

Summary

Perhaps the most important area for personal giving is not the stewardship of our money. Perhaps it is not the giving of ourselves in acts of service. It may be that the most important act of giving for a Christian is the giving of praise to God. The person who praises has found the secret of joy and peace. To “rejoice” is to have “joy again”.

Because we are designed to praise God, we are most blessed when we are fulfilling our chief end, to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. The Westminster divines were really right on this one: glorifying God and enjoying God are inextricably linked. This message is more than an invitation to positive thinking; it is an invitation to a radical, counter-cultural lifestyle that gives praise to God in every single circumstance. It is a message that explores the powerful dynamic of praise that releases the Christian into deepening experiences of heaven on earth.

Getting to Know Each Other

1. What are some of the most joyful seasons of your life? What made it such a fulfilling time?

Getting Into the Bible

Background

The apostle Paul planted the church at the Roman colony known as Philippi during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:11-40). The famous conversions of Lydia and the Philippian Jailer were included in this season of ministry. Paul’s time there was short, but the gospel was firmly planted. We know he also visited Philippi briefly on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:6). Some ten years after planting the church Paul wrote the Philippian congregation from prison, most likely in Rome in the year A.D. 61.

That letter, known to us as *Philippians*, is one of Paul’s most glowing communications. His affection for this church (which became a supporter of Paul’s ministry) is woven throughout. Paul’s purpose for writing the letter meets us in every paragraph. Paul wanted the gospel to run deep in the shared life of the beloved Philippian church so that everything they did would put Jesus on display. Nowhere is this more easily seen than in the famous Christ hymn found in Phil. 2:1-11. Nevertheless, the theme of receiving and reflecting the gospel structures the entire book. In this sense the letter to the Philippians is an ideal study for discovering that it is truly more blessed to give than to receive – in every part of life!

Read Phil 4:4-9

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

2. Joy is a major theme in the book of Philippians. Use the prompts and scripture passages below to explore Paul’s theology of joy.
 - a. What are some of the different dimensions of the Christian experience of joy based on these passages?
 - b. How do you see the principle, “it is more blessed to give than receive,” reflected in these passages?

Read Phil. 1:12-18

¹² I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶ The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

Read Phil. 2:1-11

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

3. What do you think it means to rejoice in the Lord? How do these passages of scripture help you?

Read Phil. 4:10

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.

Read Phil. 4:4-5

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;

Read Phil. 3:8

⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

4. Paul says that we “worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh...” (Phil. 3:3). What does this mean for Christian worship? How does this change the way you come into a Sunday service?

Application

5. If it is more blessed to give than receive, is it ever right to receive? Is there a way to hold the two together? If so, how would you describe the relationship?

6. What do you find most attractive about Paul’s pursuit of joy in his relationship with the Philippians? What would you like to adopt into your life?

7. In his book *Best Year Ever*, Michael Hyatt writes that our beliefs will either hold us back or propel us forward. He describes “scarcity thinkers” as those whose beliefs are positioned to hold them back. “Abundance thinkers,” on the other hand, have a belief system that sets them up to move forward.¹

Where do you see Paul’s thinking in Philippians line up? What about your own underlying beliefs? How might God be calling you to a different system of thought?

SCARCITY THINKERS	ABUNDANCE THINKERS
1. Are entitled and fearful	1. Are thankful and confident
2. Believe there will never be enough	2. Believe there is always more where that came from
3. Are stingy with the knowledge, contacts, and compassion	3. Are happy to share their knowledge, contacts, and compassion with others
4. Assume they are the way they are	4. Assume they can learn, grow, and develop
5. Default to suspicion and aloofness	5. Default to trust and openness
6. Resent competition, believing it makes the pie smaller and them weaker	6. Welcome competition, believing it makes the pie bigger and them better
7. Are pessimistic about the future, believing that tough times are ahead	7. Are optimistic about the future, believing the best is yet to come
8. See challenges as obstacles	8. See challenges as opportunities
9. Think small and avoid risk	9. Think big and embrace risk

¹ Hyatt, Michael. *Your Best Year Ever*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2018. Pgs. 35-37.