

Joy To The World #3 - Find Joy Even When You Feel Overwhelmed

- Well, usually the pastor comes out and he asks, "How are you doing?" Let me tell you how you're doing, you're doing great. This is a great day for you. We're gonna have a good time. You're gonna laugh because our joy is not in the Arizona Cardinals, our joy is not in the impeachment hearings, our joy is not in the stock market. Our joy comes down from above. His name is Jesus, joy to the world. This is gonna be a fun time and I invite you all to join me in it. All right. And we talk and we sing a lot about joy during this season and let's just be honest. For some of us, it's not that joyful, amen. We're gonna fix that today because during this time of year, people feel overwhelmed. There was a report done by the American Psychological Association said during the holidays, 68% of people find themselves increasingly fatigued. Are you tired, anyone else tired? I'm tired, I didn't sleep well. I just got back from Mexico last night. Some of you have heard, don't drink the water in Mexico. Some of you have wondered, is that true? I can confirm, it's true. I feel terrible. I am sweating like Mike Tyson in his spelling bee and I replaced my stomach with a washing machine. That's where I'm at today. Whoop, whoop! In addition, the study says that 61% of people experience increased stress during the holidays, is that true?

- [Congregation] Yes.

- Okay, just give me some of the reasons. I was gonna prepare this sermon but I didn't have time so I need your help. So what are some of the things that cause you additional stress during the holidays?

- [Man] Not enough money.

- Not enough money. Ecclesiastes 10:19. "Food is good for the stomach, wine makes life merry. "Money is the answer for everything." New life first, brother. All right, you don't have enough money, what else? What else?

- [Woman] Shopping.

- Shopping, oh, I went to the mall. I barely made it out alive. I'm sure that when the wise men brought gifts to Jesus, they didn't get it from the mall 'cause I couldn't find one wise person at the mall. It's so frustrating. Why are also the holidays little overwhelming?

- [Woman] Family.

- [Man] Relatives.

- Family, relatives, in-laws, outlaws. Let's all get together. It's some of you, you have those rel... You're like, I'm getting uncle Tony pants because last year he forgot to wear 'em to the

Christmas dinner and I need a backup plan. I can't do that again, right? How many of you, don't raise your hand. How many of you have a really frustrating, awkward, weird relative? And if you don't, that's you. The holiday, I don't write the mail, sister, I just deliver it. It's gonna get worse. My point is the holidays can be a little bit stressful and overwhelming, amen. It's subtle and we all gain weight. That's the worst. How many of you are not skinnier than your pre-Thanksgiving self, amen? Somebody sent me last year, this thing, a fudge, this huge box of fudge. I was eating it and eating it and eating it and then I put the lid back on, it had to snowman. And I thought that's gonna be my body type if I finish this box. All these reasons, but here's the good news. There is a joy in the Lord. There is a joy that comes down from heaven. There is a joy in the Holy Spirit that is possible only for the children of God not to have in their circumstances but to have through them and sometimes in spite of them. And that's the great theme of this grand book of Philippians. And sometimes when we're overwhelmed, exhausted, frustrated and stressed, by considering the life of another person, we gain perspective. So before we jump into the book of Philippians and we will, so grab your Bible, find Philippians. The author is a man named Paul. He's a leader in the early church. The theme of his book is joy. He talks about joy, rejoicing, gladness, cheer, some 19 times in 104 verses and what's curious, he's writing from where? Prison, jail. So he has his wrist shackled to a Roman soldier and he sits down to write a treaties and field guide on joy. That must mean that you can have joy regardless of circumstance if your joy is in the Lord, not in your circumstance. And so he has this great theme of joy. It's the theme of the whole book and in the section we're in today, chapter two, verses 12 through 30, this is the centerpiece and the theme. He says, "I am glad and rejoice." "I'm glad," says the guy in prison, says the guy who has no wife, has no kids, doesn't know if he's gonna get out of jail, doesn't know if he's gonna die in jail, doesn't know what's gonna happen. He says, "I'm happy, I'm having a good day. "I woke up feeling pretty good," and okay, this is not a denial of reality. It is the recognition that the presence of God is a greater reality, that's what it is. "I am glad and I rejoice with you all. "Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me." God wants our joy to be contagious and for other people to participate in the joy of the Lord with us. That being said, some of you will ask, "Why should I rejoice?" Well, because the rest of us are tired of your grumpiness. In addition, he's gonna give three reasons to rejoice. Philippians 2:12-13. "Therefore my beloved," that's nice language, right? Let me just say this. This is the language that a grandma or grandpa gives to a beloved grandchild. "Oh dear," that's what it is. "Oh dear, I love you so much." This is the father, heart of God coming through the pastor, Paul. You need to know that the names and nicknames we give to people are powerful. We tend to only give nicknames to the people we love the most and the people, we... You said it, not me. The people we hate the most. He has a nickname. How many of you grew up in a family where you got a nickname and it wasn't good? And every Christmas they call you that same nickname. They take you back to when you were 11. Here, he nicknames the children of God as the beloved. That's a good nickname. We need to have good nicknames for one another and God's people, speaking and breathing life into one another. "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed." Underline that verse and show it to your child. That's the new life verse for all the parents. Always obeyed. "So now not only in my presence," he's not there, "but much more in my absence." They're in Philippi, he's 800 miles away in the city of Rome. He can't be present with them. He goes on to say, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," that's

honor and respect. "For it is God who works in you, both to will," He changes your desires, "and to work," He helps you accomplish them, "for His good pleasure." Lemme say this. Number one, God is for you. Many of you don't know this, you don't believe this, you don't trust this. This truth gets tested when trouble and trial come. When we're suffering or struggling, we might be thinking that God is against us, He's not. Satan and demons, I promise they're against you. God is for you if you are a Christian, if you are a child of God and he uses this language of beloved. In a few verses, he's gonna call us those who are Christians, the children of God and he says here that God serves us and helps us according to His good... God likes helping, God likes forgiving, God likes serving. God takes pleasure in meeting the needs of the people that He created. You are not a burden to God, you are a blessing to God. God's heart is a father's heart. My children are not a burden, they are a blessing. When my children need me, it is not a frustration for me, it is a pleasure for me. You are the children of God. God is a loving father. He is pleased, He is joyful, He is cheerful, He is smiling to forgive you, to love you, to seek you, to save you, to bless you, to comfort you, to lead you, to guide you. That's why we want to be with God because he wants to be with us, amen. Number two, God lives in you. Not only is God ruling over all, He is reigning in the lives of those who belong to Him. This means you're not alone, you're not abandoned. The Christianity is not a to-do-list that God gives you and doesn't participate in. He says, "God works in you, both to willing to work." This is God working in you. And the old Testament, it talks about getting a new heart. In the new Testament, the language is being born again 'cause you're born physically, you need to be born again spiritually by giving your sin and receiving salvation from Jesus Christ. And when he's talking about God working in you, this is amazing. How many of you can testify God's done some work in you? If you're a Christian, God has done some work in you. And ultimately this God who began this work, Paul tells those who were in Philippians. He who began the good work will see it through to completion, that the work that God has started in you, God will finish in you. That God will not leave you, that God will not betray you, that God will not forsake you, that God will not abandon you and this work in you is amazing. You get a new mind, you think differently. You get a new heart, your emotional life is now not predicated on your circumstance but the presence of the spirit of the Lord who gives you love, joy, peace, patience, peace, kindness, faithfulness, self-control and gentleness. All of that is the emotional life of Jesus, birth by the Holy Spirit. So you get a new mind, you get a new emotional life, you get a new will. Many people don't know this. Christians don't obey because we have to, we obey because we get to, because at our deepest level, we want to. That's what I never told my kids, you have to read the Bible. That's like saying, you have to eat your ice cream. Don't say it like that, you'll ruin it. We were looking forward to it, it's awesome. This hit me in college, I became a Christian at age 19. My mind changed. All of a sudden, I see God and history and reality and myself very differently. My emotional life changed, all of a sudden I'm actually more joyful and cheerful and hopeful and then ultimately what I was shocked by was my desires changed. I found this out when I was, I was getting ready on a Friday night to figure out what I was gonna do. I was in a dorm. Some of the guys come over. Everybody in my school drank. It was a state university and I'm brand new Christian and the guys come in and they're like, "Hey, we're going to a party," and I know they're going to drink and they said, "Do you wanna go with us?" I said, "No." I couldn't believe it. Like, who is this guy with my driver's license? What is he saying? They said, "Well, what are you

gonna do?" I said, here's what I said. I couldn't believe I said it. I said, "Ah, I'm gonna go to the library and read my Bible." And they're like, "What, have you accepted Ned Flanders in your heart? "What are you doing?" It's Friday night at a state university. They looked at me and they asked, "Why do you wanna go to the library and read the Bible?" I said, "I don't know. "That just sounds like the most fun thing to do tonight. "That's what I wanna do," because God changes desires. He works to change your will and then he gives you His will and then He gives you His pleasure as your wills become aligned, God is pleased and you are pleased with obedience. You don't have to pray, you get the pray. You don't have to read the Bible, you get to read the Bible. You don't have to be forgiven, you get to be forgiven. These are all things that we should be really excited about. Number three, God partners with you. He says they have obeyed but I need you to see this. The God who is for you and the God who works with you is the God that you obey. It's not to earn His love, it's because He starts with love. It's not so that your performance will merit a relationship but because His love for you changes and transforms you so that His love does a work in you and then it ultimately does a work through you and we call that obedience. And then he says, "To work out your own salvation with fear "and trembling." My dear friends, don't worry about their salvation being worked out. Don't worry about what they need to know and what they need to do and how they need to change. Get up, look in the mirror and say, this is what I'm dealing with today. This person is my responsibility. Each person, work out your own salvation. God works things in, you work them out. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. That is respect and honor for God and this leads to a question that often gets asked theologically. What does God do? What do we do? Certain theological traditions, certain biblical teachers will emphasize what we need to do, others will emphasize what God does. These are like two pedals on a bike. They go together. As far as being a Christian, all that work is done by God. That's the work for you, through the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus Christ in your place for your sin. So I will just ask, do you know Jesus? Do you love Jesus? Do you belong to Jesus? Are you following Jesus? Are you excited about Jesus? That work that he does for you, He does all the work and then God does a work in you. He takes out your old heart, gives you a new heart, takes out your old nature, gives you a new nature, takes out your old will, gives you a new will, takes out your old mind, gives you a new mind. And now the spirit of God is in you and God who worked this all into you, you can now work it out with Him. So ultimately, God initiates, we respond. God saves us and then we grow to be more like His son, Jesus Christ. God forgives us, we forgive others. God wrote the scriptures and sent the Holy Spirit and we open it to learn. God welcomes us to pray and bring our burdens and needs to Him and then in prayer, we are obeying Him. What God works in, we work out. This is the two pedals on the Christian bike for the life of forward progress. And let me just tell you, this is the best life. This is the most exciting, wonderful, transforming life. God doesn't want to just make you better, He wants to make you new. He wants to give you joy and it's not a joy that the world can understand because it is found solely in God and it comes down with Jesus. You know, the angel says, I bring you good news of great joy for all the people. Jesus is born. Joy comes down with Jesus and joy is only possible, truly, deeply, perpetually, unceasingly for those who are with Jesus, amen.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- Well, you're both excited. Okay, great. Then I'm gonna do it again. We're gonna give you eight more reasons to rejoice, like if the first three didn't get you, I'm gonna get you again. You need to know that joy is not an addition, it is essential to walk with God. Christianity is not just about duties, it's about the lights. Here's what Paul says, Philippians 2:14-18. Do what things, all things. Does that include politics?

- [Man] Yes.

- Yes. Politics is the Greek word for demon. It's just is. Some of us, we don't complain about a lot of things but maybe we have a few hot button issues for us that we grumble about. What is grumbling? Complaining, arguing. Go to any coffee shop in Scottsdale, sit next to the old men and you will get a case study in grumbling. Everybody laughed except for the old men. They're like, "That's nasty and not," you're grumbling. Okay, so you're just proving my point. Grumbling or disputing, this is where you're arguing with people. These would be two amazing words to explain our culture. People are complaining and arguing, amen. Have you flipped through the news recently? MSNBC, any good news? Nope, grumbling and complaining. CNN, any the good news? Nope, grumbling and complaining. Fox News, still grumbling and complaining. I hate to tell ya. Our local Republican representative was trying to fix the case here. You're only gonna find good news in here, amen? Out there, you're gonna hear a lot of grumbling and complaining. Just tell me, what's coming next year? It's an election year. I'm hoping Jesus comes back before November. "Do all things," Does he do this all the time? Yes, he's hopped up on cold medicine and might throw up. He's excited though. "Do all things without grumbling or disputing" "that you may be blameless and innocent, "children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked "and twisted generation, "among whom you shine as lights in the world, "holding fast to the word of life." That is the word of God. "So that in the day of Christ, when Jesus comes back, "I may be proud that I did not run in vain "or labor in vain." And then he talks about the fact he might die. "Even if I am poured out as a drink offering "upon the sacrificial offering of your faith," I'm what? "I'm glad." Paul's like, even if they kill me, it's a great day. He must know something we don't. One of the greatest fears that people have is the fear of death. Jesus defeated death and as a result, there's nothing to fear if you're following Him. "Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me." A couple of things. Number one, you can stop grumbling and disputing. You can stop just complaining and arguing. You can, you can stop complaining and arguing. How many of you, the holidays are tough 'cause your family gets together, all they do is complain and then argue, right? Let's fix that. God gives you joy so that you can enjoy, which means you don't need to be held captive by grumbling and complaining. You can make a choice that God will honor and He will be pleased to help you to stop grumbling, start praying, stop disputing, start worshiping. Number two, you can be blameless and innocent. This is not perfect but it is a new you that is in a process of perfection that ultimately is completed in the presence of God forever. It is possible to walk with God. It is possible to be faithful to your spouse. It is possible to love your kids. It is possible to be generous with your resources. It is possible to serve others. I am 100% sick of all the negative press on Christianity. That ultimately there are many who are not perfect but they are blameless

and innocent and even if you don't like where they're at, look at where they started and encourage their progress. Number three, you can stop being part of a crooked and twisted generation. Which generation is twisted and crooked? Everyone, dragons showed up, Eve made a fruit salad, all been dumpster fire since. Every generation is crooked, people are crooked and their ways are twisted, but it doesn't have to be that way for the children of God. You don't have to do what everyone else is doing and you don't have to feel how everyone else is feeling. In addition, number four, you can be the children of God without blemish and shine His lights. You are God's children. What I used to tell our kids growing up is that's not how we do it in our family. So it'd be like, "Dad, can I drink monster energy drink "at bedtime and light off fireworks?" "No." "Well Johnny does." Well his parents hate him and we'll pray for Johnny. He's three, this is not ideal. In our house, we don't do that. In our family, that's not what we do. God is a father, as soon as you become a child of God, you become part of the family of God and there are certain things that the family does not do. That's just not our family. And what he's saying is, you can live as children of God and he's giving this analogy of a very dark world, but the God's children with life and love and joy and peace, they shine forth like a lighthouse. When boats are out at sea, if there's no lighthouse, they don't know where safe harbor is and they don't know where to venture toward. So the lighthouse goes on and brings them home. You, my dear saints, you are those lights in this world. As you love, as you forgive, as you have joy, as you walk in obedience, others will see how to make it home to safe harbor and enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ. Don't let them convert you to their cheerlessness, demonstrate for them cheerfulness and welcome them to meet the one who gives you joy. In addition, you can stop living in ways that are vain. Number five, there are many things in our life that tragically, sadly, unfortunately feel like we have wasted our time and energy. We all have things. Jobs, relationships, projects that we have poured ourselves into and it's like a bucket that has no bottom and that was all wasted. What he's saying is that these people are living in such a way and this church now has been up and going for about 10 years. It's the most healthy, loving, joy filled church in the New Testament. Not all Christians are hypocrites and not all churches are grumpy. There are some godly people and some of them get together in some great churches and we wanna be one of those. But what he's saying is he is not wasted his efforts on them and he wants them to keep going. That's my hope, my prayer, my encouragement for you. Number six, you can start living in a way that you can be proud of. And I know there is a negative and pejorative sense to pride. What he says here that, "I wanna be proud of you." This is powerful. We either build people up or we beat them down. When we speak life over them, we lift them up. When we speak death over them, we literally bury them. How amazing would it be to get a letter from Paul from prison and he says, "I'm proud of you." Now, some of you never heard this from your mom, your dad. You got a critical spirit, not a cheerful spirit. It was always what you did wrong, never what you did right. If your parents said, "Hey, we need to talk." You're like, "Oh, what did I do now?" We need to be people who give blessing, give encouragement because you're not gonna get it anywhere else. And what I love here is that Paul says, "I'm proud of you." This holiday season, your kids, your grandkids, your spouse. I love you, I like you, I enjoy you, I'm proud of you. Some of you say, that's not how they are. Well, then give 'em something to shoot for because criticizing them, grumbling and complaining isn't working. So try encouraging and blessing. And he is proud of them and I'm proud of you. Number seven, you could stop

cheerlessness and start cheerfulness. Because ultimately if you're waiting for the circumstances of your life to align to bring you joy, you will wait forever and then die. How many of you, you've lived under that myth? As soon as I graduate, as soon as I make money, as soon as I get married, as soon as I have a kid, then I'm gonna be really happy and then you're like, well, as soon as the kids move out, then we'll be really happy. Well, and then as soon as they give me grandkids, I'll be really happy. And then you got ointments and you got injuries and you go into the bathroom at times you didn't plan on it. And it's just not coming, I'm just telling you. I just looked down the road and it's, that's where it's going. It's not all gonna come together. So you're gonna need to choose cheerfulness, joyfulness in the middle of it. This is one of the major themes of the whole Bible, 2,700 words on cheer, rejoice, joy, gladness. Woo-hoo! Really? Seems like, "I was reading the news, I missed that." Put your phone down, all right. Put your phone down. All right, number eight, you can die with a smile on your face. He talks about being poured out as a drink offering. You know what? The worst thing is not to die, the worst thing is to die without knowing Jesus. If you know Jesus, he already told us in chapter one to live is Christ, to die is gain, it's gain. And he says, being with Jesus is far better. So he's in jail and they're like, "We're gonna kill you." He's like, "Don't give me a promise you won't keep. "Don't get my hopes up. "I'm gonna go see Jesus," and he's gonna say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. "And I'm gonna get out of prison and go to a party. "A party that never ends." You're all gonna die. I want you to die with a smile on your face. You know what? Jesus, I'm coming, it's gonna be awesome. Hope you got a play set for me at the table. I'm looking forward to the party that never ends. We've got some older saints in this church that are closer to the finish line. We've had a few funerals and I can tell you that those who die knowing Jesus die differently than those who don't. Those who do not know Jesus die in fear and those who know Jesus die in cheer. That's how this works, amen. All right. I'll clap for myself, that's how excited I am. All right, what he's gonna do now is, he's principally established joy and now he'll give us two testimonies. One is a man named Timothy, the other is a man named Epaphroditus. Tell you a little bit about these men briefly and then we'll jump in. What this is, is this is their testimony. The world has biography. They pulled themselves up by their bootstraps. They actualize their potential. They fought through a hard time. The Bible doesn't have biography, it has testimony and that is that God was present, that God provided, that God sustained me, that God blessed me, that God delivered me. So this is the testimony of what it means to live in joy and cheer of the Lord. It says in Nehemiah 10, "The joy of the Lord is my strength." Cheerless people are too weak to make it through this life. If you wanna be strong, you need joy so that you can enjoy whatever is set before you. These are two cheerful, joyful, glad, happy men and this is their testimony. The first is Timothy verses 19 through 24. "I hope in the Lord, Jesus, to send Timothy to you soon." Paul is in jail in Rome, they are in the church at Philippi, some 800 miles away. They heard Paul was in jail so they sent Timothy to go check in on him. He says, "So that I too may be cheered by news of you." Lemme say this. You can live in such a way that when people hear about you, they're cheerful. If you don't know this person, become this person by the grace of God. "For I have..." This is a crazy statement. He says of Timothy, "For I have no one like him." Just, if you know the Bible at all, what caliber and quality of people did Paul have in his ministry? Awesome, they're the Yankees of serving Jesus. His team is amazing. It's all first round draft picks. He works with the giants of the faith and what he says is this. Yeah, but Timothy, I have no one like

him. Man, that we would know a person like this, that we would become a person like this, a faithful person. He says, "I have no one like him." What makes him so unique? "Who will be genuinely," not insincerely, not selfishly, genuinely concerned for who? For you. What brings cheer to the heart of God and the people of God is when we consider others above ourselves. I'm gonna hit it on Christmas eve, it's the section in Philippians two just prior to this, where he talks about how Jesus is a servant and he humbled himself and he served us and he did what was in our best interest, though it was not in His. It was not in Jesus' best interest to go from heaven to earth. It was not in Jesus' best interest to go from the earth to the cross. It was not in Jesus' best interest to go from the cross to the grave. But it was in our best interest. And Timothy is carrying forth the character of Christ, being selfless in a world that is selfish, doing what is best for others, not himself. Let me just tell you this. This is the secret to being a Christian, being a husband, being a wife, being a friend. Doing what is in the best interest of the person that you love, even though it is likely not in your best interest. Here's what he says, "For they all seek their own interests, "not those of Jesus Christ." What he's saying is the whole world is filled with people who are like, what can I gain? How do I benefit? We even have this little line, what's in it for me? That's demonic. What's in it for you? That's godly. It's a reorienting of mindset. If all I do is wake up every day and look at my wife and kids and say, "How does this benefit me? "What do I get, how do I win?" Our family will be destroyed. If I get up and say, okay, how do I do what's best for Grace and the kids, our family will be filled with cheer and joy. It's really that simple. Selfish people are miserable people. He goes on to say, "But you know of Timothy's proven worth." There are certain people that tell you, how many of you have met people like that? They say one thing but they don't follow through to completion. Just do this, this is kinda fun. Find your old high school annual. You're my best friend, I'm gonna be there forever. I'm gonna take care, we're gonna die together. And you're like, I don't remember who that is. I don't remember who that is. People will have intentions without commitments. They'll start something they don't finish. They'll commit to something that they don't see through to completion. If you're an employer, you know exactly what I'm talking about. And we're coming into that time of year where this happens. We call it New Year's. We get fat during the holidays and then New Year's comes and we make New Year's resolutions, which are lies. They're lies, how do I know their lies? You're not doing what you said you were gonna do last January. So what happens is you show up to the gym on January 1st. What's it like? It's full of highly motivated people. January 4th, tumbleweeds. No one is there, it's over. There's not that consistency and that fortitude to continue. Everyone has a pain threshold where at some point they say, okay, no more. What he's saying of Timothy is, Timothy has this result, this commitment that when he commits himself, he's in no matter what and the result is, you can depend on him, he is faithful. He's not perfect but he's faithful. Proven worth. "How has a son with a father," I love this language. Paul, we have no indication that he had any children. Timothy was a man that we know nothing about his father. The Bible tells us about his grandmother and his mother. So we have a young man with no father. We have an older man with no son and in Jesus Christ, they become like a father and son. This is where God's primary metaphor for the church, in my opinion is family. Bad things happen when we sort of base the church off of business or entertainment or heaven forbid, politics. The system that God intends is familial. God's a father, Jesus is the son, the angelic and other divine beings are the sons of

God. He just told us that human beings who belong to Jesus are the children of God, it's all family language. What this means when you come into the church, God is your father, Jesus is your big brother. You meet other people, they're like brothers and sisters. Older people become like fathers and mothers and in a world of divorce and broken homes and disbursement where people don't live near their family, church family can be a real blessing, amen. Now, how many of you, you feel closer to some Christian than you do to your own biological family? It's because the spirit of God makes us family. We sensed that, we were down in Mexico this weekend and we walked into this church and we don't speak the same language, many of us didn't, but you know what? There was immediate warmth and friendship because though we don't share the same language, we share the same spirit, the spirit of God. If you have a family that loves Jesus, you're doubly blessed. If your family doesn't love Jesus and doesn't love you, you're not cursed, you're just blessed by the family of God. And what he wants is older men to have fathers' hearts. Let me just tell you, this is crucial and critical. The brokenness in our culture can largely be connected to men who do not have the father heart of God. And the healing and restoration is through men like Paul, having a father's heart. Timothy's proven words. "As a son with a father, "he has served with me in the gospel." This is Jesus, they're talking about Jesus. Philippians uses this word gospel more than any other book of the Bible in terms of frequency. "I hope therefore to send him "just as soon as I see how it will go with me "and I trust in the Lord that surely, "I myself also will come." He's in prison, they're in Philippi. He's sending the letter back. Timothy is still there and he's telling them, I hope I get out and I'm going to send Timothy to you either way, but ultimately I hope to join him in visiting you. Now, what's interesting about this, this faithfulness, this loyalty, this fidelity is really unusual. The story of Timothy is this. There's a history book in the new Testament called Acts. In Acts 14, Paul shows up at this town called Lystra. He preaches about Jesus and guess what? There's a riot. They take him out and they try and murder him. They throw rocks at him, it's called stoning. Not this, this, that's what they're doing. And so they try to stone him to death and they think he's dead, maybe they knock them out or something. So they literally leave his body out of the city. Well, Paul somehow comes back to consciousness, just got knocked out and he's all bloodied and he's beat up and he's hurting like crazy. May I ask you? Would you go back and be like, "These people really need Jesus, "those are some terrible people. "I gotta go tell him about Jesus," that's what he does. How many of you be like, "Lord, once I got hit in the head with a rock, "I took that as a word from you that I'm retiring." That's exactly what I heard. He goes back. You know why? Because if you're committed to Jesus Christ, even if somebody is cruel and mean, all it proves is they need Jesus Christ. He goes back because he does what's best for them, not what's best for him. And then ultimately he leaves town, a church is planted, believers gather, he has a second missionary journey. A while later he returns back to that town and it says at that time, Timothy joined him as like his associate pastor, which is crazy. Just think about it. We're all trying to climb the ladder in upward mobility in a bigger office and benefits package. What does he get for joining Paul? Paul comes into town, they try and kill him. Paul's like, "I'm looking for an assistant." Timothy's like, "I'll take the job." Most of us are not, like if we had a list, like, hey, welcome to the church. If you'd like to serve, we're looking for people who are good at taking a beating. You'd be like, I'm out. I'll play with the kids, I'll be an usher, whatever. Give me a vacuum cleaner, not a rock. That's what I need. This is Timothy. If you don't know this person,

pray that God would bring them. If you are not this person, pray that God would make you that person. Faithful, loyal. He brings cheer and joy to Paul because Paul can depend on him and then he's gonna talk about this other guy, Epaphroditus. Philippians 2:25-30. "I have thought it necessary "to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother." So Timothy is a younger man apparently Epaphroditus is an older man, so Paul doesn't regard him as a son but as a brother. Again, the church is family and here's, this is amazing. This letter would have been read before the church and he calls him fellow worker, fellow soldier. Paul says that, that's amazing. "And your messenger and minister in my need "for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed "because you heard that he was ill. "Indeed he was ill, near to death, "but God had mercy on him "and not only on him, but on me also, "lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. "I'm the more eager to send him. "Therefore, that you may," What? "Rejoice at seeing him." When he shows up, he's like he almost died, he's sick. I'm gonna send them back to Philippi. When I do, get a cake, get a sombrero, find a piñata, blow a kazoo, have a parade, make sure you know that he's coming and make sure he knows that you're looking forward to him coming. You know what? If you wanna create a cheerful environment, celebrate the people who are coming into that environment. He's just telling them, literally plan the party, eventually Epaphroditus, the honored guest will show up. He goes on to say, "That I also may rejoice at seeing him again "and I may be less anxious. "So receive him in the Lord," with what? "All joy." Receive your spouse with all joy, receive your kids with all joy, receive brothers and sisters in Christ with all joy. All joy, "and honor such men." What Paul is establishing here is the environment and culture of the church. This is the happiest, this is the healthiest, this is the holiest church in the New Testament. He doesn't have rebukes for them, just commendations, minor corrections. The book never uses the word sin, not because they're perfect but because they're making progress. In addition at the beginning, he doesn't declare himself to be an apostle as he does in many of his other letters because they already honor him and they respect him and he doesn't need to pull out the org chart or put his name plate on saying, I am an apostle, rock paper, scissors, apostle. Apostle always wins. He doesn't have to do that because they honor him. This is the secret to joy. Joy can only coexist in an environment of honoring, true? How many of you grew up in a home that was dishonoring? Kids trash mom, mom trashes dad, dad trashes everybody. It's why the holidays are really painful for some folks. You don't want to be in a dishonoring environment because it's joyless. Mockery is not joy, it's the demonic, satanic counterfeit. Making fun of someone is not enjoyable, it's miserable. And sometimes what happens in our family systems, we get back together for the holidays and we're just devastated. Do we really gotta talk about the worst thing I ever did? Why do we need to make fun of me for half an hour? See, it gets quiet in the room because it gets close to the soul. Honoring and joy co-exist. How do I know? Right now in heaven, it's a culture of honor. Right now in heaven, no angels are trash talking each other. I've got bigger wings than you. Right now in heaven, it's a culture of honor. They're honoring the Lord. The Lord is honoring them. The departed saints who were in the presence of God right now, they're not being dishonored. God's not bringing up all their past failures. Hey guys, there's Noah. Remember when he got drunk and passed out naked in his tent watching NASCAR? Noah's like, "Really, that was thousands of years ago. "Can we please move on?" If you will choose honor, it will bring joy. If you choose honor, it will bring joy. An honoring joyful environment, it welcomes people, it doesn't repel people. People want to be in an environment

where they are honored. I'm proud of you, I love you. I see progress. God started something and I know for a fact, he's gonna see it through to the finish line. "Joy and honor for such men for he nearly died "for the work of Christ, "risking his life to complete what was lacking "in your service to me." Here's the story of Epaphroditus. So Paul's in prison. The church hears, our pastor is in prison and the problem with the Roman jail, you don't get food, you don't get clothing, you don't have civil rights. You don't get a court appointed attorney. It's not like that. And so if you don't bring food and clothing and provision, somebody's gonna die. So they're like, Oh my gosh, our pastor is 800 miles away. They took a big, special offering and then they had to pick somebody to carry the bag of money all the way to Rome. And you gotta nail this 'cause Jesus had a bookkeeper. How did that end? Remember Judas? He's like, one for me, two for me, three for me, four for me, robe for me, hell for me. That's Judas, right? I shouldn't have said it like that but that's how it went down. So when it goes to choose the bookkeeper, the financial guy, they gotta really get this right. They pick up Epaphroditus, what does that tell you? He's trustworthy. He's trustworthy and what Paul says, how many of you would not sign up for this job? On Sunday, I could see they're together like all right, yeah, we're looking for a volunteer to walk. If I just told you this. Six weeks to Boulder, Colorado with a bag of money. You're like, I'm out. For sure I'm out. I was out at the walking part. 800 miles on foot with a bag of money, life in danger. That's a trustworthy guy. And he gets sick along the way, almost dies. What he doesn't do is say, well, I'll spend this money. So if it was you, it'd be like, Lord, I'm sick. I got money, spending the money. He doesn't do that. He doesn't stop, he doesn't go back, he doesn't quit. He pushes all the way forward to Rome. Six-week walk, 800 miles. He shows up to Paul, almost dead and God spares his life. And he sends news back saying, "I know you're worried about Epaphroditus "but ultimately he is in recovery "and I will send him back to you." Here's what I want you to see. In Christianity, there are wonderful people. Timothy is a wonderful person. Epaphroditus is a wonderful person. Paul is a wonderful person. Don't believe the demonic lie, that God doesn't have some wonderful people in some wonderful churches, He does. There's a few other ones too but God does have some wonderful people and some wonderful churches. And the way that people become wonderful is by honoring Him. So what Paul is demonstrating here, they would have read this letter publicly. He's honoring Timothy, would you agree with that? I have no one like him, that's honoring and he's honoring Epaphroditus, Timothy's the guy on the platform, he's well known. Preaches, teaches, writes. Epaphroditus is off the platform. He's serving behind the scenes. It's good to honor those who are visible and those who are less visible in the ministry and if you will set up a culture of honor in your home, in your family, during the holidays, some of you are not good at this. You need to literally think about things that you can encourage and bless people with and thank people for. And some of you need to write them down, as Paul did and send them to those people as a blessing for them. But this culture of honoring is so significant because it is the culture of the Kingdom of God. And this really hit me in a profound way. It was a couple of years ago, one of our pastors, Grace and I were at the church that's run by one of our pastors and on that Sunday, this man was not preaching. Instead he brought in his pastor, an older man and he literally said, "He's my spiritual father." He used the language of Paul and Timothy and he honored his spiritual father. And then everybody welcomed and he got off the stage, gave him a hug, the man walked out to teach. His name is Jack Hayford. He's a good Bible teacher. He wrote the Spirit Built Study Bible. He's a godly

man. And he got up and what he did, here's what I'll tell you. I don't remember the sermon, I know it was awesome but I do remember what he did and he said, "I'd like to introduce you to my wife." They've been married for a long time. She's since passed away and gone home to be with the Lord. And he had his wife stand up and the camera panned on her. Everybody got serious, he's like, "This is my wife, I love her so much." He talked about how much he appreciated her, how his work was impossible without her work, that she was the blessing and burden lifter behind the scenes and a great source of joy and he'd never met anyone like her. He just honored his wife. And I thought, Oh, what a good idea. What a good idea to have an environment where people honor one another, because what that does, that lifts people up to the potential that God has for them rather than dragging people down to the past. It pulls them into the future. What I'm gonna share now, I believe it's from the heart of God. As I was praying for you all this week, God impressed something on me that I wanna share. It's for the men and the women but it's first for the men, the husbands and fathers. And I believe that this is the secret to unlocking joy during the holiday season. Behind all the Philippians is God. If you misunderstand the character of God, then you misunderstand what it means to be godly 'cause to be godly is simply to try by the grace of God to be like God. Let me share this with you in closing. There is honor and fun in the Father's house. Jesus talks about the kingdom of God as the Father's house and when the Bible talks about the kingdom of God from beginning to end, it usually uses the language of what, parties, feasts, celebrations, meals, weddings. Who doesn't love a party, amen? I'll tell you who doesn't, religious people. Religious people don't like parties because environments of honor and joy repel them, but they attract healthy people or people who want to become healthy. And so Jesus gets invited to parties, God throws parties through the Bible. God has a party that never ends. The Father's house is a fun, awesome, great place to be. I'll read it to you. Isaiah 65:17-19. Here's God speaking. "For behold, I create new heavens, new earth." You'll be raised as a new person, you'll occupy a new realm. You'll enter a new city. God makes all things new. Who doesn't like nice new things, amen? We love nice new things, God's got all new for everyone forever. "Former things shall not be remembered or come to mind." One of the problems during the holidays, we take former things and we make people remember them and we put them at the forefront of their mind. The worst days of your life. This is the jabbing, the joking, the criticizing, the instigating, the grumbling and the disputing. In the Father's house, there will be none of that. The past will be buried with Jesus and ultimately, it's not that God erases your memory but you're not thinking about it. The thing that you regret right now, you won't regret forever because you won't be obsessed about it, you'll be obsessed with the goodness and glory of God. He goes on. But to be what? Glad and rejoice. 2,700 times, glad, rejoice, cheer, cheerfulness, celebration, gladness. It's a big deal for God, "And rejoice," how long? Forever, heaven is the place, the kingdom of God is the place. The eternal state is the place where you're just rejoicing forever. Some of you are like, I don't know if I could do that. You will, I'm telling you. You're gonna play hopscotch, you're gonna eat lollipops, you're gonna be awesome. Kids are gonna want to hang out with you. You're gonna be a fun time. I just believe that our picture of God and His kingdom are altogether wrong and they're not attractive because who wants to be with a cheerless God forever. I don't. You get to heaven, God's like, "I'm upset, ah." Forever? I didn't my option. It was hot so I'm not sure what to do. "Be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create "for behold, I create Jerusalem, a new

city "to be a city," of what? Joy, I don't know if you see a theme here. What's the theme? Joy, yeah, it seems like God's happy. "And her people will be a gladness," more joy. I told you last week, some people are like, God wants you to be happy, wants to be joyful, not... The Bible uses all these words interchangeably. Glad, cheerful, rejoicing. Hundreds of times, the Bible uses the word, rejoice, cheerfulness, gladness, happiness in the same verse. God's just like, it's so awesome. I need to use a bunch of words 'cause it's just so big and incredible and awesome that you can't get your mind around it. So we're gonna layer it up so you look forward to it. You guys are dead. Man, if the dead in Christ rise first, it might be us. What the heck? Man, okay. "I will," what? Who will rejoice? God says, "I will rejoice, in Jerusalem "and be glad in my people." God loves you, God likes you, God takes pleasure in you, God wants to be with you, God is glad to have you with Him forever. Let me just tell you this. When you show up at God's house for the party, He's not bummed that you're there. He's glad to see you. "And no more shall be heard in the sound of weeping, "crying or of distress." All that's over. 10 things in closing and some of you like, are you closing? Maybe, I'm not gonna lie to ya. Number one, most people, the strong statement. Most people wrongly view God. They view God as cheerless, as joyless, as sorrowful and as angry. The way that God relates to the non-Christian is totally different than the way that He relates to the Christian. For the Christian, our primary relationship with God is not one of His anger, His sorrow, His disappointment. It is instead marked by His joy, His pleasure and His cheerfulness. Don't let the picture of God for the enemies of God be your picture if you are a child of God. Number two, God the Father's, this will blow your mind. God's default mood is happiness. God doesn't wake up like, argh I got to stack people up like kindling. It's Tuesday, I'm very frustrated. God's primary mood is not anger or sorrow. Some of you didn't know that. Some of you see God as cheerful, domineering, overbearing, dictatorial, tyrant. And then you become like that, thinking that it's godly. God honors, God has cheer, God has joy, God throws parties. God has a party plan for you. God does have moments of sorrow and anger but let me tell you this, God's happiness is consistent. I think this is my, for those of you who are note takers, this is my third point. God's happiness is constant, His anger and sorrow are not. They're not. Before God made us, was God happy? Sure, when Jesus comes back, will He be happy? Sure, in the middle, there's some sorrow and anger but God's joy is constant. His sorrow and anger are not. His default disposition is happiness and joy. One of the reasons that people don't know and understand this, is because there's a word in the new Testament, it's the same word in the Greek New Testament that gets translated two different ways. In reference to human beings, this word is generally always translated cheer, joy, rejoice, glad. That same word in reference to God is for some curious reason translated blessed. It's the same word. God is cheerful, God is joyful, God is happy. Now I know, here's my next point. Some of you will say, but what about our sin? What about our sin? Here's what I would tell you. You're not that big of a deal. You're not such a big deal that God gets up and says how I feel today depends upon what Sally does. Sally disappointed me, my day is ruined. Okay, Sally, I love you but you're not that big of a deal. You are not the center of the universe. You are not the determiner of God's mood or emotion, if I could use that language, that ultimately, God has constant joy and occasional sorrow and anger but we're not a big enough deal to wreck all of His joy. Right now heaven, happy place. All the angels there, having a good time. Zero people there are bummed to be there. It's going good and it's gonna go good for the children of God forever. How about this

one? God, the Father's home is a culture of honor and happiness. In heaven, nobody's trying to unseat God or those who are put in positions of leadership and it's a place of joy. Here's where He's going. I believe that what we see in the apostle Paul is the father heart of God trying to bring the culture of God's house down into the church. Honor up there, there needs to be honor down here. There's joy up there, there needs to be joy down here. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done. Let's live kingdom down, not culture up. And God knows that if His culture can live in the church family led by a spiritual father like Paul, then what that will do, that will train and inform and educate and instruct all the fathers to go put the culture of the kingdom in their home. A culture of honor, where dad honors the children and says, I love you and I'm proud of you and I have hope for you and what God started in you, God will finish through you. It's an honor of his wife. You got a great mom, praise her for this. Thank her for that. It's a culture of honor and joy and here's what happens. The reason many of us do not want to be with our family during the Christmas season is because the mom and the dad, but starting with the dad establish a culture of cheerless dishonor. That's why some of you have an ulcer thinking about the holidays. No one wants to be in an environment of cheerless dishonor. Everyone wants to be in an environment of cheerful honor, Amen. The Father's house is a place of cheerful honor. This is true for the men and the women, the moms and the dads. But I just feel inclined in the spirit in praying for you this week to tell you men, you determine the culture of your home. You determine if there is honor or dishonor. You determine if there is cheerfulness or cheerlessness and it is such a great opportunity for us as men to say, you know what? I want the Father's house to show up at my house. I want the eternal party to show up for the Christmas holiday and what this may mean for some of you men, and I know I'm pushing, you're welcome. It's my second spiritual gift. My first is teaching so I'm gonna push ya. You may need to tell your kids or your wife, I'm sorry. You know what? The jabbing comments, the cheerlessness, the grumpiness, the complaining, the grumbling, the disputing. You know what? I lit that fire, I apologize, I ask forgiveness. I promise, I'm not gonna that this year. I'm gonna encourage people, I'm gonna love people, I'm gonna bless people. I'm gonna bring the Father's culture of honor and joy into this family, into this home, into this holiday. I'm just telling you, if you will do that, your kids are gonna wanna be around. They're not gonna just be in their room playing Fortnite. They're actually gonna come down and visit. When they grow older, they won't load up their car and drive away as far and as fast as they can. They'll still wanna be in relationship with you and once they have friends, they wanna bring them over and once they have a spouse, they wanna bring them over and when they have grandkids, they wanna bring them over. Some of you would wonder, why don't my kids hang out with me? Why don't my grandkids hang out with me? Your house may not have the same environment as the Father's house. And as a result, people don't run to it like they run to Him but we can repent of that. We can change that, we can replace that by the grace of God. I want you to think about how you can bring honor into the family environment this holiday season and I want you to think of how you can bring cheerfulness and joyfulness in and lemme give you one simple suggestion. Ask people. Ask your spouse, ask your kids. Hey, what do you wanna do, what would be fun? What are you looking forward to? What would make it awesome? And then start making plans, execute on those plans and make sure that the holidays feel like a series of parties, amen? And just so you know, this is what we're doing at the church. We just had the women's Christmas dinner, we had

a trip to Mexico I'll tell you about in a moment, we threw a party for a bunch of Mexican pastors and their families. Coming up, we have got a student party, then we've got a Christmas Eve party, you know what? December is practice for heaven month. We throw parties, we have fun. We go down slides, we're gonna have snow. We eat hot chocolate because it's in heaven. We also have s'mores because that's what manna meant in the old Testament, it meant Graham crackers. We believe that God is awesome, that heaven is awesome, that the family of God is made for joy and to have a good time, okay? All right, lemme pray, that's all I got. Alright, Father, God, thank you, thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you. You're a cheerful God, you're a joyful God, you're an enjoyable God. God, I love the fact that when it talks about your presence in the Bible, it talks about fullness of joy. We invite you, Holy Spirit, bring the fruit of the spirit to us. Love from the father and joy in the father. God, thank you that joy and happiness is not something that we need to create, it's something that you are and we can enter in and participate in your joy. We invite the joy of Jesus Christ into this room. We invite the joy of Jesus Christ into this season. We invite the joy of Jesus Christ into these families and homes. God, we're so happy we're loved, we're forgiven. We're blessed, we're adopted. We've got an eternal ticket to the party that never ends. God in the meantime, let us rejoice and be glad. Let the joy of the Lord be our strength to make it through this world until we get home and get joy forever in Jesus' name, amen.