

PHILIPPIANS – LESSON 6 – “The Focusing Illusion”

DAY 36

Begin this week by reciting Philippians 4:4-5

Memory Verse:

Philippians 4:4-5

4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

Now try to say it from memory.

Reflect: *In the Lord.* Those words are absolutely key. The apostle Paul is not saying that we should rejoice in everything that happens in life. There is deep loss, inexplicable pain, and raw evil in our world. The message is that we can rejoice “in the Lord” no matter what we face. Jesus is always with you. The Lord is near. His grace is available. Heaven is your home. God wins and Jesus is on the throne. Keep your eyes on the Lord and there will always be a reason to rejoice. When have you faced deep sorrow but still had a sense of joy deep in your heart?

DAY 37

Read: Philippians 4:1-7. Read this passage two or three times and reflect on the spirit of joy no matter what the circumstances.

Reflect: In every situation you can be present because God is present in every situation. What is also available at all times is prayer. We can talk with God, listen for his still small voice, petition him, and give thanks to him in the darkest moments. There is no place where God won’t hear our prayers. There is no time that God sleeps, slumbers, or puts his phone on “Do Not Disturb.” He is always available. Why do we forget to rejoice in the Lord and talk to him in prayer in the very times we need him most?

Journal:

- When have you cried out to God amid a dark and painful time? How did God answer, show up, or bring you comfort and strength?
- When have you forgotten to cry out to God and how did this impact your journey through a hard time?

Pray: Ask God to help you keep your eyes on him in the painful and difficult times of life so that you can still find joy in him, even if the situation feels joyless.

DAY 38

Read: Philippians 4:8-9 Read this passage four or five times slowly and reflect on the things that should saturate our thinking.

Reflect: Our minds wander. We tend to focus on what is right in front of us. One of the biggest problems in this life is that the things of the world that are often a distraction yell loudly. They buzz, beep, glow, and entice us. At the same time, many of God's greatest gifts are all around us, but they are quiet, polite, and don't scream for our attention. What we need to do is slow down and notice. We can train our brain to tune in and our eyes to focus. What helps you keep your attention on the things that are good and beautiful and deserve your attention?

Journal:

- Write down at least two or three things that you think of in a relationship to each of the words below:
 - What is true?
 - What is noble?
 - What is right?
 - What is pure?
 - What is lovely?
 - What is admirable?
 - What is excellent?
 - What is praiseworthy?
- How can you think more often and more deeply about these kinds of things?

Pray: Thank God for the beautiful, pure, and noble things around you and ask him to help you notice them more often.

DAY 39

Read: Philippians 4:10-23. Read this passage two or three times and reflect on how we should view the material things God places in our care.

Reflect: Contentment in all circumstances. Generosity toward those in times of need. Fragrant offerings that bring joy to the heart of God. These things mark a Christian whose life is focused on Jesus. We are changed and no longer look, think, or act like the world around us. As we learn to focus on what honors God and means the most, we become countercultural givers who focus on the Giver far more than the gifts. How have you grown in contentment as you focus more on Jesus and live more like the Savior?

Journal:

- How has God provided and surprised you with material goods and gifts?
- How have you experienced contentment and peace, even when you did not get the material things you may have wanted?

Pray: Thank God for his amazing and lavish provision and pray that you will grow in both contentment and generosity.

DAY 40

Read: Conclude your forty-day personal study by again reciting Philippians 4:4-5:

4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.

5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

Reflect: Focus changes everything. Make time to focus on praise and thanks. Praise is worship of God for who he is: holy, powerful, tender, Shepherd, friend, comforter, and countless other attributes. Give thanks to God for what he has done for you: protections, provision, drawing near you, and so much more. Start a journal where you take time each day to write down a few declarations of praise for who God is and your prayers of thanks for what God has done.