

The Joy of All Things
Week 1: Philippians 1:3-6
Fall Launch: 8/24/14

Welcome/intro: expecting you, hoping you'd come—takes a lot of courage to walk into a new place, thanks for taking that step here today

If just joining us picked a great time to come, starting a new series called “The Joy of All Things”

What we do around here is take either a book of the Bible or a topic and we talk about it until we either finish the book or run out of things to say

And this fall we'll be going through a short little book of the Bible in the New Testament called Philippians

Now when we do a series here through a book of the Bible, we have historically done super-deep-dives into the Scripture

We're not skimming, we're not rushing, we take our time—last spring we went through 1 Peter in like 15 weeks

The series was called “Living Hope” and someone asked me about week 12 how long Hope was going to live before we wrapped that thing up!

But this fall we're going to try something different to see if we can't help those of you who get a little antsy if we camp out too long in any one spot

To this point we've done two different message series:

1. Deep-dive Scripture study (1 Peter, John which we're doing slowly in chunks for like the next 15 years)
2. Topical (Crazy Busy series just did for 3 weeks which was super-fun)

This fall we're going to add a 3rd type of series as we go through the book of Philippians—calling it

3. Choose Your Own Adventure

When I was a kid I used to love these books

And the way it worked was you would start the story from the beginning and YOU were always but then at some point it gave you a choice to make

So you're like this submarine commander and you're taking this sub out to sea and then something goes wrong and the nuclear reactor starts to melt down

And you can choose to either surface the ship or go down with the ship and bring the entire crew down with you

As we go through Philippians this fall, it's going to be a choose-your-own-adventure kind of a series

On Sunday mornings, we're going to go through Philippians Sportcenter Highlights style— cue the music! [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28jJEjBUHQ> 1:18 mark]

We're just going to hit the highlights through Philippians as we go through it

We're not going to read each word and cover every little detail—Sunday Morning Sportscenter Highlights of Philippians

However, 2. in our small groups, we'll be doing a fairly thorough study of the passages that we're looking at.

And in small group you'll read the whole book through over the course of our time in the series

And you'll be wrestling with some issues or topics that we don't cover here on Sunday mornings as we do the Sportscenter Highlights

So that's door #2 for you to choose as we go through this series

Option #3 as we go through this series is a brand new thing we're excited to introduce and we talked about it last week

We're going to a 5-day-a-week very brief devotional that will be posted to the blog on our web site AND emailed out to whoever asks for it and wants it

And this devotional through the course of this series will be walking through day-by-day just a little piece or verse or two from Philippians, kind of making our way through it

And it'll be another chance to engage at a daily level with the Scripture we're looking at and get even more into the good stuff that's buried in each part of this great book.

Now not only will the daily devotional email be hopefully a treasure trove of daily wisdom and inspiration in a very short form

it will also be an opportunity for you to connect with other people here at Chatham Church

At the bottom of each email will be a link that will take you to the blog post that's the exact same thing as the email

But there will be a section for comments and in the comments you can either respond to anything you want to from the passage or questions that day

OR you can leave a prayer request or let us know some good news—I've got a job interview at 3:00 today, please pray for me

We'll be checking that blog throughout the day and will be glad to pray for you and with you and respond to whatever you might want to leave there for us

We're very excited about this and we're starting this TOMORROW. Monday morning if you want to experience the joy of our Connect devotional, there are a couple of ways you can sign up

We need your first name, last name and email and we need you to deliver it to us in one of four ways:

1. You can fill out the little form in your bulletin—right now, just write down your first and last name, email address, drop it in the offering plate and boom, you're getting it tomorrow.
2. If that feels way too old-school to use pen and paper, you can TEXT your information to my good friend and co-worker Steve Tamayo: 954-483-0854

In fact, go ahead and do this! One of the few times in church the guy up front is going to say "pull out your cell phones and do something else besides listen to me for few minutes!"

Go ahead and pull out your cell, text Steve here at his old Florida area-code your first name, last name, and your email address and he'll put you on this email list

You can un-subscribe at any time, so that's quick and painless!

While some of you are doing that, the third way you can subscribe is to

3. Go to our web site and across the top there's a button that says "BLOG" and that'll take you to it. There's also a button there that says "Subscribe" that you can click on and give your information
4. Hesitant to add this fourth one but it is a viable option: you could hire a sky-writer and write your first and last name and email address in the sky and we'll add you to the list

But if you do this you'll need to be sure to still text Steve Tamayo so he knows to look up and capture your information

Given that you'd have to text Steve anyway it SEEMS more efficient to ME to just text him the information directly

But far be it from me to inhibit anyone's creativity or enthusiasm.

So that's what this fall series will look like—3 different levels of engagement depending on what you've got time or interest or availability to do:

 Sunday morning Sportscenter Highlights of Philippians

 Small Groups more thorough

 Week-day devotional emails

And UNLIKE the choose-your-own-adventure story where you EITHER surface the submarine or you go down with the ship

YOU DON'T HAVE TO CHOOSE JUST ONE! You can do ALL 3 of these and it'll be great!

Now the title of this series is "The Joy of All Things"

 and that's in large part because the book of Philippians invites and commands and celebrates joy and rejoicing more than any other book of the Bible

So we're going to really just hit the JOY highlights here on Sunday mornings through this book

Some quick background and then we'll just dip our toe in the water as we get started into this great book

It was written by Paul around AD 62

To a group of people who lived in Philippi—it was somewhat significant because this was the first church that Paul helped to start in Europe as he was traveling around

And Paul LOVED this church, they had a great and encouraging relationships

And in fact as we get to the end of the letter we come to find out that one of the motivations behind Paul writing this letter is that the Philippians had generously taken up a collection and delivered to Paul a bunch of money

And Paul was raised by a good southern mama who taught him to write his thank you notes!

So Paul's likely in jail, he gets this gift from the Philippians and he writes them a note to encourage them in their faith and to say thank you

And one of the most surprising things about Philippians if you read it alongside most of the rest of the letters that Paul writes is that there's hardly any real PROBLEMS in the church at Philippi

If you read the New Testament you realize that the church has been messed up from pretty much the very beginning!

In fact, if there weren't any problems in churches we wouldn't have like $\frac{3}{4}$ of the New Testament!

From the very beginning, God has delighted to use messy, imperfect people like us to communicate his love to the world

And while there's a couple of small individual spats that Paul addresses, really this is an overwhelmingly positive and glowing letter

And the joy and love that Paul feels towards this group of people is so strong that it really animates his writing

And because there's so much joy and love in Paul towards these people, every few verses there's this really great phrase or image or encouragement that really sticks out

And if you hang around Christians long enough you'll find many of these verses end up in notes or greeting cards or in quilts or cute little frames

My guess is that Philippians is the most quilted book in all of history, it's just so quotable and quiltable—greeting cards and picture frames and all kinds of knick-knacks

And what we're going to find as we work through this book is that while Paul very much loves the Philippians and appreciates their gifts
the JOY he expresses only has a little bit to do with the particular circumstances or happenstance of their relationship

The Joy that Paul is going to express and invite us to enter into over these next several weeks
is bigger than things working out his way
it's more permanent than circumstances or the stars lining up

The joy that Paul's talking about is not in any way decided or dictated by circumstances or the immediacy of his situation

And it has everything to do with something that's much larger and more permanent

Just about a year ago, the movie Despicable Me 2 came out, much to the delight of children everywhere

And along with it was released a song that has become one of the most top selling songs of all time: "Happy" [CUE MUSIC HERE? 25 second mark:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-GLuydiMe4>]

That is now stuck in all your heads for the rest of the day—your welcome!

Now, along with posing us with the deep philosophical problem that we must all now wrestle with and consider as to why a room with out a roof is happy

Pharrell Williams said a number of things in this song that are really worth engaging

One is: Clap along if you feel like happiness is the TRUTH

And then later in the song he declares "can't nothing bring me down, my level's too high."

What I want to propose to you this morning is that what Pharell Williams says in this song about happiness in many ways dovetails with what the Scriptures say is true about joy

In Scripture's view, happiness and joy are two different thing

Happiness is the experience of temporary gladness based on circumstances

Joy is the permanent condition of deep confidence and gladness that remains in the midst of any circumstances—it's the truth and can't nothing bring me down off of it

Joy doesn't ignore tears or cover-up the hard parts of life or just wish or hope that stuff away—that's avoidance and denial and that's not what we're talking about

What we're talking about is a deep confidence and gladness that is free to see all the muck and mire and pain and sadness that this world has to offer—and GRIEVE IT!

But underneath that and undergirding that, is something that's anchored and rooted in something that's deeper than today's events

something more solid than the winds of who likes you or who doesn't, what your job situation happens to be

whether someone cut you off in traffic today or if your boss or co-workers or neighbors were friendly today to you or not

Joy is what happens when you realize that allowing everything and everyone else around you to have the power to decide the disposition of your heart is too precious to give away so foolishly any more

And so you make a decision to take back much of the power over your heart that you've given away to circumstances and people

And give them over to the One person who stands outside of circumstances, stands outside of time, stands outside of the ups and downs of the various seasons of our lives

Because the only way to have joy in the midst of all circumstances is to find an anchor point that stands over and above and outside of all circumstances

Which does NOT mean that we're super-detached from our circumstances

That's actually the Buddhist answer to the problem of pain and the longing we have for joy

and it's one of the core places where Jesus and the Buddha differ
and that's one of the reasons when people say that all religions are basically the same it shows that they don't really know that much about what they're talking about.

The Jesus answer to our hunger for Joy is not found in detachment—he says that joy is found in proper A-ttachment

Joy is found in right A-ttachment that starts with God
and then enters into whatever situation, whatever circumstance, whatever relationships FROM THAT starting point and from that launching pad and from that perspective

Because the joyful God is not a distant, far-off God—he's the God who puts on flesh and who comes to get us

He's the God who is not some clock-maker who winds the universe up and then steps back and watches it from far off

He's the one who is all up in this place, working every second of every minute of every hour to redeem every single thing that ever happens to us

Jesus does not call us to a detached joy because he himself was extremely attached to us and to all that he had made

And so our joy starts with taking back our hearts from the stuff around us and giving it to the God FIRST who stands both outside of time and who works within time

and from THAT place of primary attachment to God, we re-engage with everything around us here from a much stronger place that empowers and equips us to be attached in a healthy, joy-giving way

And this is exactly what we're going to find all throughout Philippians

Paul is going to take JOY in ALL KINDS of things

sometimes in relationship to people, sometimes in relationship to his work, sometimes in relationship to his circumstances and even trials and difficulties

And the way that Paul can find joy in all things is that he doesn't start with the things!

He starts with God who IS THE SOURCE OF ALL JOY and who is so COMMITTED to our permanent joy that he died to secure it for us

And as Paul starts there, and through that lens, through that filter, through that as the starting point

Paul is able to take joy and find joy in all things as he starts with the one who IS the fixed point of Joy in the cosmos and who stands outside the cosmos

And he's going to invite us, for the next several weeks especially, to join him in rooting our hopes and our confidence and in finding our joy in him

But to start with as we get into this series, just to get us thinking a little bit and engaged at a deeper level,

if joy is a permanent and fixed heart condition that remains even as we engage with real challenges and difficulties in our lives, we've got to ask the question:

How's your joy? What's your joy-meter-level like today?

If there's a source of joy available to you this morning, if that's reality and that's true, how tapped into it are you?

If you're like me, there's one of three answers to that question:

First: my most common answer if I'm honest is that I've allowed the circumstances and stressors of my life or the difficult and challenging issues in this world to over-run me and choke out my joy.

Secondly, Sometimes I'd say that my joy-meter or joy-quotient was pretty high, I'm doing pretty great with this whole joy thing!

But when I look back later at what was happening around me, what I thought was joy was actually just circumstantial happiness and when challenges or boredom or stressors came that all got exposed and what I thought was joy was really just shown to be temporary happiness

Third, Sometimes I'd say that I had joy but when I look back later the only way I was able to maintain what I called "joy" was through denial.

I kind of ignored or blocked out a bunch of hard stuff that was going on and when that hard stuff came to light I realized that there wasn't real joy there at all, it was just denial.

Of course, denial is kind of a pleasant place for the person who's in that place, but the problem with denial is that it necessarily destroys relationships and destroys community

Because when we're living in denial we're not really relating to one another we're relating from our island of denial to imaginary people who we can't really love or relate healthily because there's always something about the other person that the person in denial can't deal with

And Paul is going to say right here this morning that REAL relationships are one of the most important places where we experience joy here on this earth

In fact, it's one of the core questions that Paul is going to invite us to ask about our joy-meter this morning

And if you're the kind of person who struggles to stay engaged for much longer, let me just give you where we're going today

Just getting started thinking about joy and engaging with it, I just want to ask a few primer questions to get us engaged

Three core questions from this little short text that we're going to look at this morning for us to consider for those of us who realize that our joy-meter is low

When the joy-meter is low, it's time to ask a couple of short but critical questions:

1. What's my (primary) story?
2. Who am I walking with?
3. Where is my confidence?

Paul is going to give us the Jesus answer to joy and it has to do with these three things that we'll come back to over the course of this series

But for now, for just this week, I want to invite you to start to think about these three questions and begin to see how they tie into our longing for joy.

If you've got a Bible turn with me to Philippians 1 where we get the first of many exclamations of joy as Paul starts off this letter

If you don't have a Bible it'll be on the screen behind me, if you don't OWN a Bible, we've got free Bibles over on the book table
along with some of the best books ever written all available for great prices

Here's Paul's opening greeting to the Philippians as he starts his letter:

³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with [here's our word!] joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, [and here's your first quilt-verse] that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Over the past couple of weeks we've moved our church offices from the strip mall up at Cole Park next to Torero's down to Chatham Mills in Pittsboro

And the space we moved into is great but like most moves it needed some work and a little freshening up

So over the past two weeks a number of us have spent lots and lots of time over at the new space in Chatham Mills

And one of the biggest jobs we had to do was painting. I can sum up how I feel about painting very easily: I hate it!
I'm slow at it and I find it mind-numbing

But a couple times I was in there with a group of us painting, and two of us would end up in a room painting and doing the trim work and cutting

And we'd end up in a conversation that was real, where something of significance was being shared as we both slugged away at the work

And when the work was done, I found that I didn't hate that particular painting session quite so much

As Paul starts his book of joy, the first note he sounds and the first place he celebrates joy is in his partnership with the Philippians

Paul is working alongside the Philippians co-laboring in a task that is at points laborious, at points dangerous, at points costly, at points it causes people to have to make incredible sacrifices

PAUL has had to make incredible sacrifices

The Philippians had to make incredible sacrifices

And in the midst of all these sacrifices, in the midst of at points risking their lives and their relationships with families, Paul declares that there's joy in this co-laboring together

We tend to think that joy is the absence of pain or difficulty. But Paul here says that in the midst of all the difficulty and opposition and challenges, he's known with this community real joy.

And the joy inherent in THIS co-working is NOT JUST CO-WORKING BUT CO-WORKING AROUND SOMETHING THAT MATTERS

What Paul and the Philippians are working on together has joy at the very core of it

They are working together in and for the GOSPEL—God's good news to all humanity

The gospel is God's joy expressed concretely on this earth in the work and person of Jesus Christ

There are all kinds of partnerships and co-laboring that happens here on this earth that do not produce joy

because the object and goal of their labor does not have joy woven into the very core of what the work is about

Drug traffickers co-labor, but the object and subject of their co-labor does not have joy in it and therefore does not produce the fruit of joy in their lives

The gospel is the joy of God expressed concretely on this earth in the work and person of Jesus Christ

And some of my deepest joys and richest friendships have come in the darkest seasons of my life

as we pressed on toward the most important goal of loving and serving Jesus Christ together in our own personal lives

And as we've worked together to in service to this larger purpose and larger, bigger thing of doing our small part in advancing God's eternal, joyful purposes in the world

Let me ask you, as we're getting started here talking about joy and trying to be as honest as we can be about our own experience of real joy

The only way for joy to be the defining characteristic of our lives is if the story of our lives is hooked into a larger story that has joy at the center of it.

That joy story has to be at the center of OUR stories in order for real, eternal, lasting joy to be ours

Not on the margins, not just when it's convenient, not when we're desperate and needing God to show up somewhere and do something

If we want joy to be the core energy of our lives, we have to have THE JOY STORY at the core of our lives, otherwise we miss it

My son Davis and I have been reading the Lord of the Rings books—we started it sometime in May 2013 and we just finished it last week
we spent about 15 months reading through just a little bit every night

And if you've read the books or seen the movies you know that part of what makes it so great is that there's an epic primary plot that carries a ton of weight and import

And then there's all these interesting sub-plots, all these sub-stories and different characters with long and strange names in and out

But there's ONE primary story that's driving the action and the actors to make heroic sometimes extremely difficult and sacrificial decisions

And their sense of purpose and their resolve and their courage amidst all kinds of challenges and pains and loss and grieving

Derives from the fact that their primary story is big enough and important enough to sacrifice everything for

Question number one as we evaluate our joy-meter: What's your (primary) story?

Your job, no matter how great and important it is, no matter how much you enjoy it, is not a secure enough story and large enough story
to generate lasting and permanent joy

Your relationships, your friendships, your family, no matter how great and perfect they might all be, is not a secure enough story and large story to generate lasting and permanent joy

Your volunteer work, no matter how altruistic and important and good it might be, is not secure enough or large enough a story to generate lasting and permanent joy

All of these are to be sub-plots to the main story-line of God's work in Jesus.

The Scripture's response to our joy-lessness first and foremost an invitation:
that the story of the expression of God's joy in the world might be OUR primary stories, and EVERYTHING ELSE in our lives might be secondary, and sub-plots

Some of us go through religious motions, but never really put the joy of the gospel at the center

Others of us would call ourselves sort of vaguely Christian, we try to be good, check in with God occasionally

we're basically moral people but there's no rigorous, deliberate engagement at deeper levels with Jesus in our day-to-day lives and in the places that really matter

You know what that's kind of like? It's like you're living in a war zone, and every day there's all these circumstances and events trying to crush your joy

And you've got a tank in the garage—the tank of the gospel, this is so strong and powerful that nothing can destroy it joy

But instead, each day you get on your moped and try to navigate around. And then every day or every couple of days you get blown up and you can't figure out why

But the tank is right there! The power available to you in Jesus is right there!

You're just choosing a vague moralism over the power of the gospel—I want to invite you to a serious consideration of how you're relating to this story

What would it look like to hook your lives into the story of God's work in Jesus, God who is so committed to your joy that he died to make a way for you to access it.

Some of you don't really know this story, haven't really engaged this story before, we're so glad you're here, strap in, this is going to be a fun ride!

We're going to see over and over again in Philippians how Paul's joy comes from how he answers our first two questions:

1. What's my (primary) story?

And secondly, as we talked about earlier: 2. Who am I walking with?

Who is on this journey with me who is also committed to this as our **MUTUAL PRIMARY STORY**

we are in this together with the gospel as our mutual primary story that serve as the organizing principle, the **BIG IDEA**

of how we live our lives, make our decisions, how we do parenting and singleness and marriage and retirement, how we spend money and time and on and on it goes

We need people around us who will encourage us in this direction and help keep us focused on what we know to be most important

This is why we put such an emphasis around here on small groups—if we don't have people walking with us who share this as our mutual primary story, then we are cut off from a major channel and a significant possible source of joy

Over the past fifty years in our country there has been an explosion of self-help books

In fact, there's a self-help book with the top 101 best self-help books

This movement has helped a lot of people

And much of their analysis of what's gone wrong with people is that we're not confident enough, we have low self-esteem

And in this passage that we're looking at, Paul uses a word that's very popular in those circles, he talks about **confidence**.

But the way that he uses the word confidence is different and it's important for our conversation about joy

If this was a self-help book that you were reading from Barnes and Noble and Paul was a self-help guru, he would have said something like this:

"I'm confident that **you** have the gifts and abilities within **yourself** to overcome any and all obstacles and to do whatever **your** heart desires."

The self-help movement is largely about affirming our innate abilities to do whatever our hearts tell us to do

And again, there's some good stuff here, it's not all bad

But ultimately Paul's confidence rests in a different place and I want to suggest to you that this is a second and related critical component to true joy.

being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

As Paul states it here, Paul has a whole lot of confidence, but is his confidence in the Philippians innate gifts and abilities? NO!

Paul's confidence is in the HE, not in the YOU; JESUS is the one Paul's confident about, the YOU is the one on the receiving end of the work!

Now, of course he respects and loves the Philippians and he believes and knows that Philippians have got all kinds of gifts and abilities given to them by God

But ultimately Paul's confidence is NOT in the Philippians but in the one who is LORD OVER the Philippians

Jesus is the one who STARTED this good work in them and Jesus is the one who will FINISH that good work in them

And MAYBE the Philippians are the most brilliant people in all of the Greco-Roman world

Or MAYBE they're not the sharpest knives in the drawer or the biggest aqueduct in the countryside

But either way, Paul's confidence does not rest on their ability to overcome but it rests on the God who has already overcome sin and death

And who is already at work mightily to complete the good work he began in them

The self-help movement is onto something when they name confidence as critical to our mental and emotional health

But what our confidence is in, where our locus of confidence is, what we're confident ABOUT makes all the difference in the world.

I've known all kinds of people who were very confident, even one person who turned out to be narcissistic—that's about as confident as you get

But these people had no real, lasting joy

Because the locus, the center, the focus of their confidence was too small, too shallow, too easily shaken

There is NO JOY without CONFIDENCE. Think about that with me for a second—there is no such thing as lasting, enduring joy without some sort of confidence

No one has joy who is primarily marked by fear, anxiety, worry, or self-hatred

In order for joy to flourish in your heart and in my heart, it has to have an environment of confidence

But not just any-confidence—real joy requires God-confidence, a certainty that there is a good God who is outside of this world and who stands over it as its rightful Lord

A confidence that THAT God is for you and with you and will one day put the world to rights no matter what happens, no matter how bad or good it gets in this life, if there is no God-confidence then there is no joy

But Paul shows us the key to what Christians call joy, and it includes a rock-solid confidence

not in the abilities of the people around you, because we've all been let down by people before, haven't we?

And it's not a self-confidence, because I've been let down by me maybe more than by anyone else, haven't you?

It's a God-confidence, that the one who stands outside of all time has the power to redeem all our times and complete the work he started in us

We're talking over the next several weeks about joy and we're just getting started today and I just want to get you thinking a little bit

Here are the questions for you:

1. What is my (primary) story?

If the gospel is the joy of God expressed in the work of Jesus Christ to rescue and redeem all humanity into permanent joy for all eternity, then where are you in relation to this gospel?

2. Who are you walking with?

Do you have real friendships with people who have a mutual commitment to this gospel story as your primary story?

3. Joy only flourishes in the atmospheric conditions of God-confidence. Where are you putting your confidence today?

Ultimately, if we're putting our confidence in our own abilities, in someone else's abilities

in our money or status or position or retirement plans, then we're sowing the seeds of our own joy self-destruction

But as we grow in putting our confidence in the one who stands outside and over all things, as we find our confidence in him

Then in that environment we create the conditions ideal for joy, real joy, to grow and flourish and become the core energy of our lives.

Over the next several weeks we're going to watch Paul answer these questions.