

# 13 | PHILIPPIANS 3:1-3

## INCREASE YOUR JOY

Having the right focus changes everything!

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## Announcements

1. Welcome **visitors!**
2. Pray for many families who are sick today.
3. Welcome to **Marcus and Elizabeth Curtis**: missionaries to the Jews in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. They are reaching the Jewish population there.
4. **Small Groups** this week.
5. Don't forget to get your **Youth Discipleship Guide for March**, on the Welcome Center.

## Call to Worship: Psalm 122:1-4

I was glad when they said to me,  
 "Let us go to the house of the Lord!"  
<sup>2</sup> Our feet have been standing  
 within your gates, O Jerusalem!  
<sup>3</sup> Jerusalem—built as a city  
 that is bound firmly together,  
<sup>4</sup> to which the tribes go up,  
 the tribes of the Lord,  
 as was decreed for Israel,  
 to give thanks to the name of the Lord.

## Introduction

The title of our message is "Increase Your Joy." Do you ever feel like you are losing your joy? Joy is the birthmark of the birthright of the child of God. And if you're not living a life of joy you're living beneath your privileges as a Christian.

When I was a kid, my family visited Graceland in Memphis, Tennessee. It's amazing how crazy people are over this person, who is dead. People go crazy over the silliest things.

In Philippians 3 Paul has crazy love for Jesus, who is alive. This is the love we need also. This passage is extremely important because it tells us what it means to know Jesus, what it means to find eternal salvation and ultimate satisfaction in life.

What do you treasure? Is there anything of surpassing value? Is there anything that deserves our life-long, passionate pursuit? The answer is yes. Paul describes it in verse 8: "More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

Paul reminds us that nothing on earth compares to the **JOY** knowing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. You will never regret pursuing Christ.

## *The Most Attractive Quality*

Did you know the most attractive quality of our life in order to bring people to Jesus Christ is the joy that we have? The people that you work with, if they can see that joy in you, the people that you go to school with, the people that you worship with. That's the

reason I want our services to be services that are marked by joy, enthusiasm, and happiness. I'm not talking about cheerleader enthusiasm. The real meaning of the word enthusiasm is in God, *in Theos*.

We ought to worship the Lord with gladness. It's all right for a mortician to be a mortician there, but we haven't come to mourn a corpse today. We've come to hail a risen conqueror. His name is Jesus, and he is alive this morning in each one of us who knows him.

### *Many are Lacking Joy*

The Bible is the sufficient Word of God, but I think many Christians don't know how to utilize it. So many Christians lack joy. What do you do when you are down and despairing? You're depressed. Maybe you say, "That's never happened to me, Pastor." Well, just hang on. Give it time. It happens to all of us.

How to get up when you've fallen and think you cannot get up? I'm not talking about having fallen physically, but emotionally, spiritually, when you're down and don't seem to be able to recover. Now I'm not just talking about feeling bad about certain things.

### **Lady: buy shoes**

Somebody asked a lady, "What do you do when you get, down?" She said, "When I get down, I get a new pair of shoes." Her husband said, "I wondered where you'd gotten that amazing collection."

Whether we actually live with joy or allow something to take it from us is a choice each of us makes every day. Living with joy is a decision we make again and again as we're continually faced with joy stealers such as worry, bitterness, guilt, negativity, and busyness. The Psalms are filled with joyful passages to encourage us. But you know Philippians is a book of joy. Let's look at three ways in Philippians 3:1-3 how you can increase your joy.

### *Scripture Reading*

Let's stand and read Philippians 3:1-3,

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. <sup>2</sup>Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. <sup>3</sup>For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh (3:1-3).

*This is God's Word.*

This morning I want us to consider 3 pathways to increase your joy.

- 1) The **Wellspring** of Joy
- 2) The **Watchfulness** of Joy
- 3) The **Welcome** of Joy

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## 1. THE WELLSPRING OF JOY (3:1).

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### *Rejoice in the Lord*

What is the wellspring of joy? It's a relationship with Christ.

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you (3:1).

“**Finally**” does not mean to indicate that Paul has come to the end of this letter. This is only the halfway mark in the book of Philippians! There will be another “finally” to come (4:8). This word (*toloipon*) could be translated “moreover,” “furthermore,” “so then,” or “now then.” He’s reviewing the main theme here. I’m going to say it and say it again and again and again and again. This is so important: **Finally, most importantly, rejoice in the Lord!**

A Christian possesses joy that the world never knows. Many assume that the opposite is true. They think the Christian life is one of drudgery. They presume we live an antiquated life in which we deny ourselves every pleasure. But nothing could be further from the truth. The Christian life is filled with **unspeakable joy** that far surpasses anything that anyone in this world could ever know. In fact, knowing Jesus Christ is the only source of true and lasting joy that there is.

### THE REASON TO REJOICE

We have a reason to rejoice: **the Lord** (3:1). The sphere in which joy is found is in a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. True joy is a gift from God that only he can give.

The psalmist declared, “You have put gladness in my heart” (Psa 4:7).

And, “In your presence is fullness of joy” (Psa 16:11).

This joy is produced by the Holy Spirit in the believer. Paul writes, “The kingdom of God is ... joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17).

Again, “The fruit of the Spirit is ... joy” (Gal 5:22). There is not one drop of real joy to be experienced apart from him. All joy is in the Lord.

### *Joy Goes Beyond an Earthly Focus*

“The joy of which Paul writes is not the same as happiness (a word related to the term ‘happenance’), the feeling of exhilaration associated with favorable events. In fact, joy persists in the face of weakness, pain, suffering, even death.”<sup>1</sup>

We are called as Christians to focus on a sovereign, loving God who is superintending every detail of your life. There is a joy, a happiness in Christ that cannot come from the world. Your circumstances, your emotions, your money: nothing can take away the sense of contentment in Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur. *Philippians*, 216.

Joy is a matter of **focus**. “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup> For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory” (Col 3:1-4).

True joy is not dependent upon circumstances. Neither does it come from the things of this world. Authentic joy comes from having a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Real joy comes from knowing the Lord. This source of joy rises above our circumstances and cannot be drained by the surrounding situation. It is available in good times and difficult times, in prosperity and poverty. No matter what transpires in someone’s life, they can know joy.<sup>2</sup>

### THE COMMAND TO REJOICE

*It is a duty for us to cultivate this joy.* We must daily put a stop to any tendency to murmur and complain about life. Instead we should praise! We must resist the temptation to depression and melancholy as we would to any form of sin.<sup>3</sup> We are commanded to rejoice. Paul says it in Philippians 4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord, always, and again I say, Rejoice.”

#### *Rejoice Always*

The grammar here is interesting. “Rejoice” (3:1) is in the continual **present tense**. The means that the Philippian Christians, and we, are **always** to be rejoicing in the Lord. We are to rejoice not only on Sunday morning in their church gathering, but throughout the week in our homes and workplaces. We are to be always rejoicing in every circumstance of life. We should rejoice in good times, as well as bad times. We should be glad not only in prosperity, but in poverty and hard times. Rejoicing is to be our habitual emotion as Christians.

#### *Rejoice even when You’re Sad!*

What about when I’m sad? Can I rejoice in Jesus when I’m sad?

“Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup> And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: <sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

#### *Make the Choice to Rejoice*

The truth is when we understand Romans 8:28-30, that God is using every circumstance to make us like Jesus, then we can make a choice to rejoice.

<sup>2</sup> Lawson. *Philippians*, 136.

<sup>3</sup> David Guzik, *Philippians*, David Guzik’s Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), Php 3:1–2.

This verb “rejoice” is in the active voice. This means Christians must take **action** to rejoice. We are to take charge in this matter. We have this obligation to direct our minds and hearts to rejoice in the Lord. We are the only ones who can fulfill this. God will not do this independently of our making this choice to rejoice in the Lord. When Paul states this in the active voice, this could be translated, I command you to be always making every effort to be rejoicing in the Lord.

### *Submit to God’s Command*

In addition, “rejoice” is in the imperative mood. That means “**rejoice**” is a command to be obeyed. It is an act of the will in choosing to obey God. To rejoice in the Lord is the responsibility of every Christian to choose to obey. Paul is commanding his readers to rejoice. They may not have felt like rejoicing, but that did not give them an excuse to mope around. That would be living in disobedience to this command. Believers are always to rejoice in the Lord. There are reasons why we become discouraged, some of them significant. But there are always greater reasons to rejoice. God does not command what he does not make possible.<sup>4</sup>

Rejoicing for a Christian is God’s will. “Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thess 5:16-18).

## **IT IS SAFE TO REJOICE**

Paul says, it is safe to rejoice. He says, “I keep writing to you the same thing: rejoice, rejoice, rejoice.” It’s no trouble for me, but for you it is safe. Why would he say that?

A joyful focus on Jesus keeps you moving in the right direction.

### *You Can’t Apply What You Don’t Remember*

You can just imagine, here is Paul, he’s chained to a soldier. He’s saying these words, and Epaphroditus (the pastor of Philippi) is writing them down. It’s almost as if he can see the Philippians’ eyes rolling as he brings up joy again.

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you (3:1).

This is not tedious. I’m not a broken record. It’s not like I’ve run out of stuff to say. Actually, **it is safe**. Why is it safe?

You can’t apply what you don’t remember. The Bible teaches us many of the same things over and over again. Why? Because we are forgetful creatures. If we don’t constantly shore up spiritual truth that we’ve heard before that we will forget it. If you don’t hang on, and anchor down, and remind yourself of the things you learn they’ll slip away. They say we only remember a small percentage of what we hear. The statistics are

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<sup>4</sup> Lawson. *Philippians*, 138-139.

actually a bit depressing for a public speaker. Twenty-five percent (25%). You retain 25% of what you hear if you hear it twice.

So Paul is constantly repeating it: Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice, rejoice! He does it because we are so prone to forget.

When we forget to rejoice we get into a lot of trouble. What are some things

### *Stay Safe in Joy*

2 Corinthians 7:1, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

Joy keeps us protected from so many sins of our own fallen spirits. “The Joy of the Lord is my strength” (Neh 8:10).

1. Sinful anger (Eph 4:26-27, “Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and give no opportunity to the devil.”)
2. Self-pity
3. Bitterness
4. Worldly curiosity, constant amusement
5. Laziness
6. Lust
7. Fear
8. Overly downcast spirit

You can think of many more! Joy protects us from falling into all of these and more.

Spurgeon said, “Glory be to God for the furnace, the hammer and the file. Heaven shall be all the fuller of bliss because we have been filled with anguish here below; and earth shall be better tilled because of our training in the school of adversity.”<sup>5</sup>

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## **2. THE WATCHFULNESS OF JOY (3:2).**

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*Look out for the dogs...*

### **PAUL’S DESCRIPTION OF JOY STEALERS**

Paul says, we need to watch out for those things and people that can steal our joy. Paul’s main concern is the false teachers who threaten to steal the joy of the Philippians. They are the Jewish teachers who are saying you need to keep the law to be saved. He writes,

Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh (3:2).

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Spurgeon, “The Minister’s Fainting Fits,” in *Lectures to My Students* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2008), 191.

## *Watch Out*

**“Look out!”** Be on guard! False teachers are coming. Now, what Paul was telling us is this: that some of the meanest people in the world are in the world of religion. And, Paul says, “Beware.” Don’t you think just because a person is religious, he’s nice. You will find more meanness in the world of religion than perhaps anywhere else. It was a religious crowd that crucified Jesus. And so, the Apostle Paul says, “Beware of dogs.”

**The Lion...** I heard about a missionary one time that was accosted by a lion. And, the missionary was afraid the lion would devour him, and he was hoping for some kind of mercy when he saw the lion fold his big massive paws in front of him, bow his head reverently, and start to move his lips as though he was praying. The missionary said, “Can it be—a Christian lion?” But then, the lion noticed that the missionary was looking somewhat relieved, and the lion said, “Don’t get your hopes up, I’m just asking the blessing before the meal.”<sup>6</sup> Now, there are some people who may act very religious, but they’re very cruel and very ferocious.

## *Dogs*

These false teachers are first referred to as “dogs.” This reference is not to a domesticated house pet, but to wild scavengers. These false teachers are like vicious, wild dogs that roam the streets in packs from one garbage dump to the next, devouring what has been thrown away. In this hunt, they attack innocent people and spread disease. These corrupters of truth feed on the trash of false doctrine. They spread the deadly disease of doctrinal error and moral decadence. They were marked by the uncleanness of their own immorality. They are vicious in character and attack the sheep. They are vile in their motives and filthy in their conduct.<sup>7</sup>

This description says it all. These are wild animals seeking only for themselves. The people Paul was referring to were very smooth Bible teachers. They were gentle on the outside, but when you got too close to them, they took advantage of you like a wild dog. These “**dogs**” do not give you hope in Christ but wound you.

## *Evil Doers*

Paul further refers to the false teachers as “evil workers.” This speaks of their evil character, as well as their endless industry in spreading more bad character which ends in bad morals.<sup>8</sup> **Bad doctrine** always leads to bad **living**.

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<sup>6</sup> Adrian Rogers. Sermon, “The Things that Really Count” (Memphis, TN: The Adrian Rogers Legacy Collection, 2005), Philippians 3:1-9.

<sup>7</sup> Lawson, 142-143.

<sup>8</sup> Lawson, *ibid*.

## *Mutilators, False Circumcision*

These false teachers are also the “false circumcision” (NASB), which explains what they teach and impose upon others. The religious rite of male circumcision was taught in the Old Testament as a sign of God’s covenant with the nation of Israel (Gen 17). The death of Christ fulfilled the meaning of circumcision (Col 2:10-14). But these Judaizers were attempting to keep people under the old covenant by requiring their followers to be circumcised. Thus, Paul refers to them as the false circumcision.<sup>9</sup>

The point is: false teachers steal your joy. They’re going to take the spotlight off of Christ and onto themselves. Be careful, because many will use even good doctrine to

### **WATCH OUT FOR JOY STEALERS**

What are some things that steal our joy?

1. **Bad teaching about God.** God’s doesn’t punish his children. He disciplines them so that he might lavish his love on them. Get your view of God right. Exodus 20:3, “You shall have no other gods before me.” You don’t get to decide what God is like.
2. **Lack of daily worship/prayerlessness.** You are a pillar of fire, child of God. When you leave your worship behind, you are like a dry, empty temple. “One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple” (Psa 27:4).
3. **Passive men (and women).** If you know the right thing to do and you don’t do it, it’s sin (Jas 4:17).
4. **Grudge holding** (Eph 4:26-31). Be the first to say, “Forgive me.” Defuse anger quickly so you can be a blessing in the relationship.
5. **Gossip.** Manufacturing gossip or words that tear down the reputation of others will never add any joy to your life. On the other hand, when you use your words to build into the lives of others you bring joy to you and them as well. Psalm 40:3, “He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.” Gossip tears down. Praise and encouragement builds up.
6. **Approval seeking.** Being liked by everyone is so overrated. It’s much better to have God’s approval and love others from a genuine place, instead of neediness.
7. **Negative self-talk.** We often let lies from Satan or others sneak in and destroy us. Instead, preach the Word to yourself! Let God’s Word pour in and over and through your life.
8. **Living in the past.** You are a new creation! (2 Cor 5:17)
9. **Fear of the future.** Whatever your future holds, it means conformity to Jesus! (Rom 8:28-30)

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<sup>9</sup> Lawson, *ibid.*

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### 3. THE WORSHIP THROUGH JOY (3:3).

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*We... worship by the Spirit of God...*

Paul says, true Judaism, the true Israel or **circumcision** are those “who **worship** by the Spirit of God.” Paul gives us the key to worship. The first is circumcision. We have to have a sensitive, heart, cut by the Word.

For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh (3:3).

#### A SENSITIVE HEART (CUT)

What is Paul talking about? What is **circumcision**? Circumcision in the Old Testament was the cutting of the male foreskin as an outward sign of being set apart from the sinful world, in the service of the living God. It was a ritual that indicated what must happen to the heart. In itself, circumcision brought no redeeming value. It did not save, nor did it sanctify. It was a picture of what must take place in the heart. Circumcision stressed that there must be a cutting of the sinful heart that is hardened by sin.

Getting close to God requires the cutting of the heart. Isn't that what you want? Our hearts need circumcision. Theologically this refers to the life-giving power of the Spirit in the heart to make you alive to God. But we need a constant cutting of the Word and the Spirit. The Word is the Sword of the Spirit, and it is “sharper than any two-edged sword.”

Is your heart getting cut by the Word? A baby doesn't circumcise himself. That's why we need each other.

#### *The Bible is Powerful*

- The Bible is **life-giving**, called the “Word of life” (Phil 2:16). The disciple (learner, follower) of Christ has an unbreakable connection with God through his Word.
- The Word is a living, active double-edged **sword** that pierces “to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart” (Heb 4:12-13).
- The Word is “like a **fire**” (Jer 23:29a)
- The Bible is a **mirror** that reveals (Jas 1:23).
- God's word is **milk** that nourishes us (1 Pet 2:2, “...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation”).
- The Bible “is a **lamp** to my feet, and a light to my path”).
- We have been “**born again... through the living and abiding Word of God**” (1 Pet 1:23).
- God's Word is a **weapons chest** that keeps us from sin (Psa 119:11).

- God's Word is an **offensive spiritual weapon** called the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17).
- You are **blessed** only as you "meditate on God's law day and night" (Psa 1:2).

### *The Need for D-Groups*

We need discipleship groups. What do I mean? This is outside the small group ministry where you are staying accountable with two or three other brothers or sisters throughout the week. Paul says, "**We are the circumcision, who worship...**" You can't do this alone. We must worship together. We must allow God to cut into our hearts. Paul said to Timothy: "**...what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also**" (2 Tim 2:2). There are four levels of discipleship going on. Paul, Timothy, faithful men, others. That's how our D-groups ought to function.

## **A SPIRIT-FILLED HEART**

Paul says, "**For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus**" (3:3a). Circumcision refers to the sensitivity of the heart. It has the idea that your heart is cut and sensitive. Are you often wounded and healed by the Word of God? How do you know you are living with a heart unhardened by the world?

If the Word of God doesn't lead you to worship, something is wrong. You see we all have a worship disorder. We want to worship the creation above our Creator. Our fallen natures want to worship comfort over our Creator. We would rather have self-worship over Christ our Savior.

### *Signs of Spirit Filling*

Do you **worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ**? Are you Spirit-filled? What are some indications in Scripture that you are Spirit-filled? Ephesians 5:18 commands us to "be filled with the Spirit" and the following evidences are named...

1. Speaking Scripture (Psalms, hymns...) to each other (Eph 5:19a)
2. Singing in your heart to Jesus (Eph 5:19b)
3. Giving thanks (Eph 5:20)
4. Spirit of humility and submission (Eph 5:21)
5. Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)
6. Boldness (Acts 4:31, "...they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.")
7. Joy (Acts 13:52, "And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.")
8. Conviction of sin (Jn 16:8, "And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment)."
9. Supernatural comfort, reminding you of God's promises (Jn 14:26, "the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you

all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you”).

10. Prayer (Jude 1:20, “Pray in the power of the Holy Spirit”).

11. A peaceful heart. If a person is filled with the Holy Spirit he will not necessarily be noisy, highly excited or full of physical strength. The Spirit-filled life is a life of calm poise and quiet confidence (Isa 30:15, “...in quietness and in trust shall be your strength”). Remember the Holy Spirit manifests his form as a dove at the baptism of Jesus. Consider that “the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere” (Jas 3:17).

Are you worshipping in the Spirit throughout the day?

## **A CRUCIFIED HEART**

Paul says, we as believers “put no confidence in the flesh” (3:3c).

For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh (3:3).

The idea of no confidence is elsewhere illustrated as crucified. Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ...”

We have to cut ourselves off from the unholy things of the world. The Lord says, “Be holy as I the Lord am holy.” What does it mean to be holy? It means to be set apart for God’s glory. Everything you do as a Christian should be holy and honoring to God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says even our eating and drinking should bring glory to God. Your attitude to your wife and to your church family ought to be a holy cheerfulness. There is no excuse.

We must “put no confidence in the flesh.” Growth in grace is not going to happen by your own efforts. Effort must be supernaturally empowered by the Spirit of God. You can only go forward on your knees as it were with a spirit of worship.

Don’t trust yourself. Notice he for D-groups.

## **Conclusion**

Here are three pathways to joy. The joy of the Lord is our strength! Let me tell you the story of a recent wrestling match with my son William. I was a bit proud and wanted to show him that I still had it. My son is only 15 years old, but he towers over me at 6 foot 4 inches. He is strong, but I knew I could still take him down. Boy was I wrong. I had my daughter Kristen film it, and she is of course forbidden from sharing it with anyone. But what occurred surprised me. In less than a minute my powerful son very gently grabbed me and carefully laid my shoulders on the ground, like a gentle giant. He didn’t want to hurt me. What happened? How did he get so strong? He grew!

We also need to grow in the joy of the Lord. This is how we know we are maturing in Christ. Our maturity is seen by our level of joy in the Spirit. No matter what the circumstances, a Christian has the supernatural ability to rejoice.

## Life Group Questions

1. Read through Philippians 3:1-11.
2. Paul says to “Rejoice in the Lord.” Instead of rejoicing in the Lord, we often try to get rid of our problems, like the lady buying shoes in Pastor Matt’s message. What are some other things we do when we should be rejoicing in the Lord?
3. We looked at the Beatitudes and how we can rejoice even when we are sad or persecuted (Mt 5:1-12). Talk about how it’s possible to have joy even in sadness or serious trials. Have you ever been depressed (hurt, etc.) and still been able to know the joy of Christ?
4. The word “happiness” is related to happenstance, or our circumstances. How is biblical joy (the Christian’s happiness) different than mere earthy happiness?
5. Paul keeps repeating the command to rejoice and says, “To write the same things to you is no trouble (tedious) to me and is safe for you.” Why is rejoicing safe? What does rejoicing protect us from?
6. Talk about some of the sins that rejoicing protects us from: ...sinful anger (Eph 4:26-27), self-pity, bitterness, worldly curiosity, constant amusement, laziness, lust, fear, overly downcast spirit...
7. Paul says, “Watch out for dogs...” (3:2). How are false teachers like wild dogs?
8. What are some other “joy stealers” that will leave you wounded? Mentioned in the message: bad teaching about God, lack of daily worship/prayerlessness, passive men (and women), grudge holding (Eph 4:26-31), gossip, approval seeking, negative self-talk, living in the past, fear of the future
9. Paul says in Phil 3:3, “We are the circumcision who worship by the Spirit of God.” Joy then takes place in the context of community. Talk about the idea of a Discipleship Group where you have two or three other people each week holding you accountable and encouraging you. What does that look like? Who do you have in mind for your D-group?
10. What is circumcision of the heart? How does God’s word cut us?

11. How does worshipping in the Spirit lead us into joy?
12. What does it mean to have “no confidence in the flesh” (3:3)?