

PHILIPPIANS

Rejoice In
The Lord!

Rejoice!
The Lord is Near!

Lesson Forty-Two

Philippians

Rejoice In The Lord!

Lesson Goal: To encourage students to rejoice and treat others with mercy.

Scriptures: Philippians 4:4, 5

For Memory: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice.”
Philippians 4:4

Rejoice! The Lord is Near!

Paul begins this paragraph with an encouragement to rejoice in the Lord. As a matter of fact, he says it twice! Even as a prisoner, helpless to do anything other than defend himself in the anti-Christian Roman courts, Paul finds reason to rejoice...to celebrate.* And, he wants the Philippians to celebrate with him.

Actually, in the fourth and fifth verses Paul gives the Philippians two important traits of the Christian life. He says that they ought to live in great joy. He also says that they should be gentle. Let's deal with the joy first.

We have used the word “celebrate” as a synonym of rejoice. This is good, because not everything that brings us joy is happy and a “feel good” kind of thing. Do you know people who find joy in hard work! Do you know people who find joy in helping people who are in bad circumstances. Your writer knows people who find joy and celebrate life by ministering to people in prison.

We have mentioned that Paul was in prison facing trial and very likely death, yet he was celebrating. The people in the church at Philippi were living in a community that was against Christianity; they were citizens of the Roman Empire which demanded worship of Caesar rather than Jesus, and they were looked down on by most people. Both Paul and the church at Philippi had good reason not to celebrate. It would not be normal for them to “party” at that moment.

However, they were in a great position to celebrate! Paul said they could rejoice, they could celebrate, because they were “in the Lord.” We have discussed this phrase in the last two lessons. Paul has used “in the Lord” numerous times in this letter. When he wrote the letter to the church at Rome, he said that nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:29). What a great reason to rejoice. What a great reason to celebrate! Christians are “in the Lord.”

Now, is this celebration equal to “partying?” No! Is it like a quiet “Yes!” when something happens that is really good? Oh, yeah! Can that apply to times when everything is going wrong, but we remember that God is still with us? Absolutely!! That is because we know that He is working things out to accomplish His purpose, even when it seems bad, and we don't understand it.

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The second thing Paul says is that Christians ought to be gentle. Let's be sure that we are understanding the word "gentle" like Paul said it. When Paul wrote it, it was more than the idea of being calm and courteous like our English word. It was more like: going beyond what is required.

For instance, say a friend of yours does something bad to you. If you give that person what they deserve, you would do something bad to them. However, you choose to treat them "gently." You choose to treat them with mercy and forgive them, not just because of all the good things they have done for you, but because you are like Jesus. You choose not to go by "the letter of the law," punishing the crime, but by love, gentleness, and mercy; forgiving the crime. That kind of living should bring joy to you!

Paul said that, in addition to these two things, our rejoicing, our celebration, should take into account the fact that "the Lord is near." For Paul, that meant Jesus could return to earth at any time. What a great reason for Christians to be happy...to rejoice. Jesus is coming back! He is not only near, as His Holy Spirit is with us all the time, but one day, and it could be soon, He is going to return to earth and take all Christians home with Him.

*Underlined statements in this Teacher's Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher's Guide.



Teaching Tips:

1. As mentioned in a previous lesson, additional references to the phrase "in the Lord," can be found in Philippians 2:19, 20; 3:1; 4:1; 2:29.
2. The Greek word that is translated "gentle" in our text literally means: "justice and something better than justice." It is going beyond; taking into account circumstances that may make justice too harsh or limit fairness. Christians should go beyond.
3. Songs about joy, celebration, love, mercy, and the second coming of Jesus are appropriate with today's lesson. "Rejoice in the Lord Always!"
4. Pray with your students: Thank God for giving us joy, even in the most difficult times. Thank God for Paul who showed us how to celebrate when everything seems bad and even hopeless. Ask God to give you a spirit of gentleness.
5. Think about it: Paul says, "Rejoice!" Then when he thought about his own situation and the difficult situation of the Philippians, it is like he is saying, "I know what I am saying. I've thought of everything that can possibly happen. And, I still say, 'Rejoice!'"

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Student Worksheet

For Memory: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice.”
Philippians 4:4

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=Even as a prisoner, helpless to do anything other than _____ himself in the anti-Christian Roman courts, Paul finds reason to _____...to _____.

=Not everything that brings us _____ is happy and a “_____” kind of thing.

=Both Paul and the church at Philippi had good reason not to _____.

=Paul said they could rejoice, they could celebrate because they are “in the _____.”

=Is this celebration equal to “_____?” No! Is it like a quiet “Yes!” when some thing happens that is really _____? Oh, yeah! Can that apply to times when everything is going wrong, but we remember that _____ is still _____? Absolutely!!

=You choose not to go by “the letter of the law,” _____ the crime, but by love, gentleness, _____; forgiving the crime. That kind of living should bring _____ to you!

=What a great reason for Christians to be _____...to rejoice. Jesus is coming back!

He is not only near, as His _____ is with us all the time, but one day, and it could be _____, He is going to return to earth and take all Christians home with Him.

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that there is a God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God’s Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus’ name. Jesus’ death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.

Fifth, believe that He has answered your prayer, and be determined to live for him all the rest of your life.