



Rejoice. Always!

(Leaders and participants are encouraged to look up Bible passages for most effective study. Passages are printed below for ease in presentation. The sections entitled "IF TIME PERMITS" are available for additional background and/or personal study. They can also be made available for group study by copying the collected sections at the end of this Leader Guide and using each question at its place in the Guide below.

Discuss with a partner or your small group the similarities between “happiness” and joy.” **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group. The leader should start to begin discussion. Answers could include: happiness is an emotion that comes from things and events on earth; joy is a spiritual response that comes from knowing we belong to God and knowing Who He is.**

In this study, we look at Philippians 4:4-9 where we read in verse 4, *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.* We will explore the joy we all have *in the Lord* and how that joy affects our daily lives, our lives as we relate to one another, and our lives as we live in the world, but are not of the world.

Opening Prayer: Dear Lord, You are the real Source of our joy! We rejoice and thank You for giving Your Son Jesus to live a perfect life, suffer, die for our sins, and rise to life again. We rejoice in the gift of Your Spirit and the faith to believe in Jesus. We rejoice in the gifts of the Spirit, which allow us to rejoice in the Lord — even in our mundane and “so daily” lives. Bless our study of Your Word. In the name of Jesus we joyfully pray, Amen.

Rejoice.

Philippians is the letter Paul wrote to the Christians in the Roman colony of Philippi. In **Acts 16:6-40** Paul is visiting Philippi and helping to establish the church there. Paul uses the words “rejoice” and “joy” in his epistle at least 16 times, and Philippians is often referred to as the “Epistle of Joy.” Read **Philippians 4:4-9**. Mark the passage as it will be referred to several times within the study. **Perhaps read in several different translations/paraphrases. Two examples included below.** The first section of verse 4 reminds us to ... *rejoice in the Lord* (emphasis added). In verses 5-7, how does Paul specifically see that rejoicing *in the Lord* being lived out in the daily life of a Christian? _____
We rejoice by being reasonable (“gentleness” NIV), not being anxious (“worrying” MSG), pray to God with thanksgiving for all we need, God’s peace is at the center of our lives — we can’t even understand it!

Philippians 4:4-9: ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:4-9 New International Version (NIV): ⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:4-9 The Message (MSG): ⁴⁻⁵ Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, *revel* in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you’re on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute! ⁶⁻⁷ Don’t fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God’s wholeness, everything coming together for good,

will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. ⁸⁻⁹ Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies.

Read 1 Samuel 1:25-28; 2:1-2. What was Hannah's situation? _____ **The child, Samuel, she had longed for had finally been given to her, but after three years, she then gave him back to the Lord to serve Eli, the priest.** Would you have rejoiced? Why or why not? _____ **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

1 Samuel 1:25-28; 2:1-2: ²⁵ Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. ²⁶ And she said, "Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the Lord. ²⁷ For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition that I made to him. ²⁸ Therefore I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he lives, he is lent to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord there. ¹And Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in the Lord. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation. ²"There is none holy like the Lord: there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.

Read the following Bible passages and identify the reason for joy in each.

Nehemiah 12:27, 43 _____ **The wall at Jerusalem had been rebuilt against great opposition and the Israelites rejoiced.**

Nehemiah 12:27, 43: ²⁷ And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites in all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with gladness, with thanksgivings and with singing, with cymbals, harps, and lyres. ⁴³ And they offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

Psalms 5:11 _____ **God is our refuge; He protects us.**

Psalms 5:11: ¹¹ But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.

Joel 2:21 _____ **The Lord has done great things!**

Joel 2:21: ²¹ "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things!"

Habakkuk 3:17-18 _____ **He is our salvation – even in the midst of trials.**

Habakkuk 3:17-18: ¹⁷ Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

Zechariah 9:9 _____ **The righteous Savior comes to save.**

Zechariah 9:9 ⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Philippians 1:18 _____ **Christ is proclaimed.**

Philippians 1:18: ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

1 Peter 1:8-9 _____ **We rejoice in the gift of faith in Jesus Christ and the salvation He gives.**

1 Peter 1:8-9: ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

IF TIME PERMITS: Paul encourages the Philippi Christians (and all of us) to rejoice *in the Lord*. This Lord is our Triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Look up the following verses: identify and rejoice at what our Lord does for us. **Even though this includes many Bible verses, encourage participants to take turns reading and identifying what the Lord does for them.**

Genesis 1:1; Psalm 31:15, 118:1, 145:15-16; Matthew 10:29-30

Genesis 1:1: ¹In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. **Creator**

Psalm 31:15: My times are in your hand; rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors! **Protection**

Psalm 118:1: Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever! **Steadfast love**

Psalm 145:15-16: ¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.

¹⁶ You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing. **Food and clothing, house and home, all that I need to support my life; He sustains His creation (seasons, rain, sun, etc.)**

Matthew 10:29-30: ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. **He cares enough – loves me so much – to even know the number of hairs on my head!**

Isaiah 53:4-5; John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 3:8

Isaiah 53:4-5: ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions: he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. **Righteous Jesus, died on the cross for our sins.**

John 3:16-17: ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. **He saved us – by his resurrection believers, too, have eternal life.**

1 Corinthians 15:55-57: ⁵⁵ "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. **He saves us from death.**

2 Corinthians 5:21: ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. **He saves us from our sin.**

1 John 3:8: ⁸ Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. **He saves us from the devil.**

1 Peter 2:24: ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. **He makes us righteous by His blood.**

Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 3:4-7

Acts 1:8: ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." **The Spirit gives us power to live as children of God and to be His witnesses.**

1 Corinthians 11:23-26: ²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. **The Spirit works in the Lord's Supper and keeps us in the faith; we are assured of God's forgiveness in Christ Jesus.**

1 Thessalonians 2:13: ¹³ And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers. **The Spirit works faith through His Word.**

Titus 3:4-7: ⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. **The Spirit makes us God's own in Baptism – we die to sin and are clothed in the righteous robes of the Lamb.**

IF TIME PERMITS: In Acts 16:11-40 we find Paul visiting Philippi and helping to establish the church there. Read this account and discuss the relationships Paul forged with the Christians there.

Lydia and the jailer at Philippi and his entire household were good founding members of this congregation; the church at Philippi appears to be a strong and healthy one, even though the Roman magistrates originally opposed Paul and Silas and jailed them.

Acts 16:11-40: ¹¹ So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. ¹⁶ As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." ¹⁸ And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. ¹⁹ But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. ²⁰ And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. ²¹ They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." ²² The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. ²⁴ Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the

prisoners were listening to them, ²⁶ and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's bonds were unfastened. ²⁷ When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." ²⁹ And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" ³¹ And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family. ³⁴ Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God. ³⁵ But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." ³⁶ And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace." ³⁷ But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out." ³⁸ The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. ³⁹ So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

Faith Talk: Read **Philippians 4:11-13**. Would Paul say that our circumstances dictate our joy? Why or why not? _____ **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Philippians 4:11-13: ¹¹ Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹² I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Always!

We might be tempted to question Paul's use of the word "always." We might even reason, "Sure, Paul, you can say that, but you have to know that there are times and trials in my life when I don't *feel* like rejoicing." Read **Philippians 1:12-14, 29-30**. What is Paul experiencing as he writes this epistle? _____

He is under house arrest in Rome.

Philippians 1:12-14, 29-30: ¹² I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

IF TIME PERMITS: What other hardships had Paul experienced? See **2 Corinthians 11:23-28**.

He was imprisoned, flogged, exposed to death, whipped, beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, and moved constantly. In constant danger from within and without, from fellow Jews and Gentiles, and from false believers. Gone without sleep, been hungry and thirsty, and have been under pressure for all the churches (stress, anxiety).

2 Corinthians 11:23-28: ²³ Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

In **Philippians 1:21**, Paul declares: *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*. What relationship is most important for the Christian's joy — even when enduring hardship and trial? _____ **Our faith-relationship with our Triune God — our Savior and Lord.** How does the Spirit nourish our relationship with Christ and keep us in the faith? _____ **Through the Word of God and the Sacraments.**

Paul continues with practical advice to live a joyful life. Read **Philippians 4:8-9**. See also **Philippians 1:27-28** and **2:14-18**. What does he advise? _____ **Daily keep your mind on the things of God – all the "whatever's"; live a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ, stand firm in one spirit; don't grumble or**

dispute, shine as lights in the world, surround yourself with those who share the faith. In **Philippians 3:14-17**, what does Paul additionally encourage? _____ **Imitate fellow believers who set an example for us – mentors.**

Philippians 4:8-9: ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 1:27-28: ²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

Philippians 2:14-18: ¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Philippians 3:14-17: ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only let us hold true to what we have attained. ¹⁷ Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

Faith Talk: Reread **Philippians 3:17** (see above). Who would you identify in your life as an example of faith to follow and imitate? _____ What have you learned from him or her? _____ **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

In **Philippians 3:14** (see above), we read: *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* As we live our daily lives, how can we be joyful regardless of our circumstances? _____ **Joy comes from our relationship with Jesus — our Rock and salvation — our Source of joy, not from what is happening around us.**

Faith Talk: Why is it important to know that our joy is not dependent on our feelings or circumstances? Discuss with a partner or the small group. **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Answers should include the fact that our feelings vary from day to day and circumstances change, often from bad to worse. However, Christian joy comes from our unchanging and loving God.**

Faith Talk: Toward the end of the book of Zephaniah, God promises through His prophet in 3:17 that Israel will be restored and forgiven: *The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.* Discuss what it means that God saves, rejoices over His children, and exults over us with loud singing. How does that make you feel? _____ Why do the words *he will quiet you by his love* remind you of **Philippians 4:7?** _____ **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share.**

Philippians 4:7: ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Faith Walk:

1. Thank God for sending His Son to be your Savior from sin, death, and the devil, and, for giving you the faith through His Spirit to believe in this Good News.
2. Pray that the Spirit gives you an opportunity to share the Good News about Jesus in your daily circumstances with someone who needs to hear.
3. Ask God to give you His peace — even in the midst of uncertainty or trial.
4. Thank God for a special mentor in the faith that you have had.
5. Sing a joyful song to the Lord at the top of your voice. Rejoice in the Lord – always!

Closing: Pray, sing, or listen to “Rejoice, O Pilgrim Throng” (*LSB* #813; *LW* #455) or “Joy to the World” (*LW* #53; *TLH* #87).

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Rejoice.

If time permits: Paul encourages the Philippi Christians (and all of us) to rejoice *in the Lord*. This Lord is our Triune God — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. Look up the following verses: identify and rejoice at what our Lord does for us.

Genesis 1:1; Psalm 31:15, 118:1, 145:15-16; Matthew 10:29-30

Isaiah 53:4-5; John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 3:8 Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 3:4-7

If time permits: In **Acts 16:11-40** is we find the account of Paul visiting Philippi and helping to establish the church there. Read this account and discuss the relationships Paul forged with the Christians there.

Always!

If time permits: What other hardships had Paul experienced? See **2 Corinthians 11:23-28**.