

## Philippians - Part 1

The Joy of Ministry

*Philippians 1:1-18*

*Memory Verses: Philippians 1:6*

### MANUSCRIPT

#### Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Summer time is the time for vacations, and we love our vacations, don't we? They make us happy! We work hard all year, laboring at jobs that are necessary, but often don't bring us much satisfaction other than the paycheck at the end of the week. So when we get to summer, we know that vacation time is right around the corner, and the hope and anticipation of a break, the beach, rest and relaxation, are within our grasp. A good vacation can fill up your batteries and keep you going for another year.

But what about a bad vacation? Have you ever had one of those? The kind where you need a vacation from your vacation? Sometimes you have a string of bad vacations all in a row so the following year you take a stay-cation. Why risk your time off on a possible failed trip... just stay home and veg out. But after your stay-cation you realize that you aren't satisfied and are left feeling that your stay-cation was hardly more satisfying than a bad vacation. So we do everything we can to avoid a bad vacation... but sometimes we can't.

I remember one-time as a kid, we went to the beach and it rained the whole time. Before wi-fi. That was a bad vacation. And then as a fresh-man in college I was given the opportunity to go to Israel. I was so pumped to go. Was sick the whole time. We were looking inside the garden tomb, where it is possible that Jesus was buried, and everyone was praying and meditating, and all I could think of was... don't throw up where Jesus rose up. Or even a couple years ago me and Lisa went on our first ever cruise with my best friend Chuck and his family. Everyone said, oh, you can't even tell you are on the water. Well, I could, and I didn't like it. I couldn't sleep cause I felt like I was about to fall out of the bed and because I kept having visions that we were going to tip over. It was like a week long ride on an all you can eat roller coaster.

The point is this... we look forward to our vacations all year because most of our lives are not that exciting or filled with euphoria. We look forward to vacations because we think it will fulfill our longing for happiness. But, here's the thing with happiness... happiness can't be guaranteed. If vacations fail, if our plans falter, then instead of being filled with happiness, we can be filled with greater despair. Happiness is a fickle thing. It's at times very elusive and uncertain. If you are chasing happiness, then you will often be let down.

This is why we shouldn't chase happiness. Rather, we should chase joy. There is a big difference between joy and happiness. Happiness is an experience that can last for a very short time and is dependent on your circumstances. Joy on the other hand is an attitude not based on chance or circumstance. It is a deep and abiding confidence that regardless of one's circumstances in life, all is well. No matter what difficult experiences, pain, or disappointments one may face, genuine joy remains because of a well established hope in something greater than happiness. Joy is a state of being where life is a vacation that can't be ruined or dampened by the temporary storms that are unavoidable in life. Therefore, we need to learn how to stop chasing happiness and find joy.

That is why we are in the book of Philippians for the rest of the summer. Because, life is hard, and our times are difficult, and vacations won't give us lasting happiness, because our struggles will still be here when we get back. Philippians deals with this issue of Joy more than any other book in the Bible. The verb *rejoice* and the noun *joy* appear 13 times throughout these 4 short chapters. All four chapters of this book are dedicated to this singular idea; that true and abiding joy can only be found in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

So, today we are going to begin by looking at how ministering for Christ gives us joy. Ministering for Christ gives us joy. Think about that statement for a second. One thing is for sure... we like to be ministered to don't we, but not necessarily minister to others. Being ministered to makes us happy, but ministering to others can be hard work. So how can ministering to others in the name of Christ bring us joy? Read with me in [Philippians 1:1-18](#).

Here we see a laundry list of ways to minister for Christ. Paul is consistent in ministry. But, rather than being burnt out, or frustrated in ministry, throughout this passage we see Paul speaking about his joy. In fact look again at the last part of [vs18](#); "and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice..." Paul, the author of the book of Philippians, is making one thing abundantly clear to us this morning... **When You Engage In Ministry You Will Inevitably Be Ministered To More Than Those You Seek To Serve.** Those who follow Christ's call on their life to engage in ministry will be filled with the joy of ministry and through their ministry they will feel ministered to... exponentially more beyond the ministry they gave.

What do I mean? For example, I've probably led around 15-20 mission trips. We prepare for months on end to go to serve people in impoverished areas. We raise funds and supplies to meet their physical and spiritual needs. We go thinking that we can make a difference. And when we get there we do work hard at building schools, and sharing the gospel, and encouraging missionaries... but when the trip is over, every single time, I kid you not, the testimony from the members of the team is the same; "i went thinking I was going to minister to them, but they ministered to me way more

than I ministered to them. I thought I was going to make a difference in their lives, but they made a way bigger difference in my life.” And, for the most part I agree. The biggest moments in my life were when I thought I was doing ministry for others, and God used that experience to minister to me in a far greater way.

This morning... I want to assure of this one thing... you can't out minister God. Whatever you are willing to sacrifice in ministry for his kingdom... he will return upon you a hundred fold. The happiness you desire to give to others, will become a fountain of joy sustaining your soul for the rest of your life. The difference between happiness and joy is the difference between a vacation and a mission trip. One is a possible shot at happiness, the other is a consistent and self-sustaining river of joy. There is much joy in ministry. So, let's look at a few of these examples in this passage.

### Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we notice here is that... **We Find Joy In The Ministry of Constant Prayer (vs1-4)**. Paul is of course writing a letter to the church at Philippi, but he frames it within the language of intercessory prayer. There is a difference between prayer and intercession. A prayer can include intercession, but it can also include thanksgiving, petition, confession, or praise. Intercession is the ministry of praying deeply on the behalf of specific people for their specific needs. And this is how Paul begins this letter... in intercessory prayer. Notice that in **verse 1** he addresses his attention towards specific people; first the brothers and sisters of the church who he calls, “saints,” then the overseers or elders of the church, and finally the deacons of the church. And then in **verse 2** he begins to pray for their specific needs within the church. He prays that God would give them grace, and that God would give them peace. Continuing in **verses 9-11** he prays that their love would increase for one another, that they would have greater knowledge and discernment, that the polity of their church would lead them towards excellence and prosperity, that their church would be without sin and without shame, that they would produce good and righteous works, and that they would bring God glory in all they do.

This prayer may seem like a small thing for Paul to do, but when taken into account that God is able to do abundantly more than we can think or imagine, intercession was probably the greatest ministry Paul could give them. If God can do more through our prayers than we could ever hope to do in the flesh, then prayer is a great ministry indeed, perhaps the greatest ministry.

I also want you to notice that Paul's prayer wasn't just intercessory, but also consisted of thanksgiving for the church at Philippi. In **verses 3-4** Paul thanks God for these people because they genuinely

bring him Joy. The people themselves bring Paul joy because of the partnership they share so naturally, praying for them also brings him joy because in praying for them he is also remembering them.

Simply put, when you pray for those who you are unified with it gives you joy. And, here we see the payoff. Our desire in interceding for others through prayer is that they would be served and blessed... but we too will be ministered to and receive a measure of joy when we pray for them. Prayer is a ministry of joy in that those who we pray for are blessed and we are blessed to pray. That is why here at Stone Creek Church constant prayer is one of our 6 core values or core traits. We believe there is much power and much joy in the ministry of prayer and that each one of us should be praying constantly. We don't wait until we've done all we can do to pray... we pray first knowing that God can do more through our prayers than we could ever do. That is why one of our motto's is **prayer is our first response not our last resort**. When we pray we serve and are served. **When You Engage In Ministry You Will Inevitably Be Ministered To More Than Those You Seek To Serve.**

The second thing we see here is this... **We Find Joy In The Ministry of Covenant Partnership (vs5-11)**. Partnership between believers is not only the goal, but is the means by which we all achieve that goal. Partnership between believers has a name; Church. The greek word for “partnership” here is *Koinonia* which means a unique, intimate, and spiritual communion. Those within the church should have such a unique affection and love for one another that it resembles the bonds of family. This is why in **verse 7** Paul says that it is right for him to feel strongly towards his spiritual brothers and sisters at Philippi, and why he says in **verse 8** that he yearns for them and has affection for them. In today's time, if the people of a particular church were to actually love one another in this way it may seem strange or odd... but Paul and the Bible say... that it is right! Partnership is right! That is why at Stone Creek Church we don't observe membership. Rather, we observe Covenant Partnership. When we desire for you to become a part of our church we aren't asking you to attend a production or buy a product. We don't want you to be a consumer. We are asking you to make a commitment to minister with us for the glory of Christ and partner with us to see that goal accomplished. There is nothing that will bring you more joy than to be in a covenant partnership with a loving church family.

And what does covenant partnership produce? Gospel ministry. We see some aspects of Gospel ministry here. In **verse 6** we see, that the good work that was started in the hearts of the believers is continuing until the day of its completion. This speaks to the work of discipleship; the process of growing in sanctification together. Covenant partnership rely's heavily on group discipleship in order to transform individuals to be more like Christ, which in return strengthens the entire body and produces greater Gospel

ministry. At Stone Creek Church we believe in intentional discipleship. That we must be very intentional in the way we promote and conduct the ministry of discipling one another. This is another of our core values, and the accompanying motto states; **we believe spirit led transformation happens best in spirit filled community.** This is why we believe in small groups. We believe that in a small group we can best live out biblical community, and encourage sanctification.

Another aspect of Gospel ministry we see here is the growth of knowledge and discernment in **verse 9**. In order to grow in spiritual knowledge and spiritual discernment, one must be devoted to the Word of God. A healthy church is a theologically literate and Biblically based church. This is why at Stone Creek Church another one of our core values is relying on the Word. We are dedicated to and dependent on the Bible as our standard. It's not anecdotal. It's not just a bunch of clever sayings and bits of advice. This is the actual commands of God for living in this world. That's why we say, **"we believe the word of God is our standard, not a suggestion.** How can we have the knowledge and discernment to approve what is excellent in **verse 10**? The Word of God. How can we have the knowledge and discernment to be pure and blameless in this world? The Word of God.

Another aspect of Gospel ministry that we see here is in **verse 11**. A church filled with covenant partners should produce viable and visible good works that bring glory to God in their community. This means that a church should serve those in need together, and they should give selflessly and sacrificially to see it accomplished. And we must do it in a way that is noticed so God gets the glory. This is why we believe in strategic missions. We believe in supporting missionaries on the field not just through monetary means but in prayer, care, and physical involvement. Our motto for this core value is; **we believe that reaching our world means more than just writing a check.** We also believe that the people of our community should see the goodness of God on display, and so that is why we also believe in relational outreach. We believe in doing big things for others so they can see our big God. Our motto for this core value says: **we believe that reaching our neighbors takes more than just inviting them to church.** People won't always be inclined to come to your church... so we must take the church to them.

Lastly, Gospel ministry is to promote the explicit praise of God. The church makes it a point to praise God through song, giving, prayer, the word, serving, and other aspects in cooperate worship and in private worship. At Stone Creek Church we believe in authentic worship. We believe worship is a lifestyle, not a production. What we do in our Sunday morning worship service isn't the end of worship for the week.. it is the beginning. It is a catalyst, it is the kindling of what we hope will continue in you life from Sunday to Saturday. Our motto for this core

value says; **we believe worship is a lifestyle of joyful obedience, not reluctant observance** . Worship is an overflow of the joy we have when we follow Christ.

All of this ministry done in covenant partnership brings us joy. The hard work of ministry isn't meant to be done alone – it is done with the people you love and care for the most. And what we see is this... the love, grace, and communion given to us in the local church transforms laborious christian work into a joyous gift we can't wait to be a part of. As covenant partners of a local church, our goal is of course to minister to each other and the world... but in the end it's easy to see that we are the ones being ministered to. **When You Engage In Ministry You Will Inevitably Be Ministered To More Than Those You Seek To Serve**

Lastly we see that... **We Find Joy In The Ministry of Christ Proclaimed (vs12-18)**. Of course our greatest ministry is to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To preach that there is salvation in no one else and in no other way than by placing ones faith in Christ and repenting from their life of sin. In **verse 7** we see that Paul is filled with joy that we partake in this ministry with him as we defend and confirm the Gospel. Not only that but in **verses 12-14** Paul is also filled with joy that his imprisonment in Rome has actually fueled others to preach the word more boldly and without fear. And then in verses 15-18 Paul says that he is also filled with joy that even though some people are preaching the Gospel in an attempt to take Paul's place of prominence (in a self focused manner) the Gospel is still being proclaimed. For Paul, it doesn't matter who preaches, or why they preach, as long as Christ is preached. We should feel the same. Nothing should give the believer more joy than to know that Christ is being proclaimed to the lost. We preach to serve the lost, but we are most assuredly being served by peaching. **When You Engage In Ministry You Will Inevitably Be Ministered To More Than Those You Seek To Serve**

### Application

Did we forget to mention that Paul was imprisoned in Rome? I don't know if you caught that a second ago. Yeah, Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter the church at Philippi. Think about his circumstance. Not a happy one to be sure. But that didn't matter to Paul. Because of his relationship with Christ, and his partnership with his church, and the ministry of prayer, and the fact that the Gospel was still being proclaimed... he was in good spirits – he was filled with Joy.

Listen, joy isn't about being in a happy circumstance, joy is about finding contentment in the work of God; in your life and in the life of others. Paul was able to do ministry with joy, no matter his circumstances, and you can to. Put your focus on serving others with the Gospel and you will find long lasting joy. **When You Engage In Ministry You Will Inevitably Be**

## **Ministered To More Than Those You Seek To Serve**

### **Conclusion**

Anjeze Gonxhe Bojaxhiu was born on August 26<sup>th</sup> 1910 in Skopje North Macedonia. When she was 12 years old she made a commitment to ministry. When she was 18 she left home never to return, first going to Ireland to learn English and then to India to serve the poorest of the poor where she served for 87 years. In 1950 she started a ministry in Kolkata to care for “the hungry, the naked, the homeless, the crippled, the blind, the lepers, all those who feel unwanted, unloved, and uncared for.” She called the ministry Missionaries of Charity. Her first year running the ministry she almost starved, and the work was extremely hard, but eventually the Lord would send people to help her. When she died in 1997 those who served with her in ministry numbered 4500, operating over 600 missions, schools, and shelters in 120 countries. You know of this wonderful woman as Mother Teresa. Before she died in 1997 she was asked, “you've seen all kinds of suffering and pain, and you've worked some of the hardest ministry that anyone could ever work.... how has this brought you joy?” she answered... “Joy is prayer; joy is strength; joy is love; joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls.” Nothing will ever bring you as much joy in this life... as giving your life in ministry to others. **When You Engage In Ministry You Will Inevitably Be Ministered To More Than Those You Seek To Serve**