

LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY ONE

Your Smile Increases Your Face Value

A Survey of Philippians

From start to finish, Philippians is a letter that makes you smile!

—Charles R. Swindoll

ONE of the ancient proverbs from Solomon's pen addresses the value of joy in our lives:

*A cheerful heart is good medicine,
but a broken spirit saps a person's strength.* (Proverbs 17:22)

Joy prompts healing—both physically and emotionally. What an amazing gift from the Lord is this joy, supplied to all who know Jesus as Savior! In this poignant letter of friendship and faith, the apostle Paul advocated for a lasting joy to undergird the life of all believers.

This letter was originally addressed to a small pocket of Christians living in Philippi—a Roman colony located in Macedonia, a few miles inland from the Aegean Sea. Though writing during a time of his own house arrest, Paul urged his readers to rejoice in suffering and to trade their anxious thoughts for a sentinel of peace to guard their minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7).



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before you begin this study, pause a moment for prayer and praise, offering a word of thanksgiving to the Savior of your soul!



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Like any love letter, Paul’s letter to the Philippians is best read in one sitting, with eager anticipation. Open your Bible to this New Testament book and take a few moments to read it in its entirety. Consider even reading the book aloud to experience its beauty more fully.



Observation: A Summary of Paul’s Philippian Letter

Observation, the process of looking closely at the details of a passage of Scripture, helps you understand the setting and key ideas. Printed below is Chuck Swindoll’s overview chart of the book of Philippians organized by chapter and theme. As you look over the chart, make some notes about what stands out as helpful in wrapping your mind around the larger message of Paul’s letter.

Philippians: A Letter That Makes You Smile

Author: Paul Date: circa AD 62

There is	Joy in Living	Joy in Serving	Joy in Sharing	Joy in Resting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> when we don’t get what we want in spite of circumstances even with conflicts <p>Chapter 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> starts with right attitude maintained through right theology encouraged by right models <p>Chapter 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a warning a testimony a goal a command <p>Chapter 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unity peace contentment <p>Chapter 4</p>
Christ	... My Life	... My Model	... My Goal	... My Contentment
Spirit	His Provision (1:19)	His Fellowship (2:1)	His Worship (3:3)	His Peace (4:7)
Positive Reaction	<p>To Difficulty</p> <p><i>Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. (1:12)</i></p>	<p>To Others</p> <p><i>Do all things without grumbling or disputing. (2:14)</i></p>	<p>To the Past</p> <p><i>Forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (3:13–14)</i></p>	<p>To the “Unchangeables”</p> <p><i>Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. (4:11)</i></p>
Tone	Warm, encouraging, affirming			
Key Words	“Rejoice,” “Christ,” “Mind,” “Act”			
Uniqueness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No major problem passages “Joy” is found in each chapter Not one quotation from the Old Testament 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Christ mentioned over forty times Most positive of all Paul’s letters, yet written while he was chained to a Roman guard 	
Key Verse	“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21)			

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Now you try! Take a few minutes to complete your own overview of Philippians. Assign each chapter a theme, and include key words and a key verse that bring each section into focus. Fill in the blanks below with your discoveries. You'll be amazed at how quickly you grasp the overall message and structure of this powerful New Testament epistle—and the results will make you smile!

Chapter 1	
THEME(S)	
KEY VERSE(S)	
SUMMARY SENTENCE	
CREATIVE CHAPTER TITLE	

Chapter 2	
THEME(S)	
KEY VERSE(S)	
SUMMARY SENTENCE	
CREATIVE CHAPTER TITLE	



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Chapter 3	
THEME(S)	
KEY VERSE(S)	
SUMMARY SENTENCE	
CREATIVE CHAPTER TITLE	

Chapter 4	
THEME(S)	
KEY VERSE(S)	
SUMMARY SENTENCE	
CREATIVE CHAPTER TITLE	

Now you're ready to make some decisions about Paul's overall meaning in this letter. This next step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process is referred to as interpretation.



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Interpretation: Matters of the Heart

The process of interpretation ties all of your study together and offers a singularly powerful idea that must be embraced and acted upon in faith. For the apostle, his aim was threefold:

- To *encourage* his friends at Philippi (Philippians 1:3–30)
- To *warn* them about the dangers of false teachers and the risk of falling from their faith (3:1–4, 15–19)
- To *thank* beloved believers for their partnership in the spread of the gospel (4:14–16)

Paul wrapped his strong arms of encouragement around the Philippian believers in this letter of affection. And though not intended as a theological treatise, Paul's words flowed with rich doctrinal overtones (Philippians 2:1–11). In his message, Chuck makes this important interpretive statement:

The great love songs of the past were written for one person, most often . . . yet they have stirred the hearts of millions of other lovers to whom the song was not written. So it is with these great letters. I personally think we have fallen into the wrong pattern of thinking when it comes to interpreting them (the epistles) for today. They are letters to be read, understood, and applied personally. But to think of them as treatises, needing each verb or noun or adjective dissected, is to miss the point. That is especially true of Paul's Philippian letter. It is one to be enjoyed and appreciated not merely analyzed. You can sense Paul's deep sentiment in his opening greeting.

So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News. God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. (1:7–8)

In each of the following passages from Philippians, write down how Paul's great theme of Christian joy relates to the experience of the Christians to whom he wrote:

Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now. (1:3–5)



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Joy was the motivation behind Paul's _____ for the Philippian believers.

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. (Philippians 2:1–2)

Paul felt great joy (complete happiness!) when the Philippian believers committed themselves to _____ wholeheartedly with each other, _____ one another, and worked together with one _____ and _____.

Meanwhile, I thought I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a true brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier. And he was your messenger to help me in my need. . . . Welcome him in the Lord's love and with great joy, and give him the honor that people like him deserve. (2:25, 29)

Paul urged the Philippian believers to welcome his special envoy, Epaphroditus, and to do so with an attitude of Christian love and great _____!

Whatever happens, my dear brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. I never get tired of telling you these things, and I do it to safeguard your faith. (3:1)

Paul made clear that Christian joy comes from _____, and the joy that flows from our confidence in Him provides a necessary safeguard for our _____.

What power and value there is in this virtue of Christian joy! Yet as important as joy is to the Christian life, it's not something that can be mustered up on our own; joy is formed in us by the Spirit of God.



Correlation: How Joy Is Formed in Us

Correlation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process that uses related passages of Scripture to support your interpretation. When Paul wrote to the Christians at Galatia, he revealed the fruits of a vibrant, Spirit-filled life. Not surprisingly, joy makes the list!

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things! (Galatians 5:22–23, emphasis added).



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Application: Finding Joy in Our Relationship with Christ

Chuck offered four basic principles on the experience of joy based on this overview of Philippians:

1. *For living in joy, I need the best model: Christ (Philippians 1:21).* How would you fill in the blank on the following statement? “For to me, living means living for _____, and dying is even better.”
2. *For serving with joy, I need the right attitude: the attitude of Christ (2:5–11).* In what ways can you demonstrate the mind of Christ in your ministry? Your relationship to your spouse or children? Toward those with whom you disagree?
3. *For sharing a life of joy, I need an eternal goal: life with Christ (3:14).* In one sentence, how would you summarize your life goal or mission?
4. *For resting in joy, I need God’s peace, which comes from trusting Christ (4:6–7).* What anxious thoughts are robbing you of God’s peace and joy?

What keeps you from bringing these worries to Jesus in prayer?



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A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, that in Your presence is fullness of joy and that in Your right hand are pleasures forevermore! Please do whatever needs to be done to form that joy in me by Your gracious Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.



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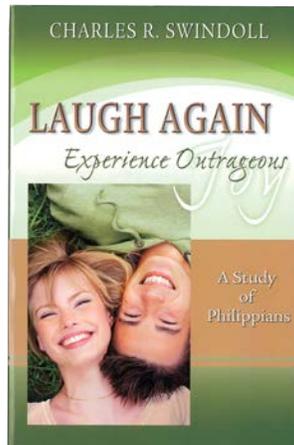
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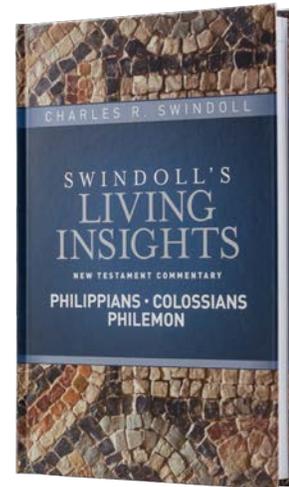
Tools for Digging Deeper



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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.

