



Wisdom from the Word

A Mind Set on Higher Things

Have you ever read letters that someone else wrote to another person or family? The New Testament lets us look into the lives of the first “parents” of the Christian faith who wrote to communities of new Christians. These letters address trials, hardships, famine, persecution, and even plagues those communities were experiencing. Although those events might not be part of our reality, these ancient words can spiritually mentor us in facing obstacles, suffering, and troubles.

The apostle Paul wrote this letter that we call Philippians to people in the city of Philippi, a former army colony of Rome composed mainly of retired soldiers and Roman citizens. Paul, in prison when he wrote this letter, had received gifts and help from the Philippian Christians via a friend, Epaphroditus, who almost died on his journey to reach Paul. Paul wanted to thank the Philippian Christians, encourage them, call out false teaching, and inspire these believers to pursue unity in Christ.

HEARING THE WORD

Read Philippians 4:4-13 (NIV):

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard

your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 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. 10 I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

- What four types of practices or spiritual rhythms does Paul encourage the Philippian Christians to engage with (see verses 4, 6, 8, and 9)?
- Which of these seems easiest to you; which sounds hard or perplexing?
- What specific outcomes does Paul state will result if we engage in these practices?
- Looking at the range of circumstances Paul said he had encountered in verses 12-13, what resonates with you?

Find this and other downloadable Bible studies on the NCF website: <https://ncf-jcn.org/resource/bible-study-materials>. Use these on your own or with other nurses or students.

- What would contentment (verse 11) look like in the daily life of a follower of Jesus?

APPLICATION

Anxiety can feel like a song stuck on repeat. It plays a chorus of worry again and again: worry about a current hardship, family, finances, work. Paul recommends a brilliant idea: Purposely change the song, and your mindset will also change as you call to mind good things (v. 8) and rejoice in the Lord (v. 4).

- Share something that you're thankful for. Intentionally keep calling it to mind this week. Reflect at the end of the week on what resulted from this practice.

The other important practice in hard times is to live like Jesus did. Jesus is who Paul imitated. Paul and the Philippian believers also lived by this truth: In God's economy, you don't go into scarcity by being generous—you actually experience joy and deeper trust that God will look out for you.

- Ponder this. Ask God to bring to mind someone to whom you can extend forgiveness, generosity, peace, hope, kindness, or encouragement. Do it this week.
- Once you've practiced the mindset of a rejoicing, thankful attitude this week and following God's prompting to generously give goodness to someone as Jesus would do, keep playing this “song” of a positive, God-centered mindset. 🌱🌱