



FINDING JOY IN RELATIONSHIPS
PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30
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INTRODUCTION

We're all created for relationship – it's what we're made for! First, relationship with God, then with one another. If we have a great circle of relationships (a great "crowd" around us), and we embody great relational qualities to others, chances are good that we will have a joy-filled life. In other words, the quality of your crowd will, in large part, determine the quality of your life.

In this passage we are reminded by Paul that he has a great "crowd," a cherished circle of relationships that make him rejoice. (Do we?) Further, we see several qualities of great relationships that lead to joy. As he points out these from the lives of Timothy and Epaphroditus, we should be encouraged by what we see and hear (and perhaps have in our lives)...yet also challenged to embody these qualities in our relationships as well. When we do this, we will follow in the footsteps and example of Jesus, and experience the blessing of joy-filled relationships.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share your thoughts on the BIG IDEA: "The quality of your crowd will, in large part, determine the quality of your life."
2. **Read Philippians 2:19-30.** Why do you think *compassion* so integral to great relationships?
 - a. In **v20-21**, Paul says of Timothy, "I have no one else like him." In your life, who would you say that about? Who is your best friend, and what makes your relationship so special? (*Start your sharing by completing this statement with your best friend's name: "I have no one else like _____.")
3. In **v22**, Paul says Timothy has "proved himself," which means his *character* has been tested over time, and he is reliable. Why are character, consistency and reliability so important in relationships?
 - a. Whose character/consistency/reliability do you admire or appreciate, and why?
 - b. Do you think it's more difficult to maintain Christ-like character in extraordinary challenges, or ordinary chores? Why?
4. Tyler said "*Cooperation* always contributes to joy-filled relationships, while competition usually corrupts them." Share an example where you have seen all or part of this statement play out in your life.
 - a. Read **v25**. Paul refers to Epaphroditus as "my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier." Life – especially the Christian life – is a combination of (among other things) *family*, *fellowship*, and a *fight*. Share an example of how each of those relational dynamics is present in your life. In other words, where do you need family, where do you experience fellowship, and how/where are you in a fight?



5. Epaphroditus showed incredible *commitment* to the cause of Christ. (*Remember, the distance from Philippi to Rome was 800 miles...each way!) Important things – and important relationships – in life require commitment. Where do you need to be reminded of this simple-yet-significant truth?
 - a. Share a specific example of where you're often tempted to choose/pursue comfort or convenience...over commitment.
6. Read **v29-30**. It takes *courage* to choose to be unselfish in a consumer culture. Where is God calling you, in your relationships and in your life, to choose *service over security*?

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Read **Matthew 20:26-28; Philippians 2:5-7; Proverbs 18:24 and Ephesians 2:8-10**. How and where do you need to simply repent, seek God's forgiveness and grace, and follow His example in relationships?

COMMIT TO MEMORY

I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.

Philippians 2:20 (*Ask God to grow you into this kind of person in relationships with others.)

PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

Pray for the person on your right, and commit to praying for one another throughout the week. Be sure to thank God for examples like Timothy and Epaphroditus in Scripture...as well as the blessing of friendships/relationships in your own life. Prayer is powerful!