

## Philippians 1:1-3 \_Unlocking Joy: Finding Strength and Unity When Life Throws Its Worst At You!Unlocking Joy - Finding Strength and Unity When Life Throws you Its Worst at you.

Good morning, Bridge Fellowship Church!

It's always a joy to gather with you, as we worship Jesus. Whether you've been a part of our church from the beginning or today is your first Sunday with us, let me say, "Welcome!" We're so glad you've chosen to join us.

My name is Douglas Humphrey, and I get to serve as the Lead Pastor here at BFC.

As I look around this room, I can't help but reflect on the goodness and faithfulness of God in bringing us together. Each of you matters to this church.

As we prepare to dive into God's Word, my prayer is that we would approach this time with open minds and receptive hearts. I believe God has something to say to each of us—not just collectively, but individually.

I would argue that joy is the single greatest tool we have in our toolbox to get through this thing called life with our sanity and dignity intact. And although we encounter trials, hardships, and all kinds of issues, they ultimately only have as much power over our joy as we allow them to have.

Today, we are starting a new series from the book of Philippians that I've titled:

### **Unlocking Joy - Finding Strength and Unity When Life Throws you It's Worst at you.**

I would argue that joy is the single greatest tool we have in our toolbox to get through this thing called life with our sanity and dignity intact. And although we encounter trials, hardships, and all kinds of issues, they ultimately only have as much power over our joy as we allow them to have. When we worry, when we fixate on our problems we only make things worse.

Here's the thing: joy is a choice. It's not automatic. It's not guaranteed. It's a decision we make—moment by moment, day by day—as we navigate life.

I get it—because I've been there too. I've let external factors knock me off my joy game more times than I'd like to admit. And let's be real, there's a good chance it will happen again. Why? Because life is full of unexpected twists, tough challenges, and even moments of victory that can distract us, pulling our focus off Jesus.

The bills pile up. Relationships get messy. Prolonged sickness antagonizes us. Work demands weigh us down. And our kids start acting out of pocket.

And sometimes, even the good things—like promotions, celebrations, or successes—can rob us of our joy.

True joy, Biblical Joy as witnessed in Philippians is rooted in who we are now - we're in Christ Jesus. It's based on what we've been saved from - eternal separation from God. Its furthered by the mission we've been entrusted with - we make disciples, and were inspired to press on by the eternal reward that awaits us in glory.

In contrast, the world defines joy as a fleeting feeling, dependent on circumstances, possessions, or achievements. It's tied to the ever-changing and unstable elements of life, leaving people constantly chasing what can never fully satisfy them

Here's our definition...

**Joy** - is a steadfast, Christ-centered delight rooted in our identity in Him, the salvation we've received, the mission we're called to, and the eternal reward that awaits us—unlike the fleeting, circumstantial happiness the world offers.

That's our working definition for joy...

My aim as we journey through Philippians is to show us not only how to recognize joy in every situation but also how to walk in it. We need to know how to live it out, no matter what life throws at us.

And let's be honest, sometimes it's not just about what life throws our way. Sometimes, we reach for things that aren't meant for us—at least not until God gives them to us. I'll let you connect your own dots on that one.

As to be prepared for what's to come, I provided you with a road map on the back of your sermon notes detailing our Journey week-by-week.

I want to warn you upfront—this series isn't about faking it until you make it. It's not about slapping on a fake smile while you're dying inside. No, this series is about discovering how to walk in real joy—even when your world is falling apart. Even when life has you by the throat, trying squeezing every ounce of joy out of you.

We're going here because that's the kind of joy we see in Philippians, its raw, unshakable, and exactly what we desperately need in our lives today.

And so as we begin our journey in the book of Philippians regarding how to “**Unlock Joy**”, let me start by giving you some vital background information.

This letter, or epistle, was written by the Apostle Paul—the same Paul who was radically saved by Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus and called to be a disciple-maker, church planter, and leader equipper. Paul was completely sold out for Jesus, zealous to make disciples who would go on to make more disciples, all for the glory of his Lord.

In fact, it was Paul's unwavering commitment to the Gospel mission is what got him into trouble with the Roman authorities. Ultimately, he was imprisoned and placed under house arrest in Rome, as recorded in [Acts 28](#). It was during this imprisonment that Paul wrote this letter to the Philippian believers.

Now think about this: while incarcerated—never to taste freedom again—Paul wrote a letter about joy.

Let that sink in for a moment. Paul, in jail, chained and at the end of his life, pens a letter that not only encouraged the Philippian believers but is still encouraging us today. That's the power of biblical joy. Christ-centered Joy. Even when your world is turned upside down, God is able to get His use out of you.

With that background in place, the stage is set for our sermon series. Now, let's dive into today's message - week 1.

## **Unlocking Joy: Overcoming Isolation and Cultivating Gratitude.**

**In this first sermon, my goal is to provide you with some tools to experience joy even in isolation.**

Now, some of you might say, “Pastor, I'm not alone. I have my friends, my family, my BFC family, my co-workers, my Facebook friends, and a community I belong too.” And you're absolutely right—you do have those connections. But here's the truth: isolation and loneliness can happen even when you're surrounded by people.

I know this because I've experienced it myself. There have been times when I was surrounded by people—who truly loved me—and yet, I still felt completely alone. That kind of loneliness isn't always about being physically distant from others; it's often about something deeper. It's usually a mixture of unchecked emotions and spiritual issues.

Looking back at my darkest, loneliest days, I see now that they happened when I was at my lowest spiritually. When I took my relationship with Jesus for granted, neglecting my spiritual disciplines. I got lazy in doing the very things that draw me closer to Jesus, where I experience comfort, direction, and encouragement. That's when I felt most alone.

We all have moments like that—whether it's after a major life change, during a tough season, or even when we're in the middle of a crowd.

Maybe you recently moved to Raleigh you're struggling to connect.

Maybe you've experienced the loss of someone you love and feel an emptiness that you can't shake.

Or maybe, like me, you've been surrounded by friends or family but still felt disconnected.

No matter the reason, those moments of isolation can be overwhelming. So, let me show you how you can still experience joy despite what you feel like or who's around you.

To get started I have...

## Five ways to experience joy even in isolation.

### **Never forget who you are and what it Means to be who you are. v1-3**

Paul opens his letter with a clear and powerful declaration of identity—both his own and that of the Philippians. Let's look at what he says in verses 1 and 2...

**1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus: To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons. 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

From text we're reminded of three foundational truths about who we are:

- 1. Servants of Jesus...**
- 2. We're a community of saints...**
- 3. Recipients of God's grace and peace....**

Each of these truths is vital, let's explore them one by one.

### **1. We Are Servants of Jesus**

Paul identifies himself and Timothy as "**servants of Christ Jesus**." This isn't just a title—it's a declaration of purpose and belonging. To be a servant of Jesus means our lives are not our own. We belong to Jesus. We owe our lives to him. As His servants our ultimate purpose is to fulfill His will, which is to serve the mission of building His kingdom.

This identity frees us from being defined by our circumstances, achievements, or even the opinions of others. Instead, we are rooted in a higher calling—serving the One who saved us.

What this means is that, in times of isolation. When you feel abandoned or disconnected, focus on being a servant. Serving shifts your perspective from loneliness to purpose because it aligns you with the way God designed you to function. He designed us to work.

Speaking of being designed to work, sometimes our loneliness stems from idleness. Some of you are busy, but you're busy doing things that have no lasting value: Scrolling through social media. Binge-watching an entire

season of a show. Obsessing over the latest celebrity gossip. Playing competitive Fantasy football. Playing the lotto. Joining frivolous clubs and organizations. Constantly posting social to get likes and validation.

Add up all those things and others like them. And What do they accomplish? I'll do the math for you: **absolutely nothing. A big fat zero.**

Instead, take intentional steps to serve others in ways that are motivated by Christ:

Send an encouraging message to someone who's struggling.

Pray for a friend.

Volunteer at church.

Help out in your community.

What I'm trying to get you to see is that, when your actions are centered on serving Jesus, they take on a deeper significance, and they make an eternal impact.

And as you embrace your role as a servant, your heart will begin to fill with joy. Why? Because you're living in accordance to the way God designed you to function. Serving connects you to the greater mission of Christ, and in that connection, joy begins to replace loneliness.

**So let me ask you—how are you spending your time?** Are you busy doing nothing, or are you fulfilling the purpose God created you for?

**But here's the thing: being a servant of Jesus isn't just about individual purpose. It's also about being connected to something greater—a spiritual family. Which brings us to the second truth Paul emphasizes.**

## **2. We Are a Community of Saints.**

Paul addresses the Philippians as "**saints in Christ Jesus.**" This isn't a term for an elite group of Christians—it's for everyone who belongs to Christ. To be a saint means you've been set apart by God, made holy through Christ, and brought into a family of believers.

This reminds us that although we've been set apart from the world to live for Jesus, it doesn't mean we're alone—even if our community feels smaller. As a member of the saints' community, even when you feel isolated, you are connected to something much bigger than yourself. You're part of a spiritual family—a community united by faith and hope in Jesus.

This bond transcends all physical and emotional distance. Take Paul as an example: even in prison, he remained deeply connected to the Philippians, as evidenced by this letter. His joy wasn't diminished by his circumstances, reminding us that **true spiritual connection is rooted in Christ, not proximity.** (repeat)

**But here's the hard truth:** sometimes, our loneliness is the result of our own choices. We have access to relationships with other believers, but for one reason or another, we choose not to engage. We isolate ourselves.

**So let me ask you:** do you have at least one Christian friend—someone to encourage you, pray for you, and hold you accountable? If not, you're missing out on one of God's greatest blessings, and you're putting yourself at risk of deeper loneliness.

If that's you, let me encourage you to rectify that today:

- Faithfully attend BFC.
- Join a Bridge Group.
- or at the very least, start by befriending someone here at BFC.

You have access to an entire faith community that's here to walk with you, pray for you, and encourage you.

And the spiritual connection that you have with the Body of Christ is rooted in the grace and peace that God gives to all who are in Him, which leads us to Paul's third truth.

### 3. We Are Recipients of God's Grace and Peace

Paul greets the Philippians with these powerful words: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." These aren't mere pleasantries; they are profound reminders of what we've received in Christ.

**Grace** is the unmerited favor of God—the free gift of His love, forgiveness, and the help he provides .

**Peace** is the result of that grace—a deep, unshakable assurance that comes from being reconciled to God and resting in His care.

No matter what you're facing—whether you realize it or not—you are a recipient of this grace and peace. When life feels overwhelming, His grace sustains you. It's the very reason why you're not in a worse emotional state, than what you are.

And when uncertainty surrounds you, His peace anchors your heart and silences the voices of fear, doubt, and confusion in your mind.

Paul later reminds us in [Philippians 4:7](#) that **peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ**. It's a peace that the world cannot give and cannot take away b/c it comes from Jesus. It's a constant gift that comforts and holds us steady, even in the hardest and loneliest moments. Even when we fail to see it, God's peace is there ministering to us.

Think of the heat that emanates from the sun. You can't see it, but you certainly can feel the warmth and you benefit from the vitamin-D don't you. In the same way, God's grace and peace are there for you to experience—whether or not you recognize them.

#### **So, what should you do the next time you start feel lonely?**

Well, Instead of focusing on what you think you're missing, stop and call out to God in prayer. Tell Him what's going on and how you feel—be honest and open. Ask Him for His grace to sustain you. His peace to comfort and soothe you. Ask for more of His Spirit to empower you. Invite Him to bring peace into your situation—and as he does open yourself up to it. Receive it.

#### **But whatever you do, don't miss God's grace and peace because it doesn't look the way you expect.**

I'm reminded of man who was stranded during a flood who prayed for rescue. But when help arrived in the form of rescuers in boats and helicopters, he rejected it because it wasn't the kind of help he wanted.

The rescuers were focused on saving his life, but the man was focused on saving his house. He wanted to be saved along with his stuff. In the end, his rejection cost him the very rescue he prayed for. Sadly, the rescue team had no choice but to move on to others in need.

**Don't be like that man.** Don't stay stuck in your loneliness or trapped in your situation because you're too stubborn or fearful to recognize the out pouring of God's grace.

God has all the grace and peace you could ever need, and it's yours for the taking. Open your heart and receive it. Don't close yourself from getting the help you need.

### Conclusion

Together, these three truths— we are servants of Jesus, in a community of saints, who are recipients of grace and peace—paint a powerful picture of who we are in Christ.

As you anchor yourself in these unchanging truths and shift your focus from what you lack to what you already have in Christ, your heart will begin to experience a joy that transcends your circumstances—a joy that cannot be hijacked by loneliness or hardship.

## **So, here's the question: Where is your focus right now? Are you consumed by what you feel you're missing, or are you holding on to the truths of who you are in Christ?**

Take a moment to consider these questions.

And as you do, confess what you need to confess. Own what you need to own. And receive what you need to receive. But whatever you, **don't leave without choosing Joy.**

It would be a sin and a shame to hear this message. Understand the benefits of being in Christ, as it pertains to Joy. And then walk out of here the same way you came in.

**Think about it this way: Just like you wouldn't let garbage pile up in your house until the stench became unbearable.**

**Just like you wouldn't ignore a festering wound on your body that became infected—why would you sit here, hear the truth of God's Word, and then choose to keep living the same way you have?**

And so, for **some of you, this is a call to step out of isolation—the isolation of not having a relationship with Jesus.**

Without Him, there's no joy, no peace—only darkness, confusion, and doubt. That's where you are and I know it's terrifying for you. I know it's a lonely place. Loved one, this is your time. This is your moment to take the first step toward receiving joy.

Confess that you are a broken sinner, and believe in faith that Jesus is Lord of all. Put your faith in Him, and when you do, the Lord will immediately begin to minister to you—saving your soul and infusing you with His much-needed joy.

**For others of you, you already have access to joy because you're in Christ.**

But there are areas in your life where you feel isolated, where you feel all alone. Because you're too busy focusing on what you don't have instead of recognizing the manifold blessings that you do have - such as:

- Assurance of salvation
- Access to God in one breath
- Peace in the midst of calamity and uncertainty
- The guiding power of the Holy Spirit and His constant companionship
- A church community that loves and appreciates you
- Peace of mind that comes from know that God is protecting you
- You have all those blessings and many more.

**Do you see how blessed you are? Are you willing to trust God for more?**

If your answer is "yes"—and I pray that it is—then stop focusing on what you don't have. Stop desiring more than what God has already given you. When you focus on what you lack, you open the door to isolation and ultimately sin.

**So, I'll ask again: Where is your focus right now?**

Are you consumed by what you feel you're missing, or are you holding on to the truths of who you are in Christ?

### Take some time to reflect:

If you're not a believer, this is your time to consider the joy waiting for you in Jesus and to put your faith in Him.

If you're a believer, this is your time to refocus your heart and mind on Jesus—being grateful for all you currently have and finding joy in it.

### **Whatever you do... Don't leave here without choosing JOY!!!**

Take the needed time to consider these things and as a sign of agreement. As a sign of your recommitment. This is your time to get right with the Lord. The band is going to play, stand as you feel led. And then we will all worship Jesus with renewed hearts together.

## **Closing**

**Pray/Q's:** I pray that the Word of God has been securely planted in your heart regarding not feeling isolated through Jesus. If you have question. Need prayer. Would like to commit your life to Jesus. And or simply hit the restart button. We are here for you, come up after we dismiss for help.

FTG/CC, Foundations, Post Chill, LGLP