

## Study Guide

*This week we will read through Paul's letter to the Philippians. Most of understand happiness. But happiness depends on our circumstances. When they change so does our happiness. As we further explore JOY, we will see joy stands in contrast to happiness. Running deeper and stronger, joy is the quiet, confident assurance of God's love and work in our life – that He will be there no matter what!! Happiness depends on happenings, but joy depends on Christ. The blueprint for this letter can be summed up by the following: Chapter 1 – Joy in Suffering. Chapter 2 – Joy in Serving. Chapter 3 – Joy in Believing. Chapter 4 – Joy in Giving. Pray for JOY in your own life each day as you read!*

**Monday, June 14. Read Philippians 1.** Paul uses Joy for the first time in verse 4. The Philippians were remembered with joy and thanksgiving whenever Paul prayed. By helping Paul, they were helping Christ's cause. They were willing to be used by God for whatever he wanted them to do. When others think about you, what comes to their minds? Are you remembered with joy by them? Do your acts of kindness lift up others? Paul considered it a privilege to suffer for Christ. We do not by nature consider suffering a privilege. Yet when we suffer, if we faithfully represent Christ, our message and examples affect us and others for good. When we suffer for our faith, it doesn't mean that we have done something wrong. In fact, the opposite is often true – it verifies that we have been faithful. Use suffering to build your character. Don't resent it or let it tear you down. Choose JOY in the midst of your suffering.

**Tuesday, June 15 – Read Philippians 2.** Now go back and read verses 1, 2 & 3. What phrase or question speaks to you today? What is keeping you from experiencing joy right now? Let's look again at 2:3. Selfishness can ruin a church, but genuine humility can build it. Considering others' interests as more important than our own links us with Christ, who was a true example of humility and love. **Read 2:14-18.** Paul lets the readers know he has joy and wants to share that joy with all. Notice in these verses what the "fruit of the spirit" will look like.

**Wednesday, June 16 – Read Philippians 3.** What is the source of our joy? Jesus Christ. Paul communicates some basics of the faith in this chapter. **Read verses 1-11.** Paul doesn't tell them what they need to do or believe, he simply explains how he received the joy of the Lord. He realized what Christ had done for him. He wants to be one with Christ. He trusts in Christ to save him. He experiences Christ's resurrection. He doesn't brag, he shares where he is on his journey with God. Can you say this today? Are you at a point in your journey where you could share something similar? Are you still trying to 'work' your way into a 'Fruitful Life?' Paul tried that and found it was empty. If you are feeling empty, take your eyes off what you are supposed to do and look to Christ. He alone should be our focus. He alone should be our hearts desire.

**Thursday, June 17– Read Philippians 3:12-21.** If we stopped at verse 11 we might get a false impression of Paul. We could be led to think he has it all together. But after reading the balance of chapter 3, we understand Paul is on a journey – a journey filled with ups and downs – but one that keeps pushing toward the goal. What is the goal? Is it heaven? In the NLT verse 12 ends with ...'**But I keep working toward that day when I will finally be all that Christ Jesus saved me for and wants me to be.**' Could it be that our earthly existence actually counts for something? Could it be our life can have purpose and meaning while we are down here? Paul wasn't content to just wait on death so he could be with the Lord. Neither should we. To grow a fruitful life, means we grow. We produce fruit that looks and tastes good to others. If we aren't growing, then we are dying. Let's choose to grow!!

**Friday, June 18– Read Philippians 4.** It seems strange that a man in prison would be telling a church to rejoice. But Paul's attitude teaches us an important lesson: Our inner attitudes do not have to reflect our outward circumstances. Paul was full of joy because he knew no matter what happened to him, Jesus Christ was with him. Several times in this letter Paul urged the Philippians to be joyful, probably because they needed to hear this. It's easy to get discouraged about unpleasant circumstances or take unimportant events too seriously. If you haven't been experiencing the Fruit of Joy, you may not be looking at life from the right perspective.