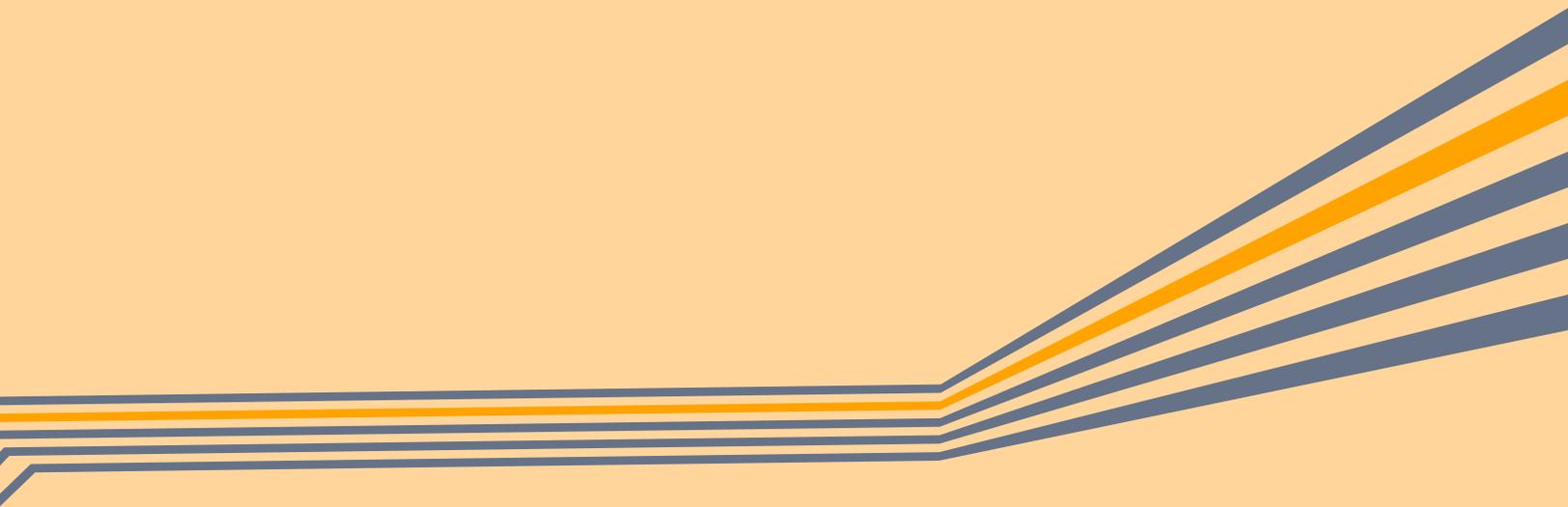
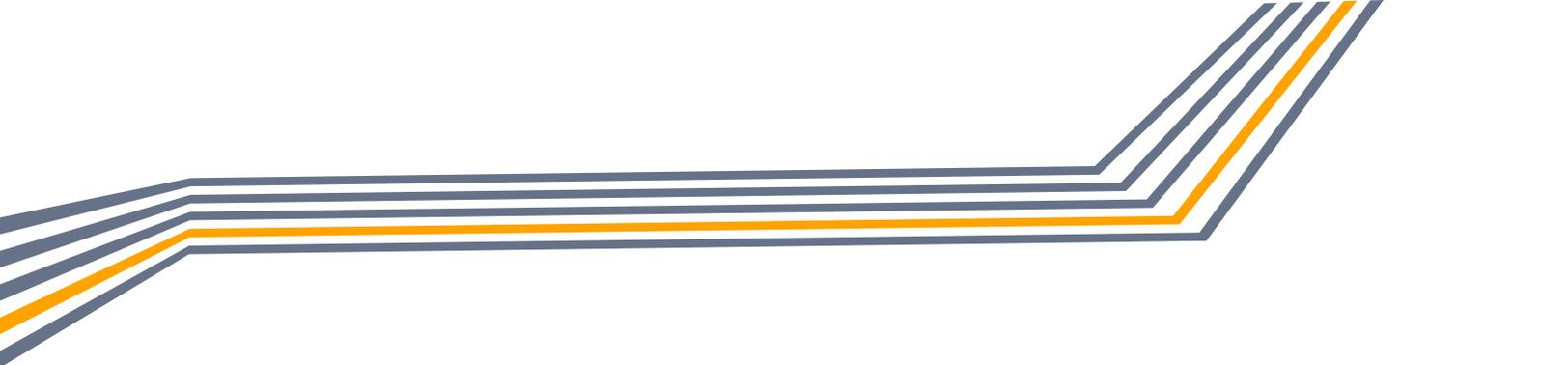


# SESSION 1

## THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

*Happiness comes and goes with shifting circumstances. Joy is unshakeable, no matter how challenging our situations.*





## A JOYFUL LIFE **Session 1**

Paul teaches us something special about joy in his letter to the Philippians. He shows us that life is not just about the happy moments. We can experience deep joy – the kind that sticks around even during the tough times.

### **This week, let's think of joy in three ways:**

1. People who feel joy only when things go right.
2. People who find joy every now and then.
3. People like the Apostle Paul, who have constant joy, no matter what happens.

Paul is a wonderful example of living with joy that we can all follow! His life shows us we can experience true joy through the power of Jesus Christ—even when the circumstances are overwhelming—even when the conflicts are painful. No matter what's happening on the outside, God can fill us with joy on the inside.



# SESSION 1

## WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL





# DAY 1:

## DON'T SETTLE FOR HAPPINESS

*...And in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice...*

PHILIPPIANS 1:18C

**Every now and then temporary moments of happiness touch our lives.**

It might be a promotion, a surprise gift, or our favorite sports team winning the big game. These moments can be meaningful, but they come and go like waves on a beach. Joy, however, is something deeper. It's a life-giving river that flows from God's heart into yours, regardless of the storms that might rage outside.

The world can only offer temporary moments of happiness. but usually it's dependent on circumstances. One day you're up, the next you're down. In the book of Philippians, the Apostle Paul shows us an entirely different approach to life—a way of constant joy rooted in an unchanging God. To put this into perspective, you'll find the word "happy" only 22 times in the Bible, while "joy" appears 192 times!

Paul penned Philippians while under house arrest, chained to an elite Roman guard monitoring his every move. Yet, there isn't a hint of dissatisfaction, bitterness, or anger in his words. Paul's happiness was not dependent on his environment, but his joy was anchored in his relationship with Jesus. Even in extreme adversity, Paul emphasizes the good that's coming from his imprisonment. He doesn't say, "Rejoice when things are going well," but instead, "Rejoice in the Lord... always!"

So today, here's an invitation: don't settle for mere happiness when unshakable joy is yours in Christ.

# REFLECT

## Memory Verse

*...Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*  
**Philippians 2:5**

To aid in your memorization, write out this week's memory verse:

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How would you describe the difference between happiness and joy?

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What places in your life do you want that deep, never-ending joy? Ask God for it right now.

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Where do you habitually chase feelings of happiness rather than seeking God's joy?

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## DAY 2:

### JOY IN YOUR JOURNEY

*Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

PHILIPPIANS 1:6

**Have you ever started a project and left it half-finished?** We all have. But guess what? God never leaves His projects incomplete, especially with anything related to you.

In his letter, Paul is reassuring the Philippians—and us—that God is fully committed to our spiritual growth. God started a “good work” in you, and He will see it through to the end. His follow-through is perfect.

Here’s what makes this journey so distinct. God’s not conducting a cosmic self-help seminar to simply make us the “best version of ourselves.” Instead, His “good work” in us is to make us more like *Christ*—which far exceeds anything we can do in our own effort.

Knowing this brings rest and peace to our soul that we’re not doing life alone. The Creator of the Universe is actively shaping, guiding, and refining you. He’s not a hobbyist, but the Master! He’s in the business of creating masterpieces, fit for His glory.

So, why worry? Why let doubts, fears, and setbacks steal your joy? Trust in His plan. He’s not done with you yet—and He always finishes what He starts! Find joy in the journey today, not just in the destination. If Paul did, we can too.

# REFLECT

## Memory Verse

*...Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*  
**Philippians 2:5**

To aid in your memorization, write out this week's memory verse:

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Do you sometimes feel like a "work in progress?" How does it feel to know God is committed to completing His work in you?

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In what areas of your life have you experienced the most significant growth recently? In what areas do you feel like God wants you to grow?

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How does the assurance of God's continual work in you affect your daily joy?

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What's one way you can actively participate in God's "good work" in you today?

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## DAY 3:

### GOLD MEDAL LIVES

*Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

PHILIPPIANS 1:27

**"There is strength in numbers."** Most of us have probably used that statement or heard it said. But beyond strength in numbers, have you ever thought about the strength and joy that comes from being united in a common purpose? There is strength in power and unity.

Paul urges the Philippians to live "worthy of the gospel of Christ." But he doesn't stop there. He also stresses the importance of standing "fast in one spirit, with one mind." That's unity! Being united isn't just for fun nights singing around the campfire—but for a mission so grand it takes every one of us operating in our complementary gifts—the mission of the Gospel of Christ.

Paul put it this way in 1 Corinthians 12:12: *For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.* Picture an athlete sprinting toward the finish line, going for the gold at the Olympics. What do you see? The runner's entire body "striving together" for the prize, though made of "many parts," moves in harmony toward a singular purpose.

This is how the Body of Christ operates when we all focus on Him! There is great joy knowing you're part of something vastly bigger than yourself—part of a community that's changing lives, uplifting spirits, and making a divine difference. When united in Christ, we don't just go through the motions of life. We live gold medal lives, worthy of the Gospel.

# REFLECT

## Memory Verse

*...Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*

**Philippians 2:5**

To aid in your memorization, write out this week's memory verse:

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Where do you see opportunities for greater unity in your life?

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How does unity in Christ differ from other types of unity you've experienced?

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What specific steps can you take to foster unity in your community?

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What would it look like for you to live a life "worthy of the gospel" today?

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## DAY 4: THE JOY OF ENDURANCE

*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

PHILIPPIANS 3:14

**Yesterday, we saw a picture of the Body of Christ represented by a gold medal athlete.** Today, let's take it a little further. After all, an Olympian has more than raw strength—they have *endurance*.

Would you ever show up to the starting line of a marathon without having trained? I sure wouldn't! A life of faith is like a marathon—great joy comes from enduring and pressing on.

Just like Paul, who kept pressing "toward the goal," we're all in a spiritual marathon. There's a heavenly prize awaiting us, and to reach it, endurance is non-negotiable. Sometimes, the road will be smooth. We'll be running on a paved trail without a hill in sight. Other times, it'll feel like sprinting up a mountain. Yet Paul shows us there's a unique joy that comes from the grit it takes to develop godly endurance—and it isn't a fitness test you tackle on your own.

It's running with God's tailwind—a constant re-energizing from a source that's outside of yourself. In Colossians 1:29, Paul describes it as supernatural energy from God "which works in me mightily."

Endurance is far more than just our willpower and refusing to quit. It isn't about earning our place in God's family. It certainly isn't about impressing God or others. It's about drawing strength from God that doesn't make sense in the natural world; then letting that strength become your joy. If we're honest, could any of us build the endurance required to reach the "prize of the upward call of God" on our own? Not even close! Which is why Paul says he presses on "...in Christ Jesus." Yes, we're running a marathon that requires a great deal of endurance. But we don't manufacture the strength on our own. It comes from God with joy, power, and eternal satisfaction.

So my friend, how will you run today?

# REFLECT

## Memory Verse

*...Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*  
**Philippians 2:5**

To aid in your memorization, write out this week's memory verse:

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What does the "upward call of God in Christ Jesus" mean to you personally?

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Where in your life do you need more spiritual endurance?

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How can you lean on God's strength when your own feels depleted?

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What practical things can we do to have sustaining joy?

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## DAY 5: THE JOY MINDSET

*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*

**PHILIPPIANS 2:5**

**The joy Paul wrote about, the joy he lived out, originated from his relationship with Christ. It dominated his mind and thought life, manifesting in his attitude, speech, and actions.** It wasn't just how he felt, but how he thought. The same is true for us.

Your attitude affects your altitude. How you think affects how you feel. This letter to the Church of Philippi drives that point home—fifteen times, Paul writes about thinking, and ten times about remembering! Your mindset and your joy are inseparable.

This makes perfect sense when we consider a primary key to Christianity: you cannot change your heart, but you can change your mind. Conversely, God can change your heart, but He won't change your mind. So if I choose to change the way I think about a given situation, God will change my heart to follow suit. But, if I don't change my thoughts, God cannot change my heart. This is such an empowering truth.

Few people illustrate this truth better than Corrie ten Boom, a woman who found joy in excruciating circumstances in WWII. As the Holocaust raged, she and her family made the risky choice to help Jews evade the Nazis. The consequences of their bravery? Imprisonment. Even in that bleak place, she was able to say, "Joy runs deeper than despair." Not because of her surroundings, but because of where her mind and heart were anchored. If she could find joy in the midst of the Holocaust, surely we can tune our mind in to finding joy in our own daily challenges.

So, when Paul says in Philippians 2:5 to have the "mind of Christ," what's he really getting at? He was encouraging the Philippian believers to rejoice even in difficult circumstances. To respond and speak differently than expected. This flies in the face of today's world, doesn't it?

A joy mindset sees the bigger picture in the same way Jesus did. Between Paul's resilience and Corrie's spirit in the face of adversity, it's clear that joy's not about what's on the outside—it's an inside job!

# REFLECT

## Memory Verse

*...Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*

**Philippians 2:5**

To aid in your memorization, write out this week's memory verse:

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Paul talks about having the "mind of Christ," emphasizing humility and selflessness. How can you practically apply these virtues in your daily life to cultivate a joy mindset?

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What challenges are you facing right now, and how can you anchor your mind and heart to find joy throughout the trials?

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What are some external factors that you've allowed to negatively influence your joy, and how can you shift your focus inward to maintain a joyful spirit?

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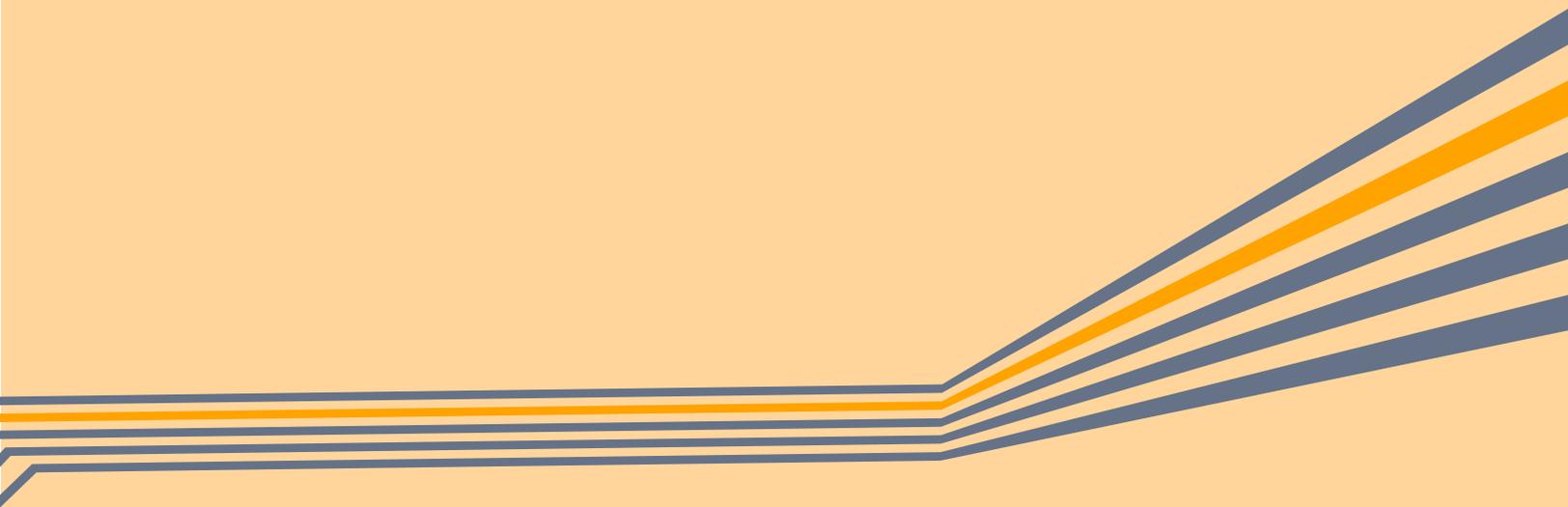
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*...Let this mind be in  
you which was also in  
Christ Jesus.*

**Philippians 2:5**



# DAY 6:

## WHAT STEALS YOUR JOY?

*“Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you.”*

**JOHN 16:22**

**A businessman was once rushing to a meeting.** Anxious and angry, he seemed to find every red light, detour, and delay in the city. Then, when he finally reached his destination, he realized he didn't have the keys to enter the building! But in the midst of his frustration, he remembered Jesus' promise in today's guiding verse—no one can steal our joy!

In today's verse, we see Jesus speaking with His disciples, preparing them for His death on the cross. While they didn't understand what He meant in the moment, they did after His resurrection. For God's people, sorrow can give way to true joy because it isn't dependent on circumstances or convenience. Joy is a fruit from the Holy Spirit—in both the *big* and *little* situations of life.

Real joy is rooted in Jesus Himself and is nurtured by the Holy Spirit. When we understand this, we see that our joy can remain untouched, regardless of external factors. The businessman's frustrating rush to a meeting is relatable and humorous, but what if that joy persisted in your life no matter how serious the situations you face?

*Joy in a concerning diagnosis...*

*Joy amidst heartbreaking news from a friend...*

*Joy through a layoff that causes financial hardship...*

You can have real, profound joy through it all. People around you will wonder, “How could you possibly face such a difficult situation with such joy?” You can answer with confidence: “Because Jesus said nothing can steal the joy that comes from knowing Him—not even this!”

# REFLECT

## Memory Verse

*...Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*

**Philippians 2:5**

To aid in your memorization, write out this week's memory verse:

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What situation is trying to steal your joy?

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How would a truly joy-filled person walk through that same situation? Can you emulate that?

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Take a moment to bring this situation before Jesus right now, asking for His joy in exchange for anxiety, anger, or heartbreak. Write down what you feel God speaks to you.

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# WEEKLY REFLECTION

What are the top three realizations you had this session?

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What is the main thing you believe God wants you to apply?

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