

SCRIPTURES FOR 7/1/07 LIFEGROUP LESSON

Philippians 1:18-30

18But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. 20I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

27Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel 28without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. 29For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, 30since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

NOTE TO LEADER: There is a lot of material here. Familiarize yourself with it so you know which stuff you are most comfortable with and what you will cut if you get short on time. Try to keep the lesson/discussion 20-30 minutes in length. Good luck and let me know if you have any questions. - Ed



JOY in the Journey: The Real Joy (part 2)

Jeff Browning

NOTE TO LEADERS: All items in *italics* are for your information and not designed to be read aloud.

OPENING:

ICEBREAKER or GET YA THINKIN' QUESTION: _____

OPENING PRAYER NOTES: _____

INTRODUCTION:

Jeff suggested that it is not **WHAT** you know that brings joy, but **WHO** you know.

Q: What did he mean by that? (*knowing Jesus can trump your circumstances*) Do you agree?

APPLICATION:

Our Declaration of Independence suggests that we have certain inalienable rights (ones that can't be taken away), including "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Q: Now, we have already established that "happiness" is not the same thing as "joy," because happiness is a response to circumstances, but joy is a response to your relationship with God, but which do you think the founding fathers were talking about here – joy or happiness? (*pursuit implies choice, but does it imply choosing your circumstances or your responses? discuss*)

**PAUL COULD HAVE REAL JOY, IN THE FACE OF TROUBLE, NO MATTER THE MOTIVE, AND...
...IN SPITE OF THE PROSPECT OF DEATH and IN THE FACE OF LIFE**

(*have someone read Philippians 1:20-26*) Paul suggests that either life or death would be fine as long as God is glorified, then he lists benefits and liabilities inherent in his death.

Q: What does he mean, "to live is Christ?" (*if he keeps living he will work for the kingdom*)

Q: What benefits does he list or imply? (*be with Jesus, free from struggle [hassles, limitations, pain, frustration]*)

Q: What liabilities does he list or imply? (*no more fruit bearing, leaving those who need him, affect spiritual growth of others [e.g., Roman guards, etc.], no more travels*)

He seems to see evidence that God would rather he live for some time longer, but Paul laments that...

Q: Do you see a difference between Paul's lament ("I desire to depart and be with Christ") and a death wish or suicidal tendencies? What's the difference? (*he doesn't want to die to get away from the world or to show how tough he is, but rather to be with Jesus*)
The Message translates v. 22 as, "As long as I'm alive in this body, there is good work for me to do." And isn't that why we are all still here? He could have returned any time and taken us all home, but there is obviously still work to be done.

(*have someone read Philippians 1:27-30*) Consequently, we are to contend for the faith and conduct ourselves as worthy of Christ's sacrifice, not fearing persecution or breaking under the strains of life, but instead following Paul's example, if for no other reason than that those who persecute you will be destroyed while you are saved. Kinda negative, but true...

ACTIVITY: Reviewing this challenge, pray for your LIFEGROUP and the church about an appropriate response to the challenge; how could you better conduct yourself; how could the church better contend for the faith, etc.

CONCLUSION:

Jeff suggests that this implies four things: 1. We are not alone, 2. We are promised the victory, 3. We are called to suffer, and 4. We are in good company.

Q: Does this excite you or make you nervous? Be honest...

Q: Consider the dilemmas you face; who is to blame for them – you or something outside yourself? Are you sure?

Q: Either way, what choices can you make to alter and get control of those influences?

Next week: Humility

OTHER ACTIVITIES:

GROUP NEEDS: _____ SHUT-IN MINISTRY: _____

WHO'S LEADING...

THIS WEEK: WORSHIP: _____ PRAYER: _____

NEXT WEEK: WORSHIP: _____ PRAYER: _____