

Finding Joy in Difficult Relationships

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 November 2020

Preacher: Bill Story

[0 : 00] Take out your Bibles with me, please, and turn to Philippians chapter 4. We enter the final chapter of our study in Philippians.

It's been rather comparatively quick. Seems like we have about three more looks here. We're going to look at verses 1 through 5 this week, and then plan to do verses 6 through 9 next week, and the week after that, 10 through the end.

So three more looks, Lord willing. I was going to do 1 through 9 until I sat down and started looking at it and said, nope, we're doing 1 through 5 this week.

A little too much, so you never know, but make our plans. So Philippians chapter 4, we're going to look at verses 1 through 5 this morning.

So if you're able, please stand as I read from Philippians 4. Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

[1 : 25] I entreat Yodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand.

So reads the word. Let us pray. Father, grant us your eyes to see, your heart to receive, to revive our soul, to teach and equip us, help us to see the connection between relationships and joy.

As Paul interweaves his joy in relationship as well as struggle with conflict. Father, we need this today.

We need to understand how to resolve our conflicts, how to maintain our joy, how to please you, and how to rejoice in you always.

[2 : 44] So teach us, change us, convict us, encourage us. These things we pray in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen. So let me ask you, do you enjoy people?

You're a people person. It doesn't mean you have to be a people person. Do you enjoy people? Do you find delight in people?

Well, let me narrow it. How about people at church? Do you enjoy people at church? Do you have delight to be with them? I've said over and over that this is my favorite day.

Sunday is my favorite day. And the reason it's my favorite day is because I delight to see the people of the church. And I was thinking, you know, as Paul says in verse 1, whom I love and I long for.

[3 : 54] You know, he's in prison far away, 800 miles away from the Philippians. And during this time, I feel, I sense that as well. I miss many folks in person that we're not seeing in person.

I long for that day when we can all gather again together. So I'm not saying I always delight in people.

I'm just kind of asking the question to stir us to think. So do you enjoy people when there's a conflict? Okay, now we don't like the conflict, but can we still have joy in people?

When there's a disagreement, when there's an offense? One of the things that I think frustrates me the most as a pastor after however many years is I've seen so many people unwilling to resolve a conflict.

that when there's a disagreement, when there's an offense, people just want to walk away. And I get that. That's natural.

[5 : 06] But it is not the calling of those who walk in the Lord. We're called to walk the narrow road, the hard road, to deal with our conflicts, not avoid them.

And so I find that one of the most frustrating things. People just leave, move on, and we're not going to deal with it. When I think an experience in the Lord through working hard can be one of the most

delightful things as a result.

Pleasing to the Lord. Well, I know about conflict. When I was a pastor in Illinois, this isn't the only time I experienced conflict, but I know a lot of conflict from that time.

Seven months after I was there, there arose a conflict in my relationship with the leaders of the church. They wanted to change the terms of my pastorate.

And I was not willing. And so we had a disagreement. We had a conflict that lasted for the next four years. And I worked hard to resolve it, address the issues.

[6 : 21] Time and time again, I was tempted to leave. Yet I wanted to do what was right. I believe God had called us there. And so, work at it.

So in the end, I believe I did what was right. And time came to leave. But even though I did what was right, I felt defeated. I experienced, of course, depression.

I did not experience joy in that conflict. And I let that trouble, that difficulty there, rob my joy.

I don't know what I could have done different other than my attitude. And so, and so, this is what I think Paul is talking about here in Philippians 4.

He addresses the same issue. Finding joy in difficult relationships. Finding joy even when there is a conflict that we're called to resolve, or seek to reconcile, or seek to at least have peace.

[7 : 34] Finding joy. Because he talks about it, verse 4, rejoice in the Lord, except when there's conflict. Right? Rejoice in the Lord, you know, most of the time.

No, he says rejoice in the Lord always, in all things, in everything, give thanks. Right? Pray without ceasing. So, so here we are.

So, I want you to notice here in these first five verses, how Paul interweaves joy and relationship. He doesn't technically connect them with, with words.

Every commentary I read made an emphasis of how each verse is independent of the others. And Paul's just making various statements. Well, I've been studying Paul for a long, long time.

And Paul's not like that. He has a purpose and an intention. He's very, very deliberate in the way that he writes. So, so notice in verse one, he calls them brothers.

[8 : 44] He call, he says, I love and long for you. My joy and crown. His relationship with them is a joyful relationship. He has joy in relationship with them.

They are his joy. And then we go to verse two and three, where he talks about this conflict. He talks about these two ladies. He, he actually publicly names them, which is pretty interesting to agree.

So obviously they've been disagreeing. They've been in conflict. Something's unresolved. So again, talking about relationships. Then verse four, he talks about rejoicing in the Lord.

Always. And again, I say rejoice. So now he's talking about rejoicing in the Lord. And then verse five, we're back to relationships again. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

How you treat other people. So I don't think there's a independence of thoughts here. I don't think joy is separated from relationship.

[9 : 50] He has joy in relationship. Verse one, he has conflict in verses two and three. Then rejoice. Out of the conflict comes rejoice.

Always. And then by the way, how you treat one another, I think it's all connected. There's an inner weaving. Obviously the main focus, verse four, as he says, rejoice twice.

He's emphasizing joy in the Lord. In all situations, in all relationships. And Paul's already talked about that in this book. Chapter one, he talked about joy.

He, he, he, he, uh, prays with joy because of their participation in ministry with him. Back in chapter one, he talked about, though he was in prison, he still has joy.

And, and then he talked about to live as Christ, to die his game. To me, it's all joy. He rejoices in all his circumstances. Chapter two, he talked about complete my joy by being united, by thinking the same together, by treating one another, uh, graciously and gently.

[11 : 00] Then he talks about joy in witness, not grumbling, but joyful in our witness. He talks about joy, receiving Epaphroditus with joy, joy, joy, joy, joy, joy.

He keeps talking about joy all through this book. And then in chapter three, he starts off with rejoice in the Lord, which then he talks about glorying in the Lord or boasting in the Lord, which then he talks about his own relation, his own, uh, walk with the Lord, where he had all these accomplishments, which now he considers rubbish for the gain of knowing Christ, for the value of knowing Jesus Christ.

And so joy in the Lord is about pursuing the Lord. And then chapter three ended with the whole thought of running the race. Keep running the race, uh, for the joy set before us.

So rejoice in the Lord. Always. This is what I believe this book of Philippians is all about. And as I was reviewing the book this week, I kind of, you know, went through those 14 instances of the word joy or rejoice in this four chapter book of Philippians, 14 times joy or rejoice.

I compared that with his book of Romans, which is 16 chapters long, four times as long. And I thought, I wonder how many times he mentions joy or rejoice in the book of Romans.

[12 : 27] Cause that's his magnum opus, right? That's his, that's his gospel. Three times. Excuse me. Seven times, seven times. So half the number of times in a book, four times as big.

So just to show you how much joy is emphasized in this little book to this little congregation, it really is the theme of the book, rejoicing in the Lord.

So he's talked about it in all things. Now let's look at it specifically in terms of resolving conflicts. How does that work?

How can we maintain joy when we encounter difficult relationships? So I think in these five verses, we get two guidelines, two directions. First, in verses one through three, he emphasizes agreement, agree in the Lord.

Think the same in the Lord. Okay. We're going to get, look at that. And then secondly, in verses four and five, where he talks about rejoicing always, he also talks about gentleness in relationship.

[13 : 40] So joy and gentleness. Okay. So we have in verses one through three, joy and agreement, and then verses four and five, joy and gentleness.

So how do all these work together? And how do they direct us about dealing with difficult relationships? relationships. I'm sure I'm not the only one that has been in difficult relationships. Sure. We all do that. And it's one thing to have difficult relationships. It becomes another thing when we have them in church. with those that we assume will be more forgiving, more gentle, more, right, patient, all those things that Christians are called to be, right?

But we find people are people. And people have paths, people have scars, people have baggage, all that stuff that, you know, as you get to know each other, those are all part of it.

And my biggest joy, I don't know if it's my biggest joy, it's one of my great joys is, is folks who stick it out, and work it out, and address issues. And I think we come to a deeper kind of relationship when we've worked through a conflict, when we've worked through an offense.

[14 : 59] I appreciate when people let me know I've offended them. I don't, I'm not comfortable with it, but I appreciate it, because it's like, I didn't want to do that, so let's talk about that, let's get through, you know, let's work through that.

I'm disappointed how often that doesn't happen. We're robbed of the privilege of growing together. Because we all, we all make mistakes, we all offend, intentionally or unintentionally.

That's going to happen. Especially as a church, where we're going to get to know each other deeper and deeper. Okay, so let's look at this. Resolving conflicts. So the first guideline or direction would be this, I would say, in verses one through three, refocus, refocus, or emphasize, your essential agreements in the Lord.

He says in verse two, I entreat Yodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord, to think the same in the Lord.

So he's emphasizing their essential agreement, agree in the Lord, their essential agreements they have in the Lord. This applies to Christian relationships only. We don't have an agreement with unbelievers.

[16 : 11] But with every believer, we have agreements in the Lord. Focus on the essentials. Major on the majors. Right? We have a disagreement. We need to refocus on what we do have in unity and make that our focus.

So I want you to notice three things. First of all, notice Paul's affection for them in verse one. He begins by calling them brothers. Now, that's his normal term for them.

Nine times in this little book, he calls them brothers or brethren. He's not just talking to men. It's a generic term. Brothers. All of you.

Family. Right? So that's his normal term. But then look what he does. He adds four more descriptions. Just kind of layers them out.

My brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. Did I remember to tell you you're my beloved?

[17:15] He says that twice. What does that tell us? It tells us Paul has an affection for them. They're not just brothers. It's deeper than that. There's a loving and a long for.

There's a warmth and a closeness. He's 800 miles away. He misses them. He really has an affection for them. He feels close to them. They're his joy.

They're his joy right now. They're his delight. He's glad in the relationship with them. So I asked at the beginning, do you enjoy relationships with people?

Do you delight in being with people? Paul did. I'm not sure early in his Christian life, he did. Paul got in a little disagreement with Barnabas early on.

Remember that? Paul's kind of the charge forward. And Mark didn't stick with us. So I'm not taking Mark again. I don't enjoy Mark. I'm just going to, you know. And I think later in his life, I think Paul, the rough edges got smoothed out, right?

[18:19] And, you know, he learned and he grew. So, he came to delight in these folks. And, and notice that, that these aren't perfect folks because we see in verses two and three, there's a problem.

This is not the perfect church. It's a very normal church. It has conflicts. It has people that actually don't agree. Imagine that.

They don't all get along. I know. So he, he delights, they're his crown. Notice that term too. My joy and my crown. What's that mean?

Well, a crown is a wreath that, that, you know, Paul kind of uses that athletic metaphor a lot about running and run the race to win, get the crown, right? Get the wreath. So the crown is a symbol of victory, a symbol of accomplishment.

Well, I thought about that. Paul's calling them his crown, his victory, his accomplishment. You're my victory. You're my crown. You're my accomplishment. I thought, well, wait a minute. Remember back in chapter three, when he talked about, here's all my accomplishments, right?

[19:27] Hebrew of Hebrews, Pharisee of Pharisees, to the law, persecutor of the church. His, his whole value of what's accomplishment is totally changed.

It's not about him now. My accomplishment is people. My win is people, not things, not status. What matters to me is winning people. You're my crown. You're my joy. That's what I care about. That's what matters. And I love that.

Um, so he begins that way. He has this affection for them, but then notice there's a, there's an attitude that he addresses.

There's an issue in the church. There's two dear ladies that don't agree. Two dear women. Strange names, huh?

[20:26] Yodia and Syntyche. Where's those names come from? That's from a Greek culture. These women grew up pagan. They were not Jewish women. They're Greek women. Syntyche actually is a, she, she was named after the God of chance, the God of luck.

So she grew up pagan, but she's become a Christian. So here, here's these two women. He, he's, and notice he addresses both of them.

He doesn't say, I entreat Yodia and Syntyche. He says, I entreat Yodia and I entreat Syntyche. So he's talking to each of them. He's calling them out publicly.

Wow. That's a little uncomfortable, isn't it? I address each one of these women to agree in the Lord. That's all he says. He doesn't say what they were disagreeing about. He doesn't say what the problem was. Apparently the problem is not so bad like in Corinth, where he says, you are divided and here's what you're saying.

[21:32] Here's what you're doing. Here it's, I think he's just trying to head it off at the pass. He's trying to nip it in the bud. He's trying to catch it before it develops into something, into a division.

And he trusts these women enough to just say, I want you to agree. It's a direct personal appeal to these two women. Literally means to think the same, have the same mindset, have the same attitude.

And I think what he means by this is to focus on what you agree on in Jesus. Those things you already agree, as a Christian, you already agree on these major essential things.

Like what? Like the gospel. Like what is our mission? What are we here for? Agree in the Lord.

Keep the perspective. Major on the majors minor on the minors. Now, sometimes there are minor disagreements that have an impact.

[22 : 39] How you run your church. How we're going to do things together. Right? That's why there's different churches and different denominations. Because we all believe in the gospel, but we want to worship this way or we want to have our leaders do this kind of thing or we want to baptize this way.

Right? So we have some but those are minor. But understand our convictions are well, we want to I'm more comfortable working that way.

That's fine. That's fine. That's where you can grow and that's where you can serve. You're more comfortable with that. That's fine. But we're not going to divide over that. Right? So think the same. Agree on the things that are essential. Sometimes they need an assistance. So he asks this brother, whoever it is in verse 3, he says, I ask you also true companion or comrade comrade or yoke fellow.

The word in the Greek is Suzuki. I think it's Suzuki. I forget what I said in Sunday school. Some scholars think that's his actual name.

[24 : 00] His name was Suzuki. Well, you know, thought Syntyche was a strange name. Suzuki. But they can't find any historical evidence of a name by that.

Anybody with a proper name with that. So it probably just means yoke fellow. Somebody that had been in ministry together with Paul. Somebody that, you know, a yoke is, you put two oxen together with a yoke, right?

They're doing work together. So here's somebody that had been in the labor of the gospel with Paul. Someone like a Luke. Some think he's talking about Luke because when they came to Philippi and they started the church, apparently Luke had stayed there.

So maybe it's Luke, I don't know. Why he doesn't name him, it doesn't matter. But he talks about this helper. Help them. Help these women. Can you imagine that?

Why can't they just get together and figure it out? Because sometimes you just need a little help. And in the church it's really important that we work it out.

[25 : 06] And so if we can't do it ourselves, let's ask somebody mature that we both trust, that we both respect, that's fair, all right, help us. Why do we need help?

Well, because when we're in a disagreement with somebody, we only hear what we say. We don't really listen to what the, we think we already know what the other person's saying, so we're just trying to cut them off.

I have found in this, and particularly in the season that we've been in with all these political stuff and all the other things going on, I find people are not listening.

They're just talking. And they're talking and proving, but the other person isn't listening or, you know, they're just talking, you know, they're all talking but nobody's listening. I spoke with somebody in our church not long ago who felt hurt by the church and that was the very thing they didn't feel listened to.

They felt they were being told something and not heard. Man, what a difference just to go and sit down and listen, not judge, just listen. And I just, I'm just convinced that happens more and more, especially when we disagree about things.

[26 : 28] Especially if we're passionate about something. You know, I'm really curious, aren't you? I want to know what these ladies disagreed about. Who was it? Color a carpet in the chapel?

Nah, I doubt it. Whether to serve, you know, punch or wine at communion? I don't know. Paul doesn't bring it up.

It's not important apparently. But at the time it was to these women. Maybe it was something, you know, important to each one of them about how they do the gospel.

You know, I don't know. We don't know. I do want you to notice who these women are. Notice he describes them in verse 3. I ask you, true companion, help these women.

Who are these women? Who have labored side by side with me in the gospel. These are key members of the church. These are co-laborers with Paul.

[27 : 34] These are important ladies. And then he goes on, he says, not only did they labor side by side with me in the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, but what?

All their names are in the book of life. These are not periphery ladies that are arguing about some side issue. These are ladies who are in the gospel. These are leaders in the church.

These are people whose names are written in the book of life. These are good Christians.

Christians and they're not agreeing. Well, doesn't that make them bad Christians? No. Paul can still

say, they're my joy.

They're my crown. I get it. You have a disagreement. We all do that. Agree. And if you need help, get somebody to help you agree.

Why? Because there's more things important at stake. Don't be another tragedy that the world looks at the church and say, see, they're just like us.

[28 : 36] They're not any different. Well, the Philippines were not the only church that had relationship conflicts.

Pretty common. Romans 12, Ephesians 4, James 4 talks about folks that had disagreements, conflicts, fighting.

You know, talk about, we want to be a church that's like a first century church. Okay, well, we are. If we have agreements and disagreements, we wouldn't have the New Testament if it wasn't for all the problems the early church had.

We learn from their mistakes. It's common. it's normal to have conflict. It's not fun, but it's normal. And I think it comes and goes in seasons.

Something's dinging. What's dinging? Huh? Anyway, feel like, did I make a point? Ding! Get a point. All right, let me try to get another one.

[29 : 38] Ding! Or my time's running out. Maybe that's it. So here's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1. Same kind of wording.

He says, I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, think the same, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.

Why? For it has been rewarded to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, I follow Paul, or I follow Apollos, or I follow Peter, Cephas.

Oh, I'm more spiritual. I follow Jesus. Oh, well. What they mean by that is that's the one I listen to. That's the one I trust. That's the one I follow.

I don't follow Peter. I follow Paul. Oh, I don't follow Paul. He's too boring. I follow Apollos. He's a great preacher. Man, he holds my attention all the time. He's powerful.

[30 : 43] No, I like Cephas. He's really down to earth. You know, he's an old fisherman. He's not too eloquent. He's just down. I like that. I don't listen to the other guys.

I just listen to Paul. I just listen to Apollos. I only follow Piper. I only follow MacArthur. I only follow Sproul. Huh.

Why? They're all great. They're all gifted. Different ways. Paul then says, you say you follow these people.

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? And then he goes on to get to the real issue. For Christ did not send me to baptize.

Who cares who baptized you? But to preach the gospel. And not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

[31 : 55] And so we see division in Corinth is over favorite leaders. They debate and they quarrel. There is strife. They're off focus. Why are they quarreling over who they follow?

Who they prefer? That's not important. That's not what matters. But we can do that, can't we? I naturally have people I like to listen to over other people.

Yeah, we all do that. I get it easier. Something about the way that guy does it or that woman does it, it's like I can hear it better. I don't know.

So what? There's other people that are harder to listen to, but actually I gain a lot more if I can. You ever read a John Piper book? Yes.

Oh, this is being recorded, right? I love John Piper. Some of his books are hard to read. But it's worth it. A man thinks carefully.

[32 : 56] It's worth it. It's not an easy read. It's not a, I'm not going to compare it to somebody else. Love you, John. Not that he'd ever hear this, but yeah.

So, Paul refocuses on them, to them on what matters. It's about Christ. It's about the gospel. That's what matters.

Rescuing sinners, that's what matters. Our mission, what we're here for, that's what matters. Not who you like to listen to the most. That doesn't matter. So, direction one in a conflict, first of all,

focus or emphasize your essential agreements in the Lord.

Establish what's major and admit what's minor. Okay? So, secondly, then, verses four and five, he brings up joy in verse four and he talks about gentleness in verse five.

So, I put it together this way. I think he's saying, maintain your joy in the Lord through gentleness in relationships. Maintain your joy, keep rejoicing in the Lord how?

[34 : 06] Well, through gentleness in your relationships because he talks about rejoicing and then he talks about gentleness. So, notice this emphasis in verse four, rejoice in the Lord.

Excuse me. And again, I say rejoice. Rejoice. What does that mean? Whenever I hear it read, I feel like, oh, I need to be expressive with it.

Somehow, it needs to be loud. Get loud. That's the way I've always, and maybe it's what I've heard preachers do with it or other people do with it as if that's what, but the word doesn't mean get loud.

The word means be glad, delight, enjoy, delight in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord. Why?

In the Lord. What is it that we have in the Lord? Delight in the Lord. Well, what do we have? Well, we can name a bunch of stuff. I'm forgiven in Him. I have hope in Him.

[35 : 07] I have an inheritance. I have righteousness that I don't deserve. I have, I'm an heir. I have a reservation in heaven. It's hard to get reservations today.

I already got a reservation. I got promise that God is always present. Promise that God is always going to do good no matter what I go through. It's going to bring it about for good. Psalm 40.

He's lifted me out of the pit of destruction and put me on a solid rock and He's given me a new song. On and on and on we could go. Lance Redfuss, Psalm 107.

There's a lot of reasons in 107 about why to give thanks, why to rejoice in the Lord. Why? Because He's delivered me. Rejoice in the Lord. Keep that focus. That's what matters.

Okay, other things happen. Okay, my focus is already on the Lord. Well, how does it look? Well, rejoicing in the Lord can be loud praise.

[36 : 07] Yeah, of course. That's great sometimes. It can also be tears of thanks. It can also be a solemn silence.

It doesn't have to be loud. I can rejoice in the Lord just thinking and meditating.

Hmm, yeah, thank you, Lord. Oh, that's so good, Lord. It doesn't have to be loud and it can just simply, because rejoicing is about a framework of mind.

It's not an emotion. It can involve our emotions, but it's not a feeling. It's a way of thinking. He talks about always, rejoice in the Lord always, in every incident.

We just think of Acts 16 when Paul came to Philippi. He met the, remember the church started from a little river prayer meeting of women and Lydia was there, right?

[37 : 11] and possibly these two ladies were part of that little prayer group that started the church. And then, remember, Paul ended up in prison in Philippi and there was the whole incident with the Philippian jailer, right?

But do you remember what Paul and Silas were doing while they were sitting in prison there in Philippi? They were praying and singing hymns to the Lord. It was midnight they're praying and singing and all the prisoners were listening.

And then the earthquake happened remember and then the whole thing. Rejoice in the Lord always. They were just singing hymns in prison. They were rejoicing in the Lord.

Whatever happens is he's the master, he's the sovereign. This is what he wants. How do we rejoice when it's hard?

Well, recognize that rejoicing and joy is a disposition. It's an attitude not a feeling. It's a perspective. It's an intended mindset.

[38 : 17] Feeling and happiness are based on what happens to us. Joy is something that can happen always. Because it's not about a feeling and not about a reaction to something that happened but a mindset, an attitude that's already predisposed.

I don't do that naturally. Because if something unhappy happens to me, I don't naturally have that mindset.

That mindset is something I must recapture, refocus. purpose. It's putting things in perspective. So Paul sitting in prison could have thought, ah, see, serving Christ is no good to just end up in, look at what happened, you know, my life's a mess.

What good is following Jesus? All I do is end up in prison. Wait, wait, wait, wait. That's not his attitude at all. That's what he could, that would be natural to do that. But he is thinking, no, no, no.

To live is Christ, so whatever he wants, he wants. If I end up in jail, that's what I end up in. Because I'm not doing something testing the Lord, I'm simply preaching the gospel.

[39 : 35] I'm doing what I'm supposed to do. And we saw earlier in this book that he ends up in prison, and what? Caesar's household is coming to know the Lord. The guards are coming to know the Lord.

Oh, that's why I'm in prison. I'm here to convert the nerds. Got it. Cool. I rejoice. Captive audience. So, this is, this is what we need to recognize about this joy and rejoice.

It's not a, it's not a have to. You know, it's a get to. It's a change of mindset that allows me to, to, to be grateful and content with whatever I'm going through.

So, how does that affect relationships? Well, notice that he talks about this double emphasis, verse 4, rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice.

Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. Like, where's the transition? Where's the, now I come to another subject.

[40 : 44] Where's the, right? It's just rejoice in the Lord always. And again, I say rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. Wait, where do we shift gears? No, it's not a shifting of gears.

These are intertwined. Joy and relationship are intertwined. My rejoicing in the Lord will show itself by how I treat other people.

How I treat other people will show whether or not my joy is in the Lord. because if I'm harsh and selfish with other people, it will show that my perspective is not exactly rejoicing in the Lord.

See the connection? If I'm rejoicing in the Lord and I'm focusing on my joy in the Lord at all times, that's just going to flow over. And notice how he says it.

He says, let your reasonableness, actually, it's a hard word to translate because it can mean a lot of things. Reasonableness, it can mean gentleness, yielding, meekness, forbearance.

[41 : 52] It's a hard word. It's linked with all those things, with gentleness and yielding. That's why every, I think, translation has a different word for that. But notice he says, let it be known.

Verse 5, let your reasonableness be known. Let it be known. What's that? Why doesn't he just say be gentle? He says, let your gentleness be known.

It's in the passive. Remember the passive? It's not be gentle, it's let your gentleness come out. That's odd.

It's just an odd way of saying it. let your reasonableness be known. Let it show. Huh. And I think it shows because verse 4, you're rejoicing in the Lord always.

If you're rejoicing in the Lord always, let that reasonableness come out. Because if you're rejoicing in the Lord, I'm not going to be focused on me and what I want. I'm going to be grateful for what the Lord has done in me and is about to do.

[43 : 11] And in my relationships, it's just going to come out as gentleness, fairness, reasonableness. Okay? That's how it makes sense to me.

I won't be abrasive when I'm provoked if I'm already rejoicing in the Lord. So when I'm abrasive, that might mean I'm not rejoicing in the Lord.

See how that works? So then he says, here's an odd statement, right? The Lord is at hand. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.

The Lord is at hand. What is that? Is that a threat? Like if you're not reasonable, the Lord's going to slog you. No, I don't think so. That's not how Paul does that.

The Lord is at hand. So at hand or near can mean either he is near in a place, he's nearby, or it can mean he's near in time, like he's soon to come back.

[44 : 17] Okay? It can mean either one. And it's hard to tell which here. But let's think it through. So is my motivation for being gentle with other people that the Lord is nearby me?

You know, he's always nearby me. He's always. He never leaves. I will never leave you or forsake you. I give you the Holy Spirit. He will be with you always. Right?

I don't have to wait until there's two or three gathered to have his presence. That's not what that verse means. Because he's always with me. even when I'm all alone. Okay?

So, I don't think it means the place. I think it means the time. I think it means he's near to come.

Keep rejoicing in the Lord.

Keep treating others with gentleness. The Lord's near. And if in your gentleness you are persecuted, if you suffer for that, because you're gentle and they're not, the Lord's near.

[45 : 28] The Lord's near. He will vindicate you. He will bring you into home and comfort. Just talked about heaven a few verses ago. He's near.

You say, well, it's been 2,000 and how near? He's always near. Paul was convinced. Peter was convinced.

John was convinced. Jesus was coming back in their life. time. Every century of Christians are convinced he's coming back in our lifetime. Yeah? He can come in.

There's nothing keeping him. So? And if he doesn't come that way, he'll come by, you know, just taking you home. I'm getting closer and closer to that every year.

Right? at least it feels like it. So, James uses the same word to describe heavenly wisdom. It's interesting. This word for gentleness or reasonableness, he uses it in the context of talking about heavenly wisdom.

[46 : 33] So, he says, James 13, James 3, 13, who is wise and understanding among you? Well, it's going to show by your conduct. By his good conduct, let him show, let it be known, his works in the meekness of wisdom.

Interesting, the meekness, the gentleness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder in every vile practice.

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, there's our word, gentle, reasonable, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere, and a harvest of righteousness is sown by peace by those who make peace.

Fascinating, the very next section, although it's divided by a chapter, James goes on and says, what causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Why do you disagree?

[47 : 48] Is it not this that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you kill, metaphorically.

You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You do not ask. You ask and do not receive.

Why? Because you ask with wrong motives to spend it on your passions. I want you to notice how Paul uses this word. So he makes contrast.

He talks about earthly wisdom, the wisdom from below is jealousy, selfish, boasting, disorder, wrong passions, all that's natural. But the wisdom from above has this kind of gentleness.

Gentleness is linked with purity, peaceable, reasonable, mercy, fairness. It's heavenly because joy is in the Lord. So let your peaceableness, your reasonableness, your mercy, your fairness be known because that will show that your joy is in the Lord.

[49 : 05] Okay, so what do we do with all this? if you don't already have an idea? Are you struggling with a relationship? Is there a disagreement that you're in with someone, a quarrel?

Let me ask, and I ask myself the same, where's your joy? Where's your focus? Typically, when I'm in a disagreement with someone, my focus is on my position.

That's just natural. So I need to refocus. Okay, Lord. Search me and try me, right? See if there be any wrong, you know, judge my motives.

Take the log out of my eye before I want to go yell at somebody else about the big log or little speck in their eye, right? Now Jesus says it. So you can't control the other person, but you can be responsible for how you respond, right?

Where's your joy? Where's your focus? So where's the log? But know this, if your joy is in the Lord, it will show in how you treat others in conflict.

[50 : 31] So put your joy in the Lord. determined to agree with the essential things with anybody that I'm in conflict with. Let's get that straight.

Let's get the majors settled. And then perspective, remember, okay, this is mine. Okay, help me understand better. And be gentle.

Be gentle, because our joy is in the Lord and that's what matters. So I say, rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say, rejoice.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for Paul and what he has learned from you, what he has learned through difficulty in his own relationships.

We thank you, Lord, for the model that you built him to be for us to look at and see, wow, he finds joy no matter what his circumstances are. May we become like that, Father.

[51 : 32] We pray especially in our relationships. Lord, it's so natural for us to argue and to try to win our point, defend our position, and it's so unnatural for us to listen well.

So help us. As James says, be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. Father, may our joy just be grounded in you.

Continue to conform us to Christ and his thinking, and to recognize how much joy we have because of what you've done for us.

These things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. . Thank you.