

LIFE Group Leader Handout

November 8, 2015

The Joy Stealers

Pastor Ayars

Scripture—Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

Main Idea—The Book of Philippians Shows How to Overcome the Four Joy Stealers

Happiness is based on happenings, joy comes from our inner attitudes.

Joy in its various forms—17X in this book. The word “think” in its various forms appears 24X

There are four primary joy stealers, and each chapter in this book deals with one of these:

- **Circumstances**—things around us over which we have little or no control. Paul was in prison when he wrote this book. A “double mind” will allow circumstances to steal my joy. A double mind wants what God wants but also wants what I want. Paul had overcome that in prison—to live is Christ, to die is gain. A single mind overcomes this joy stealer.
- **People**—can steal your joy. A proud mind (me first!) allows people to steal you joy. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:5) A humble mind.
- **Things**—when they steal our joy, we have an earthly or temporal mind.
- **Worry**—we don’t worry about the past—we may regret it. No one worries about the present—we may want to change our present, but we don’t worry about it. All worry is about the future. An insecure mind steals our joy; a secure mind overcomes it. See verses 6&7: *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Application—

- Which of the joy stealers has committed the most larceny in your life?
- How big a deal has it been? Does it snatch some bit of joy occasionally? Or has it impoverished you?
- How is this message helping?
- *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice*

A healthy group is Christ-centered. Christ is the real leader and the group is primarily focused on him, experiencing his presence, carrying out his purposes, and living by his power. This is where group health starts. If you put anything or anyone else at the center of the group you'll lack the power to accomplish much of anything.

So here are 4 specific ways you can make your group more Christ-centered:

Recognize His Presence. *I begin every meeting with a worshipful prayer, recognizing Christ's presence with us and his leadership of the group. I sometimes include Matthew 18:20 in my prayer, remembering that Jesus said that whenever two or more come together in his name, he is actually there in our midst. Then I watch for what he does during our meeting. It's sometimes easy for me to forget that Christ is actually there in our midst throughout the meeting. He does not leave us during the Bible study. His Spirit is there to help us understand and apply His word. He certainly does not forsake us during our prayer time. He hears each of our requests, so we don't have to repeat them back to him at the end!*

Depend on His Power. *I find that many groups need to learn to take members' hurts and problems to Jesus, not just to one another. I often hear concerned group members give all kinds of advice for a person's personal issues during the sharing of prayer concerns. As the leader, ask members to simply listen, and then take the concerns to Jesus--not to a recommended book, a miracle diet or exercise program, a referred doctor, or even a platitudinous Bible verse.*

Seek His Purposes. *"What are Christ's purposes for our group?". Begin with that question and then study the Great Commission and other passages. Ask, "Why did Jesus say he came into the world? (John 17:18)". Ask the group to imagine some big ways you as a group could make an impact on your community. Ask them to imagine something so big that if God isn't in it, it would be destined to fail. Then read Ephesians 3:20, and make some God-sized plans.*

Move Beyond Study. *As you open God's word as a small group, don't just study Jesus as the historical figure of antiquity. Move beyond discussion about the stories of what Jesus did, to talk about--better yet, experience--what he is doing. He is indeed present in your group meetings, right now. Recognizing this will make all the difference in your group.*

