



REDEMPTION

MAKING MUCH OF JESUS

Philippians 4:2-9

Attitude of Gratitude

11/23/2020 - 11/29/2020

MAIN POINT

As Christians, we are to rejoice in the Lord in all circumstances and dwell on only the things that honor Him.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is one instance in the last week when you felt a sense of conflict? What is your gut reaction when conflicts arise? Why?

Paul exhorted the Philippian believers to maintain their commitment to Christ (Phil. 4:1). Then he turned to what perhaps was a primary concern of his letter: a disagreement between two women in the church that threatened to become divisive. Paul urged them to settle their differences and asked an unidentified church member to help.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 4:2-3.

How did Paul advise the Philippians to deal with conflict and disagreement? Why is dealing with it necessary?

What are the implications of Paul's advice for us today in our conflict situations?

In 4:7 and 4:9, Paul mentioned God's promise of peace for His children. What impact does a relational conflict, like the one mentioned in these verses, have on your pursuit of peace?

How does a disagreement between brothers and sisters in Christ affect the church as a whole?

When we experience conflict with other believers, we need to recall our common bond in the Lord and depend on that relationship to help us find agreement. When disagreements remain unresolved, believers become distracted and divert resources and energy away from honoring God and doing His work. Paul contrasted the issues of conflict with the encouragement to pursue a series of characteristics that are essential to Christian living, all of which build to his promise of peace.

| HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7.

What disciplines does Paul challenge the Philippian Christians to pursue in this set of verses? Which do you think you need to pursue the most? The least?

What does it mean to “rejoice” in the Lord (v. 4)? What is the distinction between joy and happiness?

How do you rejoice in the Lord always?

Paul’s exhortation that his friends rejoice in the Lord always emphasized that in all their circumstances, they were to celebrate being held securely in God’s grace. Their union with Christ enabled them to rejoice even in difficult and threatening situations.

On what are we focusing when we are grumbling or anxious? What does Paul say to do to relieve worry or stress?

How can praising God and choosing to be thankful help with worry?

Worry is a major part of every person’s life. Whether a problem is big or small, it’s easy to dwell on it until it begins to control us. Paul urges us to stop worrying. We should not worry about anything, but instead pray to the Lord with thankful hearts. We are to give Him our worry and allow the powerful peace of Christ to guard our hearts and minds.

| HAVE A FINAL VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9.

Why does it matter what we think about? How does what you think about affect how you feel? How does it affect your relationship with God?

According to verse 8, what kinds of things are we supposed to dwell on or think about?

How do you react to reading the eight virtues Paul urges us to practice? Which virtue(s) do you think would be most beneficial for you to dwell on? Why?

Verse 8 describes the kind of thoughts a believer in Christ should have. As Christians, we should be filling our minds with what is pleasing to the Lord. The world bombards us with ungodly messages. We must be willing and able to filter these messages and keep them from our thoughts. To dwell means to meditate or chew on something. It's important to keep the broken ideas of the world from becoming what we dwell on. The things we think most about easily translate into our words and actions.

What was the assurance Paul provided for the Philippian believers when they did what they learned (v. 9)?

As the believers at Philippi lifted their needs to God in thanksgiving, dwelt on everything that was noble and good, and acted on what they had received from Paul and seen in his example, the God of peace was with them. Earlier Paul said God's peace would guard them (v. 7). Now he said the God of peace Himself would be with them.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Which of these challenges do you find it most difficult to actually live out: living at peace with others, rejoicing in the Lord always, not worrying, or thinking most about what honors God? Why is that one the most difficult for you?

How have you experienced the peace that comes with loving God and living your life as an act of worship? What difference does God's peace make in your daily life?

From this study, what is one area of spiritual growth in which you want to see significant progress? What is your next step in that area?

How can you adjust your focus or schedule this week so that you can more consistently dwell on God?

PRAYER

Use Philippians 4:6 as a guide to close with prayer. Lead a time of reflective, silent prayer, divided up into the categories of prayer Paul mentioned—praise, petition, and thanksgiving.

COMMENTARY

PHILIPPIANS 4:2-9

Nothing more is known of Euodia and Syntyche than is stated in verse 2. Paul indicated that these women had labored with him in the cause of the gospel while he was in Philippi. The apostle also mentioned a man named Clement as one who had been his helper (v. 3). The word Paul used to describe their labor is translated contended, an athletic term used of those who participated in the games or contests. These women had engaged in teamwork with Paul for the sake of spreading the gospel. The book of life refers to the heavenly register of the names of the redeemed.

Rejoice in the Lord, Paul wrote (v. 4). Paul did not command his readers to be happy. People are happy when they consider the things that happen to them to be lucky or fortunate. Happiness, in other words, depends on outer circumstances. Instead of calling the Philippians to happiness, though, Paul called them to joy in the Lord. Whereas happiness flows from outer circumstances, joy comes from an inner conviction that God is working in our lives even in the worst circumstances and from our relationship with Jesus Christ. Paul's point is that in every circumstance we can rejoice in the Lord.

The term translated graciousness is a strong word (v. 5). The term conveys the idea of a patient individual who is able to submit to ill treatment by others without being overcome by a desire to strike back at the offending party. Only through a strong and vibrant trust in God when facing trouble could a person display such strength of character. The phrase translated the Lord is near could refer to the fact that the Lord is always with us spiritually as well as to the fact that the second coming of Christ is close at hand. Paul again gave a strong admonition when he wrote, "Don't worry about anything" (v. 6). The term translated worry means "to be torn apart." He instructed his readers to discard their worries and anxieties and encouraged them to make time for fervent prayer, which is the true antidote for anxiety and worry. We cannot fully comprehend the peace that God graciously bestows on all who seek Him through prayer in times of anxiety (v. 7). Such peace is not the absence of trouble but a state of well-being that comes from a right relationship with God.

Paul now challenged the Philippian believers to think about and put into practice the kinds of Christlike qualities they had heard about from him and had seen in him (v. 8). He assured the believers that the God of peace would be with them. The church was to make an environment of peace its goal, and God would rule in them. The apostle listed seven virtues that should characterize Christians. The moral excellence Paul referred to is not the excellence of mere human potential but Christian virtues. The seven virtues bring unity to the church and give to the world a good testimony.

As readers considered the precepts of the gospel Paul passed on to them, Paul also challenged them to consider the practice of the gospel they observed in his life (v. 9). The apostle modeled before them a selfless concern for others. He displayed how believers were to handle conflict and difficulties. He showed what a vibrant prayer life meant in his personal life. Finally, he promised them that by living such exemplary Christian lives, as he had, they could count on Paul's promise that the God of peace will be with you. This was not a vain promise, but the personal testimony of one who was experiencing the presence of the God of peace even as he was on trial for his life for the sake of the gospel.