

[This could also work as two separate studies.]

Philippians 4: 4-9 (ESV) – Rejoice in the Lord always

Main point: The Lord is at hand.

Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the church at Philippi, the ruins of which are now on the coast of Greece. When Paul wrote this letter, he was in a Roman prison for preaching the gospel. What do you think a prison in ancient Rome was like?? So his theme of rejoicing may strike you as somewhat surprising.

Focus of the study:

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.

Questions:

1. v. 4: *What are Paul's instructions to the Philippian people? (and how many times?)*
 - a. Rejoice, twice!
 - b. Have a patient ("reasonableness or gentleness") demeanor that others can see
 - c. Do not be anxious about anything. *What is included in "anything"?* Everything!
 - d. Pray about everything
2. *What is the reason Paul gives for doing all these things?*
 - a. v. 5: The Lord is at hand – what does that mean? (Take the hand of the person next to you; they are now "at hand," close to you; you can feel them, they can feel you)
3. *Is it always easy to rejoice? Why not?*
 - a. circumstances can be hard! sickness, frustration, confusion ...
 - b. *Now, where is Paul again?* in prison! yet he is rejoicing because the Lord is at hand, right with him, never leaving him.
4. *How can we keep from being anxious?*
 - a. pray with thanksgiving – talk to God – he knows our hearts, knows what we need, listens to us, provides for us
 - b. belief, understanding that he is always there for us
 - c. helping others and listening to others to encourage and support

5. v. 7: Paul says we will have “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.” *I wonder what you think “surpasses” means?*
 - a. far beyond any kind of other peace; as Jesus said, “I leave you *my* peace, not as the world gives...”
6. *When do you feel God’s peace? What keeps you from feeling God’s peace?*
7. *How can we pray for each other and our anxieties today?*

[could stop here]

8. Paul then gives the Philippians a list of things to think about: whatever is:
 - a. true
 - b. honorable
 - c. just
 - d. pure
 - e. lovely
 - f. commendable
 - g. excellent
 - h. praiseworthy[dig into each of those words; generate as many examples as possible for each of them]
9. *Let’s think about opposite of these words for a minute: what things are NOT true? NOT lovely? NOT excellent, etc.?*
10. *Why does it help to think about the things Paul lists? When you’re thinking about them, what are you not thinking about?*
 - a. anxiety, fears, ugly things
11. Let’s pray for each other today, that we would be able to focus on these things and know that God is with us always.
12. Ask for prayer requests for today.
13. Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
14. End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace