

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

FEBRUARY 25 - MARCH 1, 2019

TOU

SERMON SERIES

A Study of Philippians

MONDAY

Galatians 5:13-26

“You, my brothers and sisters, are called to be free” (v. 13). That is how the passage on the fruits of the Spirit begins, and I think that is significant. Many times I have read this passage and skipped over this part, turning to the fruits that I want to see in my life and focusing on them. However, they all start with freedom, as this passage shows us.

We are called to be free. It is out of that amazing freedom that we want to live for the God who freed us, manifesting these fruits in our lives in order to please and glorify Him. Too often I have missed this point. Too often I have tried to incorporate the fruits of love, joy, peace, and patience on my own and with my own effort. Today I want to take a deep breath and realize that God has set me free, and He is truly the only One who can bring these fruits into fullness in my life.

I am not by any means saying it is wrong to work on becoming more loving or kind. However, if this work is coming from only our own effort, we will find ourselves worn out and tired and, honestly, not genuinely loving or kind after all. This week we focus on joy—real, lasting joy. Not happiness that is fleeting and only dependent on circumstances—JOY. Joy is something that does not depend

on our circumstances, but depends on the God who is outside of those circumstances working everything according to His perfect will and plan.

So, I think this is a good place to start: remembering the freedom to which we were called. As we try to incorporate joy into our lives, we have to remember that it does not come of ourselves. It comes from the God who sets us free and is the ultimate perspective in our lives. When things look confusing, difficult, and completely out of control, joy comes from knowing that our God is steady and is working no matter what it seems to be. Lord, thank You for being our source of joy and teaching us how to love. You have set us free. Help us to rely on You this week.

QUESTION

On what circumstance, situation, or relationship do you need the Lord to give you His perspective so that you can find joy?

PRAYER FOR CHI ALPHA MINISTRY/BRANDON AND KENDRA KERSTON

Pray for Brandon and Kendra's ministry with Chi Alpha, whose mission is to reconcile college students to Jesus Christ, transforming the university, the marketplace, and the world. Pray that students would be empowered to be leaders for Jesus by being trained to lead small groups, worship nights, community events, and much more.

TUESDAY

James 1: 1-12

This passage on joy has run through my mind many times over the past year. I have been trying to be a more joyful person who doesn't allow my circumstances to determine the joy that I will have. However, I have realized that "really trying" to be joyful is not enough. I can't force myself to be joyful—I have to ask God over and over again to change my heart and shift my perspective from my circumstances and rely on the joy of the Lord to be my strength. If I am just trying to force joy into my life, it will not be genuine at all.

In the midst of our trials, joy does not come naturally. We want things to go the way we want them to go. We want our prayers answered in the way we ask for them to be answered. We want to believe that we have some semblance of control over our own lives. However, this passage contradicts those ideas. Joy comes not from trying, not from controlling, but by releasing. Joy comes from trusting that God is the One who should have control and actually has our best interest at heart. When that fully sinks into our very being, then we can have joy as we step back and shift our perspective—seeing that God is actually using our trials to grow our faith and strengthen us to maturity.

Of course, hindsight is 20/20. When I look back on the trials that I have faced in the past, I can see how God's hand was in all of it. I can see from a different perspective now. I can see that God did

care, He was there, and I could trust Him. If only I can remember that for the future! I don't know about you, but I do not want to be like that wave—tossing back and forth and never being grounded or steady. I want to stand on a firm foundation even when the waves hit harder than expected. I can stand on the foundation of my steady Savior.

So, let's remember the times when God has been faithful in the past. Let's release our plans, our worries, our grip on our circumstances to the One who has the ultimate perspective and can be trusted.

QUESTION

Where has God been faithful to you in the past, and how can that experience help you to trust Him with what you face today?

PRAYER FOR CHI ALPHA MINISTRY/BRANDON AND KENDRA KERSTON

Pray that God would raise up a new generation of student leaders to carry on the mission of Chi Alpha. Each spring the Kerstons disciple and train new students to commit to a year of pioneering and leading small groups on campus.

WEDNESDAY

Jeremiah 29:10-14

Being homesick is something I don't enjoy. When I was younger, I hated leaving home for any reason just because of that horrible feeling of homesickness. You feel lost and completely alone. The image of falling into your own bed runs through your mind repeatedly.

Well, Jeremiah 29 was a letter written to a group of people who, I am sure, felt very homesick. Taken from their homes into the foreign land of Babylon, the exiles felt lost and perhaps abandoned by God. They were confused and longing for that feeling of familiarity and safety. Then they received this letter, and I can only imagine the hope it would have given them: God still had a plan for them. In fact, if they seek after Him, they will find Him. He will be their home in Babylon, their sure comfort even in an uncomfortable place.

How does this truth fit into our week focused on joy? Well, this week we have looked at having joy no matter what circumstances we face. True joy is not dependent on our circumstances because true joy knows that God has a plan. True joy knows that even when life looks bleak, our God is still in control. True joy is the ability to peek behind the curtain and see the God who works everything for our good. We can have joy because we know that the God in whom we put our trust has a plan for us.

I remember a time in my life when I felt like God's plan and mine were on such a different timeline that I was frustrated. I felt like my prayers were never going to be answered. It was at that moment that God reminded me that He was currently holding the entire world in place—I could trust Him with my small worry. He sees the beginning at the same time as He sees the end, and He is working it all out for our good.

So, as we seek after joy, let's run home. Our God is our sure safety and security, and He wants us to run to Him. He still has a plan for us, no matter how confusing life may feel right now. As we seek Him, we will find Him because He wants to be found by us.

QUESTION

What circumstance do you need to trust God with this week?

PRAYER FOR CHI ALPHA MINISTRY/BRANDON AND KENDRA KERSTON

The Kerstons are praying about starting two more chapters of Chi Alpha at UC San Diego and UC San Marcos within five years. Pray that the necessary staff members would be raised up to carry out this vision and that the timing would be within God's will.

THURSDAY

1 Peter 1:3-9

As believers, we are never promised that this life will be easy; in fact, we are promised to face suffering and trials of many kinds. Our faith, however, is refined by fire, just like gold is refined by fire. Our faith is precious and, therefore, as we go through trials and pain, it is refined and made even stronger, more able to withstand trials and persevere.

It is important to note that God doesn't want us to have to go through suffering and pain. On the contrary, He feels that suffering and pain alongside us. However, God, being who He is, is able to use our suffering, pain, and hardship to bring about something beautiful and precious. I know there may be many of you in this season of life right now. You may be in a valley low, in a season of suffering, and are struggling to see your way out of it. I hope this message encourages you in some way.

Our trials and suffering are only temporary. That is why we can rejoice. We have a future to look forward to, and we know that this life is not all there is. Also, we know that God has the ability to use the painful things in our lives in ways we never thought possible. Perhaps we will encounter someone else who needs encouragement when going through something similar.

Honestly, throughout my life, I have found God to use the hard times in my life to encourage others far more often than the good times. The hard times make me able to relate to others and help me to truly be able to say to them, “I know what you are going through.” The hard times give testimony that God carried me through. This is when we lean back, find that God is there to catch us, and allow Him to carry us. *That* is what strengthens and fortifies our faith, able to withstand trials and persevere—because we know we trusted God in the past and He came through, so we can trust Him again. Whether we are in a hard season or a good one, may we see how He can use our lives for His glory.

QUESTION

In whatever season of life you find yourself, how can you trust God more and lean on Him for strength?

PRAYER FOR CHI ALPHA MINISTRY/BRANDON AND KENDRA KERSTON

Please pray for wisdom and guidance for Brandon and Kendra and for their three girls: Peyton (12), Amber (10), Eden (7). Raising children in full-time ministry is a consistent balancing act of priorities. Their goal is to raise their children to love God and not to resent Him for taking away their parents.

FRIDAY

Philippians 4:10-23

Paul says that he has learned contentment in all circumstances. This is such a wonderful picture of joy as Paul writes this letter from prison. Today's society struggles with contentment, doesn't it? With social media we are able to see everything about everyone all the time. However, the things we see are usually only the good things. We find ourselves comparing our lives to the lives of our friends and family, and to people we don't even know! We think we do not have enough; we want more—if only I had that, I would be happy.

This week we are not talking about happiness. Happiness is so fleeting. To search after happiness would be such a futile thing. Instead, we should search after joy. Joy is what Paul has here in today's passage. It is that true, lasting joy we talked about Monday as we looked at Galatians and the freedom that we live in. See, that is the secret. Paul is free even in chains. That is why he can have joy—he sees beyond his present circumstances to the joy of the Lord.

Philippians 4:13 is a verse that I memorized as a young child and has been an important verse in my life: *"I can do all things through Him (Christ) who gives me strength."* Reading that in the context of this week's devo gives it new meaning, doesn't it? Paul isn't talking about being able to battle off a giant like David did, or sit in a pit of lions

like Daniel did. He is talking about contentment! He can be content, no matter the circumstances, with the strength of Christ! That is the kind of strength I want to search after—the strength that comes from joy. Joy that trusts our God to be in control and to have a perfect plan for our lives, no matter what we face. That is true strength.

Lord, thank You that the strength to be joyful and content comes from you. Thank You that we do not have to do it on our own. We trust and rely on You today and going forward to be our strength, our guide, and our safety.

QUESTION

Where do you need Christ's strength to help you to be content? How can you apply what you have learned about joy this week to your daily life?

PRAYER FOR CHI ALPHA MINISTRY/BRANDON AND KENDRA KERSTON

Please join Brandon and Kendra in thanking God for His provisions and praying for God's continued faithfulness in providing for their ministry budget, as well as their staff budgets, so that they can continue the work they are doing on the college campus.



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