

## THE PURSUIT OF JOY

Joy is something that is unaffected by circumstances. It's not brought on like happiness as in winning a game, getting a big raise, or when we have a great opportunity present itself. Happiness is fleeting and doesn't have much depth. But joy is a state of mind and an attitude of the heart. Joy is deep. It is a settled state of contentment, confidence and hope. Joy brings a sense of peace.

The first eleven verses of Philippians will help us understand what joy is:

*I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,. . . It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*  
(Philippians 1:3-5, 7-8)

The writer of this letter, Paul, is joyful because of his ability to share with others who partner with him in a faith in Jesus Christ.

I know I feel joyful at church on Sundays when I worship together with other believers. There's something about the joining with others to praise God that makes me deeply glad. (or – in biblical language – it makes me “rejoice”) A shared joy is a deeper joy.

- In what other ways do you share joy with fellow Christians?

And...one of the greatest reasons we have for this joy is what Paul wrote in verse 6:

*...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* [Philippians 1:6]

- How does that statement make you feel?
- Can you think of any other Bible verses that make you feel joyful?

Joy increases with time, as we stay close to God, reading His word, developing our relationship with Him.

*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. [Phil. 1:9-11]*

- One source I studied suggests that joyful people lead a more stable life. Given our disorders, do you think that's true?
- How can learning to be joyful help us gain stability?

The neat thing about joy is that we can *learn* to have it. It doesn't rely on what is happening to us or around us.

- What steps can we take to have greater joy? How can we develop this attitude of the heart?