



INTRODUCTION

Part 2 - Focus on the Future, the Heavenly, and the Good

Look around. This world is a mess: tragedies, injustice, pain and suffering, greed, lovelessness, hopelessness, brokenness. *How is it possible to be joyful, happy or thankful in the midst of all this?* Part of the answer relates to our focus. *Thx* will help us see that it's possible to be thankful if we are looking in the right places.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of some of the things that “steal” your joy? Why do you think we allow things to rob us of our joy and happiness?
2. On the first week of the series, the point was made that we need to focus on Christ and not our circumstances. What would it look like if we truly focused on Christ? What are some things that could help us do that?
3. Read Philippians 3:12-15. Why is it important that we not focus on the past—regardless of whether the past was good or bad? Assuming Paul is talking about a race in these verses, what can happen if a runner looks back during the race? What goal do you think Paul was reaching for?
4. Read Philippians 3:17-21 and 1 John 2:15-17. What do you think it means to “love the world” or to “focus on earthly things?” How would we act differently if we realized our true citizenship was in heaven? How might we experience more joy and happiness if we focused on our heavenly citizenship?
5. Read Philippians 4:8. Why do you think it is so easy for us to focus on the negative, the false, and the less honorable things? How does our society reinforce a negative outlook on life?
6. How might focusing on the things mentioned in Philippians 4:8 lead to a more encouraging life? What are some steps we could take to help us focus more on these things and not the other things that tend to occupy our thoughts?
7. Read Philippians 2:14-16. Why is it important that Christians maintain a joyful attitude?
8. How might you apply this lesson to your life?

APPLICATION

Many of us lack joy because we focus on the wrong things. If we allow them, our thoughts can make us miserable—especially when we leave God out of our lives, or we live as though there is no God. When we remember that God is with us and He can help us, it changes us and our perception of our circumstances.

In the book of Philippians, Paul talked quite a bit about our focus. The book is short, but Paul mentions *joy, rejoicing or being glad* 15 times. Paul also discusses how we should focus on the future and not the past, how we should focus on the heavenly and not the things of this earth, and he encourages us to focus on the good and not the bad. Paul was a man who—despite great hardships, imprisonment and trials—learned to be content, regardless of his circumstances. And so can we. Our focus matters.

KEY VERSES

Philippians 3:12-15
Philippians 3:17-21
1 John 2:15-17
Philippians 4:8
Philippians 2:14-16