



Leader's Guide

September 18 & 19: Irrational Joy

Series Overview

We are in this world to make an impact and love others. If we are going to truly impact our world, we must display the life of Christ in our own lives. *Galatians 5:22-23* says ²²*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.* This kind of life will make a difference in our world and in the lives of the people around us.



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Sermon Highlights

Paul uses the word "joy" 11 times in the four chapters of *Philippians*. *The Message* paraphrases *Philippians 4:4*, *Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him!*

Joy is not a result of happy circumstances. Joy is a daily decision to make an impact. We need to be reminded that we cannot manufacture joy on our own. We cannot have joy, regardless of our circumstances, without supernatural help.

Let's talk about some practical ways we can grow in this area of joy so that we can have a ministry with others.

1. **Eternal perspective**

Philippians 4:5, *Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*

2. **Grateful attitude**

Philippians 4:6-7, ⁶*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

3. **Positive mindset**

Philippians 4:8, *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

4. **Supernatural strength**

Philippians 4:11-13, ¹¹ *...for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

If you don't have that power source, if you don't have His Spirit living inside of you, but you want to know what it means to live with that kind of power, you can be connected to Jesus and know this irrational joy.

On joy...

- Take a saint and put him into any condition, and he knows how to rejoice in the Lord. –Walter Cradock
- *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. –1 Peter 1:8*
- Followers of Christ have joy and comfort—it is a joy that angels cannot give and devils cannot take. –Christopher Fowler



Take it home ... Practical Applications

Take some time this week to make a list of things you can be thankful for. Consider how many of those things are gifts that you are not responsible for and thank God for the goodness that He shows us each and every day.



Take it to the source ... Bible Study

Introductory question: If you were asked what event brought you the most joy in life, how would you respond? Why?

Opening Thought

Joy is not based on a single event or circumstance. The Bible teaches that we can be joyful in every situation, with God's help. Specific events in life certainly bring joy, but they can never be the sole source of joy. Life with God is the basis for an irrational joy. Use this question to get your group thinking about what brings them joy in life.

Read *Philippians 4:4; 2:18; 3:1*.

1. This is the third time Paul has told the church in Philippi that they should rejoice. Why is rejoicing such an important part of the Christian life?
2. *The Message* paraphrases this verse, *Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him!* What are some of the ways you celebrate God? How can this change your spiritual outlook?
3. Some Bible teachers call rejoicing a spiritual discipline. What are some things you can do alone or with your Small Group to help you develop a lifestyle of rejoicing in God and all His goodness?
4. Paul says we are to rejoice in the Lord *always*. What kind of life situations make it hard for you to rejoice? What practical things can you do to help you rejoice *always*?

Key Point

Our society tends to think that our emotional conditions are completely beyond our control and that these things just happen. Paul says that we can make a choice to rejoice and that we may even have to work at it sometimes. Much of it has to do with what we focus our thoughts on and how we see God's work in our lives. Help your group to look at things from a slightly different perspective as you consider what it means to rejoice always.

Read *Philippians 4:6-8*.

1. Why do you think Paul follows rejoicing with *prayer* and *thanksgiving*? How can prayer and thanksgiving help you to develop a life of joy?
2. Do you go through your normal day with a sense of peace? How can these verses help you to handle the daily pressures of life?
3. How can the peace of God guard your heart and mind? What might that look like in practical terms?
4. Why is it important to guard your heart and mind when worry and stress start to take over?
5. What kind of things should you be thinking about if you are going to have a mind that is controlled by God's Spirit? How can disciplining your thoughts make it easier for you to think and act according to God's ways?

Key Point

A life of joy develops when we begin to get a perspective that includes God and His work in our lives. Prayer invites God to take His place in our life decisions, and thanksgiving acknowledges all that He has done for us. There are many things in the world that can easily cause us to be anxious and stressed out. These things can bombard our minds through all the different media that we encounter every day. Taking the time to meditate on God and His ways with us helps guard our hearts and minds from emotional anxiety and mental stress. We make the choice to think on things that are right, pure and lovely, and as we think on those things we get a godly perspective that brings peace and joy to every aspect of life.

Read *Philippians 4:11-13*.

1. What is the foundation of contentment in your life? What can cause you to lose that contentment the fastest?
2. Would you say that your life is governed by possessions? Why or why not?
3. How can putting Christ at the center of all your thoughts and actions help you be more content? How would that change your life?
4. How much do you look to Jesus Christ to give you the strength to be joyful and content? What could you do in your daily life to make that more of a reality?

Key Point

Contentment does not come from the outside. We are content when we have the inward reality of peace and joy regardless of outer circumstances. Life with Christ becomes the basis of our joy, and His supernatural power gives the strength to be joyful in any and every situation, regardless of what is going on around us. That is when we truly go beyond ourselves and know the abundant life that comes only from Him.

Notes...



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