

**Humble and Hungry**  
**Week 6: Gratitude and Celebration**  
**Philippians 4:4-13**

PSA: Scam emails “from” me and how to spot them. [\(Images\)](#)

Attacks like these are on the rise. I read a few months ago that Amazon has close to 1 Billion...with a B...1 Billion cyber-attacks each day. 1 Billion times a day, Amazon has to protect its network from hackers and thieves. People who try to break through their barriers to lie and steal and destroy.

And every day, you and I face a similar onslaught of attacks. And it's not just from people trying to steal our identity or get us to send gift cards to them, it's from our greater enemy who wants to infect our hearts and minds with lies...lies about ourselves, lies about God. He wants to destroy our relationships and steal our joy. And we may not get a billion of these attacks each day, but sometimes, I know, it can feel super overwhelming.

Last week, Maggie did an *incredible* job teaching us how to be Battle Ready. How to put on the spiritual armor of God and how prayer, even down to our posture, is our strongest defense against the enemy's attacks. In a way, we're going to continue that theme today. I kind of see these weeks as almost being a Part 1 and Part 2 of the same sermon.

Because, yes, prayer is our greatest defense against the enemy's attack, but prayer is ALSO our best offense. Through prayer, we can actively fight against AND drive out the attacks of Satan in our hearts and minds. Through prayer, we can reclaim territory the enemy has stolen.

And even though we are talking about things that are happening in the unseen realm, it doesn't make them less real. These are real issues we face and real battles we fight, so we want to equip you with real weapons and tools to use in the fight.

I think that's what we need more of, but it's also what we want. A few weeks ago, we did the ChurchPulse Assessment to gauge where we are spiritually and how we're doing as a church to help you grow in your faith. We had about 1,000 people take it and one of the results that came from it is that this is a growth area for us. [\(Show image\)](#)

There were a few questions about prayer and the summary said, “High neutrality suggests mixed feelings on prayer habits.” I pulled one of the questions...“Our church helps me develop habits of prayer that better connect me with God.” It was one of our lowest scores.

And we've been planning this series since the Fall, but these results emphasize why this series matters and why we want to make it super practical. We want to give you tools you can use to develop habits of prayer that better connect you with God. Not so we can see some metric move, but so all of us can move closer to the Lord through prayer.

(Cards, pass baskets, missed a week.)

As we continue today, our main idea is this: **Gratitude and celebration reorient our hearts from what we feel to Who we know.** Say that with me...

Let's look at our text. Paul is writing to this church in Philippi that he helped get started. At one point, while he was there, he found himself in prison because of his ministry. But that didn't stop them from worshiping, and while they were singing and praying one night, God used an earthquake to set them free from prison and bring their guard to faith.

And now, years later, Paul is sitting in another prison for his ministry, and he writes a letter back to this church he loves so much. And it's not filled with complaints about how hard he has it or how everyone is out to get him. Instead, it's a letter that is characterized by joy. And he encourages the Philippian church, AND US, to keep practicing gratitude and celebration.

Let's look at it together...(READ Phil. 4:4-9 twice)

Did anything stand out to you? Is there a word or phrase you found yourself lingering on? For me, it's always been the word "peace." Paul uses it twice in these verses. It's a word that means rest or tranquility. It's a peace of mind. One definition is a "sense of divine favor." It's that feeling you get that it's going to be okay, even when things don't seem okay.

And this peace is something we can receive, but it's also Someone we can experience. Paul says in verse 7 that **The peace of God guards us.** It defends us and stands against attacks from our enemy to protect our hearts and minds. But, this peace that Paul is talking about is even better than that! In verse 9, we see that **The God of peace guides us.** God's peace doesn't just defend us, it goes before us. It leads us on a counter attack, heading off the enemy's attack.

Paul had this kind of peace in his life, which is why he's able to write, *from prison*, a letter defined by JOY to a church that remembers him praising God with earth-shaking gratitude and celebration while *in prison!*

How did he have that kind of peace? Not only that, but, **How can WE experience God's peace that guards and guides us?** How can we withstand the enemy's barrage of attacks and fight the battles in our mind against worry and fear and anxiety? Simply put, **By practicing gratitude and celebration.**

And that seems like such an inadequate answer, doesn't it? But Paul says later, in verse 11, "I have **learned** to be content whatever the circumstances." He had to learn how to live with peace through all things. It didn't come naturally to him, just like it doesn't come naturally to us. It was something he learned in the classroom of all the pain and trials he went through while following Jesus.

And what he learned is that gratitude and celebration are disciplines that pave the way for God's peace to guard us and guide us and it's because **Gratitude and Celebration reorient our hearts from what we feel to Who we know.**

Sometimes what we feel is all we know and our circumstances give us this kind of *temporary amnesia*, making us forget what is true about God. They blind us from seeing anything good around us. And eventually, that starts to poison our attitude and actions.

It reminds me of a sports reporter in Iowa who was called in one morning to cover a blizzard. Poor guy couldn't find anything good in his situation and it definitely affected his attitude. Check out this clip...(Video)

We've all been there, right? Some of us as recently as just a couple of weeks ago. We can't find anything good in our circumstances. Compare that to a church sign I saw while driving to Bedford last month...(Picture)

So, how can we go from this...(Photo 1)...to this...(Photo 2)? Do we just ignore the situations we're in. Minimize them? Pretend like everything's fine and put on a good face? Do we just fake being happy or peaceful in the midst of trials and pain until we actually get there? That's not the solution Paul gives us. Go back to our text.

Vs. 5 – Paul reminds us that the Lord is near. That's why we can rejoice in whatever comes our way. We don't rejoice **for** it, but we can rejoice **in** it because the Lord is near. He's in it with us. He's close to the brokenhearted. And there's a peace that comes from knowing we're not alone or abandoned to our pain.

Vs. 6 – Paul tells us that when we feel anxious to pray with thanksgiving. Pray prayers of gratitude and celebration. God had revealed to Paul what modern psychology is just figuring out...**Anxiety and gratitude cannot occupy the same space in our minds.** Science is discovering what Paul learned nearly 2,000 years ago, it is psychologically impossible for anxiety and gratitude to be in the same room together. They don't get along, so whenever one is in the room, the other has to leave.

I think it's because celebration and gratitude shift our focus from what is wrong in our lives to what is true and right about God. And it's not about denying the hardships we face. And I know first-hand that it's not the only solution to anxiety and depression that many of us are faithfully walking through in life.

But when we practice celebration and gratitude, we rejoice in the Lord who is greater than anything we face in this life. And as we zoom in and focus on God's goodness, we begin to reorient our mind on the things that are good and right and pure and lovely in our lives. That's when the peace of God guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

But listen, when we take that next step and move from just thinking about what is true and right and noble and good to actually living it out, putting them into practice, that is when the God of peace guides us and gives us the strength we need for any situation we might face.

So, how can we practice this kind of gratitude and celebration in prayer? Go ahead and pull out your card.

### 1) Start every prayer with gratitude.

- “God, thank you...” and just linger there until something comes. Might be quick, might be a little bit of silence. It’s a slow, sometimes painful, process of reorienting our hearts from what we feel to WHO we know.
- Make it a habit: Before asking God for anything, thank Him for something.

### 2) Reframe your hardship through celebration.

- Reframing your situation isn’t about looking at life through rose-colored lenses. It’s not about pretending your pain isn’t real or slapping a spiritual platitude onto awful situations. Life brings real suffering, and faith doesn’t require us to just ignore that.
- Reframing isn’t about denying your reality, it’s about choosing what you’re going to focus on within it. Paul’s wisdom for us is to Find something true, noble, or praiseworthy in your situation and dwell on it.
- It’s asking, “Where is God’s goodness still present? Where is His faithfulness still holding me together?” It’s choosing to rejoice in all things, not because everything is good, but because God is still good.

### 3) Pray for God to change you, not just your circumstances.

- Yes, pray for solutions. Pray for God to change your situation or someone in it. But pray for peace and for God to change YOU, not just your circumstances.
- Matt Nussbaum pointed out this week that Paul never asked people to pray for his release from prison. Instead, he wanted them to pray that he’d be a witness in the midst of his trials. That the Gospel would advance because of his chains.
- Pray for God to change you first. To give you His peace that will guard and guide you through all things. Choose to fix your eyes on what is good, even when life is hard.

Time to put it into practice. Can probably all pray through all 3, but I wonder if there’s just one you need to focus on for the next few moments...

Open space for prayer

## Closing

I'm recording a podcast series right now that we're going to release starting in April, and in one of the episodes, Claire Roth says, this life, and all of its pain and suffering and death and cancer and miscarriages and divorce...this life and the hardships we face in it, it's the short part. Eternity, what awaits us on the other side, that's the long part!

Practicing celebration and gratitude through prayer is not about ignoring or minimizing what can sometimes feel heavy and painful in our life. It's a faithful recognition that God is with us through all things, He is good in all things, and, in the end, He wins. He gets the final word. And so, practicing celebration and gratitude through prayer is really just about seeing our circumstances in this life through the lenses of eternity.

And so, today, we can rejoice, not **for** everything or **because** of everything, we can rejoice **in** everything because we know that one day, Jesus will return or call us home and He will bring all things under His rule and reign. And there will be no more death or sickness or pain. He will transform our bodies and we will live perfect, free, and forever.

## Invitation

But the good news for us today is that we don't have to wait until then because we can experience *here and now* the peace of God that guards us and the God of peace that guides us.

If you're ready to find that peace, it starts with a relationship with Jesus. It is HIS peace that gives this to us and brings us peace with God. That can start when you surrender your life to Him.

## Communion

And when life doesn't give us much to celebrate, all we have to do is remember Jesus and what He has done for us. The new life He gives us. Communion is a time to remember the cross, reflect on our lives, and mourn our sin.

But we often miss that communion is a celebration! It's a celebration of God's grace through Christ and a celebration that we are no longer bound by or to our sin! We've been set free to live a new life in the short part while the long part of eternity awaits!