

Secret Sauce

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[0 : 0 0] My name is Mitch Sefton, and I have the privilege of serving as a youth pastor here at the First Christian Church. It is such an honor to be able to share God's Word with you and what He has revealed to me through studying this passage of Scripture today.

You see, I always love doing a shameless plug for our youth ministry when I have the opportunity to share a message as well, and just to share a little bit about what's going on with our 6th through 12th graders. You see, I just want to share just how much I truly appreciate not only our students, but also our adult leaders that are coming in and constantly pouring into our junior and senior high students.

We've started meeting again on Wednesday nights, and would love to have you encourage any students that is in that age range of 6th through 12th grade that would love to come and be a part of what we're doing here in 220 Youth.

We have just started a series on prayer, and we'll be continuing that for the next few weeks. Please be lifting our students in prayer as they continue to learn how to be true kingdom workers. It has been such a blessing for me as their youth pastor to see students begin to come not only on Wednesday nights, but also starting to make Sunday mornings a priority in their lives as well.

You see, a few months ago, Pastor Gary Johnson, at the beginning of May, came and he preached a sermon during Pastor Ray's sabbatical. And many of you remember that one of those points that came with his particular message was about these words, growing pains of a church.

[1 : 2 2] You see, that when a church begins to see an increase in attendance, there are things that happen that may or may not be totally comfortable with.

We may have to bend a little or a lot in order to accommodate for the opportunity for people to be able to come and worship and learn and serve and grow as we continue to put Jesus first here at FCC.

You see, our leadership had the opportunity to really make some hard decisions to move our second two services to the Family Life Center. And those types of changes can really be hard. It's not only hard on those of us that love the sanctuary, but it's also hard for all of the behind-the-scenes things that need to happen to make that the space that we can truly worship. And it has been a blessing for our staff and our eldership to see the will of servants to step up and help ease some of those transitions. You see, since shifting some of our classes, we had to shift some of our classes around.

[2 : 2 4] And we already had needed to move an adult class from where we originally put them, and now they're in another location just because of the size and the growth of that particular class. And our high school group that has been growing as well is now getting close to outgrowing the room that we have put them in.

What a blessing to have so many people in our church have a true desire to grow in their walk with the Lord and to continue to learn to do life together in these groups. You see, to be totally honest with you, this particular passage that we're going to be tackling today has been a bit of a gut punch for me over the last few weeks.

Coming out of the busiest season in youth ministry, where we are coming out of our camp season and coming out of the fair, August is usually that time when I get a chance to take a big deep breath as we gear up for the beginning of the start of the new school year.

However, this year coming out of the summer, I had the opportunity to preach at our former church out in Illinois. I have a chance to preach this morning, of course, and I also had a chance to officiate my second ever wedding last weekend.

Needless to say, there's been a little extra stress, but it has for sure been a blessing to be able to do all of these things. I've had plenty of opportunities to grumble for sure.

[3 : 39] You see, today we're going to be continuing our studies from the book of Philippians and our series called Rejoice. You see, the book of Philippians was written to the church in Philippi, where Paul had established.

So much of this book is explaining how to truly rejoice in the Lord, just as Pastor Ray has been teaching about it for over the last three weeks. You see, before we take time to dive into this message today, if you would, please take a moment and we're just going to pray together. God, we thank you so much for the opportunity just to be able to dive into your holy word in the book of Philippians and what that book has just revealed to us about what it means to truly rejoice. And God, I just pray your richest blessings right now as we dive into your word, that you just open it and allow us to understand who you are as we just read more about you and the love that you have for us.

In your precious and holy name, amen. We all have a special recipe that just gives us great joy when we even just think about it. I'm sure just thinking about that makes maybe your mouth water or it gives you that deep desire to go home and make it after church today.

[4 : 43] Or just whenever you're watching this video to just get up and go to the kitchen and do that. I'm going to go out on a limb that says someone at some point in the next day or so is probably going to make whatever you're thinking about right now.

You see, but those recipes are special to us and they're near and dear to our hearts because of the love that goes into them and the events that it's associated with that particular food or that particular recipe.

You see, in the book of Philippians, we've been given a recipe of what it looks like to truly have joy in the Lord. And Pastor Ray has been talking about these over the last three weeks. And some of those ingredients would include thankfulness, partnership with fellow believers, discipleship or growth in your own walk with Jesus, love, unity and Christlike humility.

You see, there was a time in my family where I really had this brainy idea of trying to be helpful to my wife. She was busy one evening and potato soup was on the menu. And it's something that all of our family really enjoys.

And so being the wonderful husband that I thought I was going to be, I had decided that while she was gone, I would make this soup for our family. You see, how difficult could it really be?

[5 : 54] The recipe was on the counter. She had all of the ingredients already in the house. It was just a matter of following the directions. You see, my heart truly was to help her.

Everything was going beautifully. The soup was cooked just like she always makes it. And as we sat down for dinner and I was so proud of this meal I had made for my family, everything was cut nicely, measured perfectly and cooked to perfection.

With the exception of one very small aspect of the measurements. For those of you that don't know, there is a big difference when you read the word teaspoon and the word tablespoon.

I do know this, but I just made a very small mistake in reading the recipe and it ruined the entire meal that evening. I have forever been banned from making potato soup in my home because of this one event.

You see, today we're going to be tackling a passage that if you are not able to work through this particular passage well, with a desire to be more like Christ, we will ruin the entire recipe for our ability to truly rejoice and find joy in the Lord.

[7 : 01] You see, we can be thankful. We can have partnership with other believers. We can work hard on growing in our walk with Jesus. We can show love. We can have unity. We can be Christ-like in humility.

But at the moment that we allow ourselves to grumble or argue or that to become a part of the recipe of our walk with Jesus, it will for sure ruin it all and be a recipe for disaster.

You see, just like the extra pepper that I added to the soup, adding a little grumbling or arguing will cause it all to end up being a huge disaster.

Our passage this morning comes from the book of Philippians, like we've talked about, chapter 2, verses 14 through 18. And it says, You see, in verse 14, when you take a look at the original meaning of this particular passage, it really unlocks the heart behind what is being said here.

You see, there are many parts of Scripture that are really difficult to live out. And for many of us, this is going to be one of the hardest. You see, regardless of the audience in our everyday language, it would be pretty straightforward of grumbling being the idea of showing your displeasure with a situation that has arose.

[9 : 05] Arguing in this particular situation does not necessarily mean with one another, but it is pointed more at the arguing with God because of our lack of trust in Him. For the situation that we have found ourselves in.

But it could also be that quarrelsome heart that maybe we have with one another. See, it only takes two words in this verse to make a very hard task to complete.

Do everything. You see, Paul is urging brothers and sisters in Christ to apply this to all aspects of their lives. This is indicating that no parts of our lives should be exempt and that we should make all of our lives reflect Christ in a way that will honor God.

We are currently studying the book of James in our high school Bible study. And this past week, we discussed if our spiritual reflection looks more like Jesus or more like the world, this is a great parallel to looking more like Christ in everything that we do.

When it says do everything without grumbling or arguing. What does your spiritual reflection truly look like? You see, without grumbling or arguing, this particular part of the passage, it says that this is the part that deals with the heart issue and how we choose to handle things.

[10 : 32] You see, these two words seem like they could be synonymous with one another, but they actually don't mean the same thing. But can we lead? But they can both lead to the same result.

And that is the disunity in the body of Christ. The word grumbling here also refers to the stories in the Old Testament that the church of Philippi would have had been very familiar with. And that was the Israelites as they were grumbling about Moses and Aaron in the book of Exodus.

You see, Paul would have used this particular word as a warning to not fall into the same trap of that of the Israelites. In Exodus chapter 16, verses 2 and 3, it says, You see, You see, the word grumbling in this particular context refers to what you do within yourself in the midst of doing the work of the Lord and your faith in Him.

Are you doing kingdom work and handling your brothers and sisters in Christ in a way that is honoring and loving? Or is your inner self begrudgingly or having a spirit of discontent when doing the same work?

You see, this word grumbling would be a huge part of the recipe of disaster that the enemy is always wanting to cause. Do not let the enemy have a stronghold on your heart to fall into the trap of grumbling.

[12 : 17] This will lead to a spirit of discontentment that will lead to a quarrelsome heart. And then we come upon this word arguing. And you see, the more that you allow your inward grumbings to fester, the higher the chance of them becoming an outward expression of your heart.

This will usually come out in a way of arguing with the ones that you probably love the most. That could be your spouse. It could be your kids. It could be your friends. It could be your co-workers, your brothers and your sisters in Christ.

You see, as we continue to tackle this passage, we'll move on to verse 15 where it states the following. 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 we are commanded to be blameless and pure, we may sometimes think that maybe the Bible is not quite as relevant to us as maybe what we thought it was.

But then we look at a passage just like this when Paul was talking to the church of Philippi. Well, this particular passage solidifies that they were going through some of the same things back then that we are walking through today.

[13 : 32] Paul calls this generation warped and crooked. Does that not sound a lot like what we're walking through today? A society will turn their back on Jesus for the sake of comfort.

Will tear one another down to get a leg up. Will destroy the lives of others for their own personal earthly gain. It sounds like Paul was talking about our generation now just as much as he was talking about the generation the church of Philippi was also facing.

You see, we're being called to be blameless and pure so that we will shine among them like stars in the sky. One of my favorite things to do on our farm is to be outside after dark and to go and look up at the stars.

We are far enough away from the lights here in town that we're able to see the sky illuminated by these beautiful lights. This is the example that we are given in scripture to be an example for those in a dark world.

You see, God has called us to be the light of the world and he reiterates that in this particular passage in Philippians 2. But then if you go back in John 8, 12, it says that Jesus is the light of the world and it says exactly.

[14 : 44] Again, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not, not will. Okay, pause right there.

Messed up the scripture. I'm going to start it again. Here we go. Again, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

As we go through life, there are going to be places and situations that will be easier or harder for us to allow our light to shine. When you are here on a Sunday morning around all of these other people that are letting their light shine in this place, it is lit up on a Sunday morning with the light of Christ. We are loving God in a very safe situation where the love of Christ is everywhere around us. The problem that we as believers run into is when we are trying to make our light shine in the darkest parts of our lives.

You see, maybe that place is your home because you are the only person there that has a love for Jesus. Maybe that place is your work environment because the environment that you're working in is a dark and worldly place.

[15 : 58] You see, maybe that place is your school where you know that there is darkness, but you are scared to share your love of Jesus with others because of being made fun of or being ridiculed.

You see, this list could go on and on and on because we live in a crooked generation, just like the scriptures say. You see, the part that is so sad to me and more importantly to Christ himself is that we will light your candle the moment you walk into the door.

Your candle will be illuminated as you are here and everyone will think your entire life is illuminated with the love of Christ, just as the scripture says, and it will light up a dark sky.

But the reality for many is that your candle is lit when you come into the building and extinguished the moment that you leave. You'll look like the church when you are in it, but the world has no idea the other six days of the week of your love of Jesus.

You see, we're being called to light up the sky like stars to illuminate this dark and crooked world we live in. As many of you know, I had the privilege of being the family pastor at Carlisle Christian Church in Carlisle, Illinois for two years.

[17 : 12] In my time there, I made so many amazing friends and brothers and sisters in Christ that we love dearly to this day. In youth ministry, we had the opportunity to get to know many students and walk alongside them in their faith journey and see how God was using them and those students to truly do kingdom work.

You see, through our local ministerial alliance, I had the opportunity to become friends with the pastor at the Baptist Church in Carlisle. It's been such an honor to know Scott Broughton and his family, and I had the privilege of having his oldest daughter, Savannah, be a very integral part of our youth ministry.

She was a young lady that walked into our youth group with a smile on her face that would truly light up the room. And just being in her presence, she knew that she loved Jesus. I did not have the privilege of getting to know her sister, Brooklyn, too well, because she was still getting to the age of being in youth ministry when we moved back to Greensburg.

It wasn't too long after we had moved back to Greensburg, I got a call from Josh Wolford, the lead pastor of Carlisle Christian Church, that tragedy had struck the Broughton family.

Savannah, her sister, Brooklyn, and their aunt had all been tragically killed in a car accident. It was one of the hardest things I've walked through in ministry. It was a reminder of just how fragile life truly is, and that things can truly change in an instant.

[18 : 39] You see, I went back to Carlisle soon thereafter to be there for the funeral and to support my friends, my students, in my youth ministry, and to show love to those in Carlisle that were hurting so much.

But through all of this, I had the opportunity to be a part of one of the most amazing things I've ever seen in ministry, and that was Scott preaching the funeral of his two girls. At their funeral, I heard these amazing stories of these young ladies in the kingdom reach that they both had, and how they loved people so well, but so differently.

See, I remember Scott talking about Savannah and how Savannah loved wide. She did not know a stranger. She was the person that absolutely exuberated the love of Christ to everyone that she met.

And Brooklyn, she loved deep. She was someone that when she got to know you, that she loved you with the love of Christ in such a powerful way. After the death of these two beautiful young ladies, there was a saying that was created that became the theme of our youth ministry for an entire year.

And that saying is, shine like a Broughton. The following year, the theme of our youth ministry was shine. This was taken from something that Savannah had done to truly live out the scripture that we are going to be diving a little deeper into today.

[20 : 04] Savannah was a young lady that intentionally loved people. She would write notes to people that would be a word of encouragement for them. You see, my favorite part of this was hearing of all of the people that she had written letters to, to share the love of Christ with them, just to encourage them.

She found such enjoyment and such joy in encouraging other people. You would hear story after story after story of how these notes that this young lady had written would be left and sometimes found very intentionally, but sometimes would also be found randomly because she would hide them for people to find in the future.

I even remember hearing of a few stories of notes that were found after she had passed away. You see, now even to this day, you can walk through our youth center and you can find these little caddies of colored pencils and paper.

And these are there for students to randomly write notes for whoever they choose to encourage. You see, this initiative was started a few years ago and we still have students that made this a passion of theirs to write letters of encouragement.

Our students got a chance to learn how to shine like a Broughton, but more importantly, to shine like Jesus. You see, this type of kingdom work, that can be when we are allowing Jesus to lead and not where we are spending our time and energy grumbling and complaining or grumbling and arguing.

[21 : 33] But we are spending our time and our energy to become blameless and pure. These young ladies truly knew what it meant to shine your light for the world and to illuminate with the love of Jesus and the dark, dark world that we live in.

You see, that takes us to verse 16 where it continues with, 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.

As believers, we have the ability to lead people to the cross of Christ or to steer them away from it. As we hold firmly to the word of life, we must understand the gravity of what it will do to someone if they see us as a person that grumbles and argues with one another.

You see, these actions, as we have spoken already, truly are the recipe for disaster in someone's life. If we as Christians can't thrive together, what makes us different from the world?

But if we are able to hold firmly to the word of life, then we will be able to boast on the day of Christ and that the work we did was not in vain.

[22 : 42] You see, Paul specifically uses the word run in this particular verse to help us understand that the race that life is and how we must run the race to full completion up until the day that we take our last breath here on earth and that we should be holding firm to the word of life.

He then uses the word labor to represent the work that it takes for us to be able to live a life that is above reproach, a life lived where you are standing firm on the word of life.

Just like any other relationship, this relationship with Jesus takes work. It takes effort to know him, to be like him, to show others how much he loves them.

There are so many aspects of this work that we could grumble about or that we could complain about or that we could argue about, but the scripture is very clear that we are to do everything, everything without grumbling or arguing.

But pastor, what about when the Holy Grounds gets my favorite muffin or donut and someone else takes it right before I get a chance to eat it?

[23 : 52] No grumbling and no arguing. But Mitch, what about when I'm in the grocery store and someone walks very quickly to the cart just to be able to get in front of me and, but there's no grumbling and there's no complaining.

But what about when your husband and your wife does something that really gets under your skin? No grumbling, no complaining. But what about when my husband is driving?

No grumbling, no complaining. Well, what about when someone adds something to my honey-do list and I just don't want to do it? No grumbling and no complaining.

Well, what about when the kids need you again for something that we all know that they can do themselves and we just don't want to get up to do it? No grumbling, no complaining.

Well, what about when we look at our bank statement together for a financial meeting in your family and we're trying to get on the same page and we're not really on the same page? No grumbling or complaining.

[24 : 55] I think you get the point. God does not put this scripture in the book of Philippians to be optional for us. You see, when he says no grumbling and no arguing, he means it.

No grumbling, no arguing. Do everything without them. See, scripture is very clear that we are to do everything without grumbling or complaining or grumbling or arguing and the reward is great.

You see, there is a great responsibility in this passage for not only us, but also for other believers and other people that have an interest in knowing the Lord. As we live our lives, it is very easy to complain about your job, grumble about your marriage or your kids, complain about the need to make room in a worship space or to change things around here at the church.

We have to guard ourselves from these things that will only cause division in our church, in our families, and bigger, the kingdom of God.

And then we move on to verse 17 where it says, but even if I am poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.

[26 : 13] As Paul continues to write in these verses, one of the most powerful things that he says comes in verse 17. Even if I am being poured out like a drink offering.

You see, the sentence alone shares the mindset of what Paul has about the gospel of Christ and what he is willing to do to sacrifice for it even if it is needed. You see, remembering that Paul is writing this particular letter from prison, he knows that there is a possibility of this particular thought coming true.

He may have to be a sacrifice. Paul was not going to be this happy-go-lucky guy on the way that he was writing this letter. He understood the writing from his own imprisonment.

It was the very next thought. Paul recognizes the faith and the sacrifices that are being made by the church in Philippi. And Paul says, As Paul is encouraging this church, he is not just writing to one or two people, but he is writing to the church and encouraging them to continue to live a life that shares the gospel to where they are like stars in the sky, illuminating for all to see.

Their love, sacrifice, thankfulness, time they are spending together, bearing one another's burdens, and the visual depiction of what the story of the gospel is all about. You see, this part of the passage is where Paul is rejoicing in the joy that he has with the church that he was once a part of.

[27 : 34] He is encouraging them to continue to love boldly in the name of the Lord and to not let the enemy get a stronghold in their lives. You see, through being a quarrelsome group, that is what would have caused division and not to be effective in leading others to a life-saving relationship with Jesus.

And then we move on to verse 18. It says, You see, Paul takes this last verse to encourage his brothers and sisters at the church that if they could be joyous and rejoice in his imprisonment, that they could also rejoice in their freedom in Jesus.

You see, just like adding pepper ended up causing me to have a recipe that no one would eat, we are called to not be the recipe for a disaster in our own lives with one another and with others.

You see, allowing God to continue to make your reflection look more and more like him by allowing yourself to become more and more like Christ, we can't allow the grumbling and the arguing to get a stronghold or a foothold in our lives, in our church, and in our witness.

You see, the recipe to live a life of joy with the ability to rejoice in the Lord, again, starts with thankfulness, partnership with fellow believers, the discipleship peace, or the growth in your walk with Jesus, love, unity, and Christlike humility.

[29 : 05] And that is what it truly looks like to be able to rejoice. Don't be someone else's recipe for disaster.

Pray with me. God, you are so amazing. And we thank you so much for just the blessing of being able to just dive into your holy word. God, we thank you for Philippians and this letter that Paul wrote.

And we thank you for just what you've done to unpack just what this truly means to do everything without grumbling and arguing. And God, I just pray that you just be with us and you just work through us.

And God, that we can be a light in this dark, dark world, in this crooked generation. And I pray, Jesus, your richest blessings on each person that is watching today. And thank you for your grace and your mercy for each of us.

In your precious and holy name, Lord. Amen.