

Philippians 4 // A Recipe for Joy

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[0 : 00] If you want to see that designation letter, I've got it. I have several copies now. And it has the date right there that I was talking about earlier. Today we're going to be in Philippians chapter 4 verses 1 to 13.

And as I had mentioned before, in Sunday school we're on this path through the fruit of the Spirit, just taking a bit of a pause in our Marks through Acts. To be able to take a moment and remember what it was the early church was like.

What it was like for us to be able to imitate them and pursue the Lord the way they did too. And right now, I think we could all use a little bit more joy in our lives.

There is a lot, a lot of pressure from social media, from all other kinds of things that are trying to distract us and rob us of our joy. And the funny thing is, that's kind of the enemy's thing.

This is what he does, is try and steal our joy. And not that I'm trying to say anything that you go try at home with this, but I wanted to share a little bit about what brainwashing is like.

[1 : 14] Because I've studied a little bit about cults, I've studied a little bit about, you know, and I did have a bit of a military experience. So when you start to kind of hear some of these things around, I want to just kind of explain that it looks kind of like this.

You put someone in a room, you deprive them of sleep, you deprive them of food, okay? Bright flashing lights, loud noises, and random pictures flickering.

You know, sounding a lot like Instagram, doesn't it? Or social media. Because when you think about it through the lens, you're thinking, huh, well that's not really building my joy.

We see images on social media sometimes, and I'm not hating on social media, okay? Let me just flat out say there, but all things in moderation when it comes to this. Because there is an evil in the world.

It is real. And it is trying to steal our joy and distract us from the things of God. And one of the ways it can do it is through things just like social media, if we're not careful with it.

[2 : 19] And I especially say that because so often I'll encounter folks, every now and then, which will say, yeah, I don't read my Bible much, I need to get better at it.

But, you know, we also have this new term. I don't know if you've heard it or not. It's called, you know, bed rotting, okay? And it's where you stay in bed and you just doom scroll on Instagram.

It's called bed rotting. So instead of doing anything, you're just kind of like, you know, they're flipping through, right? Like bright flashing lights. Oh, this is terrible news. Bad. See where I'm going with that? So when you say, well, I don't have time to read the Bible, but I have time to doom scroll, this is convicting for me too.

We have to set our mind on greater things. And I believe that's what Paul's message is here, is that there is a recipe for joy. There is a recipe for living in the Lord.

Now let's get into it. I'm going to read verses one to nine and then we'll break it down a bit. Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

[3 : 24] I entreat Yodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things and the God of peace will be with you. Now, we don't exactly know the argument that was happening between Iodia and Syntyche, but it's two women.

And there's two things to keep in mind about this. Two women who were fellow laborers with Paul are mentioned in the Bible. This is awesome. Faithful co-laborers.

[4 : 50] There are also two women mentioned in the Bible that were having a fight. And it is disagreement. It was bringing some disunity. It was a pity. So we've got to take a look at that. It doesn't matter if it was men or women. I just think it's kind of funny.

We have to read that. I'll leave that alone. One thing we can learn from this, though, is that if we have the joy in the Lord, it will dissolve any argument.

And you might think, well, that's kind of simplistic to say. Well, think about it this way. I have the joy of Jesus today, but I really hate that guy. You know, those don't connect. That doesn't work.

Oh, they just drive me nuts, but oh, can't wait to go to church and praise and worship today. That doesn't connect. That mass does not add up well. So having joy changes us.

Verses four and five say, Rejoice in the Lord again. I will say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand. So joy is not based upon a mental attitude.

[5 : 53] It's not based on waking up and just feeling joyful and claiming it in the mirror. It's not about that. Happiness can be up and down. And it's okay to have an unhappy day.

Sometimes you wake up and things are going wrong and you don't have to kind of force happiness. Like, I'm going to be happy today. You're forcing my tears in the shower. You don't have to be like that.

If you have a sad day, that's okay. Everybody has a bad day. And we have to give one another grace for that. But joy operates on another level. Because joy is not based on circumstance at all.

Worry, and the Greek word for anxious, means to be literally torn apart in two. To be pulled apart. And when we worry, there's an absence of joy.

When we are anxious, when we're fretting, you know, sweating and fretting and worrying, okay, there's an absence of joy. Because we can't have those things and freaking out over everything and be truly, truly joyful.

[6 : 59] Joy is a decision. And worry will affect our thinking. It'll even affect our digestion. And it will even affect our balance. Because sometimes people get lightheaded.

They're so worried. They're so freaked out. What about my keys? Why did I put my keys in the freezer? That doesn't make sense. You know, and we do things. We make decisions out of worry and anxiety that we wouldn't normally make.

They can disrupt us in our rhythm. From a spiritual point of view, worry is wrong thinking in the mind. And it's also wrong feeling in the heart.

From a spiritual point of view. Worry is the greatest thief of joy. And like I said, it's not enough just to wake up and say, I'm going to be awesome today.

I'm going to be joyful. Even though I have these things I'm wrestling with. And we don't have to fake it until we make it. It's not like that. Reasonableness.

[8 : 01] In my translation, ESV. Some of you have gentleness. Some of you have patience. And those are all accurate, actually. It all kind of means the same thing. A long-suffering spirit. And the idea is a willingness to get along.

Be reasonable with one another. If someone's having a bad day, don't write them off for it. You know, maybe you need to say, I can see you're having a bad day. How can I pray for you?

You know, because all of this, right? It's just difficult to deal with. That's okay to say that. If someone is unhappy, we can go to them and we can say, can I help you?

Is there some way I can make you smile today? Right? And we can help people in those moments when you're having a bad day. The best thing to do is you wake up and you're feeling unhappy. Call someone and say, will you pray for me?

I bet your day will turn around if you do. But sometimes we just kind of keep to ourselves and we think, no, I can tough this out. I just got to go for a walk and just claim it. It's like, okay, good. Go for a walk.

[8 : 59] That's great. Always helps. There's nothing wrong with phoning someone and saying, I feel unhappy today. And the church, we should be receptive to hearing that and not saying, well, yeah, you're unhappy because of this and this and this and this, you know?

No, no. You don't need to try and fix people. Pray for them. Seek the Lord together and find that with one another. A lot of the things that cause stress are all the things that we have taken on ourselves instead of trusting God with them.

And I can tell you this last six months have been a crazy amount of stress. Why? Because I was trying to fix it myself. I was trying to fix things on my own steam with my own understanding.

And I was like, well, if I just write this letter sassy enough, you know, or if I just do that, right? I will confess one thing. And this was advised against, well, Adelia advised against this because it's a little, you know, attitude-y.

But when we got this 501c3 letter and I'm sending in all the visa information, you know, they said we needed this. This was really important. I printed off five photocopies.

[10 : 08] I put it in every single folder, whether it was necessary or not. And it's on the very front. There you go. There's five of them. You know? Yeah. Not a bad idea. Not a bad attitude. Sorry. Not a good attitude.

Sorry. I'm confessing that to you, that that's sometimes my thing I get stuck in. Okay? We can have bad days. We can have frustrating moments. And we can remove our trust in God by simply trying to take it on all ourselves.

Phone someone. Ask for prayer. Ask for help. When we live with the awareness that the Lord is coming soon, it helps us to be agreeable to one another.

And so when I find myself within or I see around me petty arguments, part of it is like, the Lord could literally return tomorrow.

And I don't know about you, but this is one of the last things I want to be carrying in. You know? We don't have time. We're distracted constantly by things that we need to do.

[11 : 12] Good things. But we don't have time for petty arguments or squabbles. What we do have time for is being in God's word, trusting in his faithfulness, understanding we all have bad days, and that we can find joy with one another.

We don't have to agree on everything. We don't have to, you know, agree on barely anything. The apostles are my favorite example of this. You have 12 men who socially have no business hanging out together.

Their one common theme was Jesus. You had one guy who was a tax collector and considered, you know, an absolute traitor to his people. You have another guy who was a zealot who would have, you know, done anything to rid Roman occupation from his land.

How did those two guys hang out in a campfire about three years and not be at each other's throats? Jesus. That's how. He is our unity.

So we don't have to get along in the sense of we have to agree all the time. But the closer we get to Jesus, all of those little things just flutter away. And all of those little fires that were hot before become cruel and distant because God is greater and we trust in him more than our conflicts.

[12 : 30] Rejoice in the Lord. Verses six to seven. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. You notice how this isn't like, give it a try. It's not a suggestion.

It's a command. Do not be anxious about anything. There's no wiggle room there. Don't be anxious about anything. And I know you're probably saying, that's a little easier said than done, Bill.

You know, and I get it. But one of the things we have to consider is that we're intruding on God's domain when we are anxious. And it's for someone like myself who has struggled with anxiety.

I have to take this to heart. But please know, I'm not preaching up here. I'm sharing. Okay. When we embrace anxiety, we're telling God, I got this.

[13 : 35] We're saying to God, I'm the father of my house. Thank you very much. What do I mean? Okay. Run with me in this little movie for a second.

Can you imagine if your seven-year-old comes up to you and says, Dad, I'm a little worried we can't pay the water bill right now. Okay. And you're looking at him and you're thinking like, I mean, well, it's sweet that you're concerned, but this is none of your business, pal.

Like, it's my job. Even if things are tight, I pay the bills. You don't have to worry about that. Go do seven-year-old things. So then we have God on his throne in heaven.

And we're freaking out about things like this. And it's like going to him and saying, Father, how do we pay the water bill? It's on him. Our stress, our care, our anxiety, the things that rob us of our joy in him can be put back on him because he's the one doing the heavy lifting.

This isn't a cop-out. This is acknowledging authority. The seven-year-old kid doesn't have to worry about paying the water bill. They shouldn't. Okay. And you think, okay, God on his throne, surrounded by angels, worship.

[14 : 48] I mean, a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful picture. Okay. Because there is a throne in heaven and it is occupied. That is significant. Do you think he's really stressed out?

Do you think God's up there pacing saying, I'm really worried about what's going on in this town right now? No, you know, no, he's got it under control.

The problem is, is we think we need to have it under control and resting in him. Now, some things we go through are huge. I'm not trying to minimize that.

There are some things that are heartbreaking, impossible, difficult. And I want you to say that you're not alone right now. You're not. You can still have joy in the middle of the impossible circumstances by leaning on God's good grace.

We can lean on him. And even though we don't see the end of the trial, he will walk through it with us. Faithfully. Faithfully. So do not be anxious.

[15 : 54] Don't take the Father's concerns upon yourself. Wake up. Praise the Lord. Read his word. Let it soak into your life. And then go be that to everyone around you.

God already knows our needs and our requests. But sometimes I think he waits for us to be ready. One of the most interesting things you'll notice about when Jesus was healing is he comes up to a guy that had been hanging around the pool of Siloam.

And without getting too far into it, it was, you know, a lot of superstition went in there. If the water kicked up and there was an angel in there, the first one in the water would get healed. You know, there was some weird stuff going on there.

Okay. Jesus comes up to this guy. You know what he asks him? Do you want to be healed? Now, that seems like a really stupid question.

Of course. But I believe this is why. Because if Jesus were to heal him, that means he can no longer sit here and take in alms or beg.

[16 : 58] He has to go to work. He has to live a different life. A healed life. A joyful life. Are you ready for that? And I think that's why Jesus asked that specific question.

And I think sometimes that's why it's like God has everything under control. Sometimes he's waiting for us to be ready for him to have it under control in our lives. Do you want to be healed?

Do you want the answer to that prayer? Because if I answer this, it's going to mean something. And we have to let that settle into our hearts a bit. Are we ready for the God of all creation to help us in our situations?

Because it will mean living differently. Living set apart. It will mean being different. And we have to be ready for that. God's peace stands guard over two areas that create worry.

The heart and the mind. And I want to share how I was taught to pray by someone. And it's nothing new. And it's been out there for years. And it's Apt's. A-C-T-S.

[18 : 08] Adoration. Thanksgiving. Confession. And supplication. So I'm out every morning. And I mean it. Every morning. I'm out praying. And this is the process I go through.

I look up at the stars. And I worship. Just how high above the Lord is. Over all of the tragedy that I see on social media. Of all the difficulty that we experience in our lives.

Lord, you are on your throne. You are ruling this crazy messed up world. You are ruling this universe. Lord, you have a plan to bring it to an end. And I believe it's coming soon.

And I'll start with that. And then I'll say, Lord, you know. I wasn't very forgiving yesterday. I had a conflict. And I felt like the angst of my flesh creep up.

And I said some regrettable things. I'm really sorry that I wasn't being more like you in that moment. I should have just taken a moment. And stepped back and said, how can I be like Jesus in this moment?

[19 : 07] And I thank him for his mercy. I thank you, Lord. You don't hold that against me. That all things are made new and beautiful in your time. Thank you, Lord, that you forgive.

And that you restore. And thank you, Father, that you're not done with me. And then I'll pray. And I'll ask, Lord. I have this. I need your help with.

I have this relationship that needs patching. Father, if you could show me how to walk this out, I'd really appreciate it. And in Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. So, it's not in some things. It's all things. And we get caught in the trap of praying about really big stuff. There's nothing wrong with praying for big stuff.

But praying for everything means, you know what? God, that person hurt my feelings, Lord. And I don't know why. I don't even know why. Help me understand. Praying for other little things.

[20 : 06] I can't find my keys. You know, Father, help me find my keys. I got to go do this. I got to go do that. You know. Somebody gave me a book. And it's out there. But when I first got saved. Because I was about, well, just turned 16.

And it's, if God loves me, why can't I get my locker open? You know. And it was true. Because you get into that place. It's like, well, Lord. I mean, all of this is going wrong.

Why don't you love me? And of course he loves us. Our heart and our mind can sometime be in a place where we're not hearing him. We don't actually want him to fix it.

Because that means he has to be in control of our lives. And that can be a problem. But verse 7 says, And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

So we can have the peace from God. And it's a peace that nothing on earth can possibly give us. We will not find it anywhere else. We can have the peace from God.

[21 : 06] We can also have peace with God. Our relationship with him is settled. And if it isn't settled with you today, I dare you.

I dare you to take that step. Romans 10.9 just simply says, If you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and rose again, you will be saved.

There's no denomination attached to that. There's no religion attached to that. But it is just simply the truth that it starts in here and just works the way out of your mouth. Because you just can't help yourself.

Jesus is Lord. And I believe. And you can say that today. And you can have your peace with God here and now. Right now. It's that simple.

But we can also have the peace of God. And like I said before, you have to imagine God on his throne in all of his holiness. Enthroned in heaven.

[22 : 06] He's not stressing over anything. There's no anxiety around that throne. He's at peace. And he knows what is coming next.

And I wonder sometimes, and this is just me, you know, my own little international version thinking it up. So take it with a grain of salt. But I wonder if the Lord is just like, oh, kids, get ready.

It's going to get good. Just you wait. Verse 8. I'll close soon. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Joy comes when we have our mind in the right places. Every now and then, over the years, I've had someone come to me and said, can I do this?

Can it be okay with God? Can I watch this show? Can it be okay with God? Now, I'm not one to say, and that's between you and the Lord, but do the Phil 4-8 challenge.

[23 : 14] That's what I tell them. Philippians 4-8. Right? Is it good? Can you tell people about it? Or is it something you do in secret? Is it commendable? In other words, can you spread it around and say, hey, I watched this show.

It was so funny. Or is it something you want to hide? Is it pure? Is it lovely? You see where I'm going with this? You do the Phil 4-8 challenge, and you start to get to that place where the word is answering for you.

If our mind is bringing us anxiety, it is because we're watching news cycles that are death, doom, destruction. Take a break. Read the word. It's not about burying your head in the sand.

We should not be ignorant people, but have a filter as to how much you take in. And be careful. Wrong thinking leads to wrong feeling.

Before long, the hearts and the mind are pulled apart. Anxiety and worry happens. There's a survey by a doctor named Walter Cavert or Cavert.

[24 : 20] I have no idea how you pronounce that. That indicated only 8% of what people stress over is true. The other 92% either never happens, was never going to happen, didn't happen, or there was nothing to worry about.

Think about that. If that is true in our lives, 8% of what we freak out about is actually going to happen. 92% is never going to happen, or it didn't work out the way we thought it would negatively.

That's a lot of time spending freaking out about nothing. Right? Stick to the facts. Stick to the facts. What's really going on?

What can you do to make it different? First thing, pray. We have an enemy, and he desperately wants our minds divided and brainwashed to think that we are powerless, that we live in a sea of anxiety, and he wants us to be suppressed and put down.

John chapter 8 verse 44 says, He was a murderer from the beginning, does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

[25 : 37] This is our enemy. The flashing lights, the blinking screens, the news stories that just bring us nothing but death and dooms, making our eyes see things we were never supposed to be seeing.

Okay? It can cause anxiety and worry, and it wears away at our soul. So what it means to think about what is right, is that we do not focus our attention on dishonorable things, or allow them to control our thoughts.

I have no idea who said this, and I mentioned this earlier too. I really don't. So if you know the origin, I'd appreciate knowing. But a negative thought is like a bird flying over our head.

We don't have to make a nest for it. We don't have to build a house for it. Just let it go. Oh, they treated me like they were kind of like a jerk to me. Let it go. Bird fluttering over your head.

You don't have to make a home for it and think, you know, I'm going to resent this person for the rest of my life, but I got the joy of Jesus. It doesn't work well together.

[26 : 43] Okay? Let those thoughts just fly by. You're not going to have an invisible force field that's going to keep you from negative thoughts. That's just not the way the world works, though that would be great.

So when they hit you, when they come across your table, just let them fly by. Be aware of what we put our eyes to, and the flesh which pulls us away from things that are truly pure and lovely in this world.

We can't afford to waste time on thoughts that would tear us down or tear others down, because we can get into that mode, too. How can I make their life miserable?

Because I don't like them. I don't like their face. Whatever it is. However your negative thoughts go. Okay? We don't have time to get into those things.

No. Psalm 19, verses 7 to 9. When we fill our hearts and our minds with God's word, you'll find it's easier to filter out the negative thoughts.

[28 : 04] You'll find it's easier to push them away when they come across your table or fly over your head. You're going to find it's easier to show love to those who are unloving to you if you're rooted in the word of God.

Keep our hearts pure with him. Because right thinking means daily getting into it. And I like to do that. Father, I woke up feeling like myself today, and I know that never ends well.

So, Lord, let me read of your word and take it into my heart so I can act and be more like you and less like myself. A lot of our Christian life comes down to what happens in the mind.

How we filter it out. How we buffer. Romans 12, 2. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

2 Corinthians 10, verse 5. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

[29 : 12] We have the ability to take captive our thoughts. And if a negative thought comes across our heart or our mind, and especially if it's about somebody else, grab that thing and bring it before the Lord.

And if you need to, bring it before the person. Don't let it make a nest in your heart and create a resentment house. Okay? Don't do that. Stop.

Stop. Stop. Stop. Stop. Stop. action and an inward attitude. We can be nice and we can talk nice, but if inwardly we're full of hate and bitterness, that shows. You can't fake it. You can wear that mask for only so long, so it starts with our hearts and it comes out. That is the way.

Paul taught the word of God, but he also lived it. And those who followed him, he encouraged, follow me as I follow Christ. He wasn't trying to have a following himself. He was just following the Lord and others followed with him.

There are people following you in your life, whether it's children, family, friends, people that you have influence over. So follow Jesus. Follow Jesus. Rejoice in the Lord and let that trickle down throughout the generations, throughout our friend groups, in this church.

[30 : 41] Follow Jesus and let that just flow out. You don't have to work at it. You just have to surrender to him. Father, I want your way today, not mine. I want your way.

Father, I want your way today. I want your way today. Paul had learned contentment. And you know, I'll just share a quick story and then I'll close in prayer. I was at this pastor's conference a while back and there was maybe 20 of us in the circle.

A very dear friend of mine, you know, was sitting there, you know, beside me and there's a couple of guys there. It's like, oh man, we're really excited. All of this going on. It's like, you know, this happening. They were just like psyched about the church.

It was good. It was encouraging to hear. and this guy Andy beside me just looked and said this is really cool guys have you learned how to be content yet and I was just like oof have you learned how to be content yet because you see it's easy to say oh man we want to see people healed that's not a bad thing we want to see our our territories expanded in the name of Jesus that's not a bad thing but have you learned how contentment in all things yet I believe it is one of the things that helps us be joyful people is contentment wherever we have us Lord wherever you have us wherever we are let us rejoice in him let us thank him for his mercies be content with what we have and just keep moving towards him let's pray you