



Rejoice!

Philippians 4:1-9

In his letter to the Christians in Philippi, Paul expresses his love for them, his longing to be with them, and the joy he experiences because of the work God is doing in them (1:4, 8). He stresses the importance of unity, including “standing firm in the one Spirit” (1:27; 2:2).

Stand Firm as One

Read Philippians 4:1-3. Euodia and Syntyche are two women in the Philippian church who are obviously having a disagreement about something.¹ Their disagreement is apparently disturbing the unity of the church. So Paul pleads with them to “be of the same mind in the Lord” (4:2, *NIV*) or “agree in the Lord” (4:2, *ESV*).

1. What (and who) can help them “agree in the Lord?” (1:9-11; 2:1-5; 3:15-16; 4:3) What (and who) can help *us* “agree in the Lord?”²



Rejoice in the Lord

Read Philippians 4:4-7. In verses 4-6, Paul gives three commands: 1) rejoice in the Lord always; 2) let your gentleness³ be evident to all; and 3) do not be anxious about anything.

2. Paul says, “Rejoice in the Lord *always*.” Do you think this is possible? Why or why not?⁴
3. Paul says, “Do not be anxious (do not worry) about anything.” What should we do instead of worrying? (4:6)



“The way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything.”⁵

¹ We don’t know what they are disagreeing about, but Paul believes they can resolve their disagreement and “agree in the Lord.” Paul appreciates these women, who have ‘contended (strived, worked)’ together with Paul and others in the proclamation of the gospel (4:3; *cp.* 1:27).

² Some answers are found in earlier verses. We can be helped through prayers for knowledge and insight (through God’s word and the Spirit’s guidance) so we can discern what really matters (1:9-10). We can be helped by the right attitude. We should seek to be ‘like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind, [doing] nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit [but rather] in humility [valuing] others above [ourselves]’ (2:2-3). We can be encouraged by the example of others (like Paul) who keep first things first. We need to put into practice the truth we have already attained and agreed upon, trusting that God will reveal the things we need to know for unity (3:15-16). We can be helped by the counsel and encouragement of others, like Paul’s ‘true companion’ (4:3).

³ ‘gentleness’ (*epieikes*) – humble, patient forbearance; reasonableness

⁴ Questions 2, 5 and 6 were adapted from the workbook *Discipleship Explored: International Student Edition* [based on Philippians] (Epsom, England: The Good Book Company, 2009). See www.christianityexplored.org. Christian joy is based in our relationship with God. We can ‘rejoice always’ through trusting in God (*Romans 15:13*), abiding in Christ (*John 15:5, 9-11*), the indwelling Holy Spirit (*1 Thess. 1:6, Gal. 5:22*), Christ’s victory over evil and death (*John 16:22*), and realization that our salvation is being worked out even in times of trouble and pain (*James 1:2*).

⁵ D.A. Carson, *Basics for Believers: An Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996).

Paul uses three different words for prayer⁶ to emphasize the importance of prayer. He also says our prayers should be made “with thanksgiving” (4:6).

4. How does “praying with thanksgiving” help us avoid worry?⁷

📖 “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 *Thessalonians* 5:16-18, *NIV*).

By following Paul’s instructions, “the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard [our] hearts and [our] minds in Christ Jesus” (*Philippians* 4:7, *NIV*)

Think about Such Things

5. Read Philippians 4:8-9. What should we spend our time thinking about?⁸ Make a list.



6. Write down the opposites of the qualities listed in verse 8. If we spend our time thinking about these things instead of the things Paul says, how will it affect us?⁹
7. In what ways can we apply the instructions of verse 8 to our lives? Be practical.

When we think about “such things” in light of the Truth, along with Biblical teaching and godly example, it should affect our behavior (4:9a). And when we do these things, “the God of peace will be with [us].”(4:9). The peace of God (4:7) comes with the God of peace.

Reflection & Application

- Do you know the peace of God? Do you know the joy of the Lord? To have His peace and His joy, we need a relationship with Him through faith. Do you need to trust in Jesus?
- Brothers and sisters, are you rejoicing, praying with thanksgiving, and “thinking about such things?” Or are you discouraged, worried, and/or thinking about the wrong things? Review this passage and, by the grace of God, make specific commitments to “put it into practice.”

⁶ These three words are *proseuchē* (‘prayer,’ a general word for prayer), *deēsei* (‘petition,’ supplication, entreaty, request), and *aitēmata* (‘requests,’ particular request, similar to ‘petition’).

⁷ Instead of despairing and worrying, Christians should be praying with thanksgiving, and trusting God. Whatever activity (*Colossians* 3:17) and whatever circumstances (1 *Thess.* 5:16-18), trust and thanksgiving should be present in the Christian’s life. This is possible through faith in Jesus Christ, in whom ‘every spiritual blessing’ is found (*Ephesians* 1:3) and through whom we know the Creator and Source of every good thing. Since relationship with God is more important than earthly circumstances, the Christian can ‘give thanks in all circumstances.’

⁸ The point is not ‘the power of positive thinking’ but the benefits of focusing on the great truths & qualities of God.

⁹ Our minds are filled with the things we watch, read, do and listen to, including TV, the Internet, magazines, books, computer games, music and entertainment, etc. (*Discipleship Explored: International Student Edition*).