

LAUGH AGAIN: Experience Outrageous Joy

STUDY THREE

What a Way to Live!

Philippians 1:12–21

Joy is one of the fruits of the Spirit formed in us when we believe the promises of God.

—Charles R. Swindoll

FOR to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better” (Philippians 1:21). Paul learned that circumstances are forever changing. Like the tide, the world’s economy rises and falls. Like the morning fog, happiness rolls in and then disappears.

Yet, as you will discover in this study, Paul offered a way to live beyond the limitations and uncertainties of circumstances. Such an existence has been designed by God for His people who live a life centered in His Son, Jesus Christ. Put simply, a Christ-centered life is the only way to live!



PREPARE YOUR HEART

In this moving section of Paul’s letter to the Philippian church, we learn that Paul not only taught about the power of a Christ-centered life, he was also living it. Before moving on to the next step in your study, pause for prayer. Ask the Lord to open your heart to what He has for you in His Word. Praise Him for whatever circumstances you face that are drawing you to rely more fully on the presence and power of Christ.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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Philippians 1:12–21



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

Let’s face it, many of us search desperately for circumstances that will make us happy while others have determined to live above their circumstances and find their fulfillment in Christ. Choosing the right mind-set becomes key. If contrasted, these two approaches might look something like this:

Negative Mind-Set	Positive Mind-Set
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who need certain <i>things</i> to be joyful • Those who are dependent on <i>others</i> to be joyful • Those who see joy as being . . . “out there”—always in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who require virtually <i>nothing</i> tangible to give them joy • Those who create their <i>own</i> reasons for joy • Those who choose to experience joy <i>now</i>—making it a present reality

As you read and study Philippians 1:12–21, think about each mind-set described above. Be mindful of Paul’s circumstances and think about the ways in which he determined to live above his circumstances and experience the present joy of knowing Christ.



Observation: Chained for Christ

Observation, the process of looking closely at the details of a passage of Scripture, helps you start to understand the setting and key ideas.

Paul: A Classic Example of How to Live—Philippians 1:12–14

Following a loving greeting, Paul unpacked his chosen way of life, teaching how he rose above his circumstances. Look closely at the passage and do some observing about how Paul’s way of life was possible. What clues did Paul include in this text?



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As a victim of an unjust imprisonment, Paul first demonstrated his confidence in Christ. What did Paul reveal to be the reason for “everything that . . . happened” to him in Rome (Philippians 1:12)?

Paul wrote not only about his imprisonment but also about the people around him. Who does Paul refer to as being impacted by his ministry during the time he was writing?

What was the result of Paul’s encountering these individuals?

Paul used a word translated “because” or “because of” in describing his circumstances. How many times did he use this expression in these three verses?

*I am in chains because of _____ . And because of my _____ ,
most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God’s message without fear (1:13–14).*



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Read through the remaining verses from Philippians 1:12–21. Note each time Paul used the word *because* or the phrase *because of* to describe his circumstances. Underline each expression in your Bible where he referred to his situation.

Joyful despite Others—Philippians 1:15–18

In verse 15, Paul contrasted two groups of people that surrounded him during his ministry. What did Paul describe as being the motive of the first group?

What about the second group of people?

Paul spared no words in describing the motives of certain individuals around him who, because of their attitude, could have become a source of sorrow and frustration rather than joy. List the words or phrases Paul used to describe these pesky people in verses 15–18.

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Interpretation: Paul's Secret for Rising above Circumstances

Just reading Paul's description of his situation when he wrote this letter—being in chains for the gospel and surrounded by envious rivals who challenged everything he did—it's a wonder he was able to maintain such a joyful, positive mind-set. But clues in the text help us grasp the meaning of Paul's words, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21 NASB). His readers, then and now, can discover how such joy is possible when their mind-sets are rooted in both a hope in Christ and a contentment with their circumstances.

Hopeful Regardless of Uncertainties—Philippians 1:19–20

With the gospel spreading and people proclaiming Christ all because of Paul's imprisonment, Paul was greatly encouraged. And this helped him continue trusting in God instead of focusing on the uncertainties of his circumstances:

For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to my deliverance. For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. (Philippians 1:19–20)

Paul's hope was rooted in two things: one natural and the other supernatural. What two things did he center his hope on for his deliverance (1:19)?

The natural:

The supernatural:

What did Paul fully expect and hope to be the outcome of both his life and his death (1:20)?



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Contented Because Christ Is in Control—Philippians 1:21

Paul then declared the most self-evident of all truths concerning his life, his determination to rise above his circumstances, and the One who made all that possible: “*For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better*” (Philippians 1:21). For Paul, the pursuit of happiness and fulfillment was the pursuit of Christ; that’s the secret of joy for all believers—cultivating a Christ-centered mind-set that determines the course of both life and death.



Correlation: Focusing on Christ throughout Your Whole Life

Correlation is the step in the *Searching the Scriptures* process that uses related passages of Scripture to support your interpretation. Paul reminded the Philippian believers of the power of a Christ-centered life.

Read Paul’s words to the Colossian believers in Colossians 3:1–4. What about these words reminds you of Paul’s letter to the Philippians?

According to Colossians 3:1–4, in what way did Paul develop his teaching on the importance of living life with a focus on Christ?

How does Colossians 3:1–4 help you understand Paul’s words to the Philippians about bringing honor to Christ in life and in death?



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Application: Finding Joy in Our Relationship with Christ

Application reveals specific impact points when powerful biblical truths affect the way we think, respond, and act out our relationship with God and others. Close out this study by reflecting on the three applications Chuck Swindoll offered from this passage:

1. *When Christ is central, He broadens the dimensions of our circumstances.* How might you begin to view your present situation as an opportunity to impact others for Christ?

2. *When Christ is central, He delivers us from a preoccupation with others.* What person or group of people have become an unhealthy object of your focus and your thoughts? What can you do to surrender that focus to Christ?

3. *When Christ is central, He calms our fears regarding ourselves and our future.* What aspects of your circumstances or your future are causing you anxiety or fear? What steps can you take to allow the Lord to deliver you from those concerns?



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for where You have placed me. Forgive me for my negative attitude, questioning Your gracious plan and taking for granted Your generous provision. Help me to fix my eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of my faith. For the praise and glory of Your great name, amen.



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SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

STUDY

What a Way to Live!

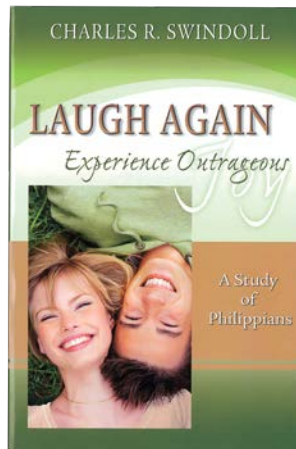
Philippians 1:12–21



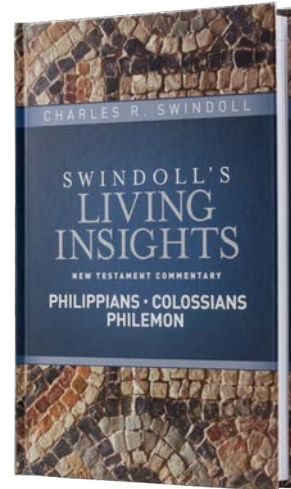
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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Mark Tobey in collaboration with Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R.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



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