

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Live With Genuine Joy
Philippians 4: 2-19

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

If possible, display a copy of Alexander McCall Smith's book **The Full Cupboard of Life** or another one of the books from the #1 Ladies Detective Agency series.

Bible Study Leader:

You may choose to look at the passages given which discuss the "book of life". Have the references written on slips of paper and give them to participants as the group gathers.

Have small piece of colored paper for use as you begin and end your session. Have a container such as a basket, tray or bowl for the papers.

If you will have teens to do their own application time at the end of your Bible study, then provide them with blank cards large enough for their activity. Make sure they have pens for writing.

Worship Time Leader:

Prepare the verses from Philippians 4 that are given at the end of the Worship Time materials. If possible, make a copy for each participant to read and to take home for meditating on during the week.

Music Sources:

Rejoice in the Lord Always, *The Worship Hymnal* # 586; CCLI # 15692

Thank You, Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* # 582; CCLI # 16763

Blessed Be Your Name, *The Worship Hymnal*; CCLI # 3798438

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***Live With Genuine Joy*****Focal Text**

Philippians 4: 2-19

Background Text

Philippians 4: 2-23

Main Idea

A life of genuine joy and contentment comes not from our external situation but from putting our faith in the Lord into practice.

Question to Explore

What brings genuine joy?

Teaching Aim

To help the church decide to put into practice at least one action from which true joy in life comes.

Gathering together:

Sing

Rejoice in the Lord Always, *The Worship Hymnal* # 586; CCLI # 15692

First thoughts:

Alexander McCall Smith has written a series of books revolving around the character of Precious Remotswe and the #1 Ladies Detective Agency. Although Mma. Remotswe and her assistant solve many “detective” issues for their clients, the books are fascinating for the descriptive passages about life in Botswana. Mma. Remotswe is a traditionally-built Botswanan woman who longs for the old Botswana ways of ordering life. Lovely passages which talk about people enjoying a cup of bush tea, sitting on their veranda and looking at acacia trees, or eating a properly cooked pumpkin are gentle reminders of how little it takes to bring true contentment. The fifth book in the series is entitled **The Full Cupboard of Life**. Today’s lesson could well use that same title. What is it about the Christian life that would cause us to view our life and say “I have a full cupboard of life?” What brings genuine joy and fulfilment to us?

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Live With Genuine Joy

Focal Text

Philippians 4: 2-19

Background Text

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Question to Explore

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To help the church decide to put into practice at least one action from which true joy in life comes.

Introduction to your personal study:

(As you begin the preparation for teaching this lesson, read the material given for the Gathering Time which is included here.)

Alexander McCall Smith has written a series of books revolving around the character of Precious Remotswe and the #1 Ladies Detective Agency. Although Mma. Remotswe and her assistant solve many “detective” issues for their clients, the books are fascinating for the descriptive passages about life in Botswana. Mma. Remotswe is a traditionally-built Botswanan woman who longs for the old Botswana ways of ordering life. Lovely passages which show people enjoying a cup of bush tea, sitting on their veranda and looking at acacia trees or eating a properly cooked pumpkin are gentle reminders of how little it takes to bring true contentment. The fifth book in the series is entitled ***The Full Cupboard of Life***. Today’s lesson could well use that same title.

What is it about the Christian life that would cause us to view our life and say “I have a full cupboard of life?” What brings genuine joy to us?

This writer was reading “*The Full Cupboard of Life*” on Mother’s Day. After a very meaningful home church worship experience, a lovely chat with her two oldest granddaughters who are now teenagers, a delicious meal, and long visit with a daughter and son-in-law and four other grandchildren, a lovely drive home looking out to the Rocky Mountains and enjoying the greening grass all led to an affirmation: **My cupboard of life is very full indeed.**

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

In this last chapter in the letter to the Philippians, Paul addresses the issues of unity in the church and then goes on to address how to find joy, how to avoid anxiety and how to develop characteristics which bring order and peace to life –both on an individual basis and as a church body.

Focusing on the Meaning:

In Chapter 4:2-3 Paul address the problem of disunity which existed between two members of the Philippian church. Some attention has been given to this in earlier studies, but it is well to consider again this disagreement. The Scripture reads ***“I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.”***

We remember that Paul’s initial ministry in Philippi was with a group of women meeting by the river. ***“On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there”*** (See Acts 16:11-15). Perhaps Euodia and Syntyche were in that group of women. There is no way to know that is true, but what we do know is that Paul addresses them directly, but non-critically. He does not try to determine who is right and who is wrong. He understands the difficulty of their resolving their differences and pleads with the church to help them. He has faith that they will reconcile their differences.

Paul expresses faith in the church’s ability to help the women. It is probably not a doctrinal issue because Paul would have felt free admonish the women and the church if it had dealt with doctrine. It was divisive enough that the church had written to Paul about it earlier. The fellowship and ministry of the church faced a major crisis.

This poignant snapshot in the midst of all of holy Scripture reminds us that relationships in the church which are broken affect the whole church body. We may wonder to what extent the efficacy of the church as a whole is diminished because there are so many broken relationships. Paul says, ***“I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche...”*** We would say that to one another. ‘I plead with you to forgive your brother or sister:’ and live in harmony.

Paul says that these women, along with Clement and the rest of his fellow workers have their names written in the book of life. Other references to the book of life include Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28; Psalm 139:16; Daniel 12:1; Luke 10:20; Revelation 3:5; Revelation 20:15 and Revelation 21:27. All these references to the book of life refer to God’s listing of the righteous ones. Paul, then, would affirm the two women and the others mentioned as being righteous. Anyone whose name is written in the book of life would not want to be a stumbling block to someone else’s finding Christ whose righteousness covers our sin. Yet that is what happens when Christians disagree. This is true whether we are referring to the larger body of Christians – fighting between denominations or individual disagreements which Christians have.

But Paul does not dwell on disagreement for this is a passage about rejoicing. Paul says, ***“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”*** He follows these words with ***“Let your gentleness be evident to all”***. This pairing of a rejoicing, happy, thankful heart and a gentle spirit and disposition is not hard to understand. When we are rejoicing; when we are thankful for God’s blessings – large and small, we treat others with gentleness. The gentle person does not insist on his rights, one commentator has said (Melick, R.C. “Philippians, Colossians and Philemon”, *The New American Commentary*, Volume 32, 1991). The person who is thankful for the “full cupboard of life” is not looking for ways to insist that he/she be given more.

Paul then states in verse 6-7 the wonderful promise that even in the darkest of times can sustain us. ***“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”***

Kathy and Jesse, a faithful ministry couple, have recently learned that Jesse suffers from ALS, more commonly known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. This progressive, often fatal, neurodegenerative disease quickly devastates a person’s body. Jesse and Kathy came to know the Lord as a young married couple. They have served as church planters, pastor, and now church planters again. They have four lovely daughters; three of whom are grown and married. They have probably wondered at the end of every month how the salary will stretch to cover the expenses. Yet they have found God faithful. Their many friends know that they will continue to find him faithful and we pray this prayer for them ***“May the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”***

Paul continues in verse 8 with a listing of attributes which we should desire to have in our lives. The very reading of this verse strengthens us and makes us want to live with these shining characteristics. ***“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – is anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things.***

Descriptions of these characteristics may be as follows:

True – truthfulness, dependability

Noble – worthy of respect, honor

Right – giving to God and people a justness that is worthy of them

Pure – holy in relation to God

Lovely – that which calls forth love. (This is the only time in the New Testament that this word is used).

Admirable – praiseworthy, attractive, likely not to offend. (This is the only time in the New Testament that this word is used).

Excellent – morally excellent (See 1 Peter 2:9 and 2 Peter 1, 3, 5 for another description of Christian virtues)

Praiseworthy – worthy of bringing praise to God (Melick, *The New American Commentary*, #32).

“Think about these things.” (verse 8) . This terse statement embodies much more than a momentary pause. We sometimes regret the “thin communication” which is so much a part of modern day life. We watch television news and see horrible images of disaster and war briefly shown in between the most trifling commercial breaks and we are immune to the real horror of what we have seen. We receive a dozen e-mails each day and much of it we delete with a quick click. Youth text message one other throughout the day, but may never have a serious conversation.

Paul is not talking about that kind of “thinking”. He is talking about giving serious attention to the concepts – so serious that they become a part of one’s daily actions. He is talking about the kind of serious thinking and involvement which causes us to question our current way of being and doing and make adjustments. We ask ourselves “Was that description of an event exactly like it was or was I embellishing the truth”; “Did I act justly and honestly in that business dealing?”; “Was that movie I watched alone last night pure? Was God there in the room with me?”; Are my actions such that they call forth love from those in my sphere of influence?” “Are the clothes I wear not likely to offend?”

In verse 9 Paul makes an extraordinary statement ***“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”*** This is either a very proud statement or it is a normative expectation of Christian leaders. All of us who lead or teach should be able to say to

our students – everything you have heard me say or do is worth your imitating. And although we may never say that to our students, it should be the guiding principle of our lives. If we are going to be a leader or a teacher, everything we do should be so noble that it can and should be repeated by our followers.

God's peace especially resides in those who have ordered their lives in accordance with God's will. This passage has helped us understand that when anxiety appears, the cure is prayer. When lives are disorderly, the cure is mental and physical discipline. (Melick, The New American Commentary, #32).

In verses 10-13 Paul discusses the gifts that the Philippian church has sent for his support. He is grateful for it because it represents their concern for him. But he stresses that he has learned contentment in all situations. This would refer back to his earlier admonition to ***“Rejoice in the Lord always”*** (verse 4).

Paul had stressed that he did not want to be financially dependent on the churches (see 1 Corinthians 9:3-18; 2 Corinthians 11:7-9; 12:14; 1 Thessalonians 2:9). However, when a church felt he was important enough to them to want to send help, he was grateful for that help.

Any serious Christian must deal with the tension between providing adequate food, housing, and clothing for his/her family and self and being caught up in the value system of the culture of which he/she is a part. As modern communication has allowed every part of the world to see the advertising done by Western countries, those cultures are caught up in “wanting”. Contentment may be replaced with a sense of needing more and more. Those Christians living in affluent countries must constantly ask themselves how they can learn contentment and have more to share with others.

In the context of being content with what he has Paul makes the statement of Philippians 4:13 ***“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”***

This has become a favourite verse for many Christians as they deal with difficult circumstances. But it is really a statement by Paul that he does not have extraordinary powers within himself to be content in any and every situation. It is Christ who strengthens him. Christ's strength is available to us just as it was available to Paul.

As Paul completes his letter, he thanks the Philippian church for their gifts to him and comments that they are ***“a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.”*** We would long for each of our gifts to the Lord to be that as well.

Paul then states a promise to the Philippian church which we may claim as well. ***“And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus”*** (verse 19).

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

This brief passage stresses harmony between Christian believers, a thankful and rejoicing heart, character issues which we should strive to achieve and the promise of peace. That is an amazing amount of help for living the Christian life in 21 brief verses. As you teach, may you passionately share the importance of these elements for Godly living.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Live With Genuine Joy

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Philippians 4: 2-19

Background Text

Philippians 4: 2-23

Main Idea

A life of genuine joy and contentment comes not from our external situation but from putting our faith in the Lord into practice.

Question to Explore

What brings genuine joy?

Teaching Aim

To help the church decide to put into practice at least one action from which true joy in life comes.

Connect with Life:

Give each participant a small piece of colored paper.

Ask them to write one thing which brought them joy this week. Place the paper in a colorful basket, tray, or bowl.

Guide the Study:

Remind the group again: Greek and Hebrew names are often difficult to say correctly in the alphabets of other languages. Therefore, do not be embarrassed if you pronounce

them differently than another person—or have difficulty pronouncing them at all in your own language.

Have someone read the entire Bible passage for today: Philippians 4:2-19.

Ask another person to read only verses 2-3.

Request the group to describe what they think about Euodia and Syntyche's relationship to one another.

Have someone read Acts 16: 11-15.

Tell them: We cannot know if Euodia and Syntyche were part of that original group of women, but we do sense from the passage that they were both known by Paul.

Present the following questions:

Whose side does Paul take in the argument?

What are they arguing about?

What does Paul encourage the women to do?

What does Paul want the church at Philippi to do?

Now follow with this question: What is meant by the "book of life"? (You may want to read the passages given in the background material. If you are going to do that, have the references written on slips of paper to be given out before the study begins.)

Involve the group in a discussion: How can we help one another when there is dissension between believers?

Have someone read verses 4-5.

Look for an answer: Why does Paul associate rejoicing and gentleness?

Have someone read verses 6-7.

Call for opinions: Does Paul mean we are to not worry about anything?

Add this: How do we incorporate this attitude into our life without appearing to be "super holy" or unconcerned about the huge issues which people face in their life.

State: This is one of those principles that we build into our lives when things are good for us so that when hard times come we can still believe it to be true.

Allow for people to share times when they were able to practice prayer and petition in a difficult situation.

Discuss among the group the concept of “**peace which transcends all understanding**”. Allow time for people to share how this has been their experience.

Read verse 8 together.

Now: Practice memorizing the Scripture together.

Discuss each word and what it may mean in daily lives.

Read verse 9

Comment that Paul is stating a reality for Christian leaders and teachers.

Share: What we do and say should be those things we want our followers to do and say.

Have someone read verses 10-19.

Comment on Paul’s appreciation for the gifts the Philippian church had sent.

Have someone read verses 11-13.

Ask the group to discuss this thought: How difficult is that concept to achieve in our lives.

Follow up: How did Paul achieve it? (see verse 13)?

Invite answers: How does Paul describe the gifts which the Philippians gave? (a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God)

Again open a discussion: How do we strive to make our gifts a fragrant offering and an acceptable sacrifice?

Add: Are our gifts any sacrifice at all?

Finally, ask: What is the promise given in verse 19? (God will meet all your needs)

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Hand out more slips of colored paper and ask the participants to add others things which have brought them joy recently.

Have everyone choose a piece of paper from those collected and read what is written to the group.

Close with someone praying, thanking God for His good gifts for us and our joy as His children in so many things in life.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Live With Genuine Joy

Philippians 4:2-19

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Memorize for Life

Choose to spend time memorizing either verses 6-7 or verse 8. Either verse will be helpful all the rest of your life.

Have small cards available to write out the Scripture so that you can review it throughout the week.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Live With Genuine Joy***
Philippians 4:2-19**Beginning the Service:**

Sing:

Thank You, Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* # 582; CCLI # 16763

Blessed Be Your Name, *The Worship Hymnal*; CCLI # 3798438

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

Over the past 30 years, Jiangjin, China has transitioned from being a county to a city to a district within the massive municipality of Chongqing. Unfortunately, the lostness of Jiangjin has not seen such dramatic change. Fewer than 1 percent of Jiangjin's 1.5 million people believe in Jesus Christ.

Residents prefer to use their local dialect instead of the officially recognized Mandarin language. They also relish eating the super-spicy Chongqing hot pot that is famous across China. Visitors from crowded, noisy urban areas enjoy the natural beauty and quiet surroundings of Jiangjin where waterfalls, streams, lakes, and dense forests can be found.

Our Father, may the people of Jiangjin, with its ever changing identity, find their identity as children of God as they place their faith in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to

give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

The Full Cupboard of Life

We will continue borrowing Alexander McCall Smith's vivid picture of the full cupboard of life. Our overall concept for learning and worship has been "Live with Genuine Joy". The full cupboard of life symbolizes that ability to appreciate and validate the many things which aid us to live with genuine joy. Paul, in the passage we are considering today – Philippians 4:2.19 has expressed several things that might need to be in our cupboard of life.

First, he addresses the issue of living in harmony with others. All over the world there is dissension and war. There are warring factions of the same religious background; there are warring tribes within national boundaries; there are members of families who quarrel with one another and there are people within churches who cannot tolerate other church members. "Peace on earth, goodwill to men" seems to be only a phrase we say at Christmas. We don't really believe it can happen and we are basically not willing to make the changes that are necessary for it to happen even in our small sphere of influence.

Euodia and Syntyche were probably good friends at one time. They may have helped establish the church at Philippi. Perhaps their children had played together. Maybe they worked in preparing food for a church event. Perhaps they had been prayer partners at one time. But some issue had come between them and they have not yet been able to **"agree with each other in the Lord"** (verse 3).

If we are to enjoy the full cupboard of life, we must ask the Lord to enable us to forgive those who have hurt us. They most likely will be family members, good friends, co-workers or fellow church members with whom we, at one time, shared many good things. **"I plead with you to agree with each other in the Lord"** Paul says to us down through the ages.

A second aspect of the full cupboard of life is the ability to have a thankful heart. Few things will enable us to live more abundantly than the ability to be thankful for what we have. This would be related to our giving of gifts to others. Paul speaks of the gifts the Philippian church gave to him as being **"a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God."** Thankfulness allows generosity because we have understood, at least in some measure, the promise that **"my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."**

A final aspect of the full cupboard of life is the filling of our thoughts and heart with **"whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable"**. That is quite a list of wonderful things which we can think about, do and achieve.

Call to Commitment:

Our intellectual pursuits should lead us to truth and nobility. Our daily actions should be centered on doing right – in the small and big affairs of our day. Our recreational activities – books we read, movies we see, games we play should be pure. Every day we should concentrate of the lovely things around us – the broad blue sky, the early crocus, the snow-covered mountain in the distance, the soft breeze, the greening of the grass, the picture painted by a friend, the peaceful home. These are treasures which cannot be taken away.

Let's recommit ourselves to all these principles that concerned Paul. We must never allow ourselves or our church to fall into the hands of Satan by letting him tempt us into permitting our human nature to overwhelm us and create potential disaster for our small body of Christian believers.

Concluding the Service:

Note to leader: Read together the following verses from today's study. Print these on paper so that each person can take them home to read during the week. Copy from the final page of this session.

Verses taken from Philippians 4

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

"Let Your gentleness be evident to all."

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

"May the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – is anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things."

"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

"a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God."

"My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

Make enough copies for your church to all read at the close of the day's worship time.

Verses taken from Philippians 4

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"

"Let Your gentleness be evident to all."

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

"May the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

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"a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God."

"My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."