

Defiant Joy (Philippians) Series Discussion Guides

June - September 2022

Week 1 - Defiant Joy



Teaching Text

Philippians 1:1-2

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon kicked off our Summer series, Defiant Joy: A Study Through Philippians. The apostle Paul is writing to the church he planted years before at Philippi, a community dear to his heart that was founded on unlikely, radical transformations and a series of miracles. This letter is meant to encourage the believers in Philippi, reminding them of what binds them together and what will bring true flourishing to their church. Through the themes of spiritual mentoring through his own life's examples, defiant joy unshaken by circumstances, steadfast unity in the Spirit, and a reorientation around the worth of the person of Jesus, Paul reveals the secrets of the art of living a life of flourishing. The truths of his letter also have the power to speak directly into our current cultural moment, where many people are languishing somewhere in between depression and flourishing. Through this deep dive into the book of Philippians, we hope our community's perspectives might shift,

and we will be able to interpret the world not through our circumstances, but through an abiding sense of joy.

Discussion Questions

Connect

1. What are you looking forward to this Summer?

Cover

Spend time (at the end or the beginning of your meeting) casting vision and setting goals for this next season of Community Group. You can ask what group members hope to give/receive from this group, and what they want to commit to together.

End by praying into what Pastor Jon prayed at the end of his sermon on Sunday together: "Lord, teach me the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven this Summer."

This season's focus will be Pray & Play, with an emphasis on prayer walking + scripture memorization.

Above All Else Teaching Text

Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

1 Kings 19:1-7

Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." Elijah was afraid[a] and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.

Recap

This Sunday, we took a break from our study of Philippians with a word from guest Pastor Banning Liebscher about the importance of guarding our hearts against the lies of the enemy. Jesus came to connect us to truth and bring us freedom and abundant life, so the enemy's main strategy against us is to disconnect us from truth through lies and lead us into a life of bondage.

We see this in the life of Elijah after he calls fire down from heaven in a massive act of faith, and then immediately begins to wrestle with lies. The lies the enemy used against Elijah are still some of the same lies we struggle the most against today. He succumbed to a situational atheism, believing that God was real, but not believing God was with him or for him. This lie led him to believe the lie that because God was not with him, the situation was hopeless. Finally, this caused him to believe the lie that he was all alone, abandoned by God and community. Pastor Banning suggested that after a long season of fleeing from persecution, Elijah did what many of us do when we are tired and overwhelmed by troubles; he dropped his guard. Proverbs 4:23 warns us that we must guard our hearts above all else because everything we do flows from it. Elijah was momentarily overcome by lies, but his story also teaches us key strategies to break free from them. We cannot underestimate the power of a

meal and a nap, temporarily unplugging from the ceaseless stream of information in our world, and refusing to show up alone/not inviting community into our struggles break up the voice of the enemy. By keeping a vigilant watch over our hearts, meditating strategically on God's Truth, praying consistently, and liberally casting our cares and burdens on the Lord, we can disrupt the enemy's schemes to keep us from the life freedom Jesus has for us.

Discussion Questions

Connect

1. What are your essential beach day snacks?

Character

Ask someone to read 1 Kings 19:1-7 aloud. Then, ask at least one of the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?
2. What do these verses reveal about the character of God? How do they challenge or encourage you?

Consider

1. Which one of the lies Elijah believed do you find yourself believing most often? What truth in scripture can combat that lie?
2. What does guarding your heart practically look like for you?

Cover

Break into smaller groups and pray against specific lies you might be believing in this moment/season. If you are able, take time to ask Jesus what He has to say about each of these things in His Word, which is the standard of all truth.

Week 3 - Proclamation of the Gospel



Teaching Text

Philippians 1:12-18

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 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. It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. 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. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Suzy continued our new sermon series, Defiant Joy: A Study Through Philippians by looking at Paul's prioritization of the proclamation of the gospel. We find Paul rejoicing at the end of this text because the gospel message was still being advanced even while he was in prison. Both followers of Jesus, and people who did not yet know Christ as Lord, were able to observe Paul's posture of defiant joy despite his suffering, and found it compelling. Paul made his number one priority to see Christ glorified, dedicating his whole body, mind, and spirit to the Lord. This allowed him to reframe his sufferings as opportunities

for more people to know Jesus, increasing his joy instead of diminishing it. Paul's letter should not only encourage us to reassess and reorder our own priorities around the glorification of Christ, but also strengthen our courage and resolve to share the gospel in every circumstance.

Discussion Questions

Connect

1. What is your go to snack on a hot, Summer day?

Character

Ask someone to read the one or two of the following texts aloud, and ask at least one of the following questions:

- Philippians 1:12-18
- Colossians 3:1-2
- Mark 12:28-31
- Matthew 6:31-33
- Matthew 28:18-20

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?

2. What do these verses reveal about the priorities of the Kingdom of God?

Consider

1. What are some of your top priorities day to day? How do you decide what they are?

2. Where do you often have an opportunity to make the Lord known? Is there anything that holds you back?

3. Is there an area you are suffering in right now? How does Paul's view on rejoicing in sufferings for the sake of the gospel challenge or encourage you?

Cover

Part of prioritizing the gospel in our lives is reminding ourselves of its good news. As a way to re-declare the gospel story to yourselves, read the Apostles Creed (church.nyc/beliefs) out loud together, and partake in Communion (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Then, spend time in prayer thanking Jesus for the story He invites us into, and asking for the Holy Spirit to reorient your heart around sharing that story.

Week 4 - No Matter What



Teaching Text

Philippians 1:18b-26

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. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of 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, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If 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! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Matthew Ro continued our Summer sermon series, Defiant Joy: A Study Through Philippians by looking at Paul's mission statement, "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain," and how it enabled him to have defiant joy no matter what. Pastor Matt broke down the well known verse by looking at the power and meaning behind it and its origin. The power of Paul's resolve was not based in anything he has done or can do, but in the truth

that God is at work. Paul's reality was rooted in the belief that God is not only moving in every outward circumstance, but also in his heart to bring about his sanctification through the Holy Spirit. The meaning of Paul's mission was shaped by his commitment to love Jesus supremely, serve Him completely, and look to Him eternally. Like Paul, we can disregard our desires for earthly comforts and persevere through our trials by keeping our eyes on Jesus and the promise of eternity in His presence. Pastor Matt went on to explain that the origin of Paul's mission was actually from Jesus' Himself in John 17 when He claims, "For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified." Paul knew everything Jesus endured was for us, so we have the ability to endure anything for His sake, and our earthly realities can become second by the beauty and glory of Jesus breaking through.

Discussion Questions

Connect

1. Which character from T.V. or film do you most closely identify with and why?

Character

Ask someone to read Philippians 1:18b-26 aloud. Then, ask at least one of the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?
2. What do these verses reveal about the reasons for Paul's joy? How do these things challenge or encourage you?

Consider

1. Paul's mission statement was "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." If you were to fill in, "To me, to live is _____", for yourself, what would go in the blank?
2. When is a time you sacrificed comforts or desires for Jesus' sake?
3. Pastor Matt taught that Paul's mission was shaped by his commitment to love Jesus supremely, serve Him completely, and look to Him eternally. Which one of these heart postures is easiest for you to live out of? Which one is hardest?

Cover

Spend time in mediating over what it means that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and create space for people to share anything the Spirit revealed to them. Then, with these things in mind, pray for an increase of love and affection for Jesus.

Week 5 - Unity & Division



Teaching Text

Philippians 2:1-4

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon continued our Summer sermon series, Defiant Joy: A Study Through Philippians by examining Paul's call to the church to be a place of defiant unity in the face of the narcissism, contempt, and division in our current culture. This text calls us to be on guard against the poison of selfishness and seeking empty glory in this world. While we have been made in the image of God, we have lost His glory because of sin, leaving a void that tells us we're not enough. The urge to fill this void pushes us towards a selfish ambition, that competes to dominate and gain recognition, and this self-serving agenda in a danger to the church. Instead, as believers, Jesus wants to fill that void with encouragement from His voice, comfort in His love, and sharing in His Spirit, to lead us in greater tenderness and compassion. Only through a deep awareness of what Jesus has done for us and building our lives on that grace, can we put ourselves aside and experience true unity

despite secondary differences. Jesus longs for His body to be like-minded with Him, sharing in the same mind, Spirit, and love. Out of this assurance in Jesus, we can begin living out other centered, culturally impossible love. In our ultra-divided world, there can be a false sense of unity that comes from keeping people at an arm's-length, far enough away that you cannot disagree, but love requires other people. Pastor Jon reminded us that while we can love God on our own, we cannot be the people of God on our own. We have to learn to humble ourselves and cultivate humility that does not speak uncharitably, sees with eyes of grace, listens patiently, is interruptible, willingly protects and forgives, declares truth, and seeks no recognition. Jesus calls us to value others above ourselves and sacrifice our preferences, to become a compelling, alternative community of love and unity for our world.

Discussion Questions

Connect

1. What song has been on repeat for you this week?

Character

Ask someone to read one or two of these verses aloud:

- Philippians 2:1-4
- James 3:14-16
- Ephesians 4:1-6
- Colossians 3:12-14

Then, ask at least one of the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?
2. What do these verses reveal about what it means to be people of Christ?

Consider

1. Do you feel the tension of division in our culture Pastor Jon referenced? How have you participated in furthering that division with or without realizing it?
2. Selfish ambition forms out of trying to fill the 'glory void' left in us by sin, but Jesus came to fill that space. Philippians 2:1 tells us Jesus offers encouragement from being united with Him, comfort from His love, common sharing in His Spirit, and His tenderness and compassion. Where have you been feeling the pressure to compete/be recognized? Which one of these gifts do you need to freshly receive in your spirit instead?
3. What does it look like to value others above yourself in your day to day?

4. Pastor Jon read some of Bonhoeffer's advice on cultivating humility, listed below. Which one of these is the easiest for you? Which one is the most difficult?

- *Hold your tongues, refusing to speak uncharitably about a Christian brother;*
- *Cultivate the humility that comes from understanding that you, like Paul, are the greatest of sinners and can only live in God's sight by his grace;*
- *Listen "long and patiently" so that they you understand your fellow Christian's need;*
- *Refuse to consider your time and calling so valuable that you cannot be interrupted to help with unexpected needs, no matter how small or menial;*
- *Bear the burden of your brothers and sisters in the Lord, both by preserving their freedom and by forgiving their sinful abuse of that freedom;*
- *Declare God's word to your fellow believers when they need to hear it;*
- *Understand that Christian authority is characterized by service and does not call attention to the person who performs the service.*

Cover

Pastor Jon closed his sermon with a quote from Stanley Hauerwas, *"The most creative social strategy we have to offer is the church. Here we show the world a manner of life the world can never achieve through social coercion or governmental action. We serve the world by showing it something that it is not, namely, a place where God is forming a family out of strangers."* Along with personal prayer requests, spend time praying for unity in our church body and the global Church.

Week 6 - Grasping or Giving: Community in the Way of Jesus



Teaching Text

Philippians 2:5-11

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon continued our Summer sermon series, Defiant Joy: A Study Through Philippians by taking a practical look at what it means to love people like Jesus did. Loving others can seem increasingly difficult in today's world, but this passage urges us to have the same, loving mindset as Christ in our relationships. Jesus displayed love rooted in servanthood and sacrifice when He came to earth as a man, and instead of taking power, gave Himself away, even unto death. At the center of the Christian faith we find Jesus on the cross, and as His followers, we should be compelled to resist the culture of self-preservation, and follow His example of voluntarily sacrificing all we have on behalf of others. The God of the Universe chose to empty Himself, put on flesh, and descend to meet us in the middle of

our brokenness and sin because He loved us. Pastor Jon pointed out that sharing in the mind of Christ means emptying ourselves of our entitlement and expectations so that we can embrace the posture of humility and obedience Jesus embodied and love people as He has loved us. While we do not possess the sustained capacity to love perfectly like Jesus, we do have access to the supernatural source of security He lived out of. Throughout the gospels, we witness the deep connection Jesus had to the Father, and how it enabled Him to look past His own needs and serve those around Him. Through Jesus, and by His example, we can abide in the Father's love and strengthen our ability to love others and suffer for them in our work, where we live, how we spend our money, and when we won't get our way. Jesus loved us in an unreasonable way, and calls us to be like Him, finding joy in someone else's prospering, even when it is at our own expense.

Discussion Questions

Connect

1. If you could be a combination of any two animals, what would you be?

Character

Ask someone to read Philippians 2:5-11 aloud. Then ask at least one of the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?
2. What do these verses reveal about the person of Christ? Are any of these things difficult for you to believe about Jesus?

Consider

1. What does it look like for you to 'remain in the Father's love'?
2. What do you find yourself 'grasping' for? What might God be asking you to empty yourself of?
3. Pastor Jon shared about people sacrificially loving others through their work, how they spent their money, where they lived, how they reconciled, their response to not getting their way, and their willingness to suffer. Who is someone in your life that loves sacrificially in these areas? How might God be inviting you to sacrificially love in these spaces?

Cover

Make room for the Holy Spirit to come and reveal where or who you are being called to love like Jesus.

Week 7 - Complain or Contribute



Teaching Text

Philippians 2:12-18

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Keithen continued our Summer sermon series, Defiant Joy: A Study Through Philippians by preaching on Paul’s encouragement in Philippians 2 to live as the people of God in the world. Paul wrote to the church of Philippi, whose people were the new Israel. The Israelites who came before them were out of slavery, and yet still lived as if they were not free. Paul wanted the Philippians to live a better story and have softer hearts, and the same is true for us today. We become people who “shine like stars” when we speak to each other without grumbling or complaining (Phil 2:14) and when we posture our hearts toward Jesus. There are three things we can do to live in the way of Jesus: First, we must

commit ourselves to formation and sanctification. Second, we release the outcomes of our life to God. Lastly, we access the very Source of true life. Ultimately, as we live as true disciples of Jesus, joy becomes the mark of our spiritual authority in the world.

Discussion Questions

Connect

1. If you could only smell one thing for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Character

Ask someone to read Philippians 2:12-18 aloud. Then ask at least one of the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?
2. What do these verses reveal about what it means to live as people of Jesus in the world?

Consider

1. Pastor Keithen asked us to examine our lives to determine what life without Jesus could look like. If you didn't know Jesus, who would you become?
2. What are some areas in your life where you are more likely to grumble or complain? What is the Holy Spirit saying about that?
3. What are some practical choices or habits we can make to posture our hearts toward Jesus?

Cover

Spend time reflecting on what it means to shine like stars as you hold onto the word of life (v. 15-16). Pray into the things God reveals as you meditate on Scripture. Then, cover all personal prayer requests.

Week 8 - The Concerns of Christ



Teaching Text

Philippians 2:19-30

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Suzy continued our Summer sermon series, Defiant Joy: A Study Through Philippians by teaching on the last section of Chapter 2. Here, Paul commends

Timothy and Epaphroditus as men who care deeply about the church and the gospel. Paul makes a connection between the Philippians church, the proclamation of the gospel, and the interests of Christ. Jesus's primary concern is for His bride. Pastor Suzy drew comparisons between Jesus and His church and a bride and groom. In addition to the bride, we play the part of the friend of the groom, meaning we are concerned with what the groom cares about. Jesus's main concerns are about the Father's heart, whose chief aim is to create a holy people. If we are not going after Jesus's kingdom, we are building other kingdoms—namely, the kingdom of self, of the world, and of others. We can forsake these kingdoms and take up the cross of Christ because this is what true love is and it is the only way to eternal life. Let's give our lives over to what is eternal.

Discussion Questions

Connect

1. What is one thing you want to do before Summer ends?

Character

Ask someone to read Philippians 2:19-30 aloud. Then ask at least one of the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?
2. What do you learn about Jesus's heart for His bride (the Church) here?

Consider

1. What does it mean to be both Christ's bride and the friend of Christ? How does being the bride and the friend of the groom relate to one another?
2. Which false kingdom stood out to you the most? Is the Holy Spirit saying anything about its role in your life?
3. Practically, how do we give our lives to what's eternal? What does this look like in your day-to-day life?

Cover

Spend time asking Jesus to refocus your hearts on his concerns, aligning your interests with His. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal places where your concerns and interests differ from Jesus's. Then, spend time covering each other's personal prayer requests.

Week 9 - Thoroughly Converted



Teaching Text

Philippians 3:1-14

Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and

sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: 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.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon continued our Summer sermon series, Defiant Joy: A Study Through Philippians, by unpacking the beginning of Chapter 3. Here, Paul delivers insight into his own transformation of faith and highlights how we can follow his example of being thoroughly converted. First, we must reject destructive religion and its tendency to draw us into self-righteousness. Joy is the greatest attribute of someone who follows Jesus, but empty, legalistic religious practices devour joy. We must put our joyful confidence in what Jesus did instead of what we can do, because we cannot rejoice in the Lord when we are struggling to earn our salvation. Secondly, thorough conversion comes when we are dependent on Jesus at the deepest point in our spirit, so we must completely reorient our lives around Him. This means we must also have a radical reorientation of what we value. When we consistently behold the beauty of Jesus, and are truly compelled by His person, the things of value in this world become garbage in comparison to Him. This frees us to have the same mindset as Paul, who considered everything a loss for the sake of gaining Christ, and calls us into the third facet of thorough conversion— a saintly, whole-hearted, devotion. While we often admire the saints, we never believe we can become like them, but sainthood, at its core, is willing our whole lives to one thing. Pastor Jon exhorted us to pursue becoming thoroughly converted, modern-day saints by wrestling to become who God says we already are and living out of that identity, cultivating a deep devotion to one another, and accepting that our devotion to Jesus can only be a response to His love for us. Being thoroughly converted calls us to take all of our broken pieces and direct them towards the person of Jesus, trusting that in Him we will one day be made whole.

Discussion Questions

Connect

1. What is an unexpected way God met you during Community Group this Summer?

Character

Ask someone to read Philippians 3.1-14 aloud. Then ask at least one of the following questions:

1. What words, images, or phrases stood out to you?
2. How do these verses encourage you in your faith?

Consider

1. Are there any areas of your life you feel like you are trying to earn your salvation or the love of God?

2. What does being devoted to something or someone look like to you?

3. Pastor Jon talked about cultivating devotion within community by going into 'the depths' with each other. This means asking questions that explore our fears, our dreams, our longings, what's driving us, etc. Ask one or two of the following questions:

- What is bringing our joy right now?
- What are you afraid of right now?
- What is breaking your heart right now?

Cover

Spend time asking God to reveal the areas you are not thoroughly converted, and how He wants to convert you. Break into small groups and surrender those areas to Him. Then, make sure to cover any personal prayer requests.

Week 10 - Live Up to Your Citizenship



Teaching Text

Philippians 3:15-21

All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Suzy continued our Summer sermon series, Defiant Joy: A Study Through Philippians, by teaching on Paul's call for us to live into our heavenly citizenship. Believers have been given the benefits of being co-heirs with Christ because of His sacrifice on the cross, but we must live up to what we have attained through Him. This passage tells us that we are citizens of heaven, but that we are called to live up to that truth in this life. Our citizenship grants us intimacy, holiness, and power, and invites us into new access, a new ethic, and a new authority. As God's people we are able to freely enter into His presence,

flee from temptation and pursue becoming holy as Christ is holy, and access the authority and power extended to us through Jesus. We are foreigners and strangers in this world, but by setting our minds and hearts in the heavenly places, where we are already seated with Christ, we can live as God's people here on earth.

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Week 11 - Unity in the Lord



Teaching Text

Philippians 4:1-3

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Recap

This Sunday, guest Pastor, Darren Whitehead, continued our Summer sermon series, Defiant Joy: A Study Through Philippians, and focused on Paul's call to unity in the church. These verses reveal a conflict between two women in the church at Philippi, but Paul pleads with them to have the same mind in the Lord. This points us to the truth that the beauty of unity is rooted in God's ability to transform our desires towards His. Community is not an absence of conflict, but the presence of God's reconciling Spirit. However, there are cultural challenges that try to stand in the way of unity. The church today faces political, racial, generational, and economic divides, but in the Lord there can be a unity in the body that crosses all of these lines. As believers, our loyalty to Jesus should be greater than our loyalty to any political party, we should identify first and foremost as a follower of Jesus, we should honor the generation before us and not look down on the generation after but build them up, and we should extend care within the church regardless of financial standing.

These counter-cultural postures foster unity in the church and create access to new authority. Pastor Darren referenced Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit fell on followers of Jesus, and before the Spirit came, it is said that the believers were 'all of one accord in one place.' It was after unity was already happening that God poured out His Spirit, and the early church was born. Unity is so important to God that He commands a blessing where His people live in unity with one another. We each have the ability to disrupt unity, but we also have the ability to repair it, and this is God's call to us today.

CHURCH OF THE CITY NY

Week 12 - The Peace of God



Teaching Text

Philippians 4:4-9

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, 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. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Ashley, continued our Summer sermon series, Defiant Joy: A Study Through Philippians, by focusing on Paul's insight into the peace of God and the God of peace being available to us. Paul's message is not meant to dismiss anxiety, but to reveal our access to peace in the midst of distress. Pastor Ashley taught that Paul first calls us to rejoice in the Lord and what He's done, to be gentle with one another, and finally to not be anxious about anything. The order of these exhortations tell us that peace is not found in the absence of anxiety, but in the reorientation of every circumstance in the presence of Jesus. The peace of God does not change our circumstances (sometimes it even makes life more complicated) but it will change our hearts.

Pastor Ashley broke down how we can accept God’s peace into three parts: interior examination, prayer and petition, and taking our thoughts captive. Our emotions cannot be ignored; they must be acknowledged to be moved through. Only by examining our emotions can we begin to identify lies we are believing and combat them with truth, and enter into prayer (communion) and petition (contending) before God. Prayer deepens our intimacy with God, and petition helps pull our eyes off our circumstances and onto Jesus. When we have our eyes on Jesus, we can ‘take our thoughts captive’ by dwelling on ‘whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy.’ Dwelling on our anxious thoughts can give them enough power to become false beliefs, but Paul ends this passage with the promise that when we set our minds on things above, the God of all peace will come and be with us.

	TRUE	NOBLE	RIGHT	PURE	LOVELY	ADMIRABLE	EXCELLENT	PRAISEWORTHY
MONDAY	WHATEVER IS...							
TUESDAY	WHATEVER IS...							
WEDNESDAY	WHATEVER IS...							
THURSDAY	WHATEVER IS...							
FRIDAY	WHATEVER IS...							
SATURDAY	WHATEVER IS...							

In hopes of putting into practice Paul’s instruction of “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,” we have created this graphic to guide us through the week. Paul says that when we set our minds on these things, the God of peace will be with us.

If you did not receive the physical handout at a Sunday Service, you can download it below.
DOWNLOAD THE HANDOUT HERE

Use the definitions below to help discern where Paul is encouraging us to set our minds.

- **True:** alēthēs (al-ay-thace') in the ethical sense as used here, means "truthfulness, dependability. Loving the truth; speaking the truth"
- **Noble:** semnos (sem-nos') translates a rare word which has a broad meaning. Used primarily by Paul in the Pastoral Epistles, it has the idea of "worthy of respect, honor. It is primarily used of church leaders, where various persons are urged to be respectable. to be venerated for character, honorable deeds"
- **Right:** dikaios (dik'-ah-yos) "Right" is a translation of the Greek dikaiosynē, often translated "just". It implies giving to God and people a justness that is worthy of them. Keeping God's commands and acting justly toward others.
- **Pure:** hagnos (hag-nos') Pure translates a word meaning "pure" or "holy" in relation to God
- **Lovely:** prophilēs (pros-fee-lace') "Lovely" is found only here in the New Testament and has a fundamental meaning of "that which calls forth love" (prophilē). It covers a host of qualities but basically means whatever is acceptable and pleasing
- **Admirable:** euphēmos (yoo'-fay-mos) occurs only here in the New Testament, and it means whatever is "praiseworthy, attractive," things spoken in a kindly spirit, with good-will to others
- **Excellent:** aretē (ar-et'-ay) Excellent" (aretē) means morally excellent. The word was seldom used by Paul, but in 1 Pet 2:9 and 2 Pet 1:3, 5 the word describes Christian virtue
- **Praiseworthy:** epainos (ep'-ahee-nos) means worthy of praising God. An attribute or person worthy of being commended

Week 13 - The Anatomy of a Movement



Teaching Text

Philippians 4:10-23

I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I 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. I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Recap

This Sunday, Pastor Jon wrapped up our Summer sermon series, Defiant Joy: A Study Through Philippians, with Paul's closing message to the church at Philippi. When we study Paul's life and church history, it is evident that the Gospel is always moving along relational lines and being pushed forward by human dynamics. Our current culture in the city promotes building the 'kingdom of self' through entitled demands, exploitive friendships, and selfish arrangements, but this can sabotage our spiritual potential as a church. However, through Paul's relationship with the Philippians we see the Gospel being carried out because of their sacrificial commitment to Jesus and His Kingdom, long, loyal relationships to one another, and generous partnerships to promote the movement.

Behind every movement of the Gospel, there is a network of people funding it with their prayers, time, relationships, and resources. Paul lived a life of sacrifice for Jesus, but had the Philippians serving as his Gospel Patrons. To bring forth a movement of the Gospel in our day, we must become people who, like Paul and the Philippians, will give what we have to see the Kingdom advance. Paul was able to be content in all circumstances, trusting that God would work all things for good either through miraculous intervention or His providential, sovereign arrangement of circumstances. He could remain sacrificial, loyal, and generous because Jesus first sacrificed Himself, stayed loyal unto death, and gave everything He had out of His great love for us. Paul's life of mission was a response to the love that saved him, and he calls us to respond in the same way, giving everything we have for the sake of the Gospel.