

Philippians Sermon Series: An Exploration of Christian Joy

Sermon-based Small Group Guide - Week of Sunday, February 3rd

Sermon Title: The Joy of the United Body of Christ Scripture Texts: Philippians 2:1-2

Welcome

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

Discussion

Story Questions

John began the sermon this week describing a Saturday morning men's group he belonged to before coming to Spokane. He highlighted the variety that existed within this group. Take some time to discover the variety within your group by having each person answer one or all of the following questions:

For groups that know each other well.

1. Name a musical artist you like.
2. What is a hobby you have thought about learning?
3. What is a job you had in the past that your group might not know about?
4. Describe the context for your first experiences of faith (a church or family religious affiliation, a person who exhibited faith to you, etc.).

For groups that don't know each other well.

1. What is your favorite style of music?
2. What hobbies do you enjoy?
3. What is your current occupation or one you've had in the past?
4. What is your faith background?
(i.e. Is this the first church you've experienced? When you were a child was there someone who took you to Sunday School? Is Presbyterian all you know or have you had a variety of denominational experiences?)

Scripture Exploration (Philippians 2:1-2)

If you have any *encouragement* from being united with Christ,
if any comfort from his love,
if any fellowship with the Spirit,
if any tenderness and compassion,
then make my *joy* complete
by being like-minded,
having the same love,
being one in spirit and purpose.

Unity

What are 3 characteristics of unity? What are 4 motives for living in unity?

What gives you a sense of unity at FPC?

In what ways is the variety within your group (and our church) a benefit and/or a challenge to this call to unity? (The topics of Spiritual Gifts and our function within Body of Christ might come up here. It is a significant topic so talk about it some now and encourage the members of your group to explore it more at another time. See page 3.)

Joy

What makes Paul's joy complete?

Do these things bring you joy? How?

Encouragement

This passage says, "**If** you have any encouragement . . ."

Just think about it: Are you finding encouragement in Christ? (Give a moment of silence, then read on . . .)

In the sermon, John referred to Matthew 11:28-30. Here, Jesus promises encouragement: “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Take two or three minutes for each person to share and be prayed for:

What is weighing on your heart today? Is there some way your group can help with this situation? Sharing your burdens with your group is a way of letting Jesus lift them from your shoulders.

Giving encouragement to one another frees us to be encouragers beyond ourselves!

Sermon Content Questions

In the sermon, John described a cold winter in Spokane several years ago when he had to coax his VW Rabbit to start. He would speak words of encouragement to the car urging the engine to fire. John equated this illustration with the way Paul coaxes the Philippians church to come to life through the encouraging words in these verses. Then he spoke words of encouragement to us:

We are an incredibly gifted church.

We are not here for ourselves. We are here to share love and joy and a sense of family with others.

What does John mean by saying that we are an incredibly gifted church?

Do you feel gifted? What gifts do you have to give?

In what ways is sharing your gifts easy or challenging for you?

Are you more compelled to give to those within the church or those outside the church?

Have you experienced your unique gifts coming together with the unique gifts of others in the church so that God was able to do something greater than the sum of the parts?

(If you didn't discuss the topics of Spiritual Gifts and our function within the Body of Christ previously when talking about unity and variety you might want to bring it up now. It is a significant topic so talk about it some now and encourage the members of your group to explore it more at another time. See page 3.)

Application

Last week John invited/exhorted us to live for others by reaching out to someone who is suffering. This week and 2 weeks ago the scripture emphasized encouragement. Consider who you know at work or school or in your neighborhood that is struggling. How can you encourage them? John gave us 2 suggestions:

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

We've also talked about writing letters of encouragement or taking someone out to coffee.

Have you had a chance to do any of these things yet? How did it go?

Considering your individual gifts or your combined giftedness as a group, what else might you do to give joy and encouragement to someone outside your group? (If you need suggestions for outreach opportunities, please contact Brenda at x220.)

✎ Who will you encourage this week? ✎
What gifts will you use?

Prayer

Pray for our church. That God will continue to unify us in Christ, using our giftedness to bring encouragement, joy and love to those who do not know Him.

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others,
faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.”

1 Peter 4:10

Spiritual Gifts and Our Function within the Body of Christ

We are a gifted church!

We are a church full of variety!

We are a church called to unity in Christ!

We exist as a church so others will know Christ!

What does this all mean?

What does it have to do with me?

**“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others,
faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”**

1 Peter 4:10

“Before I made you in your mother’s womb, I chose you.
Before you were born, I set you apart for a special work.”

Jeremiah 1:5 (NCV)

“so in Christ we who are many from one body,
and each member belongs to all the others.”

Romans 12:5

Are the members of your group familiar with Spiritual Gifts?

Is there anyone who’d like to find out more about their special purpose as a member of the body of Christ?

1. Here are some scriptures to read at home:

1 Corinthians 12:11-30 - One body, many parts

1 Thess. 5:19-21

1 Peter 4:7-11

Matthew 25:14-30 - Parable of the talents

Lists of Spiritual Gifts: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-30; Ephesians 4:11

2. There are some resources on this topic in our church library.

3. Brenda Norton has additional resources and would like to talk with anyone wanting to explore more.
Contact her at 747-1058 x220.

Factors in using your gifts so others can know Christ:

Spiritual Gifts – Personality – Talents - Weakness and Strengths – Experiences – Passion – Calling

How does this all come together for you?