

## Joy To The World #1 - Find Joy Even When You Are Lonely

- All right, Merry Christmas. We get to do one of my favorite things today, that's start a new book of the Bible. If you've got a Bible, go to Philippians. If you don't have a Bible, find a fake one on your phone, go to Philippians, it's gonna be great. We're gonna spend the holiday season looking at the book of Philippians and learning about the joy of the Lord. And so let me set up our time together in this simple observation, the US Declaration of Independence says this, and I quote; all men are created equal endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights and among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Did you catch it? Life, guaranteed. Liberty, guaranteed. Happiness, best of luck, that's what it's saying. What it's saying is that it is easier to guarantee life and liberty and happiness is something that is elusive. You are welcome to pursue it but people don't know how to find it. Amen. And what we live in is a joyless, cheerless, frustrated, angry world, amen. How many of you watch the news and you're like; there's no good news. That's why we open this book, this is the only place you'll find the good news about the joy of the Lord. But we live in a country that was founded as an experiment in the pursuit of happiness. And we now find ourselves in the holiday season where we hear these amazing historic songs like; 'Joy to the World' right, or how about this one; 'Oh Come All Ye Faithful,' joyful and triumphant, are you feeling it? Born this happy morn. Is it going good? You would think if we were in a country, you're like, what is their thing? Joy, what time of year is it? It's joy to the world time. It's happy morning time. Do you see that in America? Is that the predominant emotional disposition of the average American? You're like; wow, they're skipping and singing and laughing. No, they're weeping and crying and blogging. It's not going well. So here we are, headed into the holidays and it's supposed to be a season of joy, how's it going? Well, there was a poll that was released. Maybe this will sound familiar. 88% of people feel stressed during the holidays. How many of you are feeling it? Or we just had Thanksgiving, we're looking at Christmas in between, it's like a vice squeezing you for pain, amen. You get stressed. 56% of people bite their lip with their family during the holidays. Let's just be honest, this happened on Thursday, Amen. Because you got two options, you bite your lip with your family or you bite your family. Those are your only two options. How about this one? The top three topics avoided in conversation with family; politics. Imagine next year. Okay, politics. Personal matters. How are you doing? None of your business, all right. I'm your mom, I don't care. All right. Personal matters and religion. Here's what you can't talk about, anything that matters. So this is half our holiday conversation. Well, it's cold outside, yeah. And sometimes it's warm and sometimes it's in the middle. Yeah, it is. Good, see you next year aunt Sally, thanks for the talk. We don't really talk about anything. The average couple, how many of you are married? How many of you aren't even sitting with your spouse because it's that time of year again? The average couple has seven arguments during the holidays. How many of you are you like; Lord, could we please get down to that number? That'd be amazing, right? Well it's funny, unless it's you okay. All right, all right, I get it. The top five holiday arguments; where to go or not go, how much money to spend, what to do with family, who's gonna clean up and who's gonna cook. Those are the top five holiday arguments. 85% of people overeat during the holidays. How many of you weighed less last Sunday? Amen, let's just be honest. And if you weigh less

today than you did last, call 911 you have a medical emergency okay. And here's what happens, 42% of honest people. There's also dishonest people because we all unbutton our pants but 42% of people unbutton their pants after a holiday meal. The other 58% don't need to unbutton because the button just flies off all by itself. And just the gravitational force and the variables are too much for that little button. This tends not to be the most joyful season. But again, we live in a country, founded on joy. We're in a season that is the pursuit of joy. And one thing you will probably watch this year is that Peanut's special. And in that special, Linus steps forward and Linus reads Luke 2. I'll read it to you. It's a holiday classic. The angel said, fear not. Behold, I bring you good news. Here's what I need you to know. The world has bad news, the word has good news. I bring you good news, and who doesn't like good news? I bring you good news, of how much joy? Great joy! In the Greek, it literally is mega. Mega, if you're like a monster truck fan, like this is monster joy. This is mega joy. I bring you good news of mega joy that will be for all the people for unto you is born in this day in the city of David, a savior who is Christ the Lord, here's what he's saying. There's not joy in the world, there's joy in the Lord. and the Lord brings joy to the world. His name is Jesus. What this means is that Jesus and joy are together and you can't have one without the other. And that ultimately, if you're pursuing joy in the world, you will never find it. If you pursue joy in the Lord, you will be able to have joy no matter what is happening in the world. Because the joy is from the Lord and the joy doesn't come from the world, it comes to the world from the kingdom of God. It comes down with Jesus. What I wanna set before you and I'm really excited about this, is the theme of joy and we're gonna spend the holidays going through the book of Philippians. And I wanna set before you the joy of the Lord, which is your strength. And Philippians is God's guide to joy. Let me tell you a little bit about the church, a little bit about the book, just by way of preview. The church, you can find its founding in Acts 16. So if you wanna go home and do a little study, Act 16 tells the story. It was planted by a man named Paul. He probably walked nine miles to get into town. When he arrived, he realized there weren't really believers there. The way it usually worked, Paul would walk into a town. He would preach first to the Jew then to the Gentile. The Jews, when they met in the synagogue, he would go study the Bible with them and point them to Jesus. And then he would go to wherever us Gentiles were meeting, marketplace or wherever that happened to be. He shows up in Philippi. He can't go to the synagogue because there isn't one. This is significant because it only took 10 believing men to constitute a synagogue. What that means is, there were not 10 male believers in that whole city. Imagine if you took all the Christian men out of our city. Everything is different and nothing is better. There were not even enough men, 10 men, to constitute a synagogue. So he ends up going to a prayer meeting with a number of women. Much like our day, the women were more spiritual. In our day, it tends to be women who go to church more than men and give more than men and serve more than men. And the church in Philippi was founded by some women with Paul, they were at a prayer meeting. God was opening their heart to the message of Jesus and then he sends the messenger of Jesus to bring that message. They become converted, among them is a woman named Lydia. She deals in purple fabric and garments. She's a business woman and very successful because in that day, purple was the color of royalty. So she's got like the Yeezys and the Gucci's of her market. She's really crushing it, her margins are great and she's an affluent woman. So when the church gets started, she is the benefactor that underwrites and funds a lot of Paul's ministry. Well as soon as

some women get saved, there's also a young girl who has a demonic spirit that needs to be cast out. And all of a sudden you find God starts his work in Philippi, amongst some wonderful women who come into a loving relationship with the Lord. And what's curious is this is the first church that has ever planted in what we would now call Europe. Think of the whole legacy of Christianity in and through Europe, all the missionaries sent around the world. All of that started with the first fruits and the planting of the first church in Europe, the church at Philippi. Now by the time Paul writes his letter to the Philippians, the church is somewhere in the neighborhood of 10 years old. We're three years old. If you're new, we're a three year old new church. Theirs was 10 years old. And he was in the city of Rome sending a letter to them because he could not be present with them. And what I would submit to you is that the church at Philippi is perhaps, if not likely, the best church in the whole New Testament. They're loving, they're joyful, they're generous. They're amazing, they're awesome, they're not perfect but they're pretty incredible. And this is really encouraging to me, because not every church needs to be a head-on collision where the airbags don't deploy, amen. You're like; we could love each other, we could pray for each other, we could have fun together, we could laugh together, we could do life together. That's the Philippian church and it had been rolling faithfully for 10 years. So much so that he doesn't rebuke them. There are certain churches like, there's a church in a city called Corinth and they are, they're crazy. They think Mardi Gras is how you grow in Christ. I mean, it's just nuts. And so he sends them a letter, rebuking them. There's another religious church in the New Testament, the city of Galatia and he's really combating false teaching and arrogance and self-righteousness and judgmentalism. And he starts various letters to rebellious churches saying; Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ. And he doesn't do that with the Philippians. His tone is different because their hearts are different. He doesn't need hard words because they already have tender hearts. And he doesn't say, Paul an apostle because they already acknowledge and honor his authority. You only have to pull out the org chart with rebellious people, right? Like if you've got a kid and you're looking at him and you're like; hey, I'm your parent. Just so you know, you've already got a problem in that relationship. Right, the kid's like; I don't know about the org chart. Yeah, I was here first and I'm above you so clean your room and stop drinking red bull. Knock it off, okay. If somebody honors you, if somebody respects you, you don't need to pull out your credentials. You don't need to show your resume. You don't need to put on your name tag. They loved him, they honored him, they respected him, They appreciated them and it's a warm, friendly, affectionate, joyful, amazing book. And it never mentions the word, sin. Not because they had no sin but they were growing in their Christlike character so the focus was Christ and not their sin. Now the book itself, the book of Philippians, it's only four chapters. It is 104 verses. You can read it in 15 minutes. So you've got two choices. You could change your car insurance in 15 minutes or you could change your joy in 15 minutes, the choice is up to you. A guy gave me that between services, that was a good one. He's like; that 15 minutes thing reminded me of Geico. I was like; I'm using that brother. I believe in Jesus verses in comedy, I'll take it all. I love it, okay. So in 15 minutes you could change your car insurance or you could change your joy. You can read Philippians in 15 minutes. My encouragement to you; read it every day while we're in this series. Start every day with Philippians. Don't just turn on your phone and look at the news because I'm telling you, your joy quotient will not rise, amen. You're like; oh my gosh, it's a presidential cycle. You'll just go back to bed and read Lamentations.

Don't do that, instead, get up and read Philippians. So start every day reading Philippians. If you read it, 15 minutes a day over the course of our study, by the end, you'll know it from the heart. I'll help you to learn it. You'll enjoy it and as you read it, you will find it has the greatest hits of Christian memory verses. It's rejoice in the Lord always. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. It's just jam-packed with all of these amazing verses to memorize. And the theme of Philippians is, joy. Four chapters, 104 verses. He speaks of joy, rejoicing some 19 times. Now let me just say this. Oftentimes people don't think of Christianity and joy but they go together. That ultimately God is a joyful God, heaven is a joyful place. Nobody in heaven is bummed to be there. That God made everything good and joyful and happy and it wasn't until Satan and sin showed up that the joy started to go away. And some of you have been wrongly, falsely taught about joy. I had a whole nother, I literally had another 27 points in addition to the sermon I'm gonna preach you. We were on the plane last night, Grace was like; you can't preach all that, they won't have any joy when you're done. So I'm gonna save that for future weeks. I'm gonna save that for future weeks but let me just say this. 2,700 times your Bible uses words like joy, rejoice, gladness, feasting, celebrating, happy. It uses all those words together because they all mean the same thing. God is awesome and God makes life awesome even if life isn't awesome. Okay, that's what I'm talking about. I'm talking about a joy that comes down and oftentimes we think the more miserable we are, the more Holy we are. No, joy can lead you to the Lord. Joy can drag you to the Lord because if you're looking for joy, you ultimately won't find it until you get to Jesus. All right, well I'm excited about this and so is my wife. So if anybody wants to join us, you're welcome. 104 verses in Philippians, 19 times he talks about joy. 61 times he names Jesus. I mean, even if you went to public school you're like; I think they go together. They do, good observation. Joy and Jesus, joy and Jesus go together. You cannot have true, enduring, deep, godly joy without Jesus Christ, that's the big idea. And so we're gonna study this together and I wanna show you this theme of joy that threads the book together. I'll just read these verses to you. Chapter one, verse four, he talks about my prayer with joy. Your prayer life should be joyful. 1: 18 Christ is proclaimed, in that I rejoice. People are talking about Jesus. In 1:25, he talks about joy in the faith. In 2:2 he says complete my joy by being of the same mind, the same love. When people agree and love each other, there's joy. 2: 17 - 18, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Be glad and rejoice with me. 2: 28 - 29, rejoice at seeing him again. This guy named Epaphroditus. So Paul's in Rome, they're in Philippi. They took a special offering to fund the ministry of their pastor. They hand it to a guy named Epaphroditus, he delivers it and then he's bringing back report about Paul. So he's including in this letter, a report about his friend, rejoice at seeing him again, receive him in the Lord, with how much joy? Hey when Epaphroditus shows up on Sunday, everybody give him a hug, give him the knuckles, tell him you love him. Somebody pick him up, throw him over your shoulder, run a little lap around the church. Let him know you're glad to see him again. Finally my brothers rejoice in the, what? In Lord, not in the circumstances, not in the politics, not in the stock market, rejoice in the Lord. Finally brothers whom I love and long for, my joy and crown stand firm. And then here is my wife's life verse, my wife's life verse. You know your life is good when your wife is named Grace and this is her life verse. If her life verse was, smite him, not so great because I'm him, okay. Here's her life verse; rejoice in the Lord, when? Always, and some of you are like; always, that seems impossible, I don't think that's what it means in the Greek. So he says, again

I will say to you Puddle-glum, to you Eeyore; rejoice, amen. Rejoice always, you're like; I'm not sure I can, you can rejoice. You can rejoice, you can rejoice. And he says, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly. How do we know that we have joy? Sometimes, it's simply in the fact of laughing. Some of you would come to our church and be like; Mark's a little abrupt and says crazy stuff. I mean, we like it but we're not sure it's okay. It's good to laugh. That laughter is one way of expressing joy. There was a study that was done that says that the average child laughs 400 hundred times a day and the average adult laughs 15 times a day. You know what? Right now in kid's ministry, they're having more fun than we are, that's what it means. How many of you, you love being around kids because they're happy and joyful and they're laughing and they're having a good time? You are the children of God, he wants you to laugh and share in his joy and here's the way you get there. Your problems are big, God's joy is bigger. Now some of you are like; Pastor Mark, I got problems. We all do. We've all got pains, we've all got problems. Some of you, your pain is physical. Some of it's financial, some of it's emotional. Some of it's spiritual, some of it's relational. We all have problems, things we're struggling to overcome. We can't understand, we're not sure what decision to make. Those things are in front of us but bigger than pain and problem, is the joy of the Lord. How do I know this? This is awesome. This is so awesome. Who's writing this? Paul, question for those of you who know it, where is he? In jail! How many of you in jail, would not be writing a book about joy? While you're chained to some soldier, you're literally writing it with a shackle around your hand and you can hear the clanking of the chain because you're a prisoner. You're like; this is awesome! That guy's either mental or supernatural. Amen, he's either mental or supernatural. He's joyful and he has pain and he has a problem. His pain is, he was falsely arrested, he is now incarcerated. Imagine in our day, he was like the Billy Graham of his day. Imagine in our day, Billy Graham in a orange jumpsuit, handcuffed, on the show 'Cops,' not one of the cops, getting put in the back of the patrol car. And he's like; this is such good day. That's mental or supernatural. Either we don't know what he knows or he knows something that we don't know. He has a joy. He's not ignoring his circumstances, he's not denying his circumstances. We don't want you to ignore your circumstances, we don't want you to deny your circumstances. We just want you to know that God's joy is bigger than your pain and bigger than your problem. And this is a deep and profound joy that God gives to his children that is not available to those who are not his children. That being said, we'll jump in now to Philippians. Some of you be like; that was 22 minutes, are we done? That was the introduction, you're welcome. We're just gonna get rolling now. I hope you brought a snack, all you diabetics, your blood sugar is gonna be off because this is gonna be a while, okay? Philippians 1: 1 -5, he's gonna tell us that there is joy in serving as a Saint. I'll read it to you, Philippians 1: 1 -5. Paul and Timothy, they're friends. They're working together, doing life and ministry together. Servants, we'll talk about that. Servants of Christ Jesus to all the? The saints, there's the word. Some of you are like; is this in New Orleans? Different saints, okay, different saints. All the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, that's the city they live in, with the overseers, today we'd call that the board. The deacons, that word literally means servant. We would call that team Trinity. Grace to you in peace, from where? God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, I thank God, in all my remembrance of you. always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day til now. Let me talk about Paul's heart and then let me talk about being a

servant. I love Paul's tone toward his people. If your people are tender, your words can be tender. In certain books where the people are tough, his words are tough but here the people are tender. It is very important, at least occasionally, for the senior pastor to tell the people how he feels about them. Here, he is telling them, just listen to this. I thank God. I remember you. I'm praying for you. You give me joy. You have partnered with me, faithfully for a decade. Love! Love for his people. Joy, joy for his people. Gratitude, gratitude for his people. I just am really glad to tell you, you're easy to love. So thank you. The Bible says to love you and if you make it easier, I appreciate that, amen. You guys are great. I was out of state recently and somebody said; how's it going at the Tree church? Pastor friend of mine asked. I literally so said; we have the nicest, greatest people. He's like; really? I said; yeah. I said; you start a church, you know people are gonna show up, you hope the nice people show up first and they bring their friends. Yay, that's what happened. We have such great, I love you. You guys are great. Loving, warm. I mean, my family loves you. We love being here, we love the way you treat us. We love seeing you, Sunday's my favorite day of the week. I don't know if you like this, I like being here with you, amen. My heart is; man, Jesus I'm so grateful that you give us such great people who are a source of joy, a source of joy. And he's talking first here about being a servant, a servant and I wanna talk about how there is joy in being a servant. And what he's gonna tell us are the answers to the two most important questions; who is God and who are you? Now in the first 11 verses, seven times he tells us about Jesus. 61 times in 104 verses he names Jesus. So who is God? Jesus Christ. Who are you? This is the second most important question. And I am so excited for you. I want you to see yourself as God sees you in Christ. I want the identity that you wear to be the identity that Jesus gives you. Some of you, Satan has been condemning you, haunting you, accusing you, shaming you, beating you down, God here wants to build you up. I'll prove it to you, he talks about first of all, being a servant. A servant is one who is other-centered. They're looking to meet needs. They're not exclusively self-consumed. They're are others concerned, that's a servant. We serve a God who served us. Jesus is a servant. This is radical and counter-cultural in every culture. There's an Old Testament book written about 700 years before Jesus entered into human history, it's called Isaiah. From chapter 40 to chapter 66, that whole section is about someone who's coming and he is called the servant, his name is Jesus. His name is Jesus. That we serve because Jesus served us. And if our God is willing to humbly serve, then it must be a joyful thing for us to follow in his example and find a place to serve. There was an argument in Matthew 20 and some of the other four gospels, biographies written about Jesus and the argument was this. Some of the disciples were arguing; which one of us is the greatest? Which, if you just think about it, it is kind of a silly argument. It was like here's Pete, here's repeat, there's Jesus and Pete and repeat are arguing about which one's the best. And it's like; probably the one born of a Virgin who walks on water and hands out free food to people and raises the dead. Maybe that guy's the greatest, right? I mean, you just compare resumes. And they're arguing, which one is the greatest? And what I love about Jesus, he doesn't rebuke them, he redirects them. He basically asked this question, I'm summarizing the narrative. So you wanna be great? And they're like; we do, we wanna be great. He's like; let me tell you how to do that, be the servant. Be the servant. In the kingdom of God, those who serve are great. He says, whoever would be great among you must be your servant even as the son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Let me tell

you how Jesus served you. He saw that you were rebellious, sinful, separated from God, separated from life, separated from joy and he got off his throne and he entered into human history. God became a man. He went from being worshiped by angels to being surrounded by animals. He went from a throne to a manger, which is a feeding trough for animals. That's humility, you can't be a servant without humility. That's why he's gonna tell us in Philippians 2, that'll be my Christmas Eve sermon on Jesus comes as our humble servant. And Jesus comes to serve you by giving his life as a ransom. What that means is that he lives the perfect life you have not lived, that he pays the price that you cannot pay. That is, the price of death for your salvation. He dies, he rises, he returns to his throne. He rules and reigns as King of Kings, Lord of Lords. And he, he he loves to serve you. This is mind boggling amen, that God loves to serve you. And let me just say this, I feel inclined in the Spirit to just tell some of you who are like; I don't want to need God and I feel bad that I need God and I feel bad that God serves me. God is a joyful God who finds joy in serving you. That's amazing! So be humble enough to invite him to serve you. So my question is; do you know Jesus? Do you love Jesus? Have you met Jesus? Because here's the deal; you give him sin and he serves you. That's the deal, best deal ever. That's why we call it good news, not just pretty good news, amen. It's really good news. And how do you take on this disposition as a servant, practically? Let me say first, it's by simply serving. Paul and Timothy are often mentioned together. It's like a father-son relationship. They're always doing ministry together. If you wanna learn how to be a servant, find a place to serve and God is so gracious that he will give you joy and also, an opportunity to build loving relationships. People come into the church and oftentimes they're like; I don't feel connected, I don't feel plugged in, I don't know anybody, it just doesn't feel at home; serve! If you will serve, you will meet some people, you'll build a relationship. The relationship that Paul and Timothy, it never says; and they played racquetball on Tuesday and they golfed on Thursday. And Paul had a big pool and Timothy would come over and float in it, it doesn't say any of that. It says that they served together, which is why they had a loving relationships. So let me just tell you, we love you, let us get you plugged in, find a place to serve. In addition, a servant serves through praying. The shortest distance between two people is prayer. Sometimes you can't fix the problem but you can enter in to carrying the burden by interceding through prayer. Paul says he's a servant and he goes on to say I thank God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy. Prayer, who are you praying for? This is one of the ways that we bring joy to people. How many of you, you've been in or are in a difficult season and somebody comes up says; how are you? I love you, I'm concerned about you, I'm praying for you every day. How could I pray specifically? Oh, thank you. That brings so much joy. You're partnering with me through prayer. Servants serve, servants pray, servants give. He talks as well about your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. This is literally financial generosity. And he is saying, as soon as I showed up to start the church you were generous and for 10 years you've been consistent, faithful and generous. He calls this partnership. This is where people come together for a common cause in the church, this is for the common cause of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I just wanna say thank you to those who have partnered with us, and for those who have not yet partnered or are online and need to find a local church to partner with, let me just tell you; you serve by serving, you serve by praying, you serve by giving. And as you do those things, God increases your joy

and builds your relationships. Everybody wins because God is good to all. That's a servant and Saint. Now how many of you don't really think of yourself as a Saint? And if you do, we love you, you may be weird. You may be, I'm not saying you are and the Holy spirit will tell you or your wife. But how many of you on your social media profile, you're like; what should I say? I like tacos, I'm a Saint. How many of you didn't put that on your social media profile? How many of you, when you list on LinkedIn, your skills on your resume? I'm a Saint. It feels a little. And a lot of it is because our understanding of Sainthood doesn't come from the Bible, it comes from Christian tradition, which is not necessarily always biblical. How many of you were raised Catholic like me? And I love Catholics and I'm not gonna bang on Catholics and many Catholics know and love Jesus and we're gonna be in heaven together, so we should get to know the family. But how many of you grew up in a Catholic church? And if you did welcome, my name is Father Mark. We'll have a Eucharist in a moment. Blessing to see you. The Catholics all laugh. They're like; ha ha, ha ha, they're gonna be like; what is it? This is the thing, you just see it now. This is like the gang sign for the Catholics. Yeah, you're like; he shouldn't have said that. Nope, no, no I shouldn't. The joy of the Lord is my strength. I live in the new covenant, all my sins are covered. I'm having a good time, I don't know about you. All right. Growing up in my house, we had pictures of saints and statues to saints and I was even told that saints had certain powers. So I was told; wear a Saint Christopher medal, why? When you die, you'll go right to heaven, you'll bypass purgatory. I was like; that's like a Fast-Pass at Disneyland, that's amazing. You die, you're like; I'm here and they're like; ah, Christopher medal, front of the line! Everybody else, smolder for a bit and we'll get back to you later. It's just sort of superstitious about Saint Christopher. There was another one, I was told that there is a patron Saint of real estate. And if you bury the Saint upside down in your yard, God will sell your home quicker for above asking price. If you believe that you're into voodoo. Just so you know, you're into voodoo. This is what I thought, and I thought saints were like superheroes, mythical figures. Francis of Assisi loves animals, it's like chastity man. I can't do any of that, that's amazing. They have superpowers I don't have. The first saints were actually martyrs that died for their love for Jesus. And they were remembered kinda like veterans with a memorial wall, which is actually a good thing. And then over time, tradition started building on this. So within the Catholic church, we'll have a little fun unless you're a Catholic. Here are the 10 steps to become a Saint in the Catholic tradition. Number one, be Catholic. Some of you're like; I'm already out, that was so fast. Some of you are still in, some of you are still in. Number two, die. Now we're all out, you're like; dang it, I'm out. Musical chairs, I already lost my chair. Number three, after you die a local devotion grows up to your memory. People start memorializing and commemorating and honoring you. So then number four, you get so popular after you die that they send out a guy with a clipboard and a big hat and he comes to investigate your life. Well, what did they do? How did they live? And he's putting together your file. Number five, he then sends your case, the Bishop does to the Vatican to get overseen by the guys with bigger hats and bigger clipboards. It's all very official. And then number six, they pray that a miracle would be done in your name after you die. People start praying for you to do a miracle and then if a miracle is reported to occur, number seven, they come and investigate the miracle. Hmm, was this a real miracle, how do we know? Number eight, if there was a miracle you're declared blessed. That means you're on your way. This is like making it through TSA. You're like; I'm not there but I'm on my way, all right. Blessed is the



eternal version of TSA. You're gonna get there, you're on your way. And then number nine, they pray for another miracle to verify after you've died in your name. And if that happens, Kawabanga! Bazinga, Shizaam number 10, you're a Saint! And now they can make a holiday after you like Saint Mark's day, where we all yell and eat Carne Asada because those are my love languages. And they can name a hospital after you and they can name a school after you and they can name a church after you and they can make candles about you and sell them at the grocery store. You get all the bonus round. Is that how it works? Nah! The Bible says there's one step to becoming a Saint; grace and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. If you belong to Jesus, you get to be a Saint, period. Some of you are like; like I didn't deserve it, that's why it says grace. Some of you are like; I'm not sure how I feel about this, that's why it says grace comes with peace. You need to see yourself as God sees you. Now if I had to ask this question; pick one word to describe how God sees you, be honest, which word would you choose? Just speak freely, this is the audience participation moment of our time together. If you were to pick one word to describe how you think God sees you, what word would you pick? Sinner, I think most people, sinner. Sinner, are you a sinner? Yes and if you don't think so, you're a double naughty sinner. So we're all sinners. But the Bible, here refers to you as a Saint. Roughly 300 times the New Testament refers to someone as a sinner. Only three of those 300 occurrences are potentially speaking about a Christian believer and all three of those are debated. Zero times in Philippians does he use the word sin or sinner. Hundreds of times the Bible says that God's people are Holy, righteous and Saints. Let me explain this to you because it's incredibly important for you. I'll give you a couple of things, I just wanna speak them over you and I want you to just ponder them for a moment. Sin may describe some of your activity but does not define your entire identity in Christ. Sin may explain, let me just echo that, sin may explain some of what you do but it does not explain who you are. Number two, you will sin some of the time but you are a Saint all of the time because sin is some of your activity but Saint is your ongoing identity. Sin is some of what you do but it's not the totality of who you are. There's a difference between what you do and who you are. If your identity is based upon what you do, you are a sinner. If your identity is based on who Christ says you are and made you to be, then your identity is different than your activity. There is a big difference between having sin and being sin. That's the difference between the believer and the unbeliever. The unbeliever is sin, the believer has sin. Because you a new identity as a Saint, you can have a new victory over sin. Because you are a Saint, you can overcome sin and that means you don't work for your identity, you work from it. You live up to the position that God has eternally destined for you. You're not perfect but you're in a change process, ultimately becoming like Jesus. And as a sinner, you have a dark past but as a Saint, I have good news for you; there is only a bright future. Some of you, you think you're dirty, you think you're defiled, you think you're rejected, you think you're unclean, you think you're unlovable, you think you've blown it, you think that God is sick of you and God is done with you, he's not. God loves to serve and he loves to tell people that they are a Saint and then give them the power of the Holy spirit to become increasingly more like Jesus. I want you to receive that, that's God's gift to you. And sometimes religious people, they will beat themselves up and sort of burden themselves down thinking that they're spiritual. I'm just a scum of the earth and I'm a worthless wretch. When Jesus changes you, celebrate that, rejoice in that, believe that. You're a new creation in Christ. Old things have

passed away, all things are becoming new. You've been born again, you get a fresh clean start because you're a new person. That being said, additionally, the source of our joy is the faithfulness of God. That's what he's gonna say next, that God is faithful for you, in you, through you. It says this in Philippians 1: 6 - 11 and I am sure of this, totally confident, 100% money-back guarantee, no exceptions. That he, that is, God who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you because I hold you in my heart. Boy there's a pastor that loves his people, amen. I hold you in my heart for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. God is my witness, how I yearn for you all, I miss you. I wish I could be there with the affection of Jesus Christ. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge, that's knowledge of God, discernment, that's practical decision making. So that you may approve what is excellent, know what to do and be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Let me explain the Christian life to you in this way. It is what God does for you, it is what God does in you, it is what God does through you, that's the Christian life. That's the Christian life. What he says here is what Jesus does for you. He mentions the gospel. The gospel appears more times in Philippians per verse than any other book of the Bible. He keeps saying the word gospel, what does that mean? Good news! Part of the reason that we can rejoice is that we have Jesus who brings joy to the world and the good news is what he does for us, in us and through us. The good news is that God has lived, God has died, God has risen, Jesus has done a work for me, amen! In addition, God does a work in you. That's what he says right here. He who began a good work in you. Not only is Jesus something external done for you, Jesus is someone who lives in you. That's amazing, he began a good work in you. Here's what you need to know. The God who started working on you will finish the job, my friend. And some of you say; but I have been faithless. I have good news for you, even when we are faithless, he is what? Faithful, our faith is in a faithful God and when he starts something, he finishes it. And he started to love you and he started to bless you and he started to change you and he's not gonna stop no matter what. And some will argue; well, do we choose God or does God choose us? Yes but the sequencing is important. God chooses you, then you choose God. God begins a work in you and then you partner with him to work out your salvation with fear and trembling because it is he who works in you to will and to do according to his good pleasure. Let me just say this, I know you're not perfect. I know you got faults, flaws and failures but look at what God has done. I want you to be encouraged. Look at the change that Jesus has made in your life. Look at the change Jesus has made in your heart. Look at the change process that Jesus has you in. Sometimes we get discouraged and we're like; Jesus, I'm not here. And he's like; yeah but you started here and you're here And guess what? I got you here and I'm gonna get you there. So enjoy me and enjoy the process, not just the destination but the process. And then there is the life of Jesus through you. He talks about your love may abound more and more and you'll learn more and more and you'll make better and better decisions and there'll be a fruit of righteousness. Well, the tree is Jesus and you are just fruit that is connected to him and it's his life that is bearing fruit through you, that's what he's saying. And what he's saying is I think they're the most loving church in the New Testament and they're the most joyful church in the New Testament. And what he's saying is you can even have

more love and more joy because if you tap into the inexhaustible source of the joy and love of Jesus, you can always grow in love and joy. Now, I just wanna testify about this publicly. I have had the best week. Last Sunday, studying Philippians and then they had my daughter's bridal shower for her wedding. It's coming up in January. And then we had Thanksgiving and our house was full and it was awesome. And then Grace and I got on a plane and we went to visit my parents to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. 50th, 50th wedding anniversary. And I was sitting on the couch with my mom and dad and they were testifying. My mom said something like this, my mom's a prayer warrior so I know you're watching mom. Love you, thank you for praying. She said; we love each other, we like each other, we get along better, we take better care of each other and have more fun than any time in our whole relationship. How many of you are married and you're like; that sounds good? That your love would abound more and more. I love Grace with all my heart when I married her. God has enlarged my heart, I have more love for her today because I have a bigger heart. That your love may abound and grow and expand more and more. That's the fruit of the loving, joyful life of Jesus Christ for you, in you, through you. It changes how you live. It changes how you see God, it changes how you see others. It changes how you see yourself and it means that you have grace for people because God has grace for you and you have love for people because God has love for you. And you wanna have fun with people because God has fun being with you. Some of you don't know this, God doesn't just love you, he likes you and he doesn't hang out with you as a job, he hangs out with you as a joy. You need to receive that as the children of God. And then in closing, here's the last section. You can find joy even when you're lonely. Sometimes we're lonely, right? Paul is lonely. His church is in Philippi, he's in Rome. His friends are in Philippi, he's in Rome. His friends are free, he's imprisoned, he's alone and here's what he has to say. I want you to know, brothers. He refers to them as family. If two people love Jesus, I'll tell you what, they're family. That's why sometimes you can meet people that love Jesus if you love Jesus and you feel closer to them than your own relatives who don't know Jesus because Jesus makes us family, amen. I want you to know brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. What? He seems happy about his prison sentence. How many of you, this wouldn't be you? You're like; I went to prison and I just spent months in bliss, it was joyful. And yeah, the gruel was tasteless and I slept on the floor and the guard smelled like an outhouse. I was so happy. He knows something we don't know. Americans can have the pursuit of joy but only a Christian can have the obtaining of joy. It happened to me to really serve the gospel so that it has become known throughout the whole Imperial guard, that's 9,000 soldiers. Think like Army Rangers or Navy Seals, these are the best of the best. These are the guys tattooed up. You don't wanna come against them, they are the armed elite. And the rest, that my imprisonment is for Christ. He's in jail because he loves Jesus. Let me say this, you sometimes get in trouble for doing the wrong thing but sometimes you get in trouble for doing the right thing. Just because you're in trouble doesn't mean you necessarily did a bad thing. He's in prison because he won't stop talking about Jesus so they throw them in prison but what do you think he does once he gets to prison? He's still talking about Jesus. He's still going, his batteries never wear down. This guy's amazing. And most of the brothers having more confidence in the Lord by my imprisonment are much more bold to speak the word without fear. When the pressure comes upon you, if you remain faithful to and talking about Jesus, it puts courage in

people. Do you know what encouraged literally means? To put courage in someone. When you encourage someone, you put courage in them. And Paul's in prison and everybody's watching, he says; let me encourage you, let me put courage in you. I'm in trouble for talking about Jesus. Feel free to talk about Jesus because the people that have a problem with Jesus, they need Jesus. Paul started out not as a servant or a Saint but a religious guy who hated Jesus and now he's changed and he knows that God can change anyone, so he's going to talk to them about Jesus. Now let me say this, Paul could be absolutely throwing the world's greatest woe-is-me pity party. Here's his life. He had a decade of ministry. He walked upwards of 20 miles a day. He was beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, left for dead, repeatedly in prison. And he's rejoicing, he says I'm sorrowful yet rejoicing elsewhere. He also didn't have a wife or kids. I don't know about you, if I'm having a bad day, I wanna go home. There's a woman there named Grace whose life verse is rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice. When I'm having a bad day, I break the speed limit to go home. And some of you are like; that's a sin. New covenant, Jesus died for it so I'll cover it. I just wanna get home. And when I get home, my kids are there. Paul had no home. He had no wife. He had no kids. Let me just say that this could be a very lonely life. If you walk an average of 20 miles a day, not a lot of people are gonna keep up for that decade. There's a lot of downtime, there's a lot of alone time. There was a survey done by the federal government. It says that isolation, living alone, it has the same medical detriments as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. That it is not good to be alone, that we were made to be together. Let me talk to you a little bit about what we're learning from Paul's example. Number one, there is a big difference between isolation and solitude. Isolation is where you get alone to meet with the devil. Solitude is where you get alone to meet with the Lord. Paul is in prison. For other men that were in prison with him, I assure you of this, it was solitude. They were angry, bitter, jaded. They felt robbed, ruined, wrecked. They are meeting with Satan. Paul has a completely different disposition because he's practicing solitude. Here's the point, you're never alone if you're a Christian. That the presence of God goes in you and with you, Jesus will never leave you nor forsake you. So you're never isolated. There's solitude, he's meeting with the Lord. You need to know that. Number two, you may not get new circumstances but you can get a new mindset. What he doesn't say is, everything will be fine. He doesn't know. He could die in jail. I mean, he could get the death sentence. He doesn't know. His circumstances can't be changed but his mindset can be changed. Most of us under those circumstances, we would see this as a catastrophe. He sees it as an opportunity. 11 times in Philippians, 104 verses he'll speak of the mind or mindset. And what he wants is, as you are looking at what would be a catastrophe, take every thought captive in obedience to Christ and be looking for the ministry opportunity. And what he says is; you know what, there's 9,000 soldiers. We can't preach the gospel to them because they live separated from us and we don't have any access. And now I'm in prison, they have to listen to me. Furthermore, they're chained to Paul. So every day he's got a soldier or two chained to him. Guess what he's talking about? He's talking about Jesus. Oh, you run a prison? There's the worse prison, I'm not going to that one. You are, you need Jesus. I mean, this is the conversation he's having. And the guy, I can't imagine that. They're probably like; Oh, who's gonna be chained to Paul today? One, two, three, not it, not it, not it. Oh gosh, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, ah! I'm chained to the guy and I can't get away and he won't let me put my finger in my ear because he's not a chain, he won't let me do that. There was a guy some years ago,

he was assigned to me and my family, he was a photo journalist to follow me around and my family for a couple of days. Had a beat-up old Chevy pickup truck with rusted out floorboards. He jumped in and I said; hey what's your name? He said; Thomas, I was like; oh oh oh! Lord, this is a layup, this is a layup for me. I said; do you know there's a Thomas in the Bible? I go full on Ned Flanders, just start there. That's where I start with this guy. Do you know that there's a Thomas in the Bible? He's like; I don't wanna talk about the Bible, I'm here to take photos. I said; no, no, no, you're here to talk about Jesus. I said; everybody who gets in my truck, they're here to talk about Jesus. I said; you're stuck in my truck for a couple of days, we're gonna talk about Jesus. Thomas was the guy in the Bible who doubted but at the end, he became a devout believer. By the time we're done, you're probably gonna get baptized. That's where we're going. He was like; I'm here to take photos, not to get saved. Well, doesn't matter, this was scheduled, now you know. So for days I'm talking to this guy about Jesus, he got saved and baptized. Sometimes God puts somebody in your life and it's like; God, why are they here? They're driving me crazy. He's like; I know they're driving me crazy too so I sent them to you to talk about Jesus. It may not be a punishment for you, it may be a ministry to them. He has a new mindset. Number three, you need a purpose bigger than your pain and bigger than your problem. Okay, question; does Paul have pain? Yes, does he have a problem? Oh yeah but he has a purpose that is bigger than his pain and his problem. When you get pain or you have a problem, you've got to find a purpose for that pain and/or problem to make it meaningful, valuable, useful, purposeful so that it's not wasted but it's invested. I need you to think this way and encourage one another this way. That ultimately, the example of Paul is that the purpose of Jesus Christ is bigger than any pain or any problem. That's why he uses the word, gospel. It served to advance the gospel. His purpose is always advancing the gospel, that is telling people about Jesus. Expanding, extending the kingdom of our King. He uses the word gospel, as I said, more times in Philippians per verse than any other book in the whole Bible, why? Because that was his purpose. His purpose was bigger than his pain, his purpose was bigger than his problem. As you go into the holidays, whatever pain or problem you might have, I want you to be looking for the purpose so that you can find the joy. And even when you're suffering, you can learn to appreciate that Jesus suffered. You can become perfected through your suffering. As Hebrews says, Jesus was perfected through his suffering. You can grow in empathy and compassion for those who are suffering and mourn with those who mourn and comfort those who grieve. And you can rejoice that one day, the kingdom of God will be a happy place and everyone who is there will be happy and there'll be no more weeping, mourning or crying, that suffering will end thanks to Jesus. No matter what, you can rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice. Now let me close with a personal story, a personal illustration. This is the second time that I've preached verse by verse through the entire book of Philippians. First time I did it, I think it was about 12 years ago in 2007. Some of you may ask; oh, I haven't seen that online. It's because I took it down, it wasn't very good. Just to be honest with you. It wasn't horrible, like I wasn't a heretic. It wasn't that bad. But I went back and read the transcripts and my sermon notes. And what I noticed was I was in a painful, dark, hard, discouraging, exhausting season. And that affected my emphasis in the preaching of Philippians. And what I did is I turned suffering up and I turned joy down. And I had information about joy but I was not experiencing an impartation of joy. How many of you know the difference between information and impartation? Information is

great but impartation is necessary to live the Christian life. So I had a theology of joy but I didn't have an ongoing, deep, profound experience of joy. So I was sitting in my study last Sunday and I was preparing to teach Philippians and as I was reading, I thought; you know, I could have served the people better. I could have taught them better about the joy in Jesus Christ. And so I prayed and I asked the Holy Spirit; Holy Spirit, first time I preached Philippians there's some things that I missed, why? And I believe he convicted me of some things. One of the things that came to mind was I was focused on the past. I had regrets of things I had done and I had grudges for what others had done. Any of you relate to that? That your joy in the present is drained by your regrets or grudges regarding the past. In addition, the reason I believe the Holy spirit convicted me in that moment, that I didn't have the kind of joy that I was preaching about. Because you can preach something without experiencing it and it's tragic because it's not necessary. So that's my responsibility, not the Lord's failure. But in that present, I felt like if these people and circumstances would just get under control, then I'd be happy. Any of you ever experienced that, relate to that? If they would do this and if this would come out like that, then I would be happy. And I lived under the myth that joy was for my future, not for my present. I had lacked joy because of my view of the past. I lacked joy because of my focus in the present and I lacked joy because I lived under this myth. As soon as blank happens, I'll be happy. Any of you live under that? How many of you have lived under that? As soon as blank happens, then I'll be. As soon as I get married, you're like; it didn't work. As soon as we get kids, they're throwing up. As soon as I get that job, they're working me to death. As soon as I get that house, the heater broke. Joy is forever and joy is for now. Joy is forever and joy is for now. So I was sitting in my study and I'm asking the Lord; okay Lord, how do I do a better job for these dear people? They already start joyful, how do I help increase their joy? And I asked; Lord, why did I not have the joy of the Lord? I had the theology of the joy of the Lord but I didn't have the joy of the Lord. And I felt like God spoke to me and said; there was a spirit of darkness over you that you need to rebuke. So I sat in my study and I was like, okay. The Lord rebuke you, spirit of darkness and Holy spirit, I invite you to bring me the joy of the Lord. I kid you not, it's like a cloudy day where the clouds part and the sun shines. God dropped joy on me at my house. It was supernatural, I can't even explain it. The Lord rebuke you, spirit of darkness. The Lord rebuke you, spirit of fear. The Lord rebuke you, spirit of condemnation. And God dropped joy on me and I just felt this overwhelming sense of joy, I was really happy. And some of you start there, I'll have to get there, but I got there. I was really, really happy. And I started talking to the Lord some more and he brought to mind a few scriptures. Number one, Luke 10: 21. I said; okay Lord, when I tell them about joy, what do you want me to tell them? And all I saw was Luke 10: 21, Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit. Where did Jesus' joy come from? The Holy spirit, it came down. As Jesus came down to bring joy, the Holy Spirit comes down to bring joy. How did Jesus have joy? He had joy through his personal relationship with God, the Holy Spirit. And then God brought to mind Galatians. The fruit of the spirit is love, joy. The Holy spirit wants to bring you joy as he brought it to Jesus. And I was sitting there praying, I was like; okay Lord but it doesn't talk about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in Philippians 1 : 1 - 14. And I kid you not, God spoke to me and said; keep reading son. And I got down to Philippians 1: 19 where he says; through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance. Those who seek joy, only find it in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. And then he said one more thing that I

feel inclined to share with you. He said; I give my people joy so that my people can enjoy the people and things that I also give them. Here's the secret to joy, I believe this is the secret to joy. God gives joy so that you can enjoy. You can't enjoy until God gives joy. People are chasing people, experiences, possessions and things and they don't enjoy them because joy doesn't come from them. Joy comes from him to enjoy them. This is why I've met people, they have a wonderful spouse that they don't enjoy. They have beautiful kids that they don't enjoy. They have the forgiveness of sins, love of God, eternal life, presence of the Holy Spirit and their face looks like they just eat bad Chinese food. Because you can't enjoy until you receive joy. Joy comes from the Lord and you can enjoy, even prison. That's the message of Philippians. Father God, thank you for an opportunity to get a second chance at teaching this incredible book. God, I pray for these dear Saints. That they would read Philippians and that Holy Spirit, you would meet with them and that you would teach them about Jesus and joy in the Spirit. That Holy Spirit, you would bring the joy of Jesus to them. That you would bring joy down from heaven to them. And Holy Spirit, we invite you to do that right now. Holy Spirit, you're in the presence of Jesus. It is the place of joy. Holy spirit, we invite you to bring that joy down to us so that we could enjoy the holidays, that we could enjoy our family, that we could enjoy our work. That we could enjoy even the hardship that we face, the pains and problems that are against us, that we would overcome them by the joy that is in us. Holy spirit, I ask you to just drop on these people as you have dropped on me. God, I've been happy all week. This is one of the most joyful weeks of my whole life. My wife even acknowledged it and said; you seem happy and unburdened and what happened? The Holy Spirit, he showed up and brought the joy of Jesus to me and Lord for these dear saints, whom I do love and I do carry in my heart and I do have great affection for, I invite the Holy Spirit to give that gift of joy to them so that they can enjoy in Jesus name, amen.