



# Community Group Discussion Guide

To Be Content: In our Prayer - Philippians 4:1-9

October 25, 2020

## I. Starter Questions:

1. Have you ever been part of a community, whether it be family, work or church where there was a struggle to be in agreement? What impact did it have? How would you describe the relationships?
2. What were those things that helped overcome the disagreement?
3. Was there someone in particular that led well in the situation and what was effective about their leadership?
4. What are some of the differences in how one would lead through disagreement in a work situation, versus in the church?

## II. Scripture and Discussion:

**Philippians 4:2-3:** “I entreat Euodia 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.”

**Background:** Paul continues speaking of a theme common throughout Philippians—being of the same mind, or to “agree in the Lord”. He is speaking of unity in the church and he “entreats” two women to agree in the Lord. The word entreat doesn’t sufficiently communicate Paul’s heart. He is pleading; some would say, begging Euodia and Syntyche to “agree in the Lord”, telling us that what Paul is speaking of is vitally important—that the church can’t let disagreement distract and sidetrack the gospel work of the church.

**Discussion:** How have you seen disagreement impact the work of the church? Was the disagreement viewed as potentially very harmful, as Paul has indicated here, pleading for “agreement in the Lord”?

These verses tell us a lot about Euodia and Syntyche. They were believers, whose names were written “in the book of life”, and they were leaders who labored side by side with Paul and others in the work of the church. Paul doesn’t say what the disagreement was, although we do know it was most likely public, as Paul is mentioning them by name.

**Discussion:** What do these verses tell us about disagreement in the church? Does it happen amongst believers and leaders of the church? What is Paul saying when he instructs Euodia and Syntyche to “agree in the Lord”? Looking at disagreements that are common today, even within the church (you must vote for this or that candidate, or my conscience won’t let me vote for either candidate; the virus should be managed this way, not that way), what does Paul’s instruction to “agree in the Lord” mean or look like in the context of these issues?

**Philippians 4:4-7:** “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup>do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”

In verses 4-7, Paul speaks of rejoicing *in the Lord*, and he’s going to tell them again, “rejoice in the Lord”—speaking of its importance in their lives. Notice that Paul doesn’t say “rejoice in your circumstances”. The church’s circumstances included Paul’s imprisonment; they were threatened by those opposed to the gospel; and they were confronted with disunity in their midst. The pastor’s guidance was to turn their hearts and minds to the one who is absolutely trustworthy—to rejoice in the Lord and all that He is to them.

**Discussion:** Paul recognized and taught that taking joy in the Lord is important to the well-being of the church and individual believers in the midst of struggle. How have you witnessed or experienced the truth of this teaching? How do you encourage someone in the midst of very difficult circumstances to “rejoice in the Lord”?

Paul tells us to “let our reasonableness be made know to everyone.” Many theologians use the word gentle here to help us understand what Paul is instructing. Some descriptions of “gentle” are:

- To be mastered by God’s Spirit (humility, submission to God brings gentleness, and to be gentle is to accurately represent Christ).
- When one is gentle, others see genuine interest, creating a safe environment.
- To be gentle is to be peaceable, demonstrating trust and confidence in God, rather than self.
- The gentle person is seen as one who is open to reason, wise, representing the meekness and humility of Christ.
- To be gentle is to not be quarrelsome, but to forebear.
- The gentle person does not insist on his “rights”.

Have you experienced the gentleness of Christ? In what ways? Have you seen gentleness in another? What did it look like and how did it impact you? How does gentleness fit into Paul’s appeal to Euodia and Syntyche?

Paul follows with the command, “Do not be anxious about anything”, but also provides the cure for anxiety—prayer. Prayerful people are peaceful people because prayer guards our hearts and minds. Peace is the guard against anxiety.

**Discussion:** Scripture’s command, to not be anxious about anything, seems impossible. What does Paul say causes anxiety, or lack of peace? How would we pray if our desire was to work toward being free of anxiety? Would prayer be an effective way of helping our families, our children with anxiety, particularly with all they are experiencing right now?

### **III. Responding in Prayer:**

- Pray that our experience with prayer would demonstrate that it brings about trust in God, with the gift of prayer being peace that we can't explain.
- Pray that God would guard the unity of His church, particularly in very anxious times.
- Pray that each of us would forebear, be gentle spirit in our disagreement—that we would have God's wisdom...the same mind, in as we stand side by side in living and sharing the gospel.