

Philippians Sermon Series: An Exploration of Christian Joy

Sermon-based Small Group Guide - Week of Sunday, January 20th

Sermon Title: The Joy of the Trajectory

Scripture Texts: Philippians 1:3-11

Welcome

Greet everyone as they arrive and check in with one another. Provide refreshments if possible.

Introduction

- If this is a new group, or if there is a new member, please make sure to spend time introducing everyone.
- Follow up on the Application Activities from last week. In what ways were you more attentive to “outsiders” this past week?

Discussion

Story Question

What were your impressions of Johnny Cash before hearing John talk about him?

What are your impressions of Johnny Cash after hearing John share about him as an example of someone who finished his life well?

Can you think of examples of other people who are good finishers?

Are you a good finisher? Give examples of times you have or have not finished well.

Scripture Exploration via Sermon Points

Read Philippians 1:3-11 (Text from *The Message* is provided on page 3.)

Point 1: God is a good finisher. (Reread verse 6)

What does it mean to say that God is a good finisher?

How does this knowledge affect you?

Point 2: God calls us to finish well.

What does God see as finishing well? (Reread verses 9-11)

How can you keep these things as your goals?

sanctification

The process or result of God's continuing work in Christian believers through the power of the Holy Spirit. This occurs after justification and is growth in grace and holiness of life marked by good works.

Point 3: We are in a process of being finished by God.

Where/How do you see yourself in this process?

Are you moving forward?

What is our role in this process? What is God's role?

What should you do NOW to put yourself on a path of finishing well?

Johnny Cash finished his life well by embracing the passion for and gift of music that God created in him.

Are you embracing who God created you to be?

Do you have a sense of your specific gifts and calling?

If so, how can your group support you in embracing this?

If not, how can your group help you explore this?

Point 4: The context of this letter is a loving relationship of mutual fellowship. This is also the best context for us to be in the process of moving forward to be finished well by God.

Describe Paul's relationship with the Philippians. (Read verses 3-5 and 7-8)

Share your experiences of loving Christian community. How has it made a difference for you?

How can we as a group be more loving and encouraging toward one another?

What do YOU need from this group TODAY that would give you a sense of loving support and help you move forward toward becoming the person God created you to be?

Who do you know that is not experiencing this kind of love?

Application

The book of Philippians is a letter written by Paul (a guy, by the way) to a group of people that he cared for deeply and were an encouragement to him.

Spend time talking about the following.

Consider taking some of your meeting time to actually write letters. (Provide pens, paper and envelopes.)

1. Who has been an encouragement to you, shown you Christian love, or shared the joy of the gospel with you?
Write them a letter of appreciation or take the time to express it in some other way.
2. Ask God to bring to your attention someone you should encourage by showing your love for them or sharing the joy of the gospel with them.
Write them a letter, send them an email, call them or take them out for coffee.
3. What are some other fun practical ways you could express the kind of love Paul expressed?
Put these ideas into action within the relationships in your group, your home, your work place, etc.



Invite some friends to see the movie “Bucket List” with you. Use it as an opportunity to discuss what it means to finish well.

Prayer

Take 5 minutes to put Paul’s prayer (verses 9-11) into your own words, applying it to your group. Close the group by reading these as prayers.

Remember

HE who began a good work in YOU
will carry it on TO COMPLETION

(Philippians 1:6)

Philippians 1:3-1

(The Message)

³ Every time you cross my mind, I break out in exclamations of thanks to God. ⁴ Each exclamation is a trigger to prayer. I find myself praying for you with a glad heart. ⁵ I am so pleased that you have continued on in this with us, believing and proclaiming God's Message, from the day you heard it right up to the present. ⁶ There has never been the slightest doubt in my mind that the God who started this great work in you would keep at it and bring it to a flourishing finish on the very day Christ Jesus appears.

⁷ It's not at all fanciful for me to think this way about you. My prayers and hopes have deep roots in reality. You have, after all, stuck with me all the way from the time I was thrown in jail, put on trial, and came out of it in one piece. All along you have experienced with me the most generous help from God. ⁸ He knows how much I love and miss you these days. Sometimes I think I feel as strongly about you as Christ does!

⁹ So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings ¹⁰ so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. Live a lover's life, circumspect and exemplary, a life Jesus will be proud of:

¹¹ bountiful in fruits from the soul, making Jesus Christ attractive to all, getting everyone involved in the glory and praise of God.