

JOY!

*A Series in Philippians
1 – Praying with Joy
Small Group Leader Notes*

Welcome to another Small Group season! I am beyond thankful for your willingness to disciple and invest in the spiritual growth of those in your group. You are the frontline ministry workers here at HDC. Throughout the year, you will find yourself teaching scripture, counseling people through challenging times, and preparing your group members to change their worlds for Christ. My job is to help you do those things well, so please feel free to reach out to me at kpatrick@highdesertchurch.com if you have questions or need some assistance. Thank you!

Kyle Patrick

Small Groups Pastor

It is the first week of small groups! While some of your group members are excited to be back, others might be new, and a little nervous about joining the group. Your main goal in week one is to help on-ramp people into group life. Spend time this week getting to know each other! Exchange contact information, and just enjoy each other's company. There are intentionally fewer questions this week to help give your group more time to hang out with one another.

In his sermon, Pastor Todd encouraged us to watch the Bible Project's video of the main themes and overview of Philippians. Begin your discussion time by watching it together.

Bible Project- Philippians <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/philippians/>



What is something in your life that brings you joy?

This is a simple ice breaker question as it is easy for everyone to answer. Some people may be shy but encourage everyone to answer this one. Responses will be diverse, and my guess is that most of the things mentioned will be temporal.

In the sermon, Pastor Todd said, "Biblical joy isn't dependent or conditionally based on your particular circumstances, but something that flows from your relationship and confidence in Jesus."

Paul is writing to the Philippian church from prison. However, he begins his letter by expressing his joy. Not that he was happy to be locked up, but that his joy was found in the confidence he had in Christ despite the situation.



Read Philippians 1:1-11

Being the first week, I would encourage you, as the leader, to read it out loud to the group. However, feel free to ask for a volunteer to read.



Philippians 1:4-5 says, "In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." In what ways were Paul and the Philippian church "partners in the gospel?" (Acts 16:11-40, Philippians 4:15-20)

We read about Paul's time in Philippi in Acts 16. The Philippian church was born with the conversion of Lydia and her household. While it is only God who saves, these Philippians would have also felt a deep bond to Paul and Silas, who brought them the gospel. Paul and Silas would have felt an equal bond for their spiritual children. Thus, forming one element of their partnership.

Furthermore, we read that they suffered together in Acts 16:16-40. Paul and Silas were severely beaten and imprisoned in Philippi. After their dramatic stay and release from jail, they went back to Lydia's house, where the church met. Paul and Silas did this to encourage the church, as the early Christians in Philippi would also share in similar persecution as Paul and Silas experienced.

The church was also partnered in sharing the cost of Paul's missionary work (Philippians 4:15-20). The Philippian church wanted Paul to be equipped and funded to take the gospel to the ends of the earth and to help fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). This desire caused them to give to his ministry, even when other churches did not.



As a small group, what does it look like for us to be partners in the gospel with HDC as we seek to change the high desert for Christ?

This ultimately begins in our hearts. We must recognize that we live in a community that desperately needs Christ, and that we play a role in pointing people towards the gospel. This isn't just about going out and doing good things in the community (although that is part of it). It is about how we live out our faith among the community; how we respond to our server at a restaurant when a mistake has been made, the way we carry ourselves with other parents on our kids' teams and/or schools, how we work hard and ethically at our jobs, and how we drive while sporting an HDC sticker on our car!

As Christians, we must understand that we are called to represent Jesus to our world well. None of us will do it perfectly, but it must be evident that we live according to biblical values that look radically different than the world's values.



Read Philippians 1:9-11. Paul says that love is characterized by knowledge and depth of insight. Share with the group ways you try to understand God's Word better.

This is a great opportunity for the group to share more about their personal devotional time. My hope is that people spend time in God's Word regularly. In addition, there are so many great books, Bible studies, podcasts, YouTube channels, and online recourses that people regularly use.

Listening to podcasts is a great and simple way to learn more about God's Word. One podcast that I highly recommend is Core Christianity with Adriel Sanchez. Feel free to encourage your group to download it and listen to it during their daily commute.



Knowledge isn't very valuable if we do nothing with it. What are some practical ways in which you can utilize your understanding of God's will, found in His Word, to impact your world?

This might be a challenging question for some to answer. You might have people in your group that have not valued knowledge of Scripture up to this point. The thing to make clear is that the point of being a Christian isn't about being Bible scholars, it's about submitting to the authority and will of God.

The fact is that people in your group probably are not seeking biblical wisdom like you are. This is because they are not small group leaders and are not leading biblical discussions like you do on a weekly basis. Your group members should not feel like they are less of a Christian simply because they do not know a ton about God's Word.

Your job in this question is to encourage them to see the value in biblical wisdom because of what it produces. As Pastor Todd said, "A love that grows in knowledge and depth of insight is the kind of love that not only deeply benefits others but purifies and cleanses our own lives as we live in a thoughtful, growing love toward each other."
