

# Philippians Sermon Series: An Exploration of Christian Joy

## Sermon-based Small Group Guide - Week of Sunday, January 27<sup>th</sup>

Sermon Title: The Joy in Christ that Transcends Circumstances

Scripture Texts: Philippians 1:12-30

### Welcome

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

### Introduction

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- ❑ Follow up on the Application Activities from last week. Share times in the past week when you experienced encouragement or support from a Christian friend. Did anyone write a letter to someone or express encouragement in another way? Share these as a way of appreciating the work God is doing among us.

**It's never too late to do this application activity!**

### Discussion

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#### Story Questions

Summarize what John said about the cowardly lion in the Wizard of Oz. What drew the cowardly lion to risk? <sup>1</sup>

In what ways are you like the cowardly lion?

What helps you feel safe? What causes you to feel fear?

Is there an area in your life where you are being challenged to take a risk? What is keeping you from doing it?

Paul was not a coward. He was able to completely trust God with all circumstances because he accepted that God would use suffering for good.

Can you think of examples in scripture of people who had bad things happen to them and God used it for good. <sup>2</sup>

Discuss the difficult circumstances they endured and the good God did from them

When in your life have good things come out of difficult circumstances?

<sup>1</sup> The cowardly lion risked leaving the forest and going on the quest for two reasons. Both had to do with others. 1) Dorothy was worth following. 2) Joining the group meant engaging in something greater than oneself.

<sup>2</sup> Some examples: Joseph (Genesis 50:20), Moses (Ex 3:9-10), Hagar (Genesis 16:1-11), Job, apostles (Acts 5:12-42), Jesus

### Scripture Exploration (Philippians 1:12-30)

3 key verses that show Paul's attitude:

**Philippians 1:12** (NIV) – “What has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.”

What evidence does Paul give that this is true?

**Philippians 1:21** (NIV) – “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

What does Paul mean by this?

Given your priorities and schedule this week, how would you honestly fill in the blank:

For to me, to live is \_\_\_\_\_.

What needs to change in your life to fill in the blank with Christ?

**Philippians 1:29** (NIV) – “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him.”

Why is suffering a benefit granted by God?

How does this relate to Paul's joy in difficult circumstances?

What does this tell you about the nature of the Christian life?

## Sermon Content Questions

In the sermon, John indicated three things we learn from Paul about suffering.

1. Suffering is NOT a reason to fear.
2. Suffering is a way for us to grow personally.
3. Suffering is a way for others to grow.

**Christian Maturity** – to live your life for others; taking risks and choosing to suffer so that others will know Christ.

**Philippians 1:27 (TM) – “Live in such a way that you are a credit to the Message of Christ.”**

Where are you choosing to put yourself in situations for the benefit of others; so they will see Christ?

Have you ever suffered in a way that benefited others? How?

Did the fact that your suffering benefited others change your view/attitude toward the suffering?

Are there current circumstances in your life that you wish you could change so that you or someone you love would not have to suffer?

How might God use these circumstances to help you grow?

How might God use this to help others grow in their faith?

## Application

John invited/exhorted us to live for others this week by reaching out to someone who is suffering. Consider who you know at work or school or in your neighborhood that is suffering?

1. Tell them you are praying for them.
2. Ask them to come to church with you.

Have you had a chance to do this yet? How did it go?

Discuss why we tend to feel some fear about reaching out in this way. What are these fears and how can we overcome them.

## Prayer

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Pray for those who are suffering through difficult circumstances?

(Please remember to keep the details of confidential circumstances to yourself.)

## Remember

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**Live in such a way that you are a credit to the Message of Christ.**

(Philippians 1:27, The Message)