

The Joy of Standing Firm Group Leader Notes

This week we will be moving into Philippians 4. We have been tracking through the book looking at, “grace recognized.” That is, joy that is found in Jesus our Lord and Savior. It is not in the pseudo-saviors that this world offers, but in the Creator of Heaven and Earth that has given us a new citizenship under His loving authority.

Last week, we discussed Jesus’ command to make disciples. Pastor Todd ended his sermon with the point: until our Savior returns to take us Home, we’re called to persevere. This week, we are going to talk about how we, “stand firm in the Lord in this way.”

So much of our perseverance in our faith comes from the Holy Spirit. Standing firm, however, requires diligence on our part as well. Accepting loving correction and encouragement, reminding ourselves of the joy of salvation, and correct thinking coupled to godly action were just a few things Pastor Brian spoke about last weekend regarding our efforts to persevere. As we spend time in our groups this week, we will be discussing those points a little deeper.



1. How easy is it for you to receive correction?

As we discuss standing firm in the faith, we need to understand how important it is to have more mature Christians in our lives lovingly point out our blind spots. Generally speaking, most people do not enjoy correction. Even though it may not be all that enjoyable, it is good for us to recognize the importance of it as we persevere in our faith.



Read Philippians 4:1-9.



2. Conflicts and disagreements happen often within a group of people- even within a church. Read Matthew 5:21-26 and discuss why reconciliation is so important within the body of Christ.

Paul takes a moment to address a conflict between Euodia and Syntyche. While he does not reveal what the issue was, he encourages them to apply the principle stated in Philippians 2:2. That is to agree and to be of the same mind. Likewise, Jesus stressed the importance of reconciliation, especially amongst believers. So much so that reconciliation should take precedence over offering one’s gift in worship.

There is plenty for us to be divided on and let rule over our hearts and minds. As followers of Christ our prerogative is to seek reconciliation, and to make every effort to demonstrate the unity of Christ to our world.



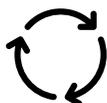
Read Philippians 4:4-7.



3. While there are reasonable things for us to be concerned about, what are ways you allow yourself to be, “troubled with cares”?

Pastor Brian spoke to this idea of being, “troubled with cares.” Meaning, we allow our patterns of thinking to dictate our mental wellbeing. For example, the app, Life360 is a great tool for knowing where your kids are. However, we can easily let it control our thinking and become a source of anxiety.

It would be useful for you to take your group to Matthew 6:25-34. Here, Jesus addresses anxiety and how we ought to view it in light of God’s sovereignty. Paul echoes Jesus’ teaching in 4:6-7, that Christians are not to be anxious, but are to entrust themselves into the hands of their loving Heavenly Father, whose peace will guard them in Christ.



4. As we think about guarding our hearts and minds, Pastor Brian asked the question, “will you allow the wisdom of God’s word to show you what you need to stay away from, and what you need to draw near to?” How do you accomplish that?

First, it is important to recognize that this can only be accomplished through a saving faith in Christ, as the Holy Spirit indwells and empowers a believer.

Most people in your group will answer Pastor Brian’s question affirmatively. We all desire that. However, we often struggle to implement it. The first practical approach is obviously by spending time in Scripture. As the saying goes, “you can’t do what you don’t know.”

There are many resources available to seek wisdom from God’s Word. As we have suggested before, the podcast Core Christianity with Adriel Sanchez is a great option for your group to engage daily. Pastor Brian also mentioned two books that are very help for overcoming anxiety. They are highlighted in your notes.

The reality is that there are many ways to accomplish this. Give your group some time to share ways they allow the wisdom of God’s Word to guide them in their thinking.



Read Philippians 4:8-9.



5. We live in a world of influence. How do you guard your thinking against worldly thought patterns versus biblical ones?

We are constantly bombarded by people telling us how to think and the age of social media has certainly capitalized on that. “Influencers” literally get paid millions of dollars to promote their ideologies. One interesting study showed that being an influencer is the most desired occupation amongst parts of Generation Z and Generation Alfa. The idea of influence is certainly prominent in our culture today.

Knowing this, we need to be diligent in what we allow to fill our minds. Social media and other outlets rarely promote biblical thought patterns. Yet, we invest so many hours every day in allowing our minds to be filled by a social media algorithm that knows what we like to see and hear based on our search history and demographics.

Believers must be intentional to guard their minds by regularly contemplating on God and His Word.



6. The weekend service notes provide a list of things from the passage to think on. Which on the list is the most important to you and why?

Spend time as a group discussing the list in the notes. Each person may have a different opinion on which is most important depending on which is most useful for guarding their mind. For example, someone that is easily influenced might think that truth is the most important because they realize they are easily persuaded.