

S T U D Y G U I D E



STEVEN J. LAWSON

REJOICE

IN THE

LORD

PAUL'S LETTER
TO THE PHILIPPIANS

S T U D Y G U I D E

Rejoice in the Lord

Paul's Letter to the Philippians

Steven J. Lawson



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

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Introduction

From beginning to end, the Christian life is an invitation to experience the joy of the Lord. To know Jesus is to encounter joy in its purest form. The world can neither give joy nor take it away. Indeed, those who know Jesus can experience vibrant joy even on the darkest of days. This is certainly true of the Apostle Paul, who penned his most joyful letter from the drab environment of his jail cell. In this teaching series, Dr. Steven J. Lawson takes a detailed look at Philippians, Paul's epistle of joy. Join Dr. Lawson on this journey and discover, verse by verse, how the joy of the Lord can transform your life.

This study guide is a companion to the video teaching series. Whether you are using the DVDs, streaming the videos on Ligonier.org, or going through the course in Ligonier Connect, this resource is designed to help you make the most of the learning experience. For each message in the series, there is a corresponding lesson in this guide. Here is what you will find in each lesson:

INTRODUCTION	<p>The introduction is a brief paragraph that summarizes the content covered in the lecture and considered in the study guide lesson.</p> <p>How to use: Use the introduction to each lesson to get a sense of the big picture before watching the video. Refer to these statements as you work through the study guide to remind yourself of what you have already covered and where you are headed.</p>
LEARNING GOALS	<p>The learning goals are the knowledge and skills that the study guide lesson will endeavor to equip you with as you work through the lecture content.</p> <p>How to use: Familiarize yourself with the goals of each lesson before engaging its contents. Keeping the overall purpose in mind as you watch each video and reflect on or discuss the questions will help you get the most out of each lesson.</p>
KEY IDEAS	<p>The key ideas are the major points or takeaways from the lecture.</p> <p>How to use: Use these ideas to prepare yourself for each lesson and to review previous lessons. They describe specifically the knowledge that each lecture is communicating.</p>

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS	<p>The questions are the guided reflection and/or discussion component of the lesson that is intended to help you prepare for, process, and organize what you are learning.</p> <p>How to use: Reflect on individually or discuss in a group the questions in the order in which they appear in the lesson. The time stamps in the right margin indicate where the answers to questions during the video can be found.</p>
PRAYER	<p>The prayer section offers suggestions for how to close the lesson in prayer with respect to what was taught in the lecture.</p> <p>How to use: Consider using each lesson's prayer section as a guide to personal or group prayer. These sections follow the ACTS prayer model, which you can learn more about in R.C. Sproul's Crucial Questions booklet <i>Does Prayer Change Things?</i> This helpful guide is available as a free e-book at Ligonier.org.</p>
REVIEW QUIZ	<p>The review quiz is a set of six multiple-choice questions that appears at the end of each lesson.</p> <p>How to use: Use each quiz to check your comprehension and memory of the major points covered in each lecture. It will be most beneficial to your learning if you take a lesson's quiz either sometime between lessons or just before you begin the next lesson in the study guide.</p>
ANSWER KEY	<p>The answer key provides explanations for the reflection and discussion questions and answers to the multiple-choice questions in the review quiz.</p> <p>How to use: Use the answer key to check your own answers or when you do not know the answer. Note: Do not give in too quickly; struggling for a few moments to recall an answer reinforces it in your mind.</p>

Study Schedules

The following table suggests four plans for working through the *Rejoice in the Lord* video teaching series and this companion study guide. Whether you are going through this series on your own or with a group, these schedules should help you plan your study path.

	Extended 44-Week Plan	Standard 42-Week Plan	Abbreviated 21-Week Plan	Intensive 14-Week Plan
Week	Lesson			
1	*	1	1 & 2	1-3
2	1	2	3 & 4	4-6
3	2	3	5 & 6	7-9
4	3	4	7 & 8	10-12
5	4	5	9 & 10	13-15
6	5	6	11 & 12	16-18
7	6	7	13 & 14	19-21
8	7	8	15 & 16	22-24
9	8	9	17 & 18	25-27
10	9	10	19 & 20	28-30
11	10	11	21 & 22	31-33
12	11	12	23 & 24	34-36
13	12	13	25 & 26	37-39
14	13	14	27 & 28	40-42
15	14	15	29 & 30	
16	15	16	31 & 32	
17	16	17	33 & 34	
18	17	18	35 & 36	
19	18	19	37 & 38	

	Extended 44-Week Plan	Standard 42-Week Plan	Abbreviated 21-Week Plan	Intensive 14-Week Plan
Week	Lesson			
20	19	20	39 & 40	
21	20	21	41 & 42	
22	21	22		
23	22	23		
24	23	24		
25	24	25		
26	25	26		
27	26	27		
28	27	28		
29	28	29		
30	29	30		
31	30	31		
32	31	32		
33	32	33		
34	33	34		
35	34	35		
36	35	36		
37	36	37		
38	37	38		
39	38	39		
40	39	40		
41	40	41		
42	41	42		
43	42			
44	*			

* For these weeks, rather than completing lessons, spend your time discussing and praying about your learning goals for the study (the first week) and the most valuable takeaways from the study (the last week).

A Letter of Joy

INTRODUCTION

As the Apostle Paul took up his pen to write a letter to the church in Philippi, many topics would have been worthy of his attention. He might have written a theological treatise. He could have composed a diatribe against false teaching. He may have been expected to pen a defense of his ministry in response to his imprisonment. Of all the things that Paul might have said, he chose to write about joy. In this lesson, Dr. Lawson identifies this concept of joy as the overarching theme of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Though this theme may seem unlikely in light of Paul's circumstances and the Philippians' struggles, this letter stands as a powerful statement that true, lasting joy is available to all who know Jesus Christ.

LEARNING GOALS

When you have finished this lesson, you should be able to:

- Describe how the theme of joy permeates Paul's letter to the Philippians
- Identify specific challenges that confronted Paul and the Philippian believers when this letter was written
- Articulate how believers today can experience true joy even in times of trial and hardship

KEY IDEAS

- The Apostle Paul is the most unlikely author of a letter about joy.
- The Philippian believers are the most unlikely recipients of a letter about joy.
- Even amid great adversity, those who know Christ Jesus can experience abundant joy in the Lord.

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

What Do You Think?

Take a moment to answer the following questions. They will prepare you for the lecture.

- How would you define *happiness* and *joy*? How are they similar and different?
- When have you experienced a moment of true joy in your life? Where does joy come from?

Scripture Reading

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

—Philippians 4:4

- In what circumstances are believers to rejoice? Why is this significant?

During the Video

Answer the following questions while you watch the video. They will guide you through the lecture.

The Most Unlikely Book

0:00–12:54

- How does Dr. Lawson describe the distinction between happiness and joy?
- Why is Paul an unlikely person to be writing about joy?
- Why are the Philippians unlikely recipients of a letter about joy?

The Most Abundant Supply

12:54–23:34

- What is the relationship of each person of the Trinity to the joy that believers experience? What does it mean to say that joy is found in Jesus Christ?

- Why does Paul refer to the Philippian believers as his joy?

After the Video

Answer the following questions after you have finished the lecture. They will help you identify and summarize the major points.

- Can the world give joy or take it away? Explain your answer.

If you are in a group, have the members discuss the difference between the world's understanding of joy and the Bible's description of joy. Ask: How has this lesson challenged your assumptions about joy?

- What is Paul referring to when he talks about the joy of Christ?

If you are in a group, have the members identify and discuss moments in the ministry of Jesus when joy was evident in His life.

- Dr. Lawson pointed out that we can still know the joy of the Lord in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death. How is this possible?

If you are in a group, have each member identify a time when he or she has experienced joy in spite of difficult circumstances. Ask: How did God bring about joy in that situation?

PRAYER

Commit what you have learned from God's Word in this lesson to prayer.

- Praise God for making you in His image to experience joy as He does.
- Confess the areas where you struggle to live a joyful life on account of sin.
- Thank God for granting you access to the deep reservoirs of joy that are found in Christ Jesus.
- Ask God to enlarge your joy as you grow in your relationship with Him.

REVIEW QUIZ

Use these multiple-choice questions to measure what you learned from this lesson.

1. How many times does Paul mention “joy” or “rejoicing” in the letter to the Philippians?
 - a. 5
 - b. 9
 - c. 14
 - d. 23
2. Approximately how long did Paul's imprisonment in Rome last?
 - a. 6 months
 - b. 12 months
 - c. 18 months
 - d. 24 months
3. Conflict between which two individuals created tensions for the Philippian church?
 - a. Barnabas and Paul
 - b. Euodia and Syntyche
 - c. Lydia and Eunice
 - d. Timothy and Epaphroditus
4. Which of the following best describes Paul's response to his imprisonment?
 - a. Paul became angry over his mistreatment.
 - b. Paul descended into a severe depression.
 - c. Paul filed a formal complaint with the Roman authorities.
 - d. Paul rejoiced in the Lord.
5. The joy that believers experience is the very joy that Jesus Himself experienced.
 - a. True
 - b. False
6. Christ's joy faltered briefly in anticipation of the death that He would endure on the cross.
 - a. True
 - b. False

Answer Key—A Letter of Joy

REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before the Video

What Do You Think?

These are personal questions. The answers should be based on your own knowledge and experience.

Scripture Reading

- In what circumstances are believers to rejoice? Why is this significant?

In this short verse, Paul instructs believers to rejoice in the Lord always. These instructions are significant, first, because they reveal that the believer's true joy is found "in the Lord." Through union with Jesus Christ, the Christian receives all that is needed to experience true joy. Second, believers are to rejoice "always." The true joy that is found in the Lord is not contingent on the believer's external circumstances; rather, it is available at all times and under all circumstances.

During the Video

The Most Unlikely Book

- How does Dr. Lawson describe the distinction between happiness and joy?

Dr. Lawson pointed out that happiness is dependent on events or circumstances in life. Therefore, happiness is conditional and temporary, coming and going based on current experiences. Joy, on the other hand, stems from a spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ. It is a deep, abiding confidence and contentment in the Lord that does not depend on circumstances. Therefore, joy can endure even in the most difficult situations.

- Why is Paul an unlikely person to be writing about joy?

Paul is an unlikely author of a letter about joy in part because he is enduring two years of imprisonment. Additionally, he is awaiting a trial before Caesar that could result in his execution. Rather than being able to move about the city freely and preach to crowds in the open air, Paul is confined to house arrest and chained to Roman guards at all times. Moreover, he has received word from Epaphroditus that the church at Philippi is beset by division and controversy. All these factors would have made joy difficult for Paul if joy were contingent on his circumstances instead of found in Christ Jesus.

- Why are the Philippians unlikely recipients of a letter about joy?

The church in Philippi that Paul is exhorting to rejoice is suffering division and

disunity as a result of a conflict between two of its prominent women, Euodia and Syntyche. Additionally, the false teaching of the Judaizers and libertarians has begun to infiltrate the congregation, undermining their beliefs and their morality. Moreover, this church is also experiencing persecution for its faith in Jesus. All these factors combine to make the Philippian believers unlikely recipients of a letter about joy.

The Most Abundant Supply

- What is the relationship of each person of the Trinity to the joy that believers experience? What does it mean to say that joy is found in Jesus Christ?

The joy that believers experience comes from God the Father, is mediated to believers through Jesus Christ, and is applied to believers by the Holy Spirit. To say that joy is found in Jesus Christ is to affirm both that all joy is found in Jesus Christ and that true joy is found only in Jesus Christ. Those who are united to Jesus experience galaxies of joy in knowing Him, loving Him, living for Him, obeying Him, and witnessing for Him.

- Why does Paul refer to the Philippian believers as his joy?

Paul refers to the Philippian believers in Philippians 4:1 as his “joy and crown” because he sees Christ in them. He has seen them come to faith amid extraordinary circumstances in Acts 16. Paul is aware of the work that Christ has done in these believers to make them trophies of His grace, and they are a joy to Paul because he knows that it is Jesus Christ who lives within them.

After the Video

- Can the world give joy or take it away? Explain your answer.

Dr. Lawson stated that joy is found in the Lord and comes from a spiritual relationship with Jesus Christ. Unlike happiness, which is contingent on life’s circumstances, joy need not falter in moments of hardship because Jesus Christ, who is the source of the believer’s joy, cannot be shaken. Therefore, since joy does not originate from the world, the world is powerless to take it away. Those who find their rest in Christ Jesus can experience true joy even in the most difficult circumstances.

- What is Paul referring to when he talks about the joy of Christ?

While the phrase “the joy of Christ” could refer generally to the joy that believers experience in the Lord, Paul has in mind the particular joy that Jesus has experienced personally. Through union with Christ, believers can experience the very joy that Jesus had. Even in the most difficult of times, joy bubbled up in the heart of Christ. Hebrews 12:2 speaks of the joy that was set before Jesus in His redemptive work and that He experiences even now at the Father’s side.

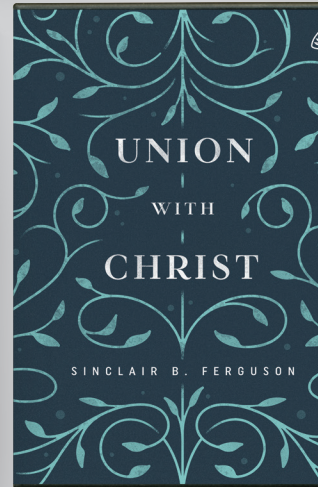
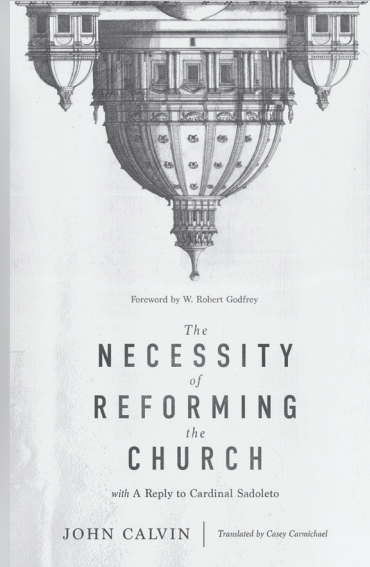
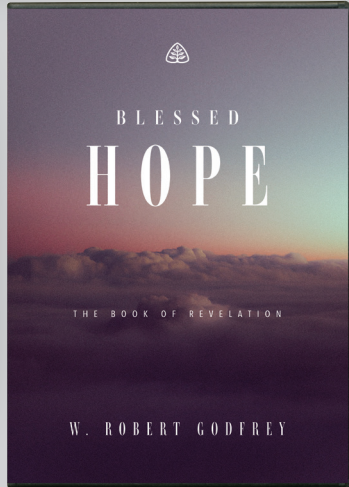
- Dr. Lawson pointed out that we can still know the joy of the Lord in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death. How is this possible?

Dr. Lawson affirmed that it is in the midst of our most difficult times that we can still know the joy of the Lord. When the psalmist speaks of the valley of the shadow of death in Psalm 23:4, he affirms that there is no reason to fear because God remains with His people even in the most difficult of places. Joy is found where the presence of Christ is. Therefore, believers can know the joy of Christ even in the darkest of times.

REVIEW QUIZ

1. **C.**
Within the four chapters of his letter to the Philippian church, Paul mentions the word “rejoice” nine times and the word “joy” five times, making a total of fourteen references to the concept of joy in this short letter.
2. **D.**
Paul composed the epistle to the Philippians during his period of house arrest in Rome, which lasted approximately two years.
3. **B.**
In Philippians 4:2, Paul refers to Euodia and Syntyche by name. Conflict between these two prominent women was beginning to spread and create a dangerous division within the church.
4. **D.**
Even though Paul was confined to prison for two years, he did not grow bitter, whine, or complain; rather, he chose to rejoice in the Lord. He rejoiced in spite of his unfavorable circumstances.
5. **A.**
As Dr. Lawson pointed out, Christians today have access to the very joy that Christ experienced. It is supernaturally deep, abundantly supplied, and freely given to believers.
6. **B.**
On the night He was betrayed, Jesus still had joy in His heart. Hebrews 12:2 confirms that He willingly endured the agony of the cross for the sake of the joy set before Him.

We want to see men and women around the world connect
the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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