

## THURSDAY DEVOTION - GATEKEEPERS WORKCAMP 2018

**Philippians 4:6-8: Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.**

We've probably all heard the phrase, "Garbage in, garbage out." You may be surprised to learn that the phrase was first used in reference to computers. In 1957, a newspaper article about US Army mathematicians and their work with early computers explained that, since computers cannot think for themselves, we can only expect good, reliable results if we put in good, reliable data; and the same is true in reverse: Garbage in, garbage out.

Paul's words to the Philippian Church tell us that the same is true for followers of Jesus: What we put in will influence us, inside and out. Paul has spent this entire letter telling the Philippians how happy he is that they are living out their faith well and in ways that are surely pleasing to God. He is proud of them and wants them to continue to do well. So, he leaves them with this reminder: The things with which we fill our minds will influence the way we think and act, so we should focus on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, and worthy of praise.

We have spent this week thinking about change: changes that happen in us when we become followers of Jesus, and changes that happen in our community when we live out our faith and cooperate with our neighbors. While we usually think about change as being a good thing, it can be hard even when it is ultimately positive or for the best. But it's important that we guard what we allow into our hearts and minds so that we continue to grow and mature and change in the right direction.

Paul tells the church not to worry and offers them a blessing of God's peace, and then he follows those words with a good reminder for us all: When it comes it comes to our life of faith—Indeed for all of life—when good things go in, good and positive changes are more likely to happen in and around us.

\*Give examples of the kinds true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, and praiseworthy things Paul might have been talking about.

\*Why is it important for us as citizens of our community and as followers of Jesus to fill our lives with these kinds of good things?

\*How do Paul's words apply to our community? How do our actions and attitudes (whether positive or negative) influence how we see ourselves and our community as well as how others see it?

\*Have each person on your crew name at least one positive characteristic, resource, or attribute in Rocky Mount. After each person has named something, discuss how the attitude and image of our community would change if we all decided to think about *these* things instead of focusing on the negative. Some examples to get your started:

\*In 2014, *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* published a list of the most charitable cities, per capita, in NC. Rocky Mount was #1 on that list. \*Rocky Mount is seeing tremendous revitalization of downtown and historic districts, including Rocky Mount Mills, the Douglas Block, the Beal Street development, Villa Place neighborhood, etc.

\*People come from all over NC to play baseball and soccer at the Rocky Mount Sports Complex and to visit the Imperial Centre Children's Museum and Art Gallery. \*Cummings Planetarium at the Imperial Centre is the only fully digital planetarium in Eastern NC. \*Rocky Mount has numerous beautiful parks: Sunset Park (including one of the largest dog parks in NC), Battle Park, Stith Talbert Park, City Lake, and 40 other city parks)

Say a prayer of thanksgiving for all the positive things that are happening in our community and for the opportunity you have this week to be a part of making positive changes for our neighbors. Ask God to give you eyes to see the good in the people and places around you, as well as in yourself, and to open your heart to reach out to people across our community with generosity and kindness. (Ask someone to close in prayer)