

Overview of Thrive: Living in Real Joy Series

God created us not merely to exist or be dutiful workers but to thrive in a life of joy. We may wonder how such a life is possible in light of the difficulties and drudgery of day-to-day living.

This timely study of Philippians exhorts believers to understand the joy that is possible as we experience life in Christ through prayer, evangelism, giving, and so much more. An understanding of true joy makes it possible for believers to live in love and humility even as Jesus did, enabling us to become more and more like Christ. (Merida, 2017)

Don't Just Survive...Thrive!!

During this lesson series be sure to:

- Be engaged.
 - Take notes, participate, and do the worksheets.
- Be in prayer.
 - Pray that God will open up our understanding to His Word.
- Invite a friend.
- Discover true joy in Jesus Christ.

Thrive: Living in Real Joy

Thursday Night
Bible Study

Facilitator:
Pastor Ralph
Velasquez

Lesson 1:
Praying with Joy

Lesson 2:
Sharing with Joy

Lesson 3:
Following with Joy

Lesson 4:
Growing with Joy

Lesson 5:
Practicing with Joy

Lesson 6:
Giving with Joy

Lesson 1: Praying with Joy - Philippians 1:3-11

Let's Chat: *When has a personal letter or note meant a lot to you?*

Philippians 1:3-6

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,
5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,
6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ;

Discussion Question #1

- How would you describe the difference between happiness and joy?

Philippians 1:7-8

7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.
8 For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Discussion Question #2-3

- What are some obstacles that hinder us from building deeper relationships?
- How can we build the kind of relationships Paul described in these verses?

Philippians 1:9-11

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,
10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,
11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Discussion Question #4

- Why are both knowledge and discernment necessary ingredients for loving others?

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Live It Out

How will you incorporate joy into your life and prayers this week?

- **Cultivate gratefulness.** Take some time to read through your church's statement of faith. (You can start with your church website, or with a staff member.) what are some specific truths that statement teaches about Jesus?
- **Memorize Philippians 1:6.** It's hard to be joyful when praying about a difficult matter, but Philippians 1:6 is a reminder that God is at work even when we don't yet see the result.
- **Partner with others.** Join with others to pray for your lives and your opportunities to serve God and others. Emphasize the importance of joy each time you pray together.

Don't buy into the lie that joy depends on your current circumstances. Paul wrote his joyful letter to the Philippians while being persecuted in a Roman prison. Choose today to seek the unshakable joy that is only available through Christ.

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Lesson 2: Sharing with Joy – Philippians 1:12-21

Let's Chat: *What do you like so much that it's hard to share?*

Philippians 1:12-14

12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,

13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;

14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Discussion Question #1

- When have you been encouraged by the faith and perseverance of others?

Philippians 1:15-19

15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:

16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

18 What then? Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Discussion Question #2

- What do these verses teach about sharing Christ?

Philippians 1:20-21

20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

21 For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

Discussion Question #3-4

- Why do we sometimes feel ashamed about sharing the gospel?
- How can we help one another be bold in sharing the gospel?

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Live It Out

We can experience great joy as we share Christ. Consider these suggestions for putting that truth into action this week:

- **Treasure Jesus above all.** Take a few moments to repent of desiring other things more than your Savior. Ask the Father to wean you off the pleasures of sin and this world.
- **Pray for people you don't ordinarily pray for.** Think about your critics, attackers, or enemies. Think about people you envy. Think about people in other churches. Pray for each of them to know Christ and to make Christ known.
- **Reach out to people who need the gospel.** Intentionally initiate a conversation with someone who needs Christ. Ask the Father to fill you with joy and confidence as you share the truth this week and beyond.

There are lots of people in today's world who would rather smoke the Bible than to read it. That shouldn't surprise us, nor should it take away our joy. Instead, it should motivate us to get to work.

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Lesson 3: Following with Joy - Philippians 2;1-11

Let's Chat: *When have you really needed an attitude adjustment?*

Philippians 2:1-2

1 Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,
2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

Discussion Question #1

- Why is unity so essential in the church?

Philippians 2:3-4

3 *Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.
4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Discussion Question #2-3

- What are the consequences when people look out for their own interests in a community?
- What are the benefits when people look out for one another's interests in the church?

Philippians 2:5-11

5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,
7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.
8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.
9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,
11 and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Discussion Question# 4

- How can we work together to obey Paul's command in verse 5?

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Live It Out

What steps can you take to show the humility of Jesus?

- **Ask for help.** Ask God each day to help you be more others oriented. Pray for help to be a more joyful servant.
- **Memorize Philippians 2:5-11.** Paul's hymn was memorized and recited by the early church. We should follow their example. Write it. Meditate on it. Memorize it.
- **Meet a need.** Find someone in your church who needs to experience the blessing of Christian service, and humbly serve him or her this week. Remember to serve privately, and remember to choose someone who can't pay you back.

There are plenty of people in this world in this world who will tell you how you should behave. Don't listen. Instead, concentrate on developing your relationship with Christ and let Him show you the best way to live.

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Lesson 4: Growing with Joy - Philippians 3:12-21

Let's Chat: *Have you ever been thankful that you didn't quit?*

Philippians 3:12-14

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,

14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Discussion Question #1-2

- What experiences or encounters have helped you grow spiritually?
- What principles in these verses can help us pursue the goal of Christlikeness?

Philippians 3:15-19

15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.

16 Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ:

19 whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things.

Discussion Question #3

- How can we intentionally position ourselves to benefit from the example of others?

Philippians 3:20-21

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Discussion Question #4

- What makes these verses challenging or encouraging?

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Live It Out

How will you press forward to become more like Jesus in the days to come?

- **Forget what is past.** Do you have something in your past that you need to “forget” in order to run forward? Ask God to impress on you the richness of His grace and to give you strength to run today.
- **See others as Jesus does.** As you look at people in our culture who are not following Jesus, do you respond to them with anger? Indifference? Or, do you weep? Pray daily for God to deepen your concern for those who are enemies of the cross.
- **Eliminate sinful habits.** Evaluate your life for any sinful habits that restrict you from maturing spiritually. Confess the sin and be aggressive in removing this habit from your life.

You may not be able to run a marathon, let alone with one. But you can run the daily race as a disciple of Jesus. All you need to do is forget the past, focus on Christ, and keep moving forward until the day your transformation is complete.

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Lesson 5: Practicing with Joy (Philippians 4:4-9)

Let's Chat: *Do you typically see the glass as half-empty or half-full? Explain*

Philippians 4:4-5

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!
5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

Discussion Question #1

- What's your initial reaction to Paul's commands in these verses?

Philippians 4:6-7

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;
7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Discussion Question #2

- How does prayer help us move from worry to trust?

Philippians 4:8-9

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things *are* noble, whatever things *are* just, whatever things *are* pure, whatever things *are* lovely, whatever things *are* of good report, if *there is* any virtue and if *there is* anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.
9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Discussion Question #3-4

- Who or what comes to mind when you read the attributes in verse 8?
- How can we practice the things Paul taught in this passage?

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Live It Out

How will you let the truths in the passage transform your life this week?

- **Pray.** What are your biggest challenges right now? Make a list and pray daily about each one. As you pray, ask the Lord to grant you His peace and graciousness.
- **Memorize.** Memorize Philippians 4:6-7. There's no better way to get a proper perspective on the challenges of life and to give our burdens to God than to saturate our minds with this passage.
- **Think.** Seek out a trusted friend who can help you be accountable with your thoughts.

There's not much power in positive thinking, not as the world wants us to engage in, anyway. But there is power in Jesus. Just as important, we can find peace and joy when we focus our lives on Him.

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Lesson 6: Giving with Joy - Philippians 4:10-20

Let's Chat: *When have you had a blast giving something away?*

Philippians 4:10-14

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.

11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:

12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

14 Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.

Discussion Question #1-2

- How would you describe what it means to be content?
- Verse 13 is often taken out of context. How should we understand it in light of verses 10-12?

Philippians 4:15-18

15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.

16 For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities.

17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

Discussion Question #3

- What are some keys to giving in a way that pleases God?

Philippians 4:19-20

19 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

20 Now to our God and Father *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

Discussion Question #4

- What sort of needs can we expect God to supply?

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Live It Out

How will you give of your resources to join God in His work?

- **Look for greed.** Identify someone you know personally who still needs to follow Christ. Pray for this person each day. Ask for guidance and opportunities to be a witness.
- **Look for need.** Work with a partner to study a specific people group in your community or around the world. Learn what you can about their beliefs and customs. Pray that the gospel would penetrate their culture. Ask God how you can get involved.
- **Look together.** As a group, plan a ministry project to serve a person or group, something that requires you step out of your comfort zone. Seek a way to connect with that person or community in order share Christ.

You may be uncomfortable talking about money. That's okay. But don't let your discomfort prevent you from experiencing the joy and contentment that comes with joking God in the good work of giving for the benefit of others.

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