified, and to warn them against false teachers; and he wanted to encourage them.

The Book of Philippians in Our Day

In chapter 4, verse 11, Paul speaks of contentment. I think it is safe to say, that in our culture, we need to simplify. We are

always taking on another job, buying another want, taking another trip, going to another event, etc., instead of being content with what we have, which brings us to the primary problem. So often we are content with who we are and not content with what we have. We need to learn to be content with what we have but never be content with who we are, because God wants to constantly do something good in us and through us.

Through Paul, the Holy Spirit teaches us that as believers we are not victims of external circumstances, but God wants to use them to strengthen us, mold us, and make us exactly who He wants us to be. Paul did not find joy in jail. He took his joy in Christ into jail with him.

Have you made the choice to rejoice?

Pure Joy—A Choice to Rejoice

A Study of Philippians

Lesson 1	The Joy of Community	Philippians 1:1-11
Lesson 2	A Choice to Rejoice	Philippians 1:12-19
Lesson 3	To Live Is Christ	Philippians 1:20-26
Lesson 4	Standing Firm	Philippians 1:27-30
Lesson 5	United in Spirit	Philippians 2:1-4
Lesson 6	The Great Example	Philippians 2:5-11
Lesson 7	Working Out Your Salvation	Philippians 2:12-18
Lesson 8	Servant Leadership	Philippians 2:19-30
Lesson 9	Count It All Loss	Philippians 3:1-11
Lesson 10	Press On	Philippians 3:12-16
Lesson 11	Our Citizenship in Heaven	Philippians 3:17-21
Lesson 12	Rejoice in the Lord Always	Philippians 4:1-9
Lesson 13	It Is Well with My Soul	Philippians 4:10-23

Additional Resources for Studying the Book of Philippians¹

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NOTES

1. Listing a book does not imply full agreement by the writers or BaptistWay Press with all of its comments.

lesson

The Joy of Community

MAIN IDEA

Circumstances do not dictate the quality of joy we, as believers, have in Christ.

QUESTION TO EXPLORE

What is the difference between spiritual fruit and religious activity?

STUDY AIM

To understand that true Christian fellowship is much more than having your name on the church roll

QUICK READ

The secret of Paul's joy was his singlemindedness. He lived for Christ and the gospel.

Introduction

Remember back in school when you were forced to do group projects? The teacher/professor would stand up and say something like, “I’ve assigned groups.” Before they have even finished, you’re already dreading who will be in your group—either the slackers who don’t do anything, or the overachievers who do everything. Despite their intent, group projects were usually more combative than collaborative.

It can be difficult to work with people that you don’t really know or like but imagine how much more difficult it is for believers! As believers, we are called to be in communion with our brothers and sisters to the point where it’s a mandate from Jesus Himself (Matthew 22:39). We don’t get a choice about being in this group project; we are called to build a legacy of God’s Word, love, and care that extends past generations—and joyful community is part of it.

So how do we do it? We have to build it. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, talked about a special kind of joy built from community. It’s the type of joy built when a community puts aside their differences and joins together for the good of God’s grace and mission—and no one is above the other—for in a godly community, all are equal, all are level, and all are welcome (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Having a strong bond in community helps us to overcome all the trials and tragedies that come our way as believers. Those with the truest joy in their hearts realize that while Jesus is the ultimate provider and nourisher, He provided

a godly community with which to flourish, to learn, and to grow.

Philippians 1:1-11

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Paul's External Joy (1:1-2)

During his imprisonment, the Philippians would send Paul regular gifts to keep up his spirits. The significance of this

cannot be understated. In Roman times, associating with a prisoner was much the same as it is now—there was a social stigma attached to it. The Philippians, however, knew about Paul and his plight and did not care about the social implications: just the spiritual ones. This enriched and enlivened Paul and he crafted this letter in response.

You will notice that Paul’s tone was much different compared to other letters, and it starts with the first line. Paul included Timothy, his ward and confidant, in his travels. Timothy’s inclusion in this greeting was intentional: when Paul recruited him, Timothy was the product of a Jewish mother and a Greek father (Acts 16). Timothy’s dual heritage meant that he likely was not able to truly bond with either community. That lack of support and lack of belonging can cause problems for any person, especially one so young. By Paul’s recruitment, Paul pointed him to his purpose in Christ and gave him a new community where he would always belong—in this, Timothy had a certain joy.

On that same line, the two were called “servants” in Jesus, a term that was usually reserved for those who were seen as lowly or at the bottom of the barrel in society. Anybody wearing this title would not have been as pleased to have it as Paul. Paul wore it on his sleeve like a badge, showcasing that he was a servant in Christ. To Paul, taking a lowly position humbled his spirit for a greater elevation and an even richer joy—because when you have no one else to thank, you can thank God because you served Him.

As believers, we are expected to be humble and to lower ourselves so God may shine through our actions, not us (1 Corinthians 1:26-31). When we do this, we can feel joy and peace that God has us covered and we are very much in His hands. Paul centered on the fact he was a servant for Christ serving others and expected others to do the same. When this happens, believers in a community are together in one accord and connect on a much deeper level.

Paul recognized that true joyful community was built on a sense of belonging: not to just one or two people groups like Timothy, but in a shared sense of humility in Christ. No one is above the other and all are connected to the Father. Paul's external joy reflected Christ's joy when this type of community comes together.

The Church's Internal Grace (1:3-7)

Paul was so touched by the Philippi Church's actions that he thanked God for allowing him to remember them. Remembering someone shows how much they mean to you: not as just a passing thought, but a deeper appreciation. It means that the other person took the time not only to meet your needs, but went above and beyond.

The Philippian Church

While not explicitly defined, the Philippian Church was grown out of Paul and Silas' imprisonment during their travels in Philippi. Most people have read the last half of Acts 16, but the first half is just as crucial. In this passage, Paul and Silas befriend Lydia, a Jewish woman who overheard Paul's teachings and was baptized. After her baptism, she offered them hospitality, just like the Philippian jailer. In both cases, this shows that *the Philippian Church grew and formed out of a need for hospitality*, which formed the foundation for how they treated others and increased their level of faith.

Think of someone who did that for you. You may not remember all the details, but your remembrance of them brings you joy and peace in knowing that person gave their all to you. It's freeing and fosters a positive environment in which the relationship and/or friendship can grow. Paul said the exact same thing here: except for the believer, and for the church, this type of love and care is an example of God's ultimate love.

The Philippi Church had a way with the gospel that was built on a foundation of community, even when it was first formed. Paul started the church with people of different faith traditions, prisoners, and prison guards (Acts 16). From the very beginning, the church exemplified a few things that made it feel much more open:

- They exemplified faith in collaboration
- They exemplified faith in salvation
- They exemplified faith in action

The first one, faith in collaboration, shows when Paul compliments the church in their partnership in the gospel since they first joined and even after he left. Paul and the Philippians had the same goal: share the gospel. By working together and not against each other can the work go forth and not be impeded. There are many times when we don't want to work with others in the church due to differing personalities, and that inhibits Jesus's plans to spread the Gospel. Being collaborative and in unity with fellow believers not only gets the gospel into unique and open places, but also demonstrates to the world that believers can stand together in unity for God.

The second one, faith in salvation, is shown in Paul's declaration: God started the work, and He will finish it when Jesus returns (1:6). This means more than just our actions. When we were first saved, we began to be changed and shaped in our salvation by Jesus and for Jesus. In other words, the Philippi Church's actions brought about Jesus' vision and plan for *their* lives, not just the people they are reaching. In this way, it's truly communal as both parties are healed and continually blessed.

The third one, faith in action, is embedded into the letter. The Philippi Church exhibits open arms when it comes to the gospel, inviting anyone and everyone they can. In our

journeys, we must exhibit that same openness and develop a deepening drive to share the Gospel. Paul felt convicted about the church in Philippi, and how their faith in action toward him was but an example of the faith in action they displayed to their entire community. In being open himself to the Lord's vision to go to Philippi (Acts 16), Paul ended up blessing an entire community. This becomes a mirror and an example for the larger scope of the Christian walk—that Jesus loved us enough to humble Himself, open Himself up to us, to bless us all in turn.

God's Eternal Plan (1:8-11)

If God is the one who started it, then shouldn't He be the one who finishes it? Paul seems to think the same. He concludes this initial segment by once again invoking God's name and stating how much affection and care he has for the church in Philippi. We mentioned earlier that the affection and care displayed by Paul for the Philippians was genuine: he was excited to see the manifestation of God in their lives and in the lives of the people they helped. In fact, Paul was so drawn toward this he prayed that their love "abound more and more, with knowledge and discernment." Spiritual discernment is a religious term that means wise judgment. So not only did Paul pray that the love of the Philippians would increase, but that their judgment and knowledge would too.

Have we prayed for our love to grow with knowledge and discernment? It's this type of love that allows us to grow in Christ even in the midst of trials and tribulations. We *know* that things might not be great, and we *discern* that the only way out is to trust in God. Therefore, our *love* grows exponentially. This is the ultimate formula for how we love as a believer and the truth of God's plan for our lives: when we study the Word and look at what it says, we gain knowledge. When we apply the Word and its teachings to what Jesus says and live it out, we act in discernment. When we do both in tandem, we give ourselves the opportunity for love and thus build our internal joy.

So, what is our goal from this joy? Paul outlined it in the last two verses. We are to gain discernment and knowledge in love so we can ultimately do what is excellent for Jesus Christ and continue to gain the "fruits of his righteousness." While we are on Earth, our goal is to become more like Christ and to consistently be upright and holy in His sight. But is it genuine? Remember how Paul described his affection for them: it was heartfelt and real. But his words evoke a sentiment we can see in the modern church today—the actions of the believers can sometimes be insincere.

The fruit of the Spirit within you are more than just good-natured attributes: they are genuine values that Christians receive whenever they are living for Jesus (Galatians 5:22-23). However, as Paul expertly included here, one key

phrase is “that comes through Jesus Christ.” While it may seem like you’re doing well and doing right by participating in a variety of church activities, it’s only when you do them through Jesus that it develops the fruit of your Spirit. For God desires that we build *all* things through Him and within in Him. If we try to work around that, we’ll miss out on the fullness and beauty of His splendor for our lives.

Building a Joyful Spirit

Feeling like joy is slowly but surely leaving your life? Here are some ways to restore the spirit of joy within your walk:

- Remember that Jesus is in control of all things.
- Pray often and pray daily to surrender it all to Him.
- Connect with fellow believers in a godly community.
- Recite daily inspirational verses that speak life into your spirit.

A community that God loves is one that is God-centered with its values and teachings, God-driven in its mission and purpose, and God-ordained with relying on Him for knowledge and discernment to grow in His love. When we have all of these things, we build the foundation for a truly God-given joy!

Implications and Actions

We desire to be in godly commonality with others to build the joy that is everlasting in God, because only in Him can we even find a community that not only teaches and enriches us, but challenges our very being inside and out—like the church in Philippi did for Paul. You may be feeling like this type of joy is elusive: it's not! You have to reach out, trust in the Lord, and lean on Him to guide your path. But an important step in that is to surround yourself with people who are on that same path. Once you do that, you're well on your way.

Questions

1. In what ways have you shown joy to other believers in your life? In what ways can this joy be manifested and shown to others if you haven't?

2. Why do you think some Christians today misunderstand sincerity in their actions for the church and for others?

3. Why do you think Paul called himself a “servant” and not a “slave?” And do you think it’s difficult for Christians today to accept that we are servants of God?
4. What lessons about godly communities and their impact on a Christian can you learn if you were in a very limiting and divided community?