

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

WHEN THE STRUGGLE IS REAL | REBEL'S GUIDE TO JOY

AARON BROCKETT | FEBRUARY 5, 2023

Alright, alright. You know, I don't know what comes to your mind when you hear or think about the word *rebel* but for the past, I don't know, 60 or 70 years or so, it's sort of been represented by this guy right here, James Dean. All of us kind of followed him and he had the corner—he kind of had the rebel thing down. And for whatever reason, it involved leather jackets, motor cycles, and a dangling cigarette.

And really what this came out of was during this particular time period in history, the societal norm was: everybody be good and play nice and follow the rules.

And then there was a segment of society who said, "Well, we don't want to do that. So you had James Dean and others who kind of said, "Well, we're just going to move to the beat of our own drum and we're going to go against the flow of all of that." And that's really where this idea of a rebel or rebellion kind of came out of.

Now what we're doing in this series together is we're walking our way through the New Testament letter to the Philippian church, which is called Philippians, and really kind of examining: Well, okay, if that is what it meant to be a rebel then, what does it look like to be a rebel today?

And what I'm trying to say is that now-a-days everybody is doing that. So if everybody is kind of going their own way and making their own path following their heart wherever it leads, wouldn't it start to reason that to be a rebel means to go against the flow of the vast majority of culture. So societal norms today are: anger, and cancel culture, and rage, and impatience, and selfishness.

So to be a rebel today, wouldn't it mean that we're actually standing apart and we're gracious and we're kind and we're quick to listen and slow to speak and we're patient and we're understanding and we're forgiving and we're joyful?

I like how Jodi said it last week. Jodi said the kind of rebellion we really need is to be deep in a shallow world, constant in a changing world, passionate in a cynical world, unified in a divisive world, humble in a competitive world, confident in a fearful world, patient in an instant world, content in a material world, and joyful in an anxious world.



I think that we would all agree that it's not. And the tragic result—and I don't think we talk about this enough—is that we are profoundly sad. There is a sadness, I think, right now within our culture and in many of us as individuals.

We talk a lot about mental health and anxiety and depression and we should. Those are very real things. And we've talked about them from this platform a lot. But often we just need to stop and acknowledge that, really, at the root of all of this is that we are sad. I think the pathway to healing for many of us, from what we've been through in the last few years, is to just really kind of get it out there and say, "You know what? I'm sad about what we've lost over the last few years. I'm sad about what it has cost us. I'm sad that we live in a really, really broken world.

"I'm sad that that relationship or maybe a set of relationships that I had I no longer have. Those people are not in my life any longer. I'm sad that my expectations haven't been met. I'm sad that I keep repeating the same mistakes over and over again. I'm sad that I continue to search for purpose and it keeps eluding me. And I wonder if I'll ever experience it."

So, because we are sad as a people and a culture, we numb out and distract ourselves with all kinds of things so that we don't have to confront our sadness and we keep chasing after happiness that eludes us.

A guy by the name of Pascal said it this way, "Modern life is filled with distractions to cover up the fact that we are not really happy."

As a pastor there are a number of things that I'm always trying to convince you of. But I know one thing that I never have to convince you of is your desire to be happy. We all want to be happy. Our culture's number one value is happiness. It's baked into our DNA as a country. It's right there in the Declaration of Independence: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

In fact, people in our culture will get sort of hostile if they perceive that you're trying to infringe or block their happiness. It's kind of like the definition of what they think is happiness is: follow your heart or pursue all of your desires or go after what it is that you ultimately want in order to be happy. And yet, why aren't we? Why do we keep chasing after this thing and we never seem to find it? It keeps kind of escaping us. I think even for many of us, as Christians, Christ followers, church goers—call it what you want—no matter how long you've been in church, especially if you grew up in church, I think there is a low-grade guilt over even our search for happiness. We even wonder, "Well, should I even be searching for this?"

I remember very vividly when I was growing up in church on a number of occasions I had some very well-meaning but misguided Christians say this to me in Sunday School or wherever it was, "Now, sonny," I don't know if they actually really did this or if it's just in my mind, you know point at me with a crooked finger, "Sonny, God doesn't care about your happiness. He cares about your holiness."

Yeah, you grew up in the same church I did. So what we ended up doing is we sort of pitted happiness and holiness against one another. So how I kind of interpreted it is, "Okay, God wants me obedient and miserable." And I want to say this to you, especially if you got that impression, if that's been your perception...

I would imagine that there may be a number of you here today who would not call yourself a Christ follower. You're not quite sure what you believe. You believe that there is probably a God but you're not quite sure who He is or what He is. And you're kind of like, "I don't know." And maybe that's been the reason why you've rejected it. You are like, "I want to be happy. All religious people, they don't seem very happy. If it's between happiness and holiness, happiness sounds like a lot more fun. So I think I'll do that." And I just want to say today that God is not against your happiness. In fact, God is the Creator of life, God is your Creator, you are His creation, therefore He knows how to optimize your happiness. The only way in which you will really, fully experience it... I would even go as far as to say, that happiness will keep escaping you until you get reunited, reconnected, restored, or redeemed to your Creator.

So God is not against your happiness. He actually really wants it for you. The Bible even goes as far as to say this: God wants to give you the desires of your heart. So here's the thing. I think what a lot of those well-meaning, misguided Christians who said that to me years ago, what they really meant was, God wants something more for you than just mere happiness. He wants you to go a layer deeper than that to this thing called joy, because joy is much deeper and it's much more durable than happiness.

It's kind of like... Have you ever held something that was just really, really well built? Have you ever had a really, really nice pen. And it was just like, "Wow! This is really nice." And then you go back to the little, cheap Walmart special and you are like, "Man, this is really, really well designed and that isn't."?

You ever been to a five-star hotel, you shut the door to the room and it's just like, "Wow!" You're like, "Man that is really well made. Solid and the hardware and the crown molding..." And then you go to a really cheap motel and it's like, "Eh." I don't know if that really how it sounds, but it's...

This is the difference between happiness and joy. God wants to give us something really well built that is durable to withstand your circumstances, your storms, and your pain. That's what He wants. So, what is the difference between happiness and joy? If you're taking notes, by the way, I hope you brought your guidebook back with you. We've got some here today if you didn't get one. These are designed to bring back every week to take notes to use daily throughout this study—just in your own personal study time, and to use in your groups. So if you've got your guide book, pull it out. Some of you are avid note takers, and that's great. You're my people. Alright?

Others of you are like, "I don't take notes." That's fine. Maybe just jot down one thing. Maybe it's a reference or something and you can jog your memory later. Let me give you something you can write down. Alright? Here's the difference between happiness and joy:

Happiness is external

It's outside of you. So I'm happy when things go my way. The unexpected discounts, the upgrade, or when I get all green lights on the way to work and I'm late. But here's the thing. I have nothing to do with any of that. So I'm kind of at the mercy of those things. So when things are good, I'm good. But when things are not good, I'm not good. And people's level of happiness is kind of like a boat on the tide. Tide goes up, boat goes up. Tide goes down, boat goes down. Same thing. Life is good, man I feel good. Life is bad, I feel bad. But that is not only bad for you, that is likely bad for the people who live with you.

So the problem is that all of those things are outside of your control and you and I, we cannot control outcomes. We can influence them, but we cannot control them. So my happiness is sort of at the mercy of random chance. That's no way to live.

Joy is internal

Joy is not external, it is not based upon circumstances but it is based upon the condition of the heart. So what that means is that you can experience joy even on the worst days, even in some of the toughest circumstances.

Have you ever known or met two different people going through similar circumstances—completely different responses? So somebody is walking through cancer. Somebody is walking through a miscarriage. Somebody is walking through unemployment or a divorce. And one person responds with anger and bitterness and they are just divided. And the another person walks through a very, very similar set of circumstances and yet is joyful and kind and introspective—so things that are external circumstances have different internal conditions.

I like how Paul puts in in 2 Corinthians 4:

"Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away..." Yeah, every time I look in the mirror I'm like, "Yeah. You're right Paul."

*"...yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that," here's the word, "far **outweighs** them all."* 2 Corinthians 4:16-17 (NIV)

So it's this idea that joy outweighs happiness. Let me just give you a couple of other ones that are very similar. Alright?

Happiness is based on circumstance

The root word for *happy* in Latin is *luck*. That's like rolling the dice. That's kind of being totally at the mercy of whatever happens to you.

Joy is based on a condition

Happiness is by chance

It's not really up to you. It's totally random.

Joy is by choice

It's a decision that you make more than a feeling that you have. So it's a conscious decision to not let the things you can't control to control you. The difference between happiness and joy, God wants our happiness but He wants us another layer deeper than that. If you're going to really navigate the challenges of life, He wants you to operate out of a place of joy.

And if I were to ask you today this question as we look out into 2023 as we see what's in the news headlines and the condition of the world, the brokenness of the world right now from everything, the struggling economy, the political division, we've got balloons from China up in the air, with all of that in front of us what does the world need right now more than anything else?

I think that's kind of the answer that everybody is pursuing. And you might get a lot of different answers to that. Some people might say, "Well, you know what the world needs now more than anything else is love." What does that mean exactly?

Maybe you've got some legalistic Christians, "What the world needs now is truth. We just need truth." "What the world needs now is better morals and better ethics."



I don't know that those are wrong answers. In fact, I think there is a lot of right and good in them. Here's what the book of Philippians would say to us:

This world needs more Christians to be joyful!

What the world needs now more than ever is for Christians to be joyful. Alright? It's awfully quiet in here, "I don't know sonny."

So what the world needs now more than ever is for Christians to be joyful. Alright? A dark and despairing world needs a joyful church. Now, what am I talking about? Why? Well, because when I say Christians, I'm not talking about religion. I'm not talking about someone who has a fake belief in God or who votes a certain way or has a set of morals.

I'm talking about those who recognize their brokenness and sin and they've repented of that, they've given their life to Jesus, not just as Savior but as Lord. And now they are beginning to live out of that new identity in Christ. Why? Because Jesus came and met us at our worst and He rescued and He ransomed and restored and redeemed us when you and I were hopelessly broken. And He gave us a hope and a future. There you are. You finally showed up today. Alright.

Now He's mediating on our behalf. I love that description of Jesus. What is that? Well, it means that Jesus is the go between between us and God and God. In His justice and in His rightness He is like, "Hey, that is a violation. They have broken the law. They are outside of Me. They've sinned." And Jesus says, "Yeah, but I've got it." That's a mediator. He's like, "Yeah, I've got it. I've already paid for that. I've already covered that." He is mediating on our behalf so when God looks at our sin, what He sees is Jesus' righteousness because we are hidden in Him.

And if that is not a reason to be joyful, in our demeanor, actions, thoughts, and speech I don't know what is. And yet, I've met a lot of grumpy Christians, especially over the past three years. Haven't you? A lot of divisive, fearful, grumpy Christians. And there is perhaps no greater barrier to the gospel message of God's grace than grumpy Christians. They just throw a wet blanket over the flame of faith you're trying to get ignited.

I remember when I was in college, 18 years old—I grew up in church but I sort of grew up pretty much religious. And I was on my way to become either a very well-informed atheist because of all of the Sunday school I'd been in, or heresy. And both of those are grievous in God's eyes.

So, I read the book of Romans and I gave my life to Jesus Christ at 18. And then I was like on fire. It wasn't long after I gave my life to Christ that I felt called to preach. And you need to understand, I was just a shy kid. I never wanted to speak in front of people. But, man I was on fire. I went to Bible College. I was so excited to share my faith. And I was looking for ways to do that. Now, this is the mid-90s. And in the mid-90s there was this thing called Witness Wear. Alright? How many of you remember the Witness Wear? Anybody? There you are. There you are, church brats like me.

The Witness Wear was like t-shirts that you wore to like, you know, witness, share your faith. My favorite one was one that said, "The Lord's gym," to kind of mimic the Gold's Gym. And then underneath it said, "Bench press this." And it was Jesus doing a push-up with a cross on His back. And I was like, "Oh, that's awesome." Alright? So vintage. It needs to come back. Maybe.

I had five or six of these that said different things and I was a cashier at Sam's Place working my way through college. So I would wear these Witness Wear shirts to work. And I had one that I wore one day and it simply said this, "Life is hard. God is good. Let's dance." And it had these stick figures. I don't know. I think as for theology, that's pretty good. So I was wearing that and ringing people out. And I got all kinds of different responses from that. Some people laughed. Some people weren't into it. But I had one guy that came through. He was an older gentleman and he kind of stood there and he kind of turned his head sideways and was just looking at my t-shirt and he goes, "What does that mean?"

And I was like, "Life is hard. God is good. Let's dance."
And this is honestly what he said. He looked at me and started to scowl and he goes, "That's so irreverent." And he got his stuff and walked out. And I was like, "Thank you. Thanks for jumping all over me." I was like, "Wow!"

I remember my very first church that I went to, I was 23 years old. They hired me as their senior pastor. That's such a joke, right? A 23-year-old senior pastor. So I go in and I remember my very, very first Sunday.

It was a church of about 180 people. Some of you may have grown up in small churches like I did. The pastor would go and stand at the front door after (I don't know where this came from, Jesus didn't come up with it) and stand there at the front door as people were filing out and they'd be like, "Good game, good game, good game." You know? And an older lady, she was like 140, she walked up to me and she said, "I don't know why we hired you." And I was like, "I don't know, what do you mean?" And she goes, "I don't know what in the world you can teach me." She's like, "I've got underwear older than you."

“Thank you for the visual. I appreciate that.” Ever met a grumpy Christian? Can I just ask you this? Are you a grumpy Christian?

I love what Karl Barth said about this. He goes, “The theologian who wavers without joy is not a theologian at all. Sulky faces, morose thoughts, and boring ways of speaking are intolerable in this field.”

Ever know somebody and it’s like, “Man, it’s got to be right doctrine.” And I would say, “Yes and Amen.” Let’s get our doctrine right. But why is it that so much of the time we do so in such a joyless way? Sort of like, “I’m going to look down on you.” Or, “I’m going to be sort of mean spirited about that.” And those who are seeking to get their doctrine right should be some of the most joyful, kind people ever.

A guy by the name of Frederick Nietch, when he was asked why he rejected Christianity, of all of the things that he could say, he said this, *“I never saw the members of my father’s church enjoying themselves”*

And this world right now, this divided, hurting, broken, confused world that is chasing after happiness—this world needs the truth that comes through Jesus. Please don’t hear me say anything different than that.

But, this world is not pursuing truth. People in this world are pursuing their own truth, which is their happiness. So a church that is filled with something deeper than happiness, joy, is as important as a church filled with the truth because that’s what opens up the door for the world to be open to the truth.

Man, who wants to come to a church that is boring? That’s why so many of you left years ago. Why do you want to come to a church that is lifeless and critical and mean-spirited and sad? You can get that every other day of your week.

We come here to be filled up and to be reminded of the joy that we have in Christ. And Philippians is the perfect book for us to study in a sad world because it is Paul’s most joyful letter, which is really ironic given where he wrote it.

Paul did not write this from a beach in Tahiti sipping on a little umbrella drink. Paul wrote this imprisoned in Rome. He was there against his will. He had been arrested illegally. He was waiting for a trial in which they wanted to kill him. And he writes the happiest letter in the Bible.

Paul was just built different, man. He just saw a different set of circumstances; he was operating out of a place of joy. You can read about his dramatic conversion in Acts,



chapter 9. And a few chapters later in Acts, chapter 16—roughly 2 millennia ago, Paul walks into a city a lot like our city. Philippi had a lot of similarities to Indianapolis. It wasn't the largest city in the region, but it was certainly pretty influential. Philippi was located along a major highway know as the Via Egnatia, a great trading route that connected Europe and Asia east to west. It was kind of a gateway city. It was a melting pot of cultures and perspectives. And it was very transient. They had a struggling NFL football team. A lot of similarities to our city. There was also a lot of racial strife. There was economic oppression and spiritual confusion.

When Paul walked into Philippi there were zero Christians. There were no Christians throughout Europe for that matter. So Paul comes in. He's an OG church planter and he plants a church. He's like, "There are no Christians here, we're going to plant a church." And you can read all about the starting of the church in Philippi in Acts, chapter 16. Now, I want to point this out just for the case of our study. During this particular time period there were three things that every Jewish man prayed every morning. Now, I'm not saying that it was right, I'm saying that this is what they did. I'm not prescribing this. I'm describing this. This is what the Jewish men would pray. They would say, "God, thank You that I'm not a woman. Thank You that I'm not a slave. Thank You that I'm not a Gentile." They prayed that every day.

So Paul plants this church. Do you know who the first three converts were in the church in Philippi?

Lydia

A woman named Lydia.

Slave girl

A little slave girl.

Philippian jailer

And a Philippian jailer.

Don't tell me God doesn't have a sense of humor. Right? So this church is rebellious. This church is running against the grain of society and that got baked into its DNA. Paul plants the church. He moves on to plant others. They stay in touch with him and this church would have Paul's back through thick and thin. And they hear what has happened to him in Rome. So they send him gifts. They are like, "Hey, we're here to support you."

So Paul writes a letter back to them to thank them for the gifts as well as to encourage them to pursue joy in a very hostile, very divided, very fearful culture. And this letter to the Philippians has been encouraging Christ followers ever since and hopefully it's going to encourage us today.

That's Paul's dominant theme: joy.

In four chapters, no less than 16 times Paul talks about joy, rejoicing, happiness and gladness. And this is not naïve optimism. This is not wish your way to a better life. What Paul is doing here is he is helping us to cultivate joy. And that's how I want us to think about it. It isn't one of those things where I'm just going to wake up every day and say, "You know what? I'm just going to be joyful today." No, it's like if you want to be joyful, you've got to be cultivating it.

But our culture chases happiness. And I would say that happiness is the drive thru window of fulfillment. It's, "I'm hungry. I don't have time to eat real food so I'm just going to go through the drive thru, get something quick that tastes good but is probably not good for me, not much nutrition. I'm not going to be hungry and I'll be on my way—that's happiness.

Joy is a garden. Joy is like farm to table. Joy can take a little longer but it's worth pursuing and we need to begin today to cultivate joy if we want to have it tomorrow. Joy, you can write this down:

Joy has to be cultivated over time.

Paul is going to show us, in this passage today, how to do that by describing his own circumstances. And I just want you to know that Paul is in pain as he pens these words. Paul had relationships fall apart. Paul had people who said, "We've got your back, we'll never leave," and they stabbed him in the back.

Paul was being criticized and he was being slandered. And he could have gotten bitter, he could have written from a place of real venom if he wanted to. He could have lashed out. But he doesn't. And there is a lot that we can learn here.

There are three things that I want to share with you about how to cultivate joy in your life directly from the passage. The first thing is this:

Look at every problem from God's POV.

POV stands for point of view. Look at every problem in your life through God's point of view. You've got to stop and you've got to ask yourself, "With what lens am I looking at this problem?"

Everybody has problems. Everybody has pain. Everybody has unfortunate circumstances. That is a part of life. What perspective am I going to choose to look at it through? Look with me at verse 12. Paul writes this:

“And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that,” now underline these next few words, highlight them, pull them out, “everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News.” Philippians 1:12 (NLT)

So, whenever somebody says, “Let me tell you what happened to me in the airport.” Chances are it’s going to be something stressful. That’s usually what we say, “Hey, this is what happened to me outside of my control that caused me stress and pain.”

Lindsay and I were with a couple this last week and we were having breakfast. And they said, just in the middle of their conversation, “Here’s what happened to us this last year.” They were on a trip to Israel and they were in some city and they were flying back, “Here’s what happened to us when we were in the security line.” And we just knew that whatever they were going to say next was going to be stress inducing.

They said they were standing there and these soldiers coming through with AK 47s were looking people in the eye and they were sort of intimidating them while in the security line. And one of the soldiers walked up to her and he looked her right in the eye, got really close to her, and he said, “Tell me the reason for your visit. Why are you here?” And it rattled her so badly, she was so intimidated that she was like, “Uh, him.” And she pointed to her husband. Wasn’t a good look. Right? It sort of looked like she was there against her will. So they escorted them into this back room and he’s looking at her like, “Gosh.” So they go in. They rifle through all of their luggage. They are interrogating them. That was something that happened to them.

And Paul says, “Hey, let me tell you what has happened to me here.” He’s been in prison. He’s waiting trial. He might be executed. And Paul says, “Hey, this has only helped advance the Good News.”

Paul had all kinds of things happen to him. He was beaten, he was flogged, he was shipwrecked, he got stoned (the rocks, not the joints) and all of these things happened to him.

This sounds like a really, really bad day to me. The situation looks pretty grim. Here’s what Paul is doing. He’s like, “Hey, this has only helped to advance the Good News.” Paul was shifting his POV. So what does that look like?

Well, hopefully this is a little visual that will stick with you when you face a problem later this week. We have seven camera angles in this room, largely because most of the people listening to this message right now are not in the room. They are outside of this room.



We have a number of locations. We have people joining us online from all over the world. So we have camera angles to capture the experience. We have camera angle number one. We have camera angle number two. We have camera angle number three. We have camera angle four, yeah, this one. Some of you didn't even know we had that up there, "Oh, look at that." We have camera angle five, angle six, and angle seven. Oh, yeah. I was faster than the camera. So we use multiple angles. Here's what it is. You've got multiple angles to capture the same image.

In your own life, whenever you are facing an issue or a problem, and you're grumpy about it, you are fearful about it, you're angry about it, shift your POV. What is God's perspective. Well, how do you do that? Look at what Paul writes in verse 13: *"For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ."* They all know why I am here. *"And because of my imprisonment,"* this is so good, *"most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear."* Philippians 1:13-14

So Paul could have felt sorry for himself, he could have said, "I've lawyered up. I'm going to sue the Roman judicial system. I'm going out and I'm going to get mine." But instead what he says is, "Most of the believers here know why I am in chains and it's actually made them more bold to speak about the message of Christ."

And, here's what we need to know, as a prisoner Paul would have had a palace guard chained to him 24/7. We would have seen that as an invasion of privacy. Paul saw it as a captive audience. Paul was like, "Awesome. I've got somebody I can explain the gospel to,"

Now, this wasn't like the same palace guard chained to him 24/7. Historians tell us that they changed out the guards every four hours. So I ran a little math. Paul was there for roughly two years, 24 hours a day. Change out of the guard every 4 hours, as a result he was able to witness to 3,280 different guards. That's roughly double the size of this room.

Chapter four tells us that members of Caesar's own household gave their life to Christ. Those were the guys at the very top. Paul was influential even though he was in prison. Why? Because he was able to see his circumstances from God's point of view. What about you? You may not be in a prison cell right now (some of you might be). What kind of situation are you in? And if you've been kind of running around in circles, like, "I can't seem to break out of this confusion and bitterness and despair," maybe it's time to change your POV. Your circumstances depend upon it.

So here's what usually happens. When we experience loss or pain the very natural human reaction is anger, anger over our circumstances. Then it can turn to grief. What

happens next is really pivotal because as you process your grief, you will either produce seeds of faith or seeds of bitterness. Those are the two options. Deeper faith comes by navigating painful circumstances.

And you are like, "Aaron, that's great. How do I change my point of view?" It is very simply moving from one question to another.

See most of us when we go through a set of circumstances that is painful we ask the *why* question. "Why did this happen? Why me? God, why didn't You intervene?" And there is nothing wrong with any of those questions. We are human beings it's where we will start. Ask the question, just don't get stuck there. Don't get stuck on the *why* you've got to begin to move to the *what*.

So Jesus would say, "Hey, in this world you are going to have trouble, but take heart, be encouraged, because I have overcome the world." He said that for a reason. So I either believe him or I don't. So I've got to move from *why* to *what*.

Now, here's a set of questions that you might write down in your guide book to kind of take with you whenever you are facing an impossible situation. And you simply just begin to pray through this: "God, what do You want me to see? What do you want me to see, God? God, what do You want me to do? God what are you trying to teach me? What are Your plans? What is Your purpose for me in all of this?" How about this? "God, what is Your point of view? Because I really want to see it."

And this is why, by the way, we keep urging you to do Daily Bible Reading, sign up for that. It comes into your email inbox. Not because God wants good little Christian boys and girls to read their Bible every day. It's because the Bible is God's POV, it is His point of view that you start your day with and you go with. Because here's the thing, for the rest of your day the point of view that you are going to get is the culture's point of view 24/7.

And if you're never going to God's point of view, it will never become fluent. It will never become the automatic reaction of your life. This is what makes joy possible. If you wait for your circumstances to be perfect, you will never experience it. If you wait for people to play nice, that will never happen. And that's what Paul get's to next. The first thing is to look at it from God's POV.

Number two:

Refocus Your Focus

Refocus your focus. How many of you when you look at a picture of yourself you focus on the best features? Anybody. No. Not me. I think most of us when we see a picture of ourself, we dial in on the thing we like the least, "Man, my ears are so big. Where did **that**

wrinkle come from?” Or, “I need to lose some weight.” We are focused on our least favorable quality.

Have any of you ever done this? You ever been looking at a picture of yourself with someone else and you point out your big ears and he is like, “I don’t see it. You look fine.” It’s because we have a tendency to fixate on the thing we like least.

And cultivating joy requires us to refocus our focus. Look at what Paul writes in verse 15. He’s going to cry out about a very personal thing for him, but it has application for us. He says:

“It’s true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News. Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me.” Philippians 1:15-17 (NLT)

Alright? So what’s going on. What is Paul saying? Understand that Paul was the man. He was the GOAT, OG church planter. He had a blue check mark by his name. He was the person everybody else kind of wanted to be—the Billy Graham of his day. He’s like that big.

He’s writing about other preachers, pastors, prophets. And he would say that these guys were colleagues. They are on the same team. Now, later in the book he’s going to write about false teachers who are outside of the faith. I don’t think that’s this group. He’s talking about faithful people who are trying to do God’s work. They were just broken. They were selfish. They were insecure. So what happened is they know that Paul is in prison and they are trying to tear him down in order to build themselves up. He’s in chains and they are spreading rumors about him. They are going after him on Twitter. They are doing everything they can to discredit Paul. And we all probably know what that feels like in whatever season of life that we are in. You ever have somebody say untrue things about you? You ever had somebody be really critical toward you, create a narrative about you that isn’t true?

Really what they are doing... I think, most of the time, this is where a lot of harsh criticism comes from—it comes from insecurity and pain, trying to tear others down to build themselves up.

I’ve had untrue things said about me online and in person. A friend of mine just last month texted me and he said, “Hey, man. I feel like I need to tell you this. I was at this restaurant and I overheard a group of guys saying very untrue things—they were saying things about you and Traders Point. And he told me what they were saying. And it was just untrue. And it hurt.

As I heard it and as an imperfect human being my response was to get a little angry, get a little defensive. And I actually started telling him, "Whoa, whoa, whoa..." and he was like, "Aaron, I'm on your side. You don't need to explain it to me."

Here was Paul's response. Paul's like, "Hey, man. It's okay." Look at what he says in verse 18. He goes:

"But that doesn't matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice." Philippians 1:18

I'm like, "Wow, man." He's like, "Hey, as long as they are getting the gospel message right, as long as they are lifting up the name of Jesus, even though they are trashing me, making me look bad in the process, I'm fine with that. I can rejoice in that. The gospel is still being advanced even though their motives are bad." Which is why, by the way, we should be kind and gracious toward other churches even if we don't agree with their philosophy and ministry. As long as the Bible is being preached and Jesus' name is being lifted up, I'm for them, man.

So Paul's like, "Hey. I don't want to be bitter about this." And if anybody had a reason to it was him. So, when somebody speaks badly about you, gossips about you, hurts you in some way, you've got two options with the way that you are going to look at it:

You can become fixated on their motives OR you can be focused on God's outcomes. And Paul says, "Man, this is the outcome that I want. I want more people to come to know Jesus. Great. It's not the way that I would have chosen, but I still rejoice." He was refocusing his focus.

Here's what I want to ask you to do. Maybe this will kind of help you. Take this away with you. Whatever room you are in right now, I want you to take the next 10 seconds and I want you to identify anything that is the color red. Alright. So 10 seconds, the color red, go.

Ten, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Alright? Now, how many of you just had an anxiety attack? You're like, "Ugh, I've got to find something red. I'm going to be tested on this." Relax. Alright?

So here's what I want to ask you to do. How many of you saw something green? Yeah. So there is something green in this room. I see several green things. Alright? You didn't see it because you weren't looking for it. And the same thing is true for joy in our circumstances, "I'm not joyful." Well, are you looking for it?

By nature we have a tendency to look for other things. And I love what it says in 1 Thessalonians 5:18. It says this:



“Be thankful,” whenever everything goes your way. No, it says what? *“Be thankful in all circumstances,”* all of them, *“for this is God’s will,”* that’s just a fancy way to say that this is God’s desire, *“for you who belong to Christ Jesus.”* 1 Thessalonians 5:18
So we don’t get to choose what we go through, we do get to choose what we focus on.
So we refocus our focus.

Here’s the last thing. Alright?

Source your joy in something that can supply.

Source your joy in something that can supply. One of my least favorite things driving down the road is when I drive past a church that has a church sign. You know what I’m talking about? These little cheesy sayings that are on this sign. That’s why we don’t have one. I’m not trying to judge or anything like that.

I actually just did pass a church that had one. And the guy was coming up to me every Sunday after church and going, “Got any idea of what we should put up on the church marquees?” And I said, “I don’t know, dude.” That wasn’t in my notes by the way. Have you ever seen those church signs? You drive by and it says this:
Know Jesus, know joy. No Jesus, no joy.

Know Jesus, know joy. No Jesus, no joy. Now, I understand what they are trying to say, and it’s not that there isn’t a grain of truth in there; it’s just that it’s not fully true. I think what it does is it kind of pushes people farther away from God, because we know lots of people who do not follow Jesus, do not acknowledge God in their life, but seem to be happy and joyful, at least on the surface.

Let’s just get real. You probably thought you’d never hear a pastor say this in church but, sin is fun. Some of you are like: Amen! Sin is a lot of fun. Right? It is. I mean we wouldn’t do it if it wasn’t. So sin is fun until it’s not. And that’s been most of our experience, “Yeah, it’s great. It’s the cheeseburger in the drive thru window that gives you a stomach ache after.” And you’re like, “Oh, man. That really didn’t satisfy. It didn’t fulfill me the way that I thought it would.”

It’s like, “What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas,” except the itchy thing that you bring home with you. Sin only goes so far. That only made its way into my notes because I like to see my assistant squirm when she gets the emails.

So lots of things give us momentary happiness. Man, the approval of people feels so good, until you fall out of favor. Stuff and experiences, man, they feel great until they wear out or the week comes to an end. Disney is the happiest place on earth until you get back home and realize that you have to mortgage the house to pay for it. Maybe you remember this quote from actor Jim Carrey. He said this:

"I think everyone should get rich and famous and do everything they ever dreamed, so they can see it's not the answer."

So, what your joy is sourced by determines how long it lasts. And Paul finishes the passage with this statement in verse 19. He says:

"And I will continue to rejoice. For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to my deliverance." Philippians 1:19

Perhaps the best summary of the entire book of Philippians can be found in verse 21, we'll likely cover it next week where Paul says, *"For me to live is Christ."*

If you were Paul's adversary he would have been maddening to deal with. They would go to Paul and say, "Paul we're going to throw you in jail." "Great, I'll convert the guards." "Paul, we're going to torture you." Well, "I do not consider the sufferings of this present world when compared to future glory." "Well, we're going to kill you." "To die is gain." Or, "We're going to let you live." "To live is Christ." *It's like, "Ahhh."*

So Paul is like, "Man, I've got something so profound and deep and durable in Christ that it cannot be taken away. It doesn't run out, go dry, or get used up."

And the way that we continue to fill that joy tank is by magnifying God over our problems. So if you've got a person with lots of big, big problems chances are he has a very small view of God.

And in worship, when you come to God in Spirit and truth, when you come to God just as genuinely and authentically as you are and something happens, divinely, in that moment that things begin to flip as you begin to magnify God in worship even if you don't feel like it, God gets bigger and your problems get smaller.

I want you to understand some of the most joyful people in the Bible had horrible things happen to them and yet they continued to worship God. Job had everything taken from him, "The Lord gives, the Lord gives away, blessed be the name of the Lord.

Mary, the mother of Jesus had a whole lot turned upside down. She was a teenager. She was not married. She was pregnant. Nobody believed her story. She gave birth to Jesus in a barn and she treasured all of these things in her heart. What were they doing in those moments? They were saying, "God, I'm choosing to magnify you so that you get bigger and my problems get smaller.

Worship is not when we come in here and you see a bunch of happy, clappy people whose lives are just perfect, praising Jesus. That's not what happens. It's a group of broken, sinful, hurting, confused people going, "No, I acknowledge that I can't figure this

out on my own. So God, I'm going to magnify You. And my circumstances might not be praise worthy, but my God always is.

So, let me just kind of wrap up with this. I'll never forget a trip that I took to Zambia, Africa a few years ago. We were traveling around from village to village. And we went into this village. The only way to get in was to cross over a bridge made out of car doors that were wired together over a little stream of sewage. It was the only way into this village and the only way out.

I remember walking in and just being devastated by the poverty that I saw. There was a church in the center of that village and they had sent word out that we were going to be there. So like 400 or 500 Zambian pastors, from all over the region came to this church for a day of teaching, training, and worship.

Part of my responsibility that day was to do the teaching for the pastors, to just encourage them and give them some resources. So, really how it worked was the pastor and his wife, their family lived in a little shanty, concrete blocks and a tile roof right next door to the church building...

The pastor came up to me with this big smile on his face. His wife was so sweet. And he said, "Hey, here's how the day is going to work." You're going to do a two hour teaching session, which I had not prepared for by the way, for all of these pastors and then we'll take you over to our house for about 45 minutes to refresh you. And then you'll go back and teach another two hours and then we'll do another 45 minutes session at our house, then we'll do another two hours.

It was like four or five sessions all day long. And the most memorable time for me was sitting in that little shanty with the pastor and his wife between sessions. And man, they were just so joyful. But I'm looking around at their circumstances, I'm looking around at the environment they lived in and I couldn't understand why. They were living in a non-heated, non-airconditioned, I don't know, three or four hundred square feet of space. A concrete, cinderblock house with a tin roof.

And they began to tell me their story. They had just lost their 18-year-old son to malaria. I never would have known by looking at them. And they would feed me after every session. They would feed me a chicken leg, a hard-boiled egg, and some water. And they didn't eat.

It was later when the missionary told me, "They've been saving up for the last couple of months knowing that you were coming. That was about all that they had. They didn't eat. They didn't have it. They were giving it all to you."

Can I tell you how I felt about that day? Because I look at my circumstances and you know, when the temperature drops below 20 degrees or somebody cuts me off in traffic or something doesn't go my way just how quick I am to be angry, be defensive, to have no joy. And it really starts making me wonder where does the source of that come from? And I feel like maybe I'm sourcing it in the wrong things.

Can I just ask you today, where is your joy? I know that there are problems and I know that there is pain. And Jesus would say, "Hey, I've got something better for you. Change your point of view. Refocus your focus. Source your joy."

See, when the rest of the world is raging, man, we can be rejoicing. When the rest of the world is complaining, man, we can be grateful. When the rest of the world is critical, we can be compassionate. When the rest of the world is tearing down, we can be building up. When the rest of the world is canceling, we can be forgiving. When the rest of the world is fixated on happiness, we can be focused on joy. When the rest of the world is scrambling for identity, we can be secure in Christ.

And maybe the most rebellious thing that you could do today, in a culture that is moving away from God, is to move toward Him and experience joy.

So, God, we come to You right now and we want to be a joyful people in an angry world. We want to, in the best sense of the term, be a little rebellious and move against the grain of culture that is seeking out its own happiness. We want to seek after joy. And that can only be found in You.

So, God, I pray today that if there are Christians here who have sort of lost their way, they've been focused on the wrong thing, they've been watching too much news and not spending enough time in Your Word, I pray today that maybe they would be convicted to just change their point of view.

God, I pray that if there are some here who walked away from church a long time ago because they had a grumpy Christian point a finger in their face and say things that pushed them away, I pray that they would recognize that that grumpy Christian does not represent Jesus. Jesus represents Jesus and that they would come home. God, I pray today that those of us who are just running on fumes, that we would be able to fill our joy tank by what Jesus died for us to have. And we ask this in Jesus' name and joyfully say: Amen.

