

DISCOVERING JOY – Members Copy

Session 1: A Miraculous Life

What miraculous work is God doing in your life?

Key passage: *"And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."* (Philippians 1:6, ESV)

A. Scripture Readings: Acts 16, Philippians 1:1-11

B. Main point

The real miracle is the ongoing work God is doing in your life

It's easy to read about the founding of the Philippian church in Acts 16 and marvel at the miracles that God was doing in the lives of those in Philippi, particularly the story of how the slave girl is delivered and how the jail is broken open by an earthquake, which led to the salvation of the jailer. Indeed, we tend to marvel at miracles that we hear about in the news or over the pulpit. But we often forget about the real miraculous work that God is doing in all of our lives on a daily basis, the fruits of which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

After reading the passages, do you think that Lydia, the slave girl and the jailer changed overnight to become saints? Probably not. I imagine the Lydia the rich businesswoman would have still struggled with pride and having to deal with non-professional people from other walks of life. I imagine the slave girl would have had issues with trust and self-worth that would take a long time to work through. And I imagine that the jailer would have had some rough edges and an abrasive personality that would need to be tempered over time.

We should take time to marvel at the miraculous work that God is doing in all our lives. What a joy it is that Christ is shaping and moulding us even right now as we discuss this topic. This is probably one of the reasons Paul can go through all his suffering and persecution and still find joy, because he knows that the real miracle of transformation is still being lived out in his own life.

C. Discussion Questions

1. How did you come to accept Christ into your life? (Optional: you can also talk about how the Home Group started, and how each person came to the home group)

2. Read Acts 16 (specifically Acts 16:11-15, Acts 16:16-18, Acts 16:25-34). How were Lydia, the slave girl and the jailer ministered to and saved? How was Joy discovered or what gave them Joy?

3. In the introduction to Philippians, Paul is addressing these three (and others) as he writes to the church. What does he mean when he says: *"And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ"* (1:6)?

4. What is the miraculous work that God is doing in your life? How does that bring you joy?

D. Application and prayer

Pray with the group. Spend time praying for those who really need a touch of God's power or miracle to resolve a situation they are struggling with at the moment. Encourage one another with the promise that God will not stop working in your life just as Paul promised the Philippians (1:6).

E. Looking Forward

Next session we look at key to eternal joy as we study Philippians 1:12-25 with Ps. Roland Seow.

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

If we allow Him to, God will do a miraculous work in our lives over time, transforming us and subsequently also those who interact with us.

DISCOVERING JOY – Members Copy

Session 2: The Key to Eternal Joy

For me to live is Christ

Key passage: *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20, NKJV)*

A. Scripture passage: Philippians 1:12-25 (NKJV)

*“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defence of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. **For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.** But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labour; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith”*

B. Main Point

"For Me to Live is Christ" – All in for Christ

Paul discovered the key to meaningful and real living - it is not in things or lifestyle but in a vibrant relationship with the person of Jesus Christ and serving His purpose. Paul discovered that this is what life is all about. Paul could have had a comfortable life on earth or better still in heaven but he chose to suffer persecution and tribulation for the sake of the church and the advancement of the gospel. His main motivation and delight in life is to see Christ honoured in everything he does.

What a man of God! What a sold-out servant and prisoner of the Lord. No wonder Paul was so mightily used and blessed with an abundance of revelation and anointing from God. We often want what the apostle Paul had but we're not willing to follow his path or be prepared to pay the price for it.

Most of us want the best of both worlds but end up not really enjoying anything. We can't straddle the fence and expect a rich spiritual life without full commitment to Christ. It's like wanting to have a great relationship with your spouse but at the same time flirting with others. This doesn't mean we can't enjoy our life on earth. Jesus taught us to love our neighbour as ourselves. We don't need to be taught how to love ourselves. Paul's priority is not about self but about Christ and his kingdom. A self-seeking person will never find fulfilment because true fulfilment is found only in Christ.

It was the joy of seeing us redeemed from hell that enabled Jesus to endure the cross and finish His mission on earth. Jesus' and Paul's life on earth were fully lived out serving the purpose of God and not themselves. Paul in this passage gives us the key to eternal pure joy.

C. Discussion Questions

1. Read Philippians 1:12-18. How did God use Paul's "chains" to advance the gospel? Why was Paul not upset that people were preaching Christ out of envy and rivalry? How would you respond?

2. **What does the phrase “for me to live is Christ” mean? Take time in your group to discuss this in their own words without Christian “clichés”**

3. **In the video, Ps. Roland talks about the issue of wanting to have a great relationship with your spouse while at the same time flirting with others. There needs to be some exclusivity when it comes to our Joy in Christ. What does that entail for our lives?**

D. Application and Prayer

This week, take time to commune with Jesus individually and ask Him to be the centre of all you do and desire. Ask Him to help you see Him in everything you do, such as in your interaction with your boss, colleagues, friends and family members and even in your school or work projects. How can He guide you in your attitudes and conversation throughout the week?

“Dear Heavenly Father, please re-orientate my perspective on the various aspects of my life so that whatever comes from my heart comes from a genuine interaction and relationship with Jesus. Please change my lenses so that I can see Christ more clearly and love Him more dearly day by day. May Jim Elliot’s famous quote, ‘He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose’ ring louder and clearer in my mind each day, in Jesus’ Name. Amen” is a suggested prayer.

E. Looking Forward

Next session we look at the keys to pressing on in our walk with Christ, through studying the passage Philippians 3:12-16, led by our Founding Elder Peggy Ong.

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

“It does not matter how great the pressure is. What really matters is where the pressure lies -- whether it comes between you and God, or whether it presses you nearer His heart.”

James Hudson Taylor

DISCOVERING JOY – Members Copy

Session 3: Press On

Persevering – the Single-Minded Pursuit of Christ

Key passages:

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." (Hebrews 12:1-2, ESV)

"For me to live is Christ, to die is gain (Christ!)" (Philippians 1:21, ESV)

A. Scripture Reading: Philippians 3:12-16

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but **I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me**. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **I press on toward the goal** to win the prize for which God has called me **heavenward in Christ Jesus**. All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

B. Main point

Press On!

Paul was absolutely determined that by "*any means possible*" he will pursue Christ, following after Him in death (to self, whilst living) and in attaining resurrection (after his death) to 'gain Christ' fully. That was his life's single-minded goal! This explains clearly why Paul's main point of the passage (3:12-16) is to "*Press On!*"

Paul starts off in the passage by saying that he has yet to attain "*this*," referring to his life-goal of Christ Himself. Nevertheless, until he does (ultimately, upon his death) he will "**press on**" like any intense athletic racerunner – single-mindedly straining with every fibre of his body toward this ONE goal!

Paul writes "**press on**" twice in this passage:

- (i) Paul will press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of him (v 12).
Christ had taken the first step/initiative to take hold of Paul. Paul had not sought Christ; on the contrary he was persecuting Christ even as he persecuted His church (see Acts 9:4,5). Now, in turn, Paul will press on to take hold of 'that', the purpose for which Christ Jesus had apprehended Paul.
- (ii) Paul will press on towards the heavenward goal in Christ Jesus, for which God has called him (v 14).
Paul's life-goal is a "*heavenward*," not an earthly one. He looked forward to the city whose architect and builder is God (Heb 11:10). And he urges the people of God to "*seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God*" (Col 3:1).

All Christians who want to become mature or consider themselves mature are to join and imitate Paul in this, his single-minded and persevering mindset (3:17). I am sure it is a challenge to every one of us.

C. Discussion Questions

1. "Not that I have already obtained" says Paul. Why isn't everything completed and done when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour?

2. Do you know why Christ had saved you? What do you believe is the purpose of your life in Christ from that time till you die and meet Him face to face?

3. How does “Pressing On” help us to Discover Joy? What kinds of things can we do to “Press On”?

D. Application and prayer

See if you can memorise verse 12. " *Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*"

Reflect: As long as we live we have not achieved the things God has for us. Write down one thing that God is asking you to do, that requires you to press on to get it done.

In pairs, take turns to share and pray with the other person.

E. Looking Forward

Next session we will look at the keys to contentment with our Youth Pastor, Ruth Larion, as we study Phil 4:10-13.

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

At times, in the midst of life's struggles, we are all are tempted to give up or not care any more as it just gets 'too much'. Realise that that this time of difficulty is just for a season and open yourself to others you can share with share with who will pray for you and help you along the way. By doing so you will finish the race well. This is what living as a Household of Faith is all about.

DISCOVERING JOY – Members Copy

Session 4: Learned Contentment

Seeking our true identity

Key passage: *"Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content."* (Philippians 4:11, ESV)

A. Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:10-13

B. Main point

Contentment can be learned

The verse *"I can do all this through him who gives me strength"* (4:13), is often taken out of context to mean that Christ will give you the means to do things that would otherwise not be possible. While in a sense, that can be true, it does not necessarily mean that tomorrow you will wake up and win an Olympic gold medal, compose a symphony or start the next Google. Rather, Paul is referring to the verses immediately prior, where he speaks of being in need and being in plenty. He is saying that in any given life circumstance, Christ strengthens him to get through it. Not only to get through it, but to find contentment in the midst of those situations.

Paul had learnt to be content by focusing on what matters to God most. One of the key things to note is that Paul had to learn to be content, it wasn't something that happened to him in an instant. By adopting an eternal perspective the things of this world and the circumstances we find ourselves in simply pale in comparison. It didn't matter to Paul that he was in prison if it meant he was able to minister to his captors. It didn't matter that he faced an uncertain future as his security was founded in the salvation he had found in the Lord.

So how do we live our lives and in all circumstances learn to be content in the same way Paul has done? First, we need to understand that it is a process that will take a long time, but that by integrating things into our lives that teach us more about God and His perspective (prayer, meditating on the Word, and helping others) we can slowly begin to learn how to, at all times, we can be content.

C. Discussion Questions

1. How did Paul find contentment? (Or: How did Paul define success?)

2. How can we "learn" to be content in our own lives?

3. How do you balance contentment and ambition? Is Paul encouraging us to just settle down and not have any drive?

D. Application and prayer

Suggest that each person some time praying before God asking what they are pursuing to find contentment. Should any of these be let go of in order to spend the time and energy pursuing things that bring true contentment and are successes in God's eyes? If your way is not working, try another.

Ask for God's peace and strength to successfully navigate through whatever season you are in, "plenty or in want" and help you to pursue Christ. By doing so you will experience the source of true contentment and joy.

New Visitor/Non-Christian Take Home:

A Christian life is not always easy, but in all situations we can learn to be content by understanding the things that are important to God and focussing on them. As we do this we experience the joy and pleasure of God through the Holy Spirit.