

11 | PHILIPPIANS 2:14-18

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Announcements

1. Welcome visitors!
2. This week is Photo Sunday. Get new photos taken for the church directory. Mary Klikas and David Beakey are our photographers.
3. Small groups start this week.
4. February Youth Guide from Welcome Center

The Importance of Light

Light is essential to our existence on the Earth, most of us know that. Light is needed for the process of photosynthesis for plants. We need it to navigate through our lives. There are objects in front of us.

Daniel 12:3 says, “Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens. And those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars, forever and ever.”

We are called in Philippians 2 to shine as the stars. We are called to shine the way to Christ and see people converted and transformed. You are a part of this if you are a Christian.

Review – Empowered, Work Out What God Worked In

Last week we learned that we have to work out what God has worked in us. God’s very presence and person is in us through the Holy Spirit. As Christians we are “clothed with power,” and “empowered from on high,” and empowered for service.

PENTECOST: “I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Lk 24:29). Jesus says, *“Pentecost is coming. Wait till the Holy Spirit is poured out on you in Jerusalem.”* We know that filling. God has worked in us (Phil 2:13). Now we are working hard to “work out” our salvation “with fear and trembling. We tremble at the grace of God. We have a holy fear an awe and a reverence that the Almighty God would make his dwelling in us. The fiery pillar, *Shekinah* Presence of God is now in the Temple of our bodies.

DRY BONES: We are like dry dead bones in the desert who have been made alive (Eze 37) through the resurrection power of Jesus. We are “strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (Eph 3:16).

So knowing that the infinite God is working in us and through us, we should be a funnel and a vessel for the power of God, doing everything in God’s infinite power that we can do.

DO SOMETHING!

Don’t just pray, *“Lord help me be a better Christian.”* Get up early. Read God’s Word. Set goals. Find brothers or sisters to hold you accountable.

Don’t just ask God to help you be a better witness. Commit to an evangelism team at Living Hope. Ask an elder for evangelism training. Go out there and start putting your foot in the water.

Don't just say "*Lord, I want to grow in godly character. I want to be more like Christ.*" Do something. Work it out. Get connected to a Life Group. Break off some of those toxic friendships. Connect with a pastor or elder or mature brother and ask for discipleship in a certain area of your life. We are ready to help you! Work out what God has worked in.

"*God I want to be sexually pure.*" Get some accountability to change your media habits. You need to change your friend group. You need to be radical and cut out your eye. Garbage in, garbage out. You want to be godly, fill your life with godly friends, godly media, godly ministry. Get serious. Do whatever it takes to be pure.

"*I want to grow in my marriage.*" Get a brother or sister in this church and connect. Healthy disciples of Christ are disciple makers. You can't do this alone. Work out what God has worked in you. Find an older godly couple to disciple you. If you need help, see a pastor or elder for advice or direction.

"*Lord, I wish I had more meaningful friends.*" "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly" (Pro 18:24, KJV). Get connected with a life group this week. There are two that meet today not far from the church.

"*I wish I knew people in the church better.*" Start serving. Invite someone out to your home for a meal. Be hospitable. "Well that's not my personality." That's right. You have to stretch yourself to be like Christ.

"*I wish my church would do this more.*" That's God calling you to start a ministry. We had several men who wanted to learn how to preach. We started an Expositor's class.

Where human exertion meets divine enablement, kingdom expansion happens. Work out what God has worked in.

Introduction

God fills us with his Spirit to grow his church. We are to help and love and disciple one another. But we must break out. We must not hide our lights under a bushel. The light shines, and the darkness cannot overcome it. You are not only to disciple one another. You are to make disciples of all nations. We've got to break out of the realm of this church and shine our lights in the world. That's what our passage (Phil 2:14-18) is all about.

We are not just in this world to become intelligent Bible scholars. We are called to make disciples. True disciples of Christ make other disciples.

Scripture Reading

Let's stand and read Philippians 2:14-18,

Do all things without grumbling or disputing,¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me (2:14-18).

This is God's Word.

APPLICATION: NO COMPLAINING, BUT PROCLAIMING

It's interesting that after some of the highest and holiest verses in the Bible (2:1-11), Paul's application is "stop complaining." We are naturally bent inwardly. Dear friends, the world will never be reached if we are self-focused. Satan's plan for us is to remain focused on our own hurts. If you can't get over your hurts, you will never get a heart for the world. Stop complaining and fighting. Absorb the hurts and serve! "Serve the Lord with gladness" (Psa 100:1). Lay down your life for the world.

The most sobering reality in the world today is that people are dying and going to hell today.

Your family. Your friends. Your children. They may be going to hell. If you don't do something, they will depart from you forever. You will never touch them and hold them.

Jesus' Marching Orders

"Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mk 16:15).

"Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled" (Lk 14:23).

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19).

The Call to Go

God says to Isaiah, "Who will go for us?" (Isa 6:8). "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom 10:14). "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ" (Rom 10:17).

4 things that keep us from shining our lights.

- Wounded/Frustration: complaining/hurt/exasperated
- Worldliness: influenced/hooked by the world
- Worried/Fear: afraid we are not ready or qualified to disciple people
- Wasting Life/Selfish: Not willing to lay our lives down

We are going to see this morning four activities we can do to bring the Gospel beyond the boundaries of Living Hope Bible Church and your family.

- 1) We **Live** the Life
- 2) We **Shine** the Light
- 3) We **Speak** the Word
- 4) We **Sacrifice** for the Kingdom

1. WE LIVE THE LIFE (2:14-15A).

Do all things...that you may be blameless

We are to be different from the world. We are to glow in the dark. It doesn't help if you shine the light right into people's faces. It also doesn't help much if you shine your light into the light. Before you do anything in evangelism, you have to live a life of contentment in God. You have to understand the joy of the Holy Spirit.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing,¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world... (2:14-15).

Complaining stops your spiritual growth. It stops the witness of your life to the world. It hinders the Gospel. This comes right after Paul says: work out all that God is working in you. Complaining stops the process. We are to be positive, hopeful people. Yes we confront sin and error in our lives, but we have the good news. We never have anything to complain about.

Complaining sees only the little idol in front of you. "I want something" and if you don't get it you complain. It demonstrates a cold, self-centered heart. Complaining stops the work of God. It also stops our light from shining. **Once you start complaining, you've stopped reflecting Jesus.**

Jesus said we are not to hide our light under a bushel. That's what complaining does. It stifles the work of the Holy Spirit.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt 5:15-16).

IMPERSONATING A CHRISTIAN

There was a man driving his car. A woman was driving behind him in another vehicle. They were at a stoplight. When the light turned green, the man in the lead car did not look up. He was looking down, maybe at his phone. But he didn't go. It's green. But his car didn't go. The lady in the car behind him did see it. And she let him know that she saw by honking the horn. She honked her horn. But the guy in the lead car didn't budge, didn't move, didn't look up. So she honked it again.

She's getting a little mad at this time, rolled down her window and yelled. Nothing happened. But just when the light turned yellow, right before it turned red, he looked up, noticed it, and zoomed through the intersection, leaving the woman to go through a whole nother light cycle. Well now, she's fuming. And she rolls her window down, puts her arm out, and gives a certain gesture. I don't need to go any further than that. She yells some very choice words, ranting, raving, pounding the steering wheel. And just then, she noticed a police officer with a gun pointed saying, ma'am, I want to see both hands. I'm going to open the car door with your hands up. I want you to get out of the vehicle.

So she gets out of the vehicle. The police puts her arms behind her, puts her in handcuffs, and takes her to jail. She's in a cell for two hours. After two hours, that same

police officer lets her out and says, ma'am, I'm very sorry for the misunderstanding. But you just have to know that, as I was listening to the words you were saying and I was watching the gesture you were making, and I was watching you ranting, and raving, and going through those contortions, and I had also noticed on the back of your vehicle the What Would Jesus Do? Bumper sticker, and the little Chrome fish that's on your trunk, and the Follow Me to Sunday School license plate holder. Naturally, I assumed that you had stolen the car.

Fair enough, right? The message on the back of the car was very different from the message coming from inside the car.

Grumbling and complaining do not add to the light. The wording here is very similar to Exodus when the children of Israel were complaining against God. Complaining is whining selfishly. That's adding darkness to the darkness. We are called to shine the light by giving hope. What does complaining do? Does it edify? Does it help people be conformed to Christ's image?

Complaining is calling too much attention to the darkness without any solution. We are Gospel people. We are good news people. Complaining is nothing but the bad news. If we call attention to a problem, we as Christ's people give the good news.

Complaining Points to an Eclipsed Heart

Complaining is the **opposite of rejoicing**. We are not to be **grumbling** against our brothers and sisters or **questioning** the wisdom and care of God. It is the opposite of working you're your salvation in God's strength. Christians should be the most joyful human beings on the planet. We are not getting what we deserve.

We should "rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice" (Phil 4:4). When we complain we are questioning the goodness of God.

Whatever we do, it should be "all for the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31).

When we see something wrong, Christians are to be a part of the solution. Sometimes Christians are like a person with **limburger cheese** stuck up their nose. Everything stinks. Instead we ought to be the **most** hopeful people. We are those who have the aroma of Christ. We believe Christ can do anything since he raised us from the spiritually dead.

We are to be "good newsmen" not complainers. The fruit of the Spirit does not include complaining. Complaining is the fruit of impatience and self-centeredness. We should notice problems, but our attitude should be always hopeful.

We are Hopeful Christians

The Bible commands us to be hopeful Christians, not complainers. "All things work together for good!" (Rom 8:28) is still a part of our Bible. "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jer 29:11). "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Rom 8:32).

THE ECLIPSE

Something happened last year, called an **eclipse**. We could see that an object much, much, much smaller than the sun could actually block the Earth from the rays of the sun. So it passed between the Earth and the sun blocking the rays. And in some places, it was a total eclipse. It's marvelous to see that. Now, what happened last year, that eclipse, must never happen with us. We must never block the glory of the son, S-O-N, the Son of God. In all of his radiance and glory, we by our lives must never diminish that glow. But we should reflect that glow.

Complaining keeps us from using our spiritual gifts. When you see a problem, it's never ok to complain. It's time to love and to disciple. What does complaining point to? It points to an eclipsed heart.

Complaining points to a heart that is not willing to do what it takes to make disciples.

A HAPPY LIFE

Paul begins by saying how different Christians should be. We are not ones who are complaining. As Christians, we have the ability and opportunity to be God-focused instead of self-focused.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing (2:14).

We as Christians have nothing to complain about. We bring to light things that need change, but never for the sake of being negative. Christians ought to be positive people. We ought to be the most joyous people on the planet. **Complaining reveals a discontented soul. A healthy Christian has a heart that is always full of praise!**

We are called to a certain attitude of service in all the things we do. As we are working out what God has worked in, we are to have a level of joy and gladness.

- “Serve the Lord with gladness” (Psa 100:1).
- “The joy of the Lord is my strength” (Neh 8:10).
- “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!” (Psa 150:6)

We are like “lights” in a dark world. This begins by having a life free from complaining and filled with gratitude. The “all things” that the Christian is to “do” is a broad, all-inclusive statement that encompasses all things that God calls us to do in our lives—at home, work, school, church, and play, and in all areas of marriage, parenting, friendship, and ministry. There is nothing in our lives that is not touched by an attitude of blessing and not complaining.¹

We are not self-focused but others-focused. We have *nothing* to complain about. We live a life with the aroma of Christ because we want those who are stranded in sin to find

¹ Steven Lawson. *Philippians For You: Shine with joy as you live by faith* (Blue Ridge, VA: The Good Book Company, 2017), 111.

life and liberty in Jesus Christ. We will take aggressive, God-sized, impossible steps of faith that he might do more and more and more.

When you get your eyes on what God can do, you live a very happy life. It's not about what we can do, but what God has done. That's why Christians no they have nothing to complain about.

A BLAMELESS LIFE

that you may be **blameless** and **innocent**, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world (2:15).

Blameless means we have a good outward testimony. **Innocent** means we have a godly inward character. Both your outward testimony and inner life are godly. That's how you shine. We as Christians want to shine as lights in a dark world. We go to church. We hear the truth. We drink it down and eat it up. But we are not just intelligent heathens. No, we are transformed believers. We are born again to newness of life. **And we know that it's not just the preacher who has the hot mic. You as a Christian have a hot mic 24/7.** People see how you live. Christians live blameless, bright lives in the world.

We are those who live upright lives of holiness because Christ lives in us. We don't want to sin. We don't need to sin. We have the power not to sin. When we live in holiness we are not only happy, but we are blameless. People ought to look at your life and say: why do you follow the rules? Why do you get the permit for your house when others sneak around the permit payment? Why do you punch out on break when everyone else milks the clock? Why do you obey the traffic laws? Why do you Christian young man guard your purity and the purity of the girls around you? It's because we as Christians believe Christ is with us through the Holy Spirit, and therefore, we live blameless lives.

Why do we live lives of such carefulness? Because Jesus Christ has raised us to new life. We can't afford to present a cheap Savior. He gave all so that we could be transformed. We don't have a pretend Gospel. Our message really is good news!

Now the next point that Paul makes is, **instead of complaining about the darkness, shine your light!**

2. WE SHINE THE LIGHT (2:15B).

Shine as lights...

We are... "children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, **among whom you shine as lights in the world...**" (2:14-15).

We shine as lights in this dark world. The spiritual and moral darkness of the surrounding society may give the impression that *you* are the misfits. But that is only the darkness talking. God has made you the new norm. You are the new creation. God is making you into **beacons of light**, reflections of Jesus who is **the Light of the World** (John

8:12), in a midnight sky. The darker the social setting around you, the brighter your Savior shines through you.”

We are to fulfill our place **as lights in the world:**

- Lights are used to make things evident.
- Lights are used to guide.
- Lights are used as a warning.
- Lights are used to bring cheer.
- Lights are used to make things safe.²

“Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 5:16).

SHINE AS STARS: IN THE MIDST OF, AMONG WHOM

...children of God without blemish **in the midst of** a crooked and twisted generation, **among whom** you shine as lights in the world (2:15).

This necessitates interaction with non-believers. You are children of God who are living without blemish **“in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation”** and you are **among them** shining **“as lights in the world.”** You cannot reach people who don’t know Jesus if you don’t know people who don’t know Jesus. Who are you loving? Who is your light shining upon?

“Not *lights* merely, but **luminaries**, *heavenly bodies.*”³ This seems to be in reference to Daniel 12:1-2.

IN THE OCEAN, KEEP THE OCEAN OUT

...children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world (2:15).

We are like ships on the ocean. To be effective, we have to keep the ocean out. We are called to be **“fishers of men”**, but in order to be effective we have to keep our boat in the ocean but keep the ocean out of the boat.

Keep the Ship in the Ocean and the Ocean out of the Ship

A Christian lives a life that is distinct from the world in several ways. We are to keep the ship in the ocean and the ocean out of the ship, so to speak. If you have a boat, you can’t tread water. You’ve all heard the story of the Titanic. It’s was the unsinkable ship until it hit an iceberg. It’s only unsinkable if you keep the ocean out of the ship.

The simple way to state this is that we are to influence the world without being influenced by the world.

² David Guzik, *Philippians*, David Guzik’s Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), Php 2:14–16.

³ Ibid.

JESUS' PRAYER

Listen to Jesus' high priestly prayer:

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world (Jn 17:15-18).

Boating on the Land!

How effective is a boat on dry-dock? It's sad to see a boat on shore. A lot of Christians are like boats on shore who are highly equipped to catch fish, but never go out to the ocean. There's no fishing going on. There's no effectiveness. Sometimes we are insulated at church discipling each other in the Gospel. We should do that but that's not our full mission. We are called to reach the world and make disciples of all nations. We need to get off the shore and get into the ocean of lost people. With boldness and love we need to shine the light of Christ. You will not be happy as a Christian if you are insulated, gazing at your belly button. What are some ways we can be inwardly focused in an unhealthy way?

Unhealthy Habits of Inward Focus

1. Over focus on theology without application. Healthy theology should always lead to doxology and evangelism. We ought to be praising our God and proclaiming our God to the nations. I enjoy a good debate, but if that debate doesn't end with us marveling and praising God to the point where our hearts are broken for the nations, we can turn even good theology into idolatry. Don't do that. The point of the study of God is to bring you to a place of praise and to equip you to reach lost people all around you.
2. Always learning, never discipling. If you are constantly studying but never teaching, you've got a problem. Every true disciple of Christ is a disciple maker. The word "disciple" means "learner." So you should be learning so that you can teach others.
3. Always preaching, never praying.
4. Confessing sin far more than praising God.

3. WE SPEAK THE WORD (2:16).

Holding fast the Word of life...

Along with the metaphor of stars shining in the sky is the holding forth, or display of the Word of God. It means both to grasp and to display.

Paul labored more than all the other apostles. He worked harder, went farther, suffered more than all the rest. Of course it was all by the grace of God. But he says, he's

not just laboring for the Philippian believers to have Bible knowledge. The goal is for them to make disciples.

PAUL'S PRIDE ON THE DAY OF CHRIST: DISCIPLES MAKING DISCIPLES

What's Paul's pride and glory on the day of Christ? It's disciples who are making disciples. It's disciples who are holding on and holding for the Word of life. The Word gives life. It gave you life if you are a believer.

¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain (2:16).

As believers live in a dark world, Paul says that they must be "holding fast the word of life" (2:16). "Holding fast" (*epecho*) more correctly carries the idea of "holding on by holding forth." It carries the idea of "putting something on display."⁴ The concept is not merely that we would have a tenacious grip on the gospel, but would also extend it to others. We must always be presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ to others with whom we have contact. Healthy disciples are those who make disciples.

NO CASUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORD

The Bible here is called the "Word of life". The disciple (learner, follower) of Christ has an unbreakable connection with God through his Word:

We have been "born again... through the living and abiding Word of God" (1 Pet 1:23).

God's word keeps us from sin (Psa 119:11).

God's word is an offensive spiritual weapon called the "sword of the Spirit."

The blessed man "meditates on God's law day and night" (Psa 1:2).

God's word will renew your mind, change you heart, strongholds. It will cast down sinful reasonings. It will transform your behavior from the inside out.

And here in Philippians 2:16, Paul says we "hold fast" to the word of life. It is literally "on display" in our life.

THE BIBLE AWAKENS PEOPLE

The Bible, and specifically the message of the Gospel is life giving.

- This Bible alone is "living and active" (Heb 4:12) and imparts spiritual life.
- God says, "My Word does not return void" (Isa 55:11).
- "Faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of Christ" (Rom 10:17)
- "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom 1:16)

PAUL'S DEFINITION OF MINISTRY SUCCESS

¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain (2:16).

⁴ From Mounce: "to hold out, present, exhibit, display."

Unless the Philippians are holding for the Word of life and putting it on display to others, Paul says: my ministry of discipleship is a failure.

Paul knows he will have invested his life well if those he has ministered to continue to be faithful witnesses of the word. Paul only thinks himself successful if the Philippians are reproducing themselves by making disciples with the Word of life.

On that last day, God will review every minister's work. He will reward them according to their faithfulness. Paul is saying to the Philippians, *As you lead your spiritual lives, if you are grumbling and complaining, I have run my race with you in vain.* His ministry with them will have been of little effect. His ministry in the word with them will not have been received as it should have been. They should do all things without grumbling and complaining as they hold fast the word and send it forth into the world, so that he will have reason to glory in the day of Christ.

MAKING DISCIPLES BY THE WORD OF LIFE

The bottom line is that we are to be making disciples, putting the word of life on display for others. We are to be holding fast the Word by holding forth the Word. Paul says, "My ministry is a failure if the Word of life is not on display in you. If you are not holding for the Word of life to others, I have failed."

We are called to be fishers of men. If we just gather our boats on dry land and compare our fishing equipment, we are failures. This is what Paul is saying. My pride, my joy on the day of Christ is you making disciples.

Same goes with us. If we at Living Hope are just a theology factory, we have failed. If we are here just showing off our Bible equipment to each other, we are failing at the mission. The mission is not to make disciples of each other. Yes do that. Mentor each other. If you don't you will fail at the larger mission. But don't just do that.

Our mission is missions. Our mission is Christ's mission: make disciples of all nations. Make disciples of every creature.

Ways We Can Make Disciples

- **Reach:** share your testimony. Share the Gospel. The first thing you teach is the Gospel to anyone who doesn't know it. This means the whole world.
- **Read.** If you are a mom or dad, start reading the Bible out loud with your family
- **Teach.** Discipleship is teaching. Teach the Bible to anyone. Teach what you know.
- **Correct.** Discipleship means we stand up in love for Bible principles. This begins in the home and spreads to our friends and acquaintances.
- **Model.** Be open about what you are learning with other believers. Be open about your failures and your repentance with your close circle of peers and mentors. Be hopeful to those younger in the faith that the Word is sufficient.

- **Love.** Iron sharpens iron. All this is done in humble love. We are not showing off knowledge. Our goal is always to give hope and to edify the body in love.

Let me mention that if you are saved you should be doing some form of all of these. There is always someone that doesn't know what you know. If you know that Christ is Lord and Savior, you know so much more than the great majority of the world. Shine your light! Speak the Word!

4. WE SACRIFICE FOR THE KINGDOM (2:17-18).

Poured out as a drink offering...

¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all (2:17).

A drink offering was a God-ordained sacrifice that was poured on top of an animal sacrifice (Exo 29:38-41). Wine was poured either in front of or upon the burning animal. As the wine vaporized, the steam rose upward. This symbolized the rising of the sacrificial offering to God. So, Paul's life is being poured out upon the lives of the Philippians. Their hearts and souls are being mixed together.

Paul was glad to pour out his life as a sacrifice. He was joyful. Paul was under house arrest in a rented house in Rome. He had a Roman soldier chained to him. The Philippians knew he could be put to death at any time. He was glad to give his life for the cause of Christ.

How about you? Do you know the Christian life is a life of sacrifice? Jesus is worthy of your sacrifices.

REJOICE IN SACRIFICE

... be glad and rejoice with me ...

¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me (2:18).

Paul says, "Rejoice with me" for the honor of sacrificing for the kingdom. That's discipleship. Be glad when I sacrifice for the kingdom. It's a joy to sacrifice. It's a joy we share.

Few commands could be more practical for our Christian lives. Even if you cannot rejoice in your circumstances, you can rejoice in the Lord. You can rejoice in God's holy character. You can rejoice in God's limitless goodness. You can rejoice in God's amazing grace. You can rejoice in God's perfect timing. You can rejoice in God's abundant supply. You can rejoice in God's all-sufficient provision. You can do all this even if you are sitting in prison, facing trial and execution. You can know joy even when your circumstances are not joyful. That is a precious gift.

Conclusion

He gave all. What a joy for us to give our all to him!

Life Group Questions

1. Read through Philippians 2:14-18.
2. Why does complaining stifle the working of the Holy Spirit in your salvation? How does a critical spirit stop your spiritual growth?
3. Like an eclipse of the sun, the moon can block the light. What are some things that eclipse the light of Christ from going forth in your life?
 - in your emotions or mindset (anger, sadness, bitterness, worldliness)?
 - in your circumstances (trials, difficulties)?
 - in your relationships (hurts, miscommunications, judgment)
4. How and why should a Christian always have a hopeful attitude no matter what? (see Rom 8:28; Jer 29:11; Rom 8:32)
5. We are called to live a blameless and innocent life, shining as lights. What does the metaphor "shine as lights" imply?
 - How easy is it to "complain" about the darkness instead of shining the light?
 - What are ways we "shine the light" to the world?
 - How does shining your light relate to discipleship?
6. We are to be "fishers of men" or like stars shining the light of Christ to a dark world. How are we like fishing boats on the shore instead of out in the ocean?
7. We are to be "in the midst of" and "among" a crooked and twisted generation. Talk about the balance of being "in the world" but not "of the world" (see also Jn 17:15-18).
8. Talk about the unhealthy habits of an inward focus.
 - Over focus on theology without application
 - Always learning, but never discipling
 - Always preaching, but rarely/never praying
 - Confessing sin far more than praising God
 - Other bad habits of inward focus...?
9. Paul's pride on the Day of Christ is that believers he disciples would be "holding fast" and "holding forth" the Word of life.

- Why is the Bible (specifically the Gospel) called the "Word of life"?
10. Talk about the various ways we make disciples (learners).
 - **Reach:** evangelize, share your testimony, give the Gospel
 - **Read:** Moms and dads can read through at least one chapter a day as a family. Find a new believer and start reading together
 - **Teach:** Teach the Bible to anyone. Teach what you know.
 - **Correct:** Stand up in love for Bible principles.
 - **Model:** Live it out
 - **Love:** Don't ignore your brothers and sisters - build them up. Lay your life down.
 11. How are Christians like a sacrificial offering (Phil 2:17-18) when we give ourselves to guild up the faith of others? Talk about how real discipleship hurts and is costly.