

# PHILIPPIANS

## JOY ON THE JOURNEY

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Philippians 4.2-9  
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### I. Connecting With One Another

When was the last time you disagreed with someone? What issue caused the disagreement? Was the disagreement worth the attention? Was it resolved? If so, how?

How about the last time you were anxious. What caused the anxiety? Are you still anxious over that issue?

### II. Introduction to this Study

As we near the conclusion of Paul's letter to the Philippians, the Apostle to the Gentiles addresses some issues specific to the Philippian church. Last week, with the Philippians, we engaged the profound truth that we are "citizens of heaven," and - in a way - we see that truth being worked out in verses 2-9.

Paul purposefully - and specifically - engages dissention between two leaders of the Philippian community, Euodia and Syntyche. Pleading that they be of one mind "in the Lord," prompts the founder of their community to reflect upon their eternal salvation. What's more, he then recognizes how that eternal salvation begins here and now. Indeed, "the Lord is near"! Because of the Lord's presence, we - as His followers - set our minds on that which is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable.

### III. Study the Text

#### a. Read Philippians 4.2-3, the first of the three sections within this passage.

Here Paul addresses an issue that is personal, though it is not private. Because these two women have "contended at Paul's side" as missionaries and continue to serve as leaders in the Philippian community, their personal disagreement is not a private matter to be settled behind closed doors, but needs to be reconciled within - and for the good of - the whole community. While we don't know what the problem between Euodia and Syntyche was, notice that Paul doesn't declare a winner.

Why do you think Paul addresses it so boldly? Do you think tackling the problem head on helped it be resolved? Why - or why not? What is the significance of Paul inviting them to agree "in the Lord"?

#### b. Paul asks his "true companion" (though we don't know who this is) to help these fellow missionaries work out their differences. Why do you think Paul invites a third party to help out? Is this similar to Jesus' instructions in Matthew 18.15-16?

#### c. Why - in the midst of encouraging two leaders to work out their differences - do you think Paul asserts that their names are "in the book of life"?

To see other places where this phrase is used, see Revelation 3.5, 13.8, 17.8, 20.11-15, and 21.27.

#### d. Read Philippians 4.4-7.

In verse 7, Paul utilizes imagery familiar to him in a prison cell; that the peace of God *guards* our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. But that does not necessarily happen on its own. Notice the layout of these verses:

Rejoice > Be gentle > Do not be anxious > By prayer and petition, with thanksgiving > Peace

Do you think this was meant by the Apostle as a progression of sorts? In other words, did he mean for us to conclude that one action or attitude would lead to the next? Why - or why not?

- e. Recall that Paul was writing this from a prison cell. Why, in such circumstances, do you think he was able to encourage the Philippians to rejoice, to be thankful? How, if at all, do you think his instructions were borne out of his own experience?
- f. Read Philippians 4.8-9. The categories Paul lists in these verses were well known in Greco-Roman culture, though he does not hesitate encouraging his fellow Christians to follow them as well. Though slightly wordy, Ben Witherington puts them into perspective:

"Paul's vision is that the Christian faith is in the main a world-transforming not primarily a world-denying religion, not least because the world and all its inhabitants were created by God, and God has not given up on them. Paul believes that we should focus on the good things and praise and appreciate admirable human qualities wherever we find them."

Our culture - or at least the evening news - is filled to the brim with things that are not true, noble, right, pure, lovely, or admirable. Where do you see such things in our world? And how do you set your mind on such things instead of being bogged down by the problems?

#### IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. How does Paul's example encourage you to address disagreements with others? How does Paul's unwillingness to "declare a winner" help you think about reconciling with someone? How does his phrase "in the Lord" help you think about reconciliation?
- b. Next time you have a difficulty with someone, do you think inviting a mutual third party into the situation could be helpful?
- c. What types of things are you anxious about? How often does your worry change anything? Recall Jesus' words in Matthew 6.25-34. How could offering up your worry to God in prayer change things?
- d. Sometimes hindsight is 20/20. Think back to a time of difficulty in your life: How can you now discern God's presence in the midst of that season?
- e. How could you be further encouraged to set your mind on the true, noble, right, pure, lovely, or admirable things?

#### V. Pray

Spend some time in prayer:

- a. For Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church - that whatever Euodias and Syntyches, whatever disagreements, whatever misunderstandings are within our church, we could come together in the Lord, to connect with Him, grow in Him and serve Him and His people;
- b. For this weekend's worship gatherings - that God would open our eyes and ears, that God would soften our hearts to hear His Word, quickening us to apply it to our lives, that we might experience His gospel and declare His gospel to those around us;
- c. For our upcoming holiday activities - that as individuals and as a community, we would invite others into celebrating the good news that God's Son with us.