

## Joy To The World #6 - Find Joy Even When You Feel Stressed

- Well, Merry post-Christmas. How you feeling? Don't lie, you're in church. Don't lie. You're tired, right? I mean, what happens is before Christmas, it's like the flight to Vegas, woo-hoo! After Christmas, it's like the flight home from Vegas. It's like, woo-hoo! You're a little tired, a little broke. How many of you are still a little foggy eyed? It's just that time of year, we're in the middle of it. And in God's Providence, we're gonna talk in Philippians, find joy, even when you feel stressed. And for some of us, the stresses looking back at the previous year, we're on the precipice of the new year and saying, man, I regret that, that could've been different, I wish that went a different way, how am I gonna make sure that doesn't continue into the future? For some of us, the stress is right in the present. You work very hard to get Christmas up. Now you gotta take the tree down, you gotta take the decorations down, you gotta pay off the credit card debt for all the presents you bought, you gotta catch up on all your work, you gotta head back in to the office. And here it begins for some of us, the stress is really looking forward into the new year. Okay, what are my plans, decisions? What's my budget, what's my schedule, how am I gonna get organized, how am I gonna have a better year than I did last year? And all of this is just part of the dynamic of the society in which we live, where we live with a low level constant stress. And then we'll add to it things like holiday stress. And for some of you there's even crisis on top of it. And if you think about it, there is just a low level constant stress that you deal with, that we deal with, that is unique in the history of the world. Just traffic, driving. And just please help get the word out in Phoenix, the left lane is for the fast people. Just let 'em know, please. I'm doing all my public serving that I possibly can to notify people. Join me in that cause. But just driving in traffic is a situation and if you're new to the valley, there's no need to use your turn signal. It's an option package on most vehicles here. We really have no use of it. What we like to do is to go from the far left lane to the far right lane all at the same time. And so just the low level stress of driving. In addition, just think about technology. It actually increases our anxiety and stress 'cause you don't just come home from work, you take it home with you. And all of a sudden your privacy is constantly violated and your time is interrupted. And even just the modern creation of electricity, which is a benefit, but obviously too, it has its downside. Now you can stay up all night, you can work all night. You can push machines in a way you can't push humans and the machines are pushing humans beyond their limitations. If you've ever traveled to another country, you'll notice they just see time and stress and burden differently. We were recently in Mexico on a missions trip and everything sorta ran on what they called Mexican standard time. It's like, what time do we start? They're like, later? Okay, that's about as clear, great. Does anybody own a watch? I don't know if you guys heard of something called time. I was in India some years ago as well. And they said, will you preach in our church on Sunday? Sure, I come out, they take me there. It was under a tree. I was like, where's your church? They're like, there. I was like, that's a tree. They're like, yeah, we meet under the tree. Okay, when do we start? They said later. I was like, what do we do in the meantime? They said, we drink chai. Amazing chai cooked over a fire. So I'm just drinking chai forever and finally, I'm just like, when do we start? They say, we'll start when everyone gets here. I was like, yeah, we don't do that in America, otherwise we'd never have church. Just very different sense of urgency and

time. On top of the low-level stress, you add some of the holiday and seasonal stress and some of you have actually other crises, emergencies, job loss, health issue, whatever the case may be. And it all culminates to cause a very stressful time. And so one thing that happens is your body will give you clues when you're stressed. And just so you know, one of the great myths on stress, anxiety, worry, burden is that it's only bad things. It's good things and bad things, they both carry some weight of responsibility. So you can be like, hey, we're getting married. That's awesome and it's a big deal. We're having a child. And if you've ever seen a childbirth, you're they're like, we're having a child. I mean, it's an awesome blessing, but it's a big responsibility. So it's not just bad things, it's also good things that the body responds to with stress. And so your body will give you clues. It'll give you clues that you're experiencing stress. Let me ask you a couple of questions. What are you anxious about? What keeps you up at night? What's the thing on your mind as your head hits the pillow? What's the thing on your mind when your feet hit the floor in the morning? And what signs is your body giving you? I'll give you some examples that the doctors will tell us indicate escalated stress levels. Mood swings up and down. Exhausted, you're just exhausted. Nervous twitch. This can be a tremor, this can be a lip quiver, this can be a nervous eye twitch. This was my poker tell some years ago when I was really stressed. I'll never forget I was up teaching on a Sunday and I got a nervous eye twitch. And I had to tell everybody, I'm not flirting with you, I apparently need a day off. I'm not doing so good here. But I was a little self-conscious a little bit of a twitch. In addition, sometimes it's just flat out brain fog. How many of you, this is your situation? Literally, the other day, I was standing somewhere and I was going in the house to do something else. I took a step and I stopped. One of the kids was like, what are you doing? I was like, I forgot, I don't know. Like from here to here, that was too much for me. My brain glitched. My brain was like, yeah, we can't do all of that. We're done. It went on vacation without me. Sometimes people get canker sores, weight gain, or weight loss. Panic moments where you just feel overwhelmed and don't know what to do. Fantasies about dying, running away, or, if you're a Christian, the rapture. You're gonna read all those weird end times books. Jesus, can I go now, please? It's just trying to escape the whole mess of life. Sometimes it's bad sleep patterns. You can't fall asleep or you are asleep and then you wake up and you can't get back to sleep. This can include high blood pressure, self-medicating drugs, alcohol, food, shopping, gambling, just general grumpiness. Aggressive driving. I was thinking about that driving in today, aggressively. Maybe I'm stressed. You've seen those people, they just ride your bumper. It's like, hey, we don't have a relationship. We don't need to be this close. That's aggressive driving. And also heart problems and/or stomach problems. So what happens is that stress comes into the mind and then it manifests itself in the body and your body gives you some indicators. And you're gonna respond one of four ways. Fight. Some of you, that's it, I'm not gonna lose, I'm gonna fight, I'm gonna hold my ground. You can just tell sometimes with people, they literally purse their lips, they get the crazy eyes, their voice escalates, and they're gonna fight. Others of you are flight. You're like, I'm out, good luck. I'm not talking to you, I'm not returning your email, I'm changing my phone number, I'm entering the witness protection program, I'm done with you. Fight, flight, fright. Some people just get panicked. They don't know what to do, they can't make a decision, they're just overwhelmed. Well, if I do this, this will happen. If I do, they just feel paralyzed and stuck. The fourth option is faith and it's inviting the Lord into the circumstances so that even if things don't change

externally, God can change you internally. That's exactly what we're gonna learn today from the Apostle Paul is we're in Philippians and he has already established, the theme of the book is joy. He mentions joy and rejoicing some 19 times in 104 verses. And this is sort of, it's almost like a concert where everything builds up to the grand finale and this would be the great closing song. And he's gonna talk about rejoicing. And if you're new, the context is that he is in jail and he is 800 miles away from the people that he is writing the letter to. So they're in a city called Philippi, he's in a city called Rome. He is their pastor. He can't be with them because he's been arrested. He is now in prison. He is chained to a Roman soldier guard. He's not sure if he's gonna live or die or have freedom ever again. He has no wife, no kids. Even if he gets released, there's nobody to go home to 'cause this guy doesn't have a home. And what he's talking about is joy. Not in the circumstances, but in the Lord, sometimes in spite of the circumstances. And you can imagine the level of stress and anxiety that he is carrying. Will I be convicted? Will I be acquitted? Will I be free? Will I be incarcerated? Will I live out my days or will I die in a Roman jail cell? Will my reputation, that's been publicly trashed because of my arrest and the opportunity of my critics, will it ever be restored? I mean, he's got a lot that he could be stressed about and somehow he has a supernatural peace. So he's gonna start in Philippians chapter three. He's gonna start talking big picture. Because what can happen is sometimes in the middle of life and circumstances, people, problems, what happens is those become so close that we lose perspective. You become so fixated and focused on those people or those problems that you lose perspective. So he's gonna pull back and then he's going to focus in. And he starts brothers, so Christians are to be family, join in imitating me. This is a big statement. There's a leadership lesson here for business, for family, for ministry. How many of you your parents would tell you do as I say, not as I do? Another way of saying that is hypocrisy. That's what that means. And what your parents would say is I don't do this, but you should. What does Paul say? You should do it because that's what I do. He's living an exemplary life. He's not perfect. But the whole purpose and goal is to tell whomever is following you, and you all have spheres of leadership and influence, you should do this, this is what I do, this is good for you. Read your Bible, pray, walk with the Lord, participate in his family, whatever the case may be. What Paul is saying is, I'm not perfect, but I'm living in such a way that other people can follow my example. And we all need this. We all need somebody who's ahead of us to say, okay, I can learn from them and I can draft behind them. For many, and he's gonna compare and contrast believers and unbelievers, Christians and non-Christians, for many of whom I have often told you, and now tell you even with tears. So there are the words that Paul says, but here he reveals the heart behind it. If you have people that you know who don't know Jesus, it should be heartbreaking for you. When you think of them, it shouldn't be with cheerfulness but with sorrow, Paul says, tears in his eyes. When he's talking about people who don't know Jesus, there's a heartbreak for him. I need you to know that as Christians, this is the heart of God and this needs to be our heart. Our heart always needs to be that we are here, as a church, so that people who don't know Jesus can come to know Jesus and our hearts are broken and our tears are shed until they come to know the God who loves them, because we love them. Amen. And so you can get hard-hearted as a Christian after awhile, and seem to think, well, they don't know the Lord, they've made their choice, it is what it is. It's heartbreaking when someone doesn't know the Lord Jesus. And for those of us who know the Lord Jesus, we will just say to those of you

who do not, that we love you and there's a God who loves you. There's a God who seeks you. There's a God who can save you. There is a God who can forgive you and his name is Jesus. And until we met him, our life was not what it could or should've been. And once we have met him, we wouldn't trade him for anything. Amen. And his heart is broken, but here's what he says. They walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. They're against Jesus and Christianity. Their end is their destruction. This leads to death and hell. Their God is their belly. Their glory is their shame and their mind is on earthly things. They can't see God, they can't see heaven, they can't see the kingdom of God, they can't see the risen Jesus, they can't see the eternal state and fate. Ecclesiastes says, these are people who just only live under the sun. They don't see any God or hope above and beyond it. And he's going to compare and he's going to contrast that with the Christian. But our citizenship is in heaven and from it, we await a savior. Our big idea is we need Jesus. The whole planet needs Jesus. Every culture needs Jesus. Every race needs Jesus. Every nation needs Jesus. The election isn't gonna fix it. We need a second coming and a resurrection. Amen. All right, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body. Jesus died and rose sets the pattern and precedent. You will die and if you belong to him, he will resurrect you to be with him like him, for him forever, by the power, that's the power of the Holy Spirit, that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and I long for, my joy and my crown stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved, great, dear affection. What he's distinguishing here is residence and citizenship. Residence is where you live today. Citizenship is where you will live forever. And the question is, where does your ultimate loyalty and identity originate? In your residence or your citizenship? And what he says is for those who don't know the Lord Jesus, that ultimately they have no concept beyond their residence. All they think is that the world they live in is normal and natural. They don't know that there is another world that will overtake this world and that this world is sinful and fallen and that world is perfect. And he's already told them early on, the opening lines of the book, he says to the saints at Philippi, Philippi is the city that they live in. That's their residence. Some of you are from Glendale or Peoria or Anthem or Cave Creek or Phoenix or Scottsdale or Gilbert or Mesa, whatever the case may be. Wherever you live, that's your residence. But if you belong to Jesus Christ, that's not your citizenship. Your citizenship is in heaven. That one day the nation, the city that you are a part of will come to an end and all that will be is the kingdom of God. And so what he's telling us is to live for the long future, to look above circumstances, to look above culture, to look above how others live life, and to find Jesus the King, to live as a citizen of his kingdom, which you need to know is this, it's a counter-cultural way of life. People will say, well, you know, that's just what people do. Not God's people. We do money differently, we do sex differently, we do gender differently, we do family differently. We do things differently because this is our residence but it's not our citizenship. That our ultimate allegiance and loyalty is to our king and how we behave is predicated upon his kingdom and not our culture. And I say this a lot but he's sort of repeating it here. There's only two ways to live and heaven down or hell up. That's really the only two ways to live. And the world culture, it pulls itself up from hell, unless it meets Jesus who comes down from heaven. And what he's talking about here is for those who live hell up, they're enemies of Jesus. They're against Christ and Christianity. You need to know if you are a Christian and you are seeking to be faithful to God, you will meet resistance in this world. Jesus says woe to you when all men

speaking well of you. Here, Paul is writing from prison, not because he did something wrong, but because he did something right, he was telling people about Jesus. And if they are enemies of Jesus and you bring Jesus to them, they may treat you as an enemy and it's an opportunity for you to love them as Jesus has loved us. He says that their end is destruction. And so their thing works until it doesn't work and once it doesn't work, it doesn't work forever. People will often say, I wanna be on the right side of history. I could care less. I would rather be on the right side of eternity, that when all is said and done and we stand before the Lord Jesus, I don't want it to be destruction. He says, their God is their belly. What he's talking about here is if you don't know Jesus, you end up living solely for pleasure, whatever feels good. But when this occurs, it's short-term, decision-making. You live for pleasure. This can be food then you become unhealthy. This can be alcohol then you become addicted. This can be drugs and now all of a sudden you're cratering your whole life. This could be for sex and now you're promiscuous and out of control. If pleasure and the pursuit of pleasure is your God, meaning it's the organizing center and highest priority of your life, your life ends in destruction. We would call it addiction, but ultimately addiction issues are worship issues. That someone or something has taken God's place as the center of your life and the pursuit of pleasure is leading to nothing but pain. He says also that their glory is their shame. What he's talking about is if you don't know the Lord, Jesus, you will brag about things that you should apologize for. You will have parades for things that you should have funerals for. And we live in this world where people glory, and that means they take credit for, they boast about all the alcohol they drank and all the crimes they got away with and all the people they slept with and all the stuff they stole from their employer. And Paul's point is boy, once you meet Jesus, the things that you had as a glory, you now have as a shame. Saying, man, I can't believe I did that. What was I thinking? Gosh, I was so confused. How many of you, this is your testimony? Before you met Jesus, you're like okay, tell me about you. You're like I did this and I have this and I did this. And now you're like, oh my gosh. Yeah, that's why Jesus died. It was so bad, he had to hit reset on my existence because my thing wasn't a good thing. Their glory is their shame. And he also says that for those who don't know the Lord Jesus, their mind is simply blind to God and heaven. They just don't see Jesus. They don't think about the Bible. They don't consider eternity. They don't imagine a kingdom that never ends and a culture that comes down to overtake this world. If you're here, my question to you is, do you know Jesus? Do you love Jesus? Do you follow Jesus? Do you belong to Jesus? Have you given him your sin? Have you received him as your savior? If so, this may be your residence but it's not your citizenship. And what that means for the Christian, I like to say, this is the closest to hell that you will ever be. And ultimately all God has for you is good unto eternity. And so he contrasts that with those who live kingdom down and he says that they ultimately follow Jesus until they see Jesus and he says to look for people who are walking that same path and walk with them. This can be people who are ahead of you. They're like mentors, you learn from. These can be like brothers and sisters, people that are at the same kind of stage of the journey as you, walking with Jesus toward the heavenly home. This can be people who are some steps behind you and you're gonna love them and mentor them and invest in them and pray for them and encourage them. And what he's saying is that as we venture together through this world, we really need each other. Relationships are vital, critical, and important to the kingdom of God, which also means that relationships are for us, oftentimes the place of our

greatest stress. And that's gonna be his next point as he's dealing with this church conflict between two women. So the next question is which relationships are strained? He's saying our citizenship is in heaven. We're all going there together. And so what he's intimating is that we should learn to get along in the meantime. Two Christians are gonna be together forever so at some point you gotta straighten out whatever is amiss between the two of you. He says, I entreat Euodia, two ladies, and Syntyche. So there's two gals in the church and they have a disagreement, they have a conflict, they have a fight. There's no indication it's a sin. He doesn't name the sin. He doesn't say, Syntyche, when you posted on your Facebook wall about Euodia's bad breath at the greeting time at church, she was personally offended and they didn't need to take up a special offering for Altoids. It wasn't that big of a deal. You kind of overshot. It doesn't say that. The Bible here doesn't name the sin. It's not because God is a coward, but apparently this was a minor deal not a major deal. The whole book of Philippians never uses the word sin. It's not that they were perfect, but these were some godly people. But these two ladies are not getting along. We don't know whose fault it is. Maybe the gal who's named starts sin is responsible, I don't know. But he says, I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche. He's like I'm begging you and I'm begging you please to agree what? In the Lord. So when you have a conflict with someone, do you always agree in what was said or done? You ever had that? Like you said, you're like, I didn't say that. That's what I heard. Well, your ears are broke. How many of you... I didn't do that? You did do that. You do that all the time. I've never done that. We don't agree. There are many things times in a relationship that there is just a disagreement. You won't agree in what was said, you won't agree in what is done, you won't agree in who's responsible. You ever had that? Some of you who are married, this was your drive in. Welcome to healing. We're gonna talk about this. You're like, we don't agree. So what does that mean, we have no relationship? No, we both go to the Lord and we agree in the Lord. We agree in the Lord. And what that simply means is this, I'll let Jesus deal with you, you let Jesus deal with me. Let's love each other and not be Jesus for each other.

- Exactly.

- Okay. It goes on. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, this'll be the guy who's gonna be the mediator, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together. Are they good gals or bad gals? They're great gals. Paul's like she's awesome and she's awesome but together they're not awesome. This happens. If you've been in church for more than 15 minutes, you know exactly what this looks like. She's for Paul and Jesus, she's for Paul and Jesus, they're just against each other. It's now become a public enough issue that he has to address it in the church. Because what happens is if two people have a conflict, what do they do? They start the troop buildup. Let me tell you what she said or he said, let me tell you what she said or he said, and now people are divided. How many of you, don't raise your hand, but during the holidays, there's some conflict in your family system. Everybody's getting together. What kind of environment does that create? It's stressful. It's anxious, it's uncomfortable, it's awkward. You're like, I hope they don't blow up. Whatever you do, don't bring up the subject, whatever that subject might be. That's like a grenade with a pin pulled and we all keep our distance from that issue. But ultimately here, it has escalated to a point where the whole church

knows about it. So this letter would've been read on a Sunday and I'm guessing one gal was sitting over there in the back row and the other gal was sitting here in the front row. They're as far away from each other as possible. And the guy gets up. He's like, all right, ladies, all right, put your guns down. Find your white flag. I'm gonna put a mediator in the middle to reconcile the relationship. Sometimes you can work it out. Other times you're like, we're just stuck at an impasse. That's where you bring in a mediator. This can be a pastor, a godly counselor. This can be a godly person. It's never your family, just so you know. Somebody like I know, I called my mom. No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. That's hell up, that's not heaven down. Don't invite your family into your fight. Amen.

- Amen.

- Write that down, don't invite your family into your fight, invite wise counsel. And what here Paul is doing, he's not letting this woman or that woman decide who the mediator is. The leader is saying, this is the mediator, a neutral third party, to try and work out whatever difference there might be between these two ladies. Why does he include this here? Because all of his argument is driving forward to the next section of verses on stress, anxiety, and burden carrying. And let's be honest that relationships are some of the greatest burdens we carry and anxieties we have. They just are. Because you know what? You can control money, you can control time, you can't control people. Even if you're in a hard place, you can work money and time towards some favorable end but you can't control the decision-making of another human being and the relational strain you have with them. So where he's driving toward is how to deal with anxiety, worry, fear, burden, pressure. This scripture here, that we're gonna dig into now, is really where the whole book of Philippians has been driving. And he's gonna start with a theme, rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice. We'll unpack all of this momentarily. This is my wife's life verse. God gives her a verse most every year. And this is her life verse. For some of you, this would be a great verse to memorize or series of verses. For some of you, this should be your verse for next year. For some of you, it may be your life verse. What's interesting is well, he's gonna talk about rejoicing in the midst of anxiety. And there's an app called YouVersion. It's a great gift to the church. It's a Bible reading app. You can get Bible reading plans and devotionals, and I've loaded some content up there. And Bible teachers love it because it's a great platform to get our Bible teaching. But they just posted what the most popular, downloaded, searched for, tagged verse of 2019 is. Philippians 4. This year on planet earth, this scripture was pursued by more people than any other verse in the whole Bible. What does that mean? It must mean that there's a great need and they're seeking an answer to that great need. And it is when I'm anxious, how do I have joy? Because we all have anxiety and we find joy to be something that is difficult to obtain. Amen. So if this is you or your circumstances, don't feel bad. You're with the majority of people on planet earth if your anxiety tends to overcome your rejoicing. And here, Paul is gonna correct all of that for us. So he says rejoice in the Lord. What it doesn't say is rejoice in your circumstances. Paul is in prison. Paul is arrested. Paul is broke. Paul doesn't know what fate awaits him. He can't rejoice in his circumstances, but he can rejoice in the Lord. If you're new, God's disposition, his default is one of delight. That God has a cheerful God. That God is a happy God. That God is a pleasant God. There are occasions

where God has other, if I could use this human language, emotions, like grief or anger or sorrow. Those are intermittent and his joy is consistent. God was very happy before we sinned. God is very happy once Jesus comes back. In the middle, there are some stormy seas, to be sure, but God's default disposition is delight. That being said, we can always access the Lord's joy. Rejoicing in the Lord means literally going to the Lord to get your joy. You may not get it from your circumstances. You may not get it from your relationships. You may not get it from your health or wealth. But you can obtain joy in the Lord and that will help you to live a life, good or bad, weeping or rejoicing in the Lord. God is constantly joyful. There is an opportunity to access his joy. Rejoice in the Lord when?

- Always.

- Always. There are certain days, seasons, and circumstances that we all wanna say, this is such a big deal. It's bigger than my joy. It's not bigger than the joy of the Lord. He's not saying that what you're struggling with or suffering through or in strife regarding doesn't exist, isn't real, but that God's joy is bigger than whatever strife, struggle, or strain you are experiencing. That's exactly what he is saying. Paul here is not denying reality. He's not saying I love prison. Please feed me more gruel. When is the next beating? I can hardly wait. All right, that's his life and that's his lot in that moment. Instead, he is able to access joy in the Lord. This means that this kind of joy is only possible for those who belong to Jesus Christ. It's only possible if Jesus Christ is your Lord and then you can access his joy always. And let's just be honest, we've all got things that for us, if joy is like a bucket, these things sort of remove the bottom and our joy is just dropped to the ground. For some of you, it's financial, for some of you, it's relational, for some of you, it's vocational, for some of you, it's health. Whatever it is, you're like, I don't struggle with joy all the time but when that shows up, my joy is fleeting, Rejoice in the Lord always, always. And one of the lies that the enemy tells us and we tend to echo to ourself is joy is impossible under these circumstances for you. You are the exception to the rule. And let me tell you when life is hard, you need more joy because to go through hard seasons, sometimes God gets you around something, sometimes he takes you through it. But especially if he's gonna take you through it, you're going to need to be strong. It Says in Nehemiah 8:10, the joy of the Lord is your strength. The joy of the Lord will strengthen you so that you can go through whatever you need to go through. All right, so just because life is difficult doesn't mean you need joy. You actually need a deeper measure of joy so that you're strong enough to endure it. Rejoice in the Lord always. And some of you immediately will be like, I disagree. You don't understand. Let me tell you my terrible, tragic tale of life and all that I'm struggling with. It may be real. I love you, let me be sympathetic/empathetic, but he says it again, rejoice in the Lord always. Well, I'm not sure I agree with that. I'm sure I feel grumpy old man in Scottsdale, Arizona. I have my own... Okay, again, I will say. What? Rejoice. That's what he says. Like what does that mean in Greek? Stop being so grumpy. That's what that means in Greek. Rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about what? Anything. We've all got a category of anxiety that is more difficult and cumbersome for us. Some of you don't worry about money. Maybe you should. Some of you do worry about money. This is Grace and I, her gift is faith and my gift is freaking out. So financially, I'll be like, okay, I like keeping an eye on



everything and cashflow and run rate and she's like, well, I trust the Lord. I was like, I trust math. So she won't be freaking out about money when I might be freaking out about money. We've each got our category, we've each got our thing. Don't be anxious about anything, but do be sympathetic and empathetic with one another. Why do you struggle with that? I don't know. Why do you struggle with that? We've each got our area where our joy is tested and we have anxiety that is easier for us to default to, unless we fight that gravitational force. Don't be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Now, five things I wanna hit here. Number one, and this is what, what I want this to be is not just information but impartation. There are people that memorize this verse that don't experience this joy. Far more people have read this verse than experienced this joy. Information is great but ultimately impartation is needed. Unless this truth lives in you and you're able to live in the joy of the Lord, it may be something that is in your mind but it's not in your life and God wants more for you than that. So five things practically, I wanna share with you on this issue of finding joy, even when you feel stressed. Number one, make everyday thanksgiving day. About a month ago, we had Thanksgiving. The nation pauses and what do we do? We all pause to give thanks. What are you thankful for? Let me say for the Christian, this should be a discipline everyday, everyday. What does he say? It says it right here, with thanksgiving. He's saying everyday should be thanksgiving day. It doesn't mean that everything is good, but it means that there is always some way or means to rejoice in the Lord and to have thankfulness. Now how many of you are pessimists? You're a glass half empty. How many of you are optimists? Glass half full. How many of you, here's the difference, the optimist says, oh, my cup is half-filled with chocolate milk and I'm gonna drink it all. And the pessimist says, my glass is half-empty with antifreeze and I'm gonna drink it all. It's just that, how many of you are more the antifreeze people? How many of you? How many of you are more the chocolate milk people? You're like, God is good, tomorrow's gonna be amazing. I can't wait to get there. Some of you are like, no I've accepted puddle-glum into my heart. Eeyore is my personal saint, it'll never work. Okay, that's you. And what happens is for those of us who are Type A, for those of us who are driven, for those of us who are really organized, for those of us who are neatniks, there is an increased opportunity for stress and anxiety. The medical experts will say, if you're a Type A driven, organized person, you tend to have higher stress, and you tend to do it to yourself. How do I know? This is just my testimony. And what can happen is you think as soon as this is fixed, as soon as that is resolved, as soon as I get into that season, then I'll be happy. And it never happens. Instead, it's saying, okay, right now, what can I be thankful for? And this is a, this is a way for us to reframe circumstances. One of the craziest conversations I ever had, years ago a guy got hit by a car. I've been doing this job for a while so I got some good stories. Guy got hit by a car, that's not the good story, but he got hit by a car and I went to visit him at the hospital. And I'm thinking, oh my gosh, poor guy got hit by a car. I mean, he was gonna live but he was in pain. And I said, how are you doing? He's like, I'm doing great. Apparently the meds are great. I don't know why you're doing great. I said, what do you mean doing great? He said, I'm just so thankful. For what, bro? You got hit by a car. Like there are zero days that I think getting hit by a car is a good day. And he said, well, at least it wasn't a truck. I was like that's a super power you got there, sir. That's a different perspective. He was

like, 'cause if it was a truck, I'd probably be dead. It was just a car and I got clipped and I'm gonna be fine. So thank you, Jesus, it wasn't a truck. I was like, yeah, this guy knows some stuff I don't know. It's just, he found a way to be thankful and there's always a way to be thankful. Some of you, this is your natural disposition. If you're like me, you've gotta remind yourself to make every day thanksgiving day. Number two, make your will your rudder. When he says, let your reasonableness be known to everyone, what he's talking about here is reasonableness is a state of mind. Think of it in this way, your emotions are like a sail, your life is like a boat, your mind and will, that's your rudder. For those of you that have been sailing. What happens if the sail is filled with powerful wind and there is no rudder on the ship, what happens? Eventually, it veers off course, it capsizes, it crashes, it ends badly. People who are driven by their emotions are ultimately driven to destruction. And so your emotions, they're a powerful force. And when you're experiencing some level of stress or anxiety or pressure or resistance or burden or crisis, your emotions are gonna be stronger and more powerful. But it makes it more important than ever that your mind and your will serve as your rudder. Okay, this is what I'm feeling. How am I gonna respond? Where is this gonna drive me? Where is this gonna take me? What am I gonna do? And it says that this will guard your heart and mind. That's exactly what he's talking about. That you need your heart, your emotional life, your mind, your mental life, to be guided and guarded by God's reasonableness. And this is where some people, they make one of two errors. They take the sail down. You know what, I got emotional. I said and did some things and got off course, therefore, I'm gonna take the sail down. I'm just not gonna be emotional anymore. Which means you can't love, you can't rejoice, you can't be emotionally empathetic and present. Other people, they're like, well, I wanna be present, I wanna be passionate, I wanna live an exciting life, but there's no rudder. You need both. You need the passions of your emotions and you need the direction of your will. That's letting your reasonableness be known to everyone. And let me say this, sometimes we are unreasonable and we don't know it. We need people who love the Lord to tell us whether or not we're being reasonable. Sometimes, true or false when we're emotional, we're not reasonable. So it's asking godly people, am I being reasonable? Is this a rational response? And am I making good decisions? Am I processing wisely? That's what he means. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. Make your will your rudder, make your mind your rudder, and also invite other people in to examine your decision-making process. Number three, when you start to panic, stop to pray. What he says here is do not be anxious about anything, but everything by prayer. He says, when you're starting to feel panic, you need to stop to pray. Now some of you will say, I don't have time to pray. I don't have time to stop. I don't have time to process that. I don't have time to think about that. I'm way too busy. I got way too much going on. It's a crisis. What I would say is that's your first priority because you may be active but not productive. You may be doing a lot but not accomplishing a lot. When you're panicky, it's not that there's no reason to panic, but it is that the panic ultimately has to be settled through prayer. And this is where sometimes we will complain, we will vent, we will self-medicate, we do not meet with the Lord and we have to meet with the Lord. And what he says here is you can pray because the Lord is at hand. Let me say this, that Lord is the Lord Jesus. So let's just revisit the life of Jesus. Did Jesus have any stress? Oh yeah, yeah. Did Jesus ever sin? No. But Jesus did have stress. Therefore, having stress or anxiety is not necessarily a sin, it's an opportunity to worship or worry, that's what it is. It's an

opportunity to worship or worry. So Jesus, I mean, his adult life, three years of ministry, if you know the story, there are people who hate him and are always conspiring to destroy him. That's stressful. There are times that he has no money. He's homeless and hoping that people let him crash at their house. That's stressful. He doesn't have a wife or kids to comfort him or go home to or to distract him. That's stressful. He knows that one of the 12 that he has chosen to be his leadership team, his staff, has been plotting to destroy him and robbing him for the totality of their ministry. That's stressful. All of this culminates as Jesus is headed toward the cross. And at the last supper, where Jesus is having dinner with his disciples, Satan enters Judas Iscariot, his pretend friend and he leaves to go set in motion an execution and murder plot that he has been architecting for months and Jesus knows all of this. It's stressful. Jesus knows that coming very shortly, he is going to endure the most painful, arduous, wretched of deaths by crucifixion, it's execution, on a Roman cross in front of his mother. So it's the night before Jesus' death in our place for our sins. How is his sleep? There is no sleep. Jesus is up all night. He's stressed. Jesus asks his friends, pray for me. Please help carry this burden with me. How did they do? Just like your friends, they go to bed. So he wakes them up. Hey guys, I really need you to help me carry this burden. Would you pray? And they're like, nope and they go back to bed. Sometimes when you're suffering, you feel very, very lonely because you're carrying a burden that other people don't feel. Jesus was carrying a burden that even those who were with him and loved him, they weren't carrying that same level of burden. So what does Jesus do? Jesus does everything that is in Philippians 4. Everything here that Paul is teaching, I believe he learned from the example of Jesus. So what does Jesus do? He goes to prayer, he goes to prayer. And the Bible says that he's up all night in a garden called Gethsemane and he is praying to the father. Does he articulate his stress? He says, father, if there be any way, please take this cup from me. That cup is the cup of suffering. It's the cup of the wrath of God, that's what it is. He knows that when he goes to the cross, he will take your place, my place, our place. That he will suffer and die in our place for our sins. That his relationship with the father and the spirit would be, at least momentarily, severed and that he would take our place and endure the wrath of God for us. Stressful. II Corinthians 5:21, God made him who knew no sin to become sin. That's your sin and my sin and our sin. So that in him, we might become the righteousness of God. Knowing that this was on the horizon, the Bible says that as he was praying, Jesus was sweating like drops of blood. He felt it. His body gave him all of the signs of stress and distress, of anxiety and worry. And then he realizes that ultimately the father does love him and has a plan for him. And he comes to a settled, resolute conclusion that he is not going to go around it, he's going to go through it. Let me say, sometimes God will get you around it. If he doesn't get you around it, he'll get you through it. And if he doesn't get you through it, he'll take you home in it. To live as Christ to die as gain. Jesus then declares, not my will, but your will be done. He's living kingdom down, not culture up. He's not saying here's what I demand, he's saying, I'll do what you command. And he goes forward. And the Bible says in Hebrews 12, for the joy set before him, he endured the cross. That on the other side of the cross of Jesus, there was joy because the father was glorified, the wrath of God was satisfied, and sinners were saved. There's always a reason to rejoice. If Jesus, in the midst of anxiety, had joy set before him in enduring the wrath of God and going through it, then there is an opportunity for the children of God to follow in the example of Jesus. And I believe, so let me

say this, when he says the Lord is at hand, back to Philippians 4, which Lord? The Lord Jesus, the Lord Jesus. And this is what's extraordinary about the Christian faith, we have a God who got off his throne. He observed our anxiety and he came down to experience it. Therefore, we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with us, the Bible says. Jesus is like, I know what it's like to have someone you love betray you and abandon you. I know what it's like to have someone steal from you. I know what it's like to have someone lie about you. I know what it's like to have someone press false charges against you. I know what it's like when your friends fail you. I know what it's like when you can't pay your bills. I know what it's like when you're homeless. I know what it's like when you're dying. Jesus understands, Jesus gets it. Jesus gets into it with you and goes through it with you. The Lord is at hand. The Lord is at hand. This is amazing. This is the great opportunity of the Christian and no one else has this opportunity apart from Christ. Number four, when you fear what you don't want, figure out what you do want. Oftentimes our anxiety is two sides of one coin. I'm going to lose something I love or I will get something I hate. And oftentimes they're together. So I wanna be healthy and they said I've got cancer. I'm losing what I love and I'm gaining what I hate. This is where the anxiety rises. Some of the greatest anxiety that you will experience in life is around decision-making. There are some big decisions that we all have to make. Am I gonna get married? Are we gonna get divorced? Are we gonna buy the house? We gonna sell the house? Are we gonna take the job or are we gonna quit the job? Are we gonna have the baby or we're not gonna have a family? I mean, there's some big decisions. Am I gonna get the degree or not get the degree? Am I gonna walk with Jesus, not walk with Jesus? Massive life decisions that echo for generations. And oftentimes people experience the heightened state of anxiety around decision-making. And I believe that people are a product of their instruction and I believe that some people have only been told half of what the Bible has to say. And that is this, you just need to do the will of God. Do I believe that? I do, I want you to do the will of God. Much of the will of God can be found in the word of God. Sometimes the easiest way to find the will of God is to open the word of God. And if it's not there directly, it's there principally. There are other times, however, that the Lord doesn't speak to you. He doesn't say anything. You're like, Lord, what do you want me to do? Silence. Lord, just tell me, I'll do whatever you want. I just don't know what to do. Silence. Have you ever had that? Those are moments when the enemy creeps in and will tell people, God, doesn't love you, God has abandoned you, or worse still, there is no God. I believe that when God isn't speaking, it may be because he's listening. I'll give you an example from parenting as a dad. We got five kids. Sometimes, if it was specific, I would tell the kids what to do. Pick up your clothes, go to bed, no more Fortnite. How many of you are like, oh, that's a healing word? You will give specific instructions. Eat your dinner. Do your chores. Finish your homework. Get in the car. Stuff like that. Very specific instructions. I rarely gave directives to my children. I did. But as a father, I ask more questions than I give commands. And as they get older, let me just tell you a little parenting secret, you can control them less and so you need to inquire of them more. Amen. As soon as they're taller than you, they're not scared of the wooden spoon. I mean, it's just things transition. And so what I would do with the kids is most of the time I would ask them what they wanna do. Hey, what do you guys wanna have for dinner? Hey guys, what restaurant you wanna go to? Hey, what do you wanna do tonight? You guys wanna watch a movie? Go for a walk? You want to play games? What do you wanna do? Oh,

okay, you wanna play a game? What game do you wanna play? Okay, you wanna watch a movie? What movie do you wanna watch? Oh, we're going on vacation. What would you guys like to do for vacation? Now, as a parent, I still reserve the right to say no. Just because I'm asking doesn't mean I'm now staff and I work for you and you get to give me a job description. I'm still the sovereign dad, but I'm asking the question and I reserve the right to say yes, no, or later. Yes, we can watch a movie. No, we're not gonna do that. Later. One of my kids, when they were little, I said, hey, what would you like to do today? They said, drive your car. They're like four. I was like, later much later. I reserve the right to say no. I didn't hand them the keys and say, well, you know who am I to judge. Well, I'm their dad, that's my job is to judge that this is not a good idea. You are the children of God, God is the father. If he has something specific to tell you, he will tell you. And if he doesn't, it may be because he wants you to speak to him. Make whose requests known? Yours. Search your own heart. What do I want? Lord, what do I desire? Psalm, I think it's 37:11 says, delight yourself in the Lord and he'll give you the desires of your heart. If you love the Lord, if you're walking with the Lord, if you're in the scriptures and in the spirit, and you're surrounded with wise counsel, it is entirely likely that God's desires will be your desires. And when you tell God what you want, that's what God wanted but it was an opportunity for you to examine your heart. What do I want? Why do I want it? Do I believe it's a good enough thing that I'll actually articulate it to the Lord. Sometimes when we articulate our needs, we realize they're not healthy. Lord, please, oh, sorry. Yeah, that wasn't a good ask. This is where God doesn't wanna just command us like pets, he wants to raise us like kids. And so what do you want? When you know what you don't want and it causes anxiety, figure out what you do on and ask the Lord. Let your requests be known to God. Number five, you remove the spirit of fear by remembering the presence of God. That's what he says here. He says, the Lord is at hand. The Lord is at hand. He says, don't be anxious, the Lord is at hand. Rejoice instead of being anxious because the Lord is at hand. That means he is with you. He's right here. I've told you before, but I'll repeat it. The number one command in the Bible is fear not. Anywhere from 150 times, some commentators will say up to a few hundred times, the Bible says over and over fear not. Why? Fear is something that we all struggle with. Anxiety is something that we all wrestle with. It's not just a Christian problem, it's a human problem. And I looked up as many as I could find of these verses, I tried to find them all. Almost every time that it says fear not, be not afraid, do not be anxious, nearby it says in some form or fashion for I am with you, for I will never leave you nor forsake you, or that the Lord is present, or that the Lord is at hand. And what he's saying is when anxiety comes, anxiety, fear often comes with a spirit of fear. It's literally a demonic spirit that causes you to start to think absent of God's presence. There's no God over the circumstances, there's no God in the future. It becomes dark, it becomes apocalyptic. It becomes doomsday. And this is where we start to false prophesy in our own life. We predict a future that God hasn't prophesied but we are predicting doom. And when the spirit of fear comes, it seems rational and reasonable to us, but it's not. So I think it's in I John 4:10, he says that the Lord has not given us a spirit of fear. So when the fear comes and the spirit of fear comes with it, we then need to remember the presence of God. And it is the love of God and the presence of God that casts out the spirit fear. Here's the point, people who were afraid run from their problems. People who have faith run to the Lord. There's a big difference in just running from your troubles and running to the Lord. The spirit of fear just wants you to run, the

spirit of God wants you to run to him. If you will do that, it is the peace of God and the presence of God that'll guard, he says, your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. That's your positional status in the Lord. The word guard there, it literally is a military term. Your heart, that's your emotional life, your mind, that's your mental life. You need a soldier on guard to protect that, that's the Lord. He will guard your heart and your mind. And what it means is that ultimately, as you go through it, and I don't know what you're going through, I love you, or whatever you're facing in your present or fearing in your future, the Lord is at hand. And what that means is you don't go alone. I'll give you a kind of a illustration. Some years ago, when a crisis hit Haiti, I did some medical and food relief right after everything hit and government was nonfunctional. Literally their version of the White House was collapsed to the ground. They don't have a military or infrastructure. It was already the poorest nation in the Western hemisphere. The port, the dock sank, so you can't get relief supplies in. The airport was damaged. I mean, it was catastrophic in every way. We landed, got outside of the airstrip and had all these medical and food supplies for the crisis and it dawned on me, we're in serious danger. I mean, there there's no cops, there's no military, there's no infrastructure, there's no government, everybody is in crisis. There's looting, there's stealing, there's murdering, I mean, it's mayhem. I was there for, I don't know, maybe an hour and I heard a gunshot and I turned around, a teenage kid got shot and bled out in front of me in the street. I was like, okay, we are officially in a high stress environment. Came back a few hours later, the body was still there because there was no personnel to pick it up. Let me just tell you this, I was a wee bit anxious. I got Grace and five kids. I wanna help, but I wanna go home, eventually. And then what happened was some guy joined us. I'll name him Rambo. Rambo joined us. He pulls up in an armored vehicle. This guy, I'm telling you, if the end of the world comes, go to his house. He has got literally a gated walled compound filled with firearms. I mean, he has accepted Rambo in his heart, he's got secondary citizenship in Arizona. He has taken open carry to a whole 'nother level. And this guy, he is a security arms expert. He was like, I'll go out with you. You know what? It felt better, I'll just be honest with you. It just felt better. Armored car, Rambo, like, you know, we can do this now. Before it's me in a cab. I'm not feeling quite as confident, just to be honest with you. He goes with us. And honestly that night hit, we had nowhere to sleep. I was on a tile floor in his compound using my backpack as a pillow and I slept pretty good. That wouldn't have happened without his presence and the provision of his presence and those who and those were serving with him in this ministry. Here's what I'm telling you, the Lord is at hand. I'm not saying that that's not a problem, but I am saying you're not alone. I'm not saying that that situation isn't real or even really dangerous but I'm saying that the Lord and an angelic army goes with the children of God. The Lord is at hand. So what I wanna do is I wanna close with just one assignment I wanna give you. You need to schedule a meeting with God and you need to do this very thing. I don't want you to just be stressed, anxious people. I don't want you to live as those who don't know God. I don't want you to just be driven by crisis and emotion and circumstance and running from instead of running to. I don't want you to be self-medicating with caffeine and energy drinks and stress and carbohydrates and overextending your body. I want you to enjoy the peace that surpasses understanding. The crazy peace that only comes in the presence of God. And the reason I'm jealous for this for you is because this has been a real struggle for me, especially in earlier years of my life. I believe by God's grace progress has been made. I've had

two blow outs of my adrenal glands from living beyond the body's capacity. I've had two intestinal ulcers, this was in years past. And I lived in a fight or flight mode for many, many, many years and it wasn't a healthy place for me or my family. I knew Philippians 4, but I didn't do Philippians 4. It was information but not impartation. And then it was five years ago, we were in the worst season of our whole life as a family. It was a really difficult season for us. and I didn't know what to do. I literally felt overwhelmed, like it seemed like a set of lose-lose options. And so I scheduled a meeting with the Lord and this is what I want you to do. I literally put it on my calendar. Like, Lord, I need a meeting. And I know he's always ready, but I needed to get myself ready. So I fasted, I prayed. I asked Grace and some other friends, please be interceding for me. I put it on my schedule and then I started journaling out, okay, this is what I wanna ask the Lord, these are burdens I need to give to the Lord, these are fears I need to bring into the presence of the Lord, these are questions that I have. I just sort of put it all together. When the day came, I got up, got in the vehicle, went out to a solitude, quiet place. For me to clear my mind, I need to clear my physical space. I don't know if you're like that. It's hard for me to have an orderly life in a cluttered environment. So I needed to get out into God's creation. It was a sunny day. I went for a long walk and I'm just verbal processing. Okay, Lord, here's what I wanna to talk to you about. And here's what I'm thinking. And I'll be honest with you, I put my headphones in, so it looked like I was on a call so people didn't think I was crazy. But I'm walking around and I'm talking to the Lord. And then I found a picnic table at a park and I thought, okay, that's where I'm gonna sit. So I sat there, I pulled out my journal, my Bible. My phone was off, I didn't want to be disrupted or distracted. And I just started to pray, okay, Lord, I'm here for the meeting. Where do we begin? God spoke to me, Philippians 4, rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Don't be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God. And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. God spoke that scripture to me. I was like, okay, what am I thankful for? And I started a long period of time with thankfulness, reasons to rejoice. And then I brought to the Lord the things I was anxious about. I don't know what's gonna happen, Lord, for me and my family. And then I brought my request to the Lord. Lord, here's what I want. I wrote a couple of them down, this was all in my journal. I told him, I said, Lord, I want safety for my family. I want us to be surrounded with wise, godly, helpful people. I wanna be physically healthy in a sunny place. I want a place where the cost of living is decent for our big family. I want schools and colleges that our kids can attend and stay in. I wanna be part of a great church. I wanna be in a big city and I need to be near an airport. Some of you are like, that's weird. That's me, I'm weird so I agree. And those were my requests. And here we are. The Lord said, son, you can have that. And I didn't know at the time. This was the biggest series of decisions for my entire family and the legacy of our family. When you decide where you're gonna live, that decides where your kids will live. That decides probably who they're gonna marry and where your grandkids grow up. I didn't know that God had this building for us. I didn't know that God had you wonderful people to come together as a church family. I didn't know that my daughter would fall in love and get married this Friday. I didn't know any of that. I didn't know any of that. And God didn't get us around it, but he got us through it. And meeting with him was the key to everything. I'm jealous for you, I want that for you, 'cause I love you. Before you finish this year and start next year,

have that meeting. Let me pray for you. Father God, thank you. Thank you that you're a father who not only tells us what to do, but asks us what we wanna do. Thank you that you're that kind of relational, loving, not domineering, but leading father. Lord Jesus, thank you that you get it. You came to earth and you felt it and you were in it and you went through it and you're there with us, no matter what. And Holy Spirit, we invite you to bring the peace that surpasses understanding. The supernatural crazy joy in spite of circumstances, in the Lord Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.