

+ PHILIPPIANS: LEARNING HOW TO THINK LIKE A CHRISTIAN +

1.1-11; 4.4-9 — Learning how to discern what really matters (cont.)

[Picking up from where we stopped: Paul's thanksgiving and prayer for the Philippians (1.3-11).]

+ *How do I determine what really matters in life? What are the things that really matter in the various parts of my life (job, relationships, leisure, etc.) — actually, practically?*
— *If someone else looked at my life, what would they say really matters to me?*

TURNING THE HEART AND MIND TOWARDS WHAT IS EXCELLENT

4.4-7: Two Anchoring Habits that turn us towards God: rejoicing and praying

1. Christian rejoicing flows from faith: its source is the Holy Spirit, not circumstance (1 Thess 1.6; 2 Cor 6.10); joy is an abiding, deep quality of life that the Holy Spirit works to form in us.
— Joy runs throughout the letter. Why be joyful? Because of this promise: “The Lord is near.”
2. Turning to God in prayer rather than the self in worry: learning faith-anchored stability in an unstable world. Paul's alternative to worrying, which controls our minds, is not to suppress it or wave it away; rather, he calls for us to acknowledge our needs to God and so entrust it to him.
— Faith places our hope in God who is not bound by our circumstances. His peace, which transcends all *understanding* but “will guard your *hearts* and *your minds* in Christ Jesus.”
— To have our thoughts and hearts formed by and trusting in Christ will move us in different patterns of thought/action: the joy and prayer that flow from love.

+ *How can habits of rejoicing and prayer help to renew our loves and desires, so that we set our minds on “the things that really matter”?*
+ *How might rejoicing and prayer be made into daily habits?*

4.8-9: What we are to set our minds on: what is excellent

— Seems to be a new thought, but continues the cognitive emphasis of 4.6.
— Consider: what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy.
— But Paul doesn't define any of these terms, which were extremely common in Greco-Roman philosophy. So, how do we know what is true or lovely?
— There is a circular logic here: you set your mind on what you love, and what you set your mind on shapes what you love. The Gospel interrupts the circle to renew it.
— The teaching and example of Paul: both point to Christ. “Practice these things.”
— Love leads us to consider what is truly lovely...

+ *How do we define ideas like truth, purity, honor, loveliness, excellence, and so forth?*
+ *How can these ideas be redefined in Christ?*