



Philippians 1:12-26

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OPENING REMARKS

Most people would welcome the idea of having a “stronger faith”. We want to believe more...trust more...grow more. The truth is; just like our physical bodies, our faith needs to be exercised in order to grow stronger. And just like our bodies, our faith gets stronger under increased pressure or opposition.

In this section of Paul’s letter to the Philippians, we’ll discover that Paul can actually find joy in opposition. It exercises his faith and it testifies to the trustworthiness of Jesus Christ.

WARM IT UP

How do you feel about the importance of exercise? What are your exercise routines, if any? Have you ever trained for a big event? Tell the story!

TALK IT OVER

1. Read Philippians 1:12-14. In what ways is Paul’s imprisonment advancing the Gospel?
2. Paul had a longing to go to Rome and share the Gospel. Did he achieve his goal? In what ways did his strategy have to change?
3. How did Paul leverage his circumstances for the sake of the Gospel?
4. Read Philippians 1:15-18a. How do you think Paul felt about antagonists who were selfish, insincere and trying to cause trouble? Did he struggle with ‘real’ human emotions like anger and bitterness? How do you think he worked things through? What does verse 18 tell us about relinquishing control? What does it tell us about the power of the Gospel?

5. Read Philippians 1:18b-24. Mark talked about having Three "P's" in place to face difficult personal circumstances. (People. Prayer. Perspective.) How do you think each were helpful to Paul?
6. Read Philippians 1:25-26. At first glance, do Paul's words seem arrogant? Prideful? Overstating his own importance? How do you think they were meant to be understood?

WORK IT OUT

7. What pressures or opposition are you facing right now that could actually be used to advance the Gospel? What would it look for you to "lean in to the Gospel"?
8. How are you inclined to respond to a culture that is increasingly viewing Christianity as outdated and irrelevant? What counsel do you think Paul would give based on verses 15-18? How is it possible to experience joy in that kind of opposition?
9. Which of the three "P's" (people, prayer, perspective) has been most helpful for you in difficult personal circumstances? Have you ever experienced joy in a time of hardship? How was it different than happiness?
10. How would embracing your impact change the way you interacted with people in your family, neighborhood, workplace, friendships? Do you think you live with an understanding of how your life of faith impacts others?

WRAP IT UP

Take some time to talk through a challenge you are currently facing. Evaluate whether or not the three "P's" are in place. Fast-forward a little and talk about how your faith might be strengthened through this struggle.

PRAY IT THROUGH

Spend some time praying for the challenges group members are facing. Pray for strengthened faith. Pray for joy that is deeper than the circumstances. Pray that each of you experience the trustworthiness of Jesus this week in whatever opposition comes your way.