

ROAD TO JOY: A STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

The Joy of Friendship, Philippians 1:3-11

LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read Philippians 1:1-11. What is the overall tone? Circle, underline or identify all the words/phrases that express emotion in these verses.
2. In verses 3-4, Paul begins by expressing the *fact* of his thankful, joyful heart. Then, verse 5 and following tell us *why* Paul is thankful for the Philippians. One of the important words in this passage and in this book as a whole is then term *partnership* (κοινωνία - koinonia), which is often translated “fellowship.” It speaks of a close mutual relationship. In this passage, we see variations of this word in verses 5 (partnership) and 7 (partakers). We see it elsewhere in Philippians as well (Philippians 4:15, for example). Paul uses this term repeatedly to speak of a unique kind of spiritual friendship.

In what ways had the Philippians entered into this kind of friendship or partnership with Paul? Specifically, what about these friends brings Paul joy?

3. In verse 9, Paul connects “*love*” and “*knowledge*”. Why does Paul attach love to knowledge? How does this view of love differ from the popular ideas about love in our world?
4. Next, verse 9 goes on to connect “*love*” with “*discernment*” to affirm those things which are good and those things that really matter in life. Why must moral discernment be a part of true love?
5. What is the ultimate hope and goal of Paul’s prayer for his friends? Do you pray these same things for your friends? Why or why not?

LIVING THE WORD

6. When you think about your involvement at church, have you typically thought about *social connection at an event you attend* or about your *partnership in the gospel and sharing in God’s grace* as Paul describes here? What is the difference?
7. How do verse 6 and verse 11 provide a theological anchor to this passage? Why is it important to build our friendships in the church upon God’s goodness, grace, and the gospel?
8. If a church was truly filled with joyful friendships built on the grace of God, how would this shape our gratitude for the church, our grace toward others, our personal rest and peace, and our witness in our city? What keeps this from happening?
9. What is one way you can live out the heart of these verses in the week ahead?