

## Philippians 1:1-11\_Unlocking Joy: Overcoming isolation\_ pt2\_Douglas Humphrey

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Have you ever been so focused on what you didn't have that you completely lost sight of what you did?

I remember talking to a friend who had just gone through a painful breakup. He was devastated, constantly replaying what went wrong, feeling the weight of what he had lost. He kept saying, *"If only things had worked out... if only I had what you and Sheila have... If only she loved me back, if only, if only"*

And I get it. Loss hurts. Whether it's a broken relationship, an opportunity that slipped through our fingers, or a dream that hasn't come true yet, it's easy to fixate on what's missing. And the more we focus on what we don't have, the heavier it feels. The more alone we feel. And before we know it, we've lost sight of everything else—our blessings, our purpose, and even the people who are still in our corner.

Paul understood this struggle. Writing Philippians from a prison cell, he had every reason to dwell on what he'd lost—his freedom, his comfort, his security, His companionship. But instead of focusing on his lack, he anchored himself in what he still had: his identity in Christ, his place in God's family, a track record of making healthy disciples, and an endless supply of the Lord's grace.

So let me ask you: Where's your focus right now? Are you consumed by what you don't have, or are you holding on to the truth of what you have through Jesus?

Because joy isn't found in finally getting everything we want—it's found in recognizing and treasuring what we already have in Him. And as you do, you'll never feel alone. More than anything, my hope is that you leave today with that truth firmly embedded in your heart.

Today, we're going to continue our discussion on how to experience joy, even when we feel isolated. Starting with...

### **Give thanks to God for your Christian family v3-5.**

Let me ask you a question: **When was the last time you genuinely thanked God for your church family?** Not just a casual "I love my church," but real, intentional gratitude for the people God has placed around you?

Paul begins this section of Philippians by **giving thanks**—Look at what he says:

**3 I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you,**

Every time Paul thought of the Philippians, his first response was gratitude to God. **Not frustration. Not criticism. Not entitlement. But thanksgiving.**

Now, consider where Paul was when he wrote this. **Prison.** If anyone had a reason to be self-focused, bitter, or discouraged, it was him. But Paul wasn't dwelling on his isolation—he was thanking God for his brothers and sisters in Christ. His joy wasn't rooted in his circumstances; it was rooted in the family of faith God had given him.

What about you? **Do you take your Church family for granted?**

Too often, we spend more time complaining about the church than we do thanking God for her. We focus on its flaws, its shortcomings, its imperfections. But let's be honest—if you're looking for something to criticize in the church, you'll find it. Why? Because the church is full of broken, imperfect people—including you and me.

I once heard someone say, *"The church is a hospital for the broken, not a museum for the perfect."* In other words, we are all a work in progress. We all need the Lord's help. And sense that's true, then grace should abound. Instead of fixating on what's wrong, what if we followed Paul's example and chose gratitude for the gift of our Church family?

But gratitude isn't just something we feel—it's something we express. When Paul thanked God for the Philippians, he didn't just think about it; he made it known. And we should do the same.

So how do we express this gratitude?

#### **1. Thank God for Your Church Family in Every Season.**

When things are going well, celebrate the joys of being part of a loving, supportive church.

When you feel loved and encouraged, recognize the people God has placed in your life to strengthen you.

## 2. Express your gratitude to Others.

*When was the last time you told someone in the church, “I thank God for you”?*

Never assume people know how that you appreciate them—tell them. Text them. Write a note. Call them up. DM them. Give them a card. Offer them words of encouragement.

## 3. Pray for Your Faith Family.

Look at verse 4 it says...

**4 always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer,**

More on the content of his prayers later, but here learn that Paul actively prayed for his church family.

If you're grateful for your this family, show it by lifting them up in prayer. Pray for their spiritual growth, their endurance, their faithfulness, their faith to trust God for what's next. Pray for continued unity. Pray for humility. Pray whatever the Lord puts on your heart - just pray, we need each others prayers.

Paul prayed with **joy** for his church family. But let's be real—some of us struggle to be happy for others. Especially when they get their break through and you're still broke. I know b/c I've been there. When it seems like God keeps passing you by, it's hard to be joyful.

**Let me encourage you not to be like little Johnny—the kid who got jealous every year when his sibling's birthday came around because he didn't get any presents. It wasn't his day, but he still felt robbed.**

In the same way, don't let someone else's blessings steal your joy. One of the true identifying marks of a Christian is their ability to celebrate others' success, even when you receive nothing in return.

Rejoice when others are blessed. Trust that your time is coming. And as you do, you'll discover the deeper blessing of joy in the process.

**That's 2nd way to experience Joy, the third is...**

## Have Confidence in God's Unfinished Work in You v6

Let me be clear: **God is not done with you.**

You may feel stuck. You may feel like you aren't growing fast enough. You may be frustrated with yourself, wondering why you still struggle in certain areas.

But hear me: If you belong to Christ, He is actively working in you, and He will finish what He started.

Paul declares in **Philippians 1:6**: **“I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”**

Paul isn't guessing. He's not saying, *“I hope God finishes what He started.”* No—he is **sure** of it. That confidence isn't based on the Philippians' effort. It's based on God's faithfulness.

It's a guaranteed promise. God does not leave His work unfinished. **When He starts something, He finishes it.**

**But we must ask; What Is This “Good Work” in You that Paul is so confident in?**

**Sanctification is a process.** From the moment of salvation until we reach glory, God stretches, shapes, and grows us. Though there may be ups and downs, the overall direction should be **upward and forward**—a steady progression in Christ.

Your transformation doesn't happen all at once, but it is ongoing, and it will be perfected (finalized) when we enter God's presence in heaven.

The sanctification chart on the screen illustrates this: a life of spiritual growth moving **up and to the right** toward Christlikeness.

We define sanctification as:

**...God working in us, while we choose to work with Him, to make us more like Jesus in every part of our lives.**

Did you catch that? It's God's work, but you must **choose to cooperate**.

And this is where a great many believers get stuck.

### **This is why Some Christians Don't Grow.**

And sense we're keeping it real. Some of you are frustrated because you don't feel like you're growing. You've been in church for years, but you still battle the same sins, the same mindset, the same problems seem to keep finding you.

Inwardly you wonder why you're not further along in your faith than what you are.

You wonder why others are more passionate about Jesus than you.

You wonder why God is using your friend and it seems like you're on the bench.

Let me ask you a question:

**Are you working with God, or are you resisting Him? Are you actively inviting sanctification? I ask, b/c...**

- **God won't transform what you refuse to surrender.** If you refuse to let go of bitterness, don't expect peace.
- **God won't heal what you won't expose.** If you hide your sins, don't expect forgiveness and deliverance.
- **God won't change what you won't release.** If you insist on doing things your way, don't expect growth.

Some of you are the same version of you that you were when you first got save, version 1.0 because you're still holding on to what God told you to let go of.

If that's you, hear me when I say this: **God is looking for wilful participants, He won't force transformation on you.** He waits for you to surrender. He's waiting for you to say, *"Lord, take it. Change me."* He's waiting for you to chose to be sanctified.

And until you do, you will stay stuck at version 1.0, as other steadily progress in the Lord.

**Now, here's where the joy comes in—if you're walking with God in your sanctification, He is shaping you right now.** You may not see it day to day, but look back—30 days, six months, a few years—and compare who you were then to who you are now. You'll realize: you are not the same person. There's a night and day difference.

- You used to be an addict, but now you're walking in freedom.
- You used to be angry and bitter, but now you extend grace.
- You used to chase approval, but now you stand secure in Christ.
- You used to be consumed by sin, but now you hunger for righteousness.
- You used to gossip about everybody and their momma, but now you speak life and encouragement.
- You used to avoid looking in mirror b/c you were ashamed of yourself, but now you see yourself as forgiven and worthy of love.

That's **evidence** of God's unfinished work in you. And if He has already brought you this far, **He will not stop now.**

So take joy in this: **God is still at work in you, and He will finish what He started. He won't leave you undone.**

That's our third way to experience joy in isolation, 4th...

### **Think about Your Shared Connection to Christ and Fellow Believers. v7-8**

The bond we share as brothers and sisters in Christ is unlike any other. Paul expresses this deep, unwavering connection in verse 7...

7 **Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart...**

Paul's love for the Philippians wasn't shallow or sentimental—it was rooted in their shared work for the Gospel. He had evangelized, baptized, and discipled them. Together, they planted the first church in Philippi. And even in his imprisonment, they stood with him, sending support and encouragement.

That's why Paul says ...**you are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.** v7b-8

Their bond was strong because it was forged through shared suffering and a shared mission. And that's how real relationships in Christ grow—through seasons of struggle. Walking through the fire together so to speak. When you've gone through hardship **with** someone, it creates a bond that is not easily broken.

Think about your own life. Who are the people you trust the most? It's probably those who have stood by you in your darkest moments—those who didn't walk away when things got hard.

Likewise, **real Christian community** isn't just about sharing good times—it also involves standing together through the pain. When a brother or sister in Christ is struggling, we don't just say, *"I'll pray for you"*—we step in, we support, we suffer with them if necessary. **That's the kind of love Paul experienced with the Philippians.**

That's why **the church is essential for us.** It's not just a place we gather on Sundays; it's a family that walks through the fires of life together.

All of which gives credence to what Paul says next, he says...

**8 For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.**

Paul isn't throwing around empty words. He calls on God as his witness to the sincerity of his love. Separated from the Philippian saints with no guarantee of reunion, his heart aches for them—not just with human affection, but with the love of Christ Himself.

From Paul's example we learn that, when we think about our **shared connection to Christ**, it brings us joy, even in seasons of isolation. And here are three reasons why:

### 1. It Reminds Us That We Are Not Alone

No matter our trials, we are never isolated in Christ. Even when physically apart, our spiritual family has our back. And when possible, we show up for each other.

*I think of Sheila my wife in this regard, when her mom passed away. A friend of hers traveled all the way from Iowa to Detroit just to hug her at the funeral. Why? Because she loved Sheila and wanted to encourage her. That's the power of Gospel-centered relationships.* Reminds us that we're not alone.

### 2. It Strengthens Our Faith in God

Seeing others trusting God despite their problems builds our faith. If they can make it, so can we. Their perseverance reassures us that God's grace is enough. That if He carried them through, He'll do the same for us. Strengthens our faith in God.

### 3. It Brings Purpose to Our Suffering

Paul's imprisonment wasn't wasted, and neither are our hardships. God uses them to deepen our love for one another.

*Just recently, a dear brother of mine accepted a new ministry opportunity. While I rejoice with him, I also feel the weight of losing our closeness.* It think God uses moments like these to remind us to appreciate the people He has placed in our lives while we still have them. In this way our suffering takes on meaning.

**My prayer for our church is this:** that we would build the kind of relationships Paul had with the Philippians—bonds that go beyond Sunday services, beyond small talk, and are deeply rooted in the Gospel mission. Relationships strengthened by shared experiences.

Because even in our most difficult seasons, **joy can be found when we have authentic love for one another.**

So let's be intentional in building the kind of Gospel-centered community that reflects Christ's love and brings lasting joy Like we see in Philippians.

Which brings us to our 5th and final way to experience joy even in isolation, we...

## **Prioritize the Needs of Other Believers by Praying for Their Spiritual Growth ([Philippians 1:9-11](#))**

Paul sets the example for us in how to pray for one another:

"I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment. v10 so that you may approve the things that are superior(v.9).

Right away, we see Paul praying for two key things:

1. **Spiritual Growth in Knowledge** – Specifically, biblical knowledge. Paul isn't just asking for them to gain more information, but to **truly grasp and apply God's Word** in their lives.
2. **Discernment That Leads to Right Living** – Knowing the truth isn't enough; it must shape how we live. Paul prays that they wouldn't just recognize what is good, but **choose what is best**— .

This kind of wisdom helps them avoid two dangerous extremes:

- **Knowledge without obedience** (which leads to pride).
- **Obedience without understanding** (which leads to empty religious routines).

True spiritual maturity requires both.

Paul continues: "...be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (vv.10-11).

Paul's goal is transformation. He's not praying for their comfort—he's praying for their character. He wants their lives to **stand up to God's scrutiny** and to **reflect Christ** so they don't cause others to stumble.

He wants them **filled with the fruit of righteousness**—visible evidence of a life shaped by Jesus ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)).

**Why Does This Matter?** Because righteous living isn't just about personal growth. Rather, **It's about glorifying God.**

As believers are shaped by Christ, their lives become a **testimony** to His power. For example, consider who Jesus transformed Paul into after his Damascus road experience.

**And Joy Come In.** When we pray for others like this—prioritizing their spiritual growth and seeking God's best for them—we shift the focus **off ourselves**. And we get the privilege of being part of what God is doing in their lives.

Think about it:

- When we hear their testimony of deliverance, it fills us with joy.
- When we see that their minds have been renewed by God's Word, we celebrate.
- When we witness them grow in faith, we encourage them all the more.

Why? B/c through our prayers. Through us helping them. We got to be part of what God did in their lives. That's what **true Christian community** looks like—praying for each other, encouraging each other, and celebrating **God's work** in one another.

Let's go beyond praying for comfort or ease. **Let's pray for spiritual growth.**

Ask God to deepen the faith of your brothers and sisters. Pray that they would bear fruit that testifies to Christ's transformative work in their lives.

That's our 5th and final way to experience Joy in times of isolation, through the prayers we pray for our church family and seeing them changed.

## **Conclusion**

We've covered a lot today. But at the heart of it all is this: **Joy is not found in what's missing—it's found in what we already have in Christ.**

Isolation, discouragement, and trials may come, but they don't have to steal our joy. When we fix our eyes on the truths we just learned—we unlock a joy that cannot be taken from us.

So let me ask you again: **Where is your focus?** Are you dwelling on what's lacking, or are you standing in the truth of what you have?

If you've been feeling isolated, if joy has felt out of reach, it's time to shift your focus. It's time to:

- **Remember your identity in Christ**—you are chosen, loved, and never alone.
- **Give thanks for your faith family**—appreciate and invest in the people God has placed in your life.
- **Have confidence in God's work in you**—He's not done with you yet. He will complete what he started.
- **Embrace the bond you share with other believers**—this is more than friendship, it's a family of families in Christ.
- **Pray for others selflessly**—because true joy comes when we seek God's best for those around us and we witness their growth.

Church, **joy is not an emotion we chase—it's a perspective we choose.** No matter what season you're in, you have access to joy in Jesus. So walk in it.

And as you do, **you will experience joy.**

?Locks and keys? List an area in your life or a situation where you need God to unlock Joy. Where you need to experience Joy: Finances, relation with spouse, your sibling, Work stuff, School stuff, overcoming temptation, fighting an addiction, etc. List an area where there current is no to little Joy in your life on the tag. unlock the tag and bring up front and place it in the can, we will nail them to the prayer wall and commit to praying over them. And as you experience Joy go and find your tag and hang it on the blessing side of the wall. and let someone know what God has done so that they can celebrate with you and encourage you.

## Let's pray.

1. Never forget who you are and what it means to be who your are.
2. Give thanks to God for your Christian family.
3. Have confidence in God's unfinished work in you.
4. Think about Your Shared Connection to Christ and Fellow Believers.
5. Prioritize the needs of other believers by praying God's best for their Lives

Conclusion

So, how do we begin to experience Joy in isolation? we....

As we close, let me ask you a question. Where in your life do you need God to unlock joy

## Closing

- Prayer, profession of faith, recommit, questions
- CC - FTV's, prayer request
- WLFJ
- Foundations
- LGLHP

