

Philippians 4

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[0 : 0 0] Well, thank you, David and Chris. Let's turn back to Philippians chapter number four today as we continue in this passage. So we've read the passage already, but I'll give you a little bit of context before we get into it.

Verses one and two, let us know whom it's speaking to, the church there at Philippi. And verse one says, Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved, and long for my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

And I beseech Herodias and Syndicae that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I entreat thee also, true yoke fellow, help those women which have labored with me in the gospel with Clement also and with other my fellow laborers whose names are in the book of life.

So there's many exhortations in the book of Philippians. And in this one, Paul here is writing and is telling them that you need these two ladies that are in this unity. You need to come to the same mind.

And that mind being in Christ would bring joy to their lives, and it would get rid of the discord that is found among them. Could you imagine receiving a letter like this in the church? And I begin to read it, and I name your name.

[1 : 0 3] It would really make you wake up this morning if your name was placed there. And then it says that they want the true yoke fellow there to help them out. Pretty neat that our yoke fellow minister at our church has really taken off, hasn't it?

Made its way all the way back into the Bible. And so the yoke fellow minister we have in our church caring for the missionary, the person who would have a partnership in the ministry with Paul also would have it here with somebody inside of the church.

It doesn't name them, but it says, I want you to go and I want you to help these two ladies out because there's a disunity. And the disunity has come by not having the same mind, by not agreeing. And we don't know exactly what it is that they're not agreeing on, but there's not a peace among them.

If I was, today I said choose joy, if I was just speaking to the teenagers, we would call this today controlling your emojis, right? Yes, you like that, don't you? They're all looking at me like, please don't say that, all right?

Controlling your emojis. How many of you find it difficult to send a text without an emoji at the end of it? How many? Yes, Miss Betty, please raise your hand, okay? Or send me an emoji about it, all right? And my wife, if you send my wife a text but you don't add an emoji to it, she thinks you're mad at her, all right?

[2 : 1 0] She needs an emoji at the end of it to know everything's okay. People realizing that text message wasn't going to work face to face, we need to see each other. So what they did is they now give us faces that we can share so it feels like you're having a real conversation, right?

And we don't just have five emojis, we have like 500 to choose from. It's very difficult now to know how to end your sentence because you need just the perfect emoji to end it with.

Not even get into all the GIFs and the memes and the different things that you could use. So at the end of this text that would be here, it would have ended, if it was a text message, it would have ended with a peace sign. They say there should be peace among you, but you should not be fighting and you can have control of your emotions.

How are you going to have control of your emotions? You're going to take control of your thoughts and you're going to make it as the mind of Christ. And that's where the battle is going to be fought. If you want to control your emotions, you control the thoughts that are there.

We do not know what the issue of discord is. I wanted to know what it was, so I went looking for it. These two ladies are fighting. Maybe another part of the Bible would give us a clue what they were arguing about. Maybe one of them left their crock pot at the church.

[3 : 17] Another one took it home with them. We don't know what it is. Maybe they're disputing over something that was taught in a Bible study because ladies do more than just use crock pots. All right? I gave two examples here, people. All right? And so I don't know what the ladies are arguing about, but they're arguing.

So I went looking for it and it says, this is what the Spurgeon says. And he says, I am glad that we do not know what the quarrel was about. He's glad he doesn't know. I'm not, but he was. And I'm usually thankful for ignorance on such subjects.

But as a cure for disagreements, the apostle says, rejoice in the Lord always. People are very happy, especially those who are very happy in the Lord and are not apt either to give offense or take offense.

Their minds are very sweetly occupied with higher things, that they are not easily distracted by the little troubles which naturally arise from such imperfect creatures as we are.

And we should all say amen to that. Joy in the Lord is the cure for all discord. Spurgeon says it's great that we don't know because it really doesn't matter what the discord is.

[4 : 14] Joy found among those ladies is what was going to take care of the problems. One of the greatest gifts that we could give to our spouse at Valentine's Day is to have a heart that is at peace, is to be people that live at peace.

The greatest thing that I can give to my son and to pass down to him is that he sees me living a life where I choose joy every day of my life. I get the opportunity to do that.

And you do as well. And no matter what situation you're at in this world, you still get to make that choice. And that is wonderful. That no amount of circumstances, no lack of resources, take that off the table.

No matter where you're at, the choice to choose joy or to forfeit it is given to you. So we look at the passage here. It says, rejoice always. And again, I say rejoice. Always is a big word.

That's something normally, we were going through this with Bridge Builders. And so the brother Wittholm pointed out to me that in writing you would tell your kids we don't use extreme terms like always or never. We don't say that when we're talking to people because it's rarely true.

[5 : 14] But when we talk about the truths of God's word, it most certainly can be. So it permits no exceptions. There will be times when being happy doesn't seem possible. But there's an opportunity always for us to rejoice in all circumstances.

It's interesting that the shortest verse in the Greek New Testament is rejoice evermore. But the shortest in the English one here is that we would, in English is that Jesus wept.

One of them says that we should rejoice evermore. The other one says Jesus wept. But they're not in conflict together, are they? We can rejoice no matter what the circumstances of our life is. Y'all know Nate Wilkerson on Thursday night.

He's the one that's most excited to be here. And a pastor asked him one day, they said, Nate, have you ever had a bad day? He said, I woke up one day and I was having a bad day. And he said, you know what? I decided I didn't like it at all.

He said, I'm never going to do that again. All right? If any of you tell me that, I'll say you're lying. But I'm going to believe Nate. He just doesn't choose to have bad days. And you know, I really think that's a genius.

[6 : 12] I really do. I haven't been able to decide if Nate is genius or crazy. And I think he's somewhere between the two. But that right there is his plum genius. Rejoicing is based upon the understanding of a truth and not merely an emotion.

It is placing your feet firmly on a truth and saying, I'm not moving regardless of how I feel about it. Nehemiah 8.10, speaking about joy, it says, Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat and drink the sweet.

Send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared. For this day is holy unto the Lord. Neither be ye sorry, for the joy of the Lord is your strength. We don't find strength in pure emotion.

We're going to find strength in something of substance that doesn't change. And that is the truth of God's word. Philippians 4.1, we've already read, says, Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved, I long for my joy and crown.

So stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. Abraham Lincoln said, Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm. If you're a Christian living in obedience to God's word, then you have placed your feet where they belong, in the Lord.

[7 : 17] You have placed your living life where you should be able to rejoice in no matter what is going on. We're going to be challenged. It's an answer here. It's almost as if they're saying, Why is it being said twice, rejoice in the Lord?

And then we have kind of an unspoken question. Well, what about this? What about the afflictions? And it says, Again, I say, rejoice. Whatever opposition you bring to the first statement, the second one is going to say, Just rejoice in the Lord is the answer to this.

We're to live understanding what it means to be in Christ. Psalm 40, verses 1 through 3. David says, I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and he heard my cry.

He brought me up also out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, and he set my feet upon a rock, and he established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth. Even praise unto our God, many shall see it in fear, and I shall trust in the Lord.

He set my feet upon a rock and established my goings. Many Christian songs of old and even newer songs, we just love that truth, right? That our feet can be established in something. We won't be moved.

[8 : 21] It's repeated throughout the chapter here. It was said in 2.18 that we should be glad and rejoice. In 3.1 it tells us to rejoice in the Lord. And here in this verse it said twice to us that we should rejoice. Someone said that the joy in Philippians is this defiant nevertheless.

Nevertheless, that no matter what's going on, you're able to say nevertheless, I can rejoice in the Lord. It could have been said many different ways, right? Rejoice in God. Rejoice in that you've been redeemed.

But he said rejoice in the Lord because it's in the Lord that we can look and say, he's over all this. That I submit to him. That he is the one that is ultimately in control.

That he's the one I submit my life to. That all I need to do is be pleasing to him when I can't be pleasing to anybody else. When I can't get my satisfaction from anybody else. I can rejoice in the Lord because he never changes.

And that he has made me acceptable. He made the conditions and I couldn't reach them. Then he died to make me acceptable so that he will love me. Rejoicing shall be the daily mindset of the believer.

[9 : 22] It is how we maintain the right thought life as we enter into the times of difficulty. So we're rejoicing and we're thinking about that and we're looking for opportunities to rejoice. And then when we get to this next statement where it says, let your moderation be known unto all men.

Moderation is our gentleness. It is our response to what's going on in a conversation or to the things of life. How do you prepare yourself for the hard things that many of you have had to respond to?

I look across this room and I think of many of you of having to respond to the hard circumstances. How do we have a moderation or how do we have a response that is gentle and it's correct?

Right? Because we're people that live with a mindset that we are rejoicing in the Lord before the problems even come. If we had to summarize marriage in one word, it's Valentine's Day, so I've been thinking a lot about it.

If I was to summarize marriage in one word, I would summarize it in this. It's just the respond. It's just the constant response, right? Some of you are wondering if that's going to get me in trouble. But we know it's true, right? I mean, so much of marriage is simply how are you going to respond to what has happened, to what has been said?

[10 : 27] How is your spouse going to respond? We spend most of our lives responding to people. More than I will ever stand here and preach and more than I will ever take your teenagers to camp or any kind of activity, I will spend more of my life responding to what people say than just about anything else.

How do I prepare for that? How do you prepare to have that moderation and that response? It's that you're rejoicing in the Lord. You're not finding your happiness in something that can change. When you put your happiness in something that you can't change, you're always going to be disappointed.

You'll always live so frustrated if you say, I have to have this and this to be happy. However, I have no influence over this plus this. You're always going to live a sad life and that should not be the life of a believer.

The most obvious response to a rejoicing heart is a gentle response. If you see somebody able to give a gentle response, you're going to find somebody who is obviously rejoicing in their heart.

Who is an example of this? 1 Corinthians 10.1. Now I, Paul, myself, beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent and bold towards you, the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

[11 : 39] We take a moment and we thought about his response, his moderation, his gentleness, and it's so clear. The Christ who knelt down, he washed the feet of one who would betray him and another who would deny them.

How do you respond like that? A Christ who said upon the cross, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. Christ even tells us in Matthew 11.29, he says, take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall rest in your souls.

It's that this meek and lowly of heart is the easy yoke in life. It seems like it'd be easier if we were more powerful and more dominant and we could make things happen. But Jesus said, learn of me, be lowly and be meek of heart.

And in doing so, you're going to find rest. So it says, let your moderation be known and unto who? Who should our moderation be known unto? It says, unto all men.

And so in your life, that's going to cover everybody. Everybody that you work with, Lamar, everybody that you had worked for, everybody that you see on your way to work, to your wife, to your son, God bless you, all right, to your cat, maybe your dog.

[12 : 49] No, your dog, definitely not your cat, all right. Don't kick the dog. But everybody that we respond to in every circumstances ought to receive this moderation from us that is a controlled response because we do not have to win the argument.

We do not have to make something happen to find our happiness. So why isn't this just our default response? It should be, right? I mean, every one of us on a Sunday morning, we get together and talk and we say, let's rejoice in the Lord.

And we all said, amen, right? We should be happy at all times because it should be easy to choose joy because we know the alternative. And you all say, but why is it not our default?

Why don't we just live like this? Sharing this with the teens the other day, I often blame the things of my past and my childhood that tell me that I can't find joy in my present day, that I need to heal from something of the past.

And because I'm not able to do that, I'm not able to find the joy that is there. Things that happened in your past really affect you today because they affect the goals that you set. So if you grew up really poor, you may say that I'm going to set this goal of being wealthy and rich and I'm not going to stop until I own everything.

[13 : 55] So your past is affecting your decision making and your goals, but it's going to be your thoughts about how you get to that goal that is going to make you who you are today. What you meditate on and what you think about at all times.

But there's something, there's this trauma that we all share in and that we all experience that is the same and it's the thing that permeates us the most and it goes all the way back to the garden with Adam and Eve.

We all want to get back to the garden, right? That's why in marriage it's so hard when something's wrong because we're like, this is not how things are supposed to be. I want to live in the garden. I want to go back to it. At the end of the day, after having all their needs met by God, obviously, they were met by Him.

They could sit down together and they would have no past fights to worry about. They had no snide remarks to worry about. They had no past failures. If Eve sat down and she exhaled, Adam didn't say, what did you mean by that?

You know, he never felt that. She just exhaled. Eve never said, they never said, well, there's a giraffe. And Adam said, oh, I know what she thinks about giraffes. She thought that was a dumb name. She thought I should have called it something else.

[15 : 00] All right. They had no insecurity about that. They just had a perfect relationship. Adam didn't, Adam had a job to do. Eve was his perfect helpmate. And they did that. There was the fighting and back and forth.

And what allowed for that, that in the cool of the day, Adam got to sit with God and to know that he was fully loved, fully accepted. He knew that he was created perfectly by him.

All of his needs emotionally were being met. And so he never went away from a conversation with God and demanded something from Eve that Eve wasn't made because he knew that all of his needs were being met.

And so there's the fall. Then immediately, Adam begins to act funny, doesn't he? He begins to hide. And he says, and God says, where are you? And he says, I was naked. And so I've hid myself from you.

And so we create two problems. Immediately, Adam recognizes there's these emotional needs that he doesn't feel like are being met anymore. And then also he's worried about pain. He has to have a coping mechanism.

[15 : 58] So we have the fall, we have these problems, and then we begin to create these agendas that are designed to solve our own neediness. And that's why we hurt each other.

That's why I hurt my wife. It's why I choose things like choose joy when I have an opportunity to choose a topic on a Sunday morning. It's because I want to find it all in him and live a life of joy, not needing to take from a personal agenda from you or from anybody else I love.

We would believe we respond poorly because we got hurt, right? Why did you respond that way, asking our kids? Well, I did this because they hurt my feelings, which they already begin to believe that if I am hurt, then I have to hurt other people.

But that's not true. He broke that cycle, right? Hurting people don't have to hurt people. What it's really saying is I'm demanding not to get hurt. And because of that, I get hurt and I'm angry.

Trying to make sure that you don't get hurt causes us to be very hateful and hurting people. We're always living life on the defense. And we respond in our insecurity.

[17 : 01] And when Stephanie and I first got married, we went to Disney World, like all people do, right, for our honeymoon. And it was great. It was in February. It was warm. And I won't say we hadn't had a fight up to that point, but I don't remember.

And we shouldn't. It had only been 24 hours. And so we go along and we get to Disney World and we have the great experience at Disney World. I mean, we're even getting the kiss with the fireworks and the castle going off in the background.

It is everything we hoped it would be. And then we get on the trolley and we go back to our car. And they say, sir, which parking lot are you at? I said, I'm at the Disney World parking lot.

I went to Disney World. Take me to my car. And they said, are you at the Goofy lot? Are you at the Pluto lot? Are you at the Mickey Mouse lot? I said, I don't know. I thought it was like church. You just pull up, you go, all right?

They said, no, sir, you're going to have a problem here. And so about two hours later, we realized we were at the Goofy lot, which is appropriate. All right, I don't really know if we're at the Goofy lot. I hope so, though.

[18 : 01] And so we get there and Stephanie, I don't know exactly how it went down. I really don't. But it has something along the lines of, did you not think that maybe you should remember where you parked the car?

Really? Really? You know, looking back on it, that's pretty logical. But in the moment, I heard, so you're a complete buffoon, and you will not be able to take care of me, and I'm going to call my dad to come pick me up, all right?

And so you would have thought that's what she said, because my reaction would have been, you're standing on my neck. I can't breathe, because I needed something from her. I needed a wife that never questioned me.

I needed a wife that never made me feel like I was anything less than perfect, and that is not a job that anybody should be given to have. And so I was looking in her for something that should not be reasonable.

I was looking for a validation and self-worth in the moment, and it wasn't going to find it. And then things get worse when you have kids, and then you get a pack and play. And the wife says, I'm going to raise the kid. I just need you to set up the pack and play.

[19 : 02] And the next thing you know, you're cussing at this device on the floor, because they're not made in a logical way. You need to be an advanced engineer to know how a pack and play works. But you know, I give you a couple funny occasions, but there's plenty of those that aren't funny.

There's just so many of those in my life where I looked for her to get something, and from you at times. But here, we shouldn't be doing that. We should respond unto all men in a moderate, gentle way, because I was already rejoicing in the fact that I live under the Lord.

I live here knowing that He is above all things. The Lord is at hand. So we give some motivation here. Why should we do these things? The moderation unto all men, for the Lord is at hand.

He is ever-present. Psalm 46.1, God is our refuge and a strength, a very present help in trouble. That God is aware of what's going on. This may sound cheesy, but I heard it not long ago, and it brought such great conviction to me that not only is God my father, but He's also my father-in-law, meaning that He is the father.

She is a child of God, and that He is concerned about my marriage as my nosy father-in-law is. Hope you're not watching, Brother Wayne. I'm sure you will later. All right. He cares about these things.

[20 : 16] He cares about His daughter. He's very present. He's aware of what's going on. We live a life before this audience of one more than anything else. The way that I respond, I'm not just looking at you, but I'm looking up to God and saying, God, I hope you're pleased with the way that I responded there.

I did that because I rejoice in you. So there's that truth, and there's also another one there, is that He will return soon. That ought to motivate us in the way we respond, because we live like we're going to live forever, but He may return tomorrow.

I mean, He may return tonight. He may return before this day ends. 1 Corinthians 15.52 says, In a moment.

He could return any moment. You know, I have great dreams of the future, as all of you do, and I hope to achieve certain things, but this may be the end. This may be all that I accomplished for Christ, because it may be over.

He may return. He may call me home. So I have to live like this is all that there ever will be. I have to live like this response is the only ministry that I will have. This is the only age in which I'll get to raise my kids.

[21 : 25] I don't have a promise that I'll get to make up in the future. His nearness causes us to rejoice. We were excited about it. His nearness affects our gentleness, and His nearness fights against our anxiety.

Anxiety. Be careful for nothing. Don't be anxious. Don't be filled with worry and concern at all times. You know, we live in a very anxious world.

Everybody says. It's like a badge of honor. If I was to ask you if you were busy and anxious, the one person that said no, we'd all look at them like they're a psychopath. Like, what's going on with you? I got enough for all of us. Here's a little bit for you to take as well.

You know, teenagers deal with anxiety just like the rest of us. Typically, let me give you a little clue. When I talk about your teenagers, I'm also talking about you, all right? But I'm just softening the blow a little bit.

Why are our teenagers dealing with anxiety? Because there's no filter. There's no guard upon their heart. And we receive content all the time, and we don't know how to process it. We just have too much coming at us at all times.

[22 : 25] It's endless scrolling during our days, consuming information. Every day, we invent new things to worry about. If you want to go down a rabbit hole, just go on Google and say, what is there to worry about today?

All right, it will lead you for the rest of the day finding new things to worry about. Undue care is an intrusion into an arena that belongs to God alone.

It makes us the father of the household instead of being a child. Undue care is an intrusion into the arena that belongs to God alone. That's why I rejoice in the Lord, because I am not the ultimate.

I rejoice in Him. And so, we can see the result. So, it tells us not to be anxious. And it says, be careful for nothing, but it doesn't say don't be anxious as the answer. The response, the corollary is the not worrying, is the take of Paul's command, which is, in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.

And this will be a peace that will guard your heart. The result of praying to God and the looking to Him as the Father and as Lord of our lives, the result of that is a peace.

[23 : 31] So, all of us will very quickly reverse engineer this, right? If you're not living with peace, if you don't have joy, then it means that you're carrying something, and you've taken on a responsibility that does not belong to you.

Keep means to guard our hearts. The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. So, that peace around us, that recognizing who He is, is supposed to provide protection to our hearts.

This Friday night, we're going to talk about this passage here. We have many different men speaking from the Psalms in April. We have another time. We're talking about mental health. Because that's the terminology that our teens have adopted.

That's often how it's talked about in health. But it's how do you have a peace in your heart? How do you live a life where you filter the right information and you respond in a proper way? A lot of people are giving answers to it.

As a church, we most certainly should be involved in it. So, keep your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus. He will restore your heart and your mind. So, a moderation, a gentle response coming from letting God fight our fights.

[24 : 32] It describes a person who's really free to let go of his anxieties and all the things that cause him stress because he knows the Lord will take up his cause. In prayer, he hands it over to God.

I don't know where I've heard this story. Most likely it's from Pastor Gardner, which means you probably heard it as well. He's been my pastor for all these 14 years. But it's a man who's dealing with all kinds of stress and anxiety.

So, what he decides to do is he decides to hire a guy. And that guy's job is to worry about all the things that he is supposed to worry about. So, every morning he writes down all the things that he is supposed to worry about.

And it's really working. So, he's telling his friend, he said, I'm not worried anymore. You seem so laid back. You seem so calm. What happened to you? You used to always be so worried. He says, I hired a guy and he now worries about all the stuff that I'm supposed to be worried about.

He said, that's incredible. I should get a guy like that. He said, how much does he cost? He says, I pay him \$1,000 a week. He says, how in the world can you afford \$1,000 a week? He said, I don't know. That's his job to worry about.

[25 : 29] And if every one of us could hire a person to take care of the things we're going to worry about. Some of you knew where that was going and you still couldn't stop it, could you? And outsource it. Give it to somebody else.

In prayer, get up lighter than when you went down, right? When you go down on your knees, say, God, I'm going to give this to you and really give it to him. But you know, one of the ways that you're not going to give it to him is if you stand up and you know what obedience is, you know what he's calling on you to do.

If you're not willing to walk in obedience, then you've got to back back up and then hitch all that stuff up to you. You can only leave that stuff at the altar when you say, God, I'm going to get up from this point and I'm going to live in simple obedience to you no matter the consequences.

You know, we were told in Cuba they get so much food given to them every month, but it's not enough to make it throughout the entire month. So people have to steal from their employers. They have to do a lot of different things, they say, to make it throughout the month because they can't get jobs, which puts Christians in a situation where they say, I have to do what the average person does or I have to do what's obedient to God.

If I do what I do, then I have to carry the weight and responsibility, but if I do what is right and obedience, I put it in the hands of God. I may not have as much, but I don't have the anxiety of having to figure things out for myself.

[26 : 46] Protect your thoughts, protect your emotions, protect your responses, bring glory to God because He is always near and watching. And then it gets us to this passage here is to think on these things.

Are we responsible for our thoughts? Can we really choose them? Joy is commanded, Deuteronomy 28, 47, Because thou service not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things.

It tells us to choose to be joyful. Matthew 5, 28, it tells us that it condemns thoughts of adultery. It says, if you look upon a woman to lust, you've committed adultery in your heart. How could we be considered sinning unless we had the ability to choose what we think about?

Over and over again, the Bible tells us we have a choice. We set our eyes upon things above. We set our affections on things above. We have that choice to make. The right place to put our minds. Much of the Christian life comes down to the mind and to our thoughts.

Romans 12, 2, Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. But you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. That transformed by the renewing of your mind.

[27 : 55] To think upon the things that God has done. We must choose the thoughts and we either choose what we allow or cast down. 1 Corinthians 10, 5, Casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.

Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. That's difficult, isn't it? To bring our imaginations. They just run wild at times. And to bring them together.

We can imagine all kinds of evil intentions even about our friends. Our imagination runs wild. When I left the other day, Stephanie wrote me and she says, Our basement is flooded. And all right. And I thought Tyler, my nephew, had done it.

And so I wrote Tyler and I said, Hey, you got to get back to the house and help Aunt Stephanie. Because our basement is flooded. You need to do something. Well, he said, Well, I'm on a date. Well, I chose a few emojis. And I said, Well, that's not going to work.

Okay. I don't care about your date. All right. And, But then he sends back an emoji. And it's a smiley face or something with a tear on the side. And I'm like, Is he laughing? What is this? And I was so mad.

[28 : 53] I had to show somebody like, Tell me what this means. And he said, He's sad. I'm like, Oh, good. Emoji. But it was just crazy imagination, right? I'm picturing Tyler living this good life.

And my wife is in buckets of water. And so immediately my thoughts go to the worst and consider. And that's humorous. But our imagination runs wild. And we're told to control those thoughts. We live in a world that is unashamedly trying to change the way we think about what is right and what is wrong.

Evil is promoted as loving. We say people should get to be made allowed to make a choice because that's a loving Christian thing to do. But we have to bring our thoughts into submission. You're not good enough.

God's angry with you. You're not truly forgiven. No one cares about you. Nobody cares about the things that you're working on. This is hopeless. Those are the kind of things that we need to take and we need to control and we need to cast down.

And some of those thoughts are very hard. John Wilkerson shared with us years ago at a couples retreat how his son passed away, I believe, at the age of 16. And how we would oftentimes think about when it became time for him to graduate college or it was time for him to get married.

[29 : 59] He would sit there and he would think about it. But God told him that was never his plan for his son in 2019. He is living in heaven today.

And so he had to take those imaginations that he had that seemed to be good. And he said, no, those aren't appropriate thoughts. What God did in the Lord is what is best. And so our imagination goes wild and we have to filter and say, God, is this where I should meditate?

Is this going to help me? And many times a thought may feel good to us. Being angry may feel good to us. Devising a plan to get back at somebody may feel good in the moment. But it's not what God has for you.

It's not the best that he has for you. The greatest thing we can do for a spouse or kids and those around us is to control our thoughts. Want to say the right words, think the right thoughts. Want to be gentle, think gentle thoughts.

Proverbs 23, 7 says, For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he. We are told that we are the sum of past events, but that is not what defines us. We can set our mind on the things of Christ.

[30 : 58] What should be filling our mind? Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are a good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things.

Our God is a God of peace. And because of this, we get to choose joy. It is in him that we have that opportunity. Because he has made peace for us. There would be no peace to be found in this world.

My message today would be, there is no peace with us and God. So let us work and work and work so there can be peace. Because until you find peace, searching for anything else doesn't matter. If the creator of the universe is upset with you and there's no reconciliation, then there's no peace in your life.

And so those things which have both learned and received and heard and seen in me do, and the God of peace shall be with you. Learn, received, heard, and seen. Paul is living out this truth and he's encouraging other people.

As this should be for us, for our children and those that we disciple, can they look at us and can they say, I've learned and I've received and I've heard and I've experienced a person that has chosen joy in their life.

[32 : 09] Experienced it three-dimensionally in every circumstance that is there. They've heard it from us and they've seen it from us in our lives. Unbeliever today, I'll plead with you.

If you're in here today, you have not put your faith and trust in God. Let me tell you what we think of as believers when we think about Jesus. When we think about true, he is one that has concealed nothing from us, completely sincere.

Nothing about him has been hidden from us. He loves us and he gave his life for us. He desires his best. You'll never find anyone who is more sincere in their motives and true than Jesus.

He loves you and he died for you. Honest, he not only does not lie, but he cannot lie. He is the most honorable. He said that he would forgive you in your sins and you can put your trust in that fact that he did not lie to you.

That if you will come to him and ask him to forgive you of your sins and repent, he will be loving, he will be true, and he will be honest and he will forgive you. He is just, which means he is completely holy.

[33 : 16] He is completely loving and in being so, he is completely just. Sin must be paid for. He will not overlook your sin. He will not just sweep it under the rug. It has to be dealt with.

He is aware of it. And that's why he went to the cross and he died, knowing the sins. The thing that you feel all the guilt and shame that you're dealing with right now, and it's a new season of life or it's a new event in your life, he knew about it and he went to the cross and he died for it because he is just and he knew that sin had to be paid for.

And talk about pure, purely clean. He can make you completely clean today. He can provide you with a righteousness so you don't have to live anymore with that guilt and shame and all those things that may torment you.

And then talk about lovely. There's nothing more lovely than Jesus. No one more lovely. I've told you a million times. I'll never forget the 12-year-old little kid that took me down to the Ganges River in India and he said, come and see.

And he tried to explain to me how a river could bring reincarnation and how it was beautiful. But that young man didn't understand lovely. Nothing more lovely than somebody dying in our place when we didn't deserve it.

[34 : 26] And today I give you a good report. You will not find any better report than the one found in Christ Jesus. It's the greatest of all news and we want to tell you more about it. I haven't even began to scratch the surface.

And when we begin to think about him, it brings a guard around our heart. It brings a peace. It allows us to respond differently. We can live a distinctively different life in this world because of Jesus.

We have plenty to meditate. We say, you can have all this world, but just give me Jesus. When you have nothing good to think about, when you have nothing pure to think about, when all of your life has just fallen apart and the only thing you have left is Jesus, well then let me tell you, you have something true to think about.

You have something honest to think about. Something just to think about. Something that is lovely and something that is pure. And that's something that is of a good report above all measure. And having Jesus, we have all the heart would ever need.

We don't walk with him in the cool of the day anymore, but he fully meets our needs. And he fully helps us when we get hurt in this world. All of us should take our mind off the carriage of this world and we should put them on Christ today.

[35 : 31] He is worthy of our worship. We should give our minds and our hearts a break from meditating and carrying a load that it was not designed to carry. We should choose joy.

Could I encourage you today, if you're not a believer, there will be some men here at the front here in a moment. When we begin to pray, you can just come to them and tell them that you want to choose joy and they'll take you to another room. They'll pray with you.

They'll explain to you what Christ did for you. You can find salvation today. I urge you to not leave not knowing Jesus, the one that is true and lovely today. But believers in here, I'm going to urge you to choose joy.

It's so important to us. It's one of the reasons we preach verse by verse in the Bible. Because if you let me loose nine times out of ten, I'm going to tell you, choose joy. Because I see too many Christians living their lives trying to make everything come together, but they're missing that ingredient, which is the joy that is found in Jesus.

When that happens, all these other things begin to come together. God will mend marriages. He works with families. He does incredible things when we will just put our lives in His hand, all of our anxiety and worries, and say, this belongs to you.

[36 : 39] I'm going to encourage you to give it to Him. Some of you that might have grown up in church, you know when He tells you to come to an altar, you know that you can't pray in your seat the same way that you can at an altar, because it's a matter of obedience, and you need to say, God, I'm going to come give that to you.

Maybe you would rather pray there in your seat, but wherever you're at, do business with the Lord. Talk to Him. Make the choice today that chooses joy. Be okay. Be okay.