

TALKING POINTS

JOY - THROUGH PROBLEMS

LEARNING IN

The pursuit of happiness - it's something we all desire, yet we struggle to find it. Here is the lie we believe - life has to be perfect for us to be joyful. Philippians tells us happiness is external, based on our circumstances - but joy is internal and comes from having God's perspective.

Paul had gone through terrible times in the four years leading to writing his letter to the church at Philippi. He spent two years in prison on a trumped up charge, was put on a ship to Rome to stand trial, gets shipwrecked and stranded on an island, then bitten by poisonous snake. When he finally makes it to Rome he's chained to a soldier 24 hour a day.

Paul's circumstances were terrible, but joy was ever present in his letter to the church at Philippi. Paul trusted God's plan for his life no matter what he was going through, which allowed him to see *beyond* his circumstances and not be overcome by them. He saw God's *purpose* in his *problems*.

Read James 1:2-4, Romans 5:3-5

Can you share a time when God revealed His purpose to you in the midst of a problem?

LIVING IT OUT

If we're going to have Joy like Paul (which supersedes all our difficult circumstances), these are the four essentials for joyful living we need to adopt:

Have The Right Perspective - our problems are not as important as how we *look* at our problems. We need to recognize God has a *purpose* behind every one of our problems - we just need to take a "wider" view.

Read Philippians 1:12-14, Romans 8:28

Why is perspective so important when facing difficult times in our lives?

Have The Right Priority - to have lasting joy, the Gospel needs to be our number one priority. We need to focus on what *really matters* in order to weather every storm life brings.

Read Matthew 6:33, Colossians 3:1-4, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

What has the highest priority in your life?

Have The Power Of God In Your Life - prayer is an avenue to hope and joy. It's NOT about wins and losses, it's about our response to circumstances. It's about character, trust, intimacy - our relationship with God. Like Paul, we can handle anything if we depend on the Spirit of God and the prayers of others.

Read Philippians 1:19-20, 2 Timothy 1:7

How can you take full advantage of the power of God's spirit and the prayer of others to strengthen you in difficulty?

Have A Purpose Beyond Yourself - living for possessions, pleasure, position or prestige will fail you. The only way to live in joy is the "upside-down" model of the New Testament - **J**esus first, **O**thers second, **Y**ourself last.

Read Philippians 1:21, Ephesians 2:10

Why is joy the result when you learn to live for a greater purpose?