



JOY

DISCOVERING GOD'S GREATEST GIFT

WESTERN
CAMP
2022

ADULT LESSON BOOK

FOREWORD

All adult Bible class lessons and “Philippians in 9 Steps” summary were developed with reference to resources from DesiringGod.org

JOY

That elusive and longingly sought state of existence. What do people mean when they talk about joy? Is it simply an intensified version of happiness? Is it euphoria? How does one acquire it, or get more of it? How does the Bible speak of joy? In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, he makes it clear that joy is a central, essential component to the Christian’s life. This joy unleashes us to live a life bursting with fearless love, as evidence of our faith and a warning to those without it. Come plumb the depths of what God has provided for us in his Christ, and perhaps rediscover a bit of what you thought you knew.

ONLINE LESSON BOOK



The purpose of this booklet is to provide plenty of content for you to be able to study the letter to the Philippians in detail. It is not possible to cover all the content in the class discussions. Some variations may exist between the online and print form of the lesson book. This print version includes space to answer questions and write thoughts and notes even when questions are not directly asked.

- 1** God rules over all things with complete sovereignty.
- 2** Christ is of supreme worth in life and death.
- 3** Let us embrace Christ in faith with all that God is for us in Him.
- 4** Then we will experience joyful, peaceful contentment of soul.
- 5** This joy and peace will free us to be fearless before adversaries.
- 6** And this joy and peace will free us to be humbly loving toward other people, counting others better than ourselves.
- 7** And this joy and peace will free us to pursue a deep, unified mindset among believers.
- 8** In this way you will give a sign of the truth of your salvation and a warning to outsiders.
- 9** And in all these things you will accomplish the final, ultimate aim of everything, namely, to display the beauty of the gospel, the supreme worth of Christ, and the glory of God.

DAY 1: PHIL 1.1-26

1. Phil 2.3-7 What commands does Paul give? What might those look like in your life? How does he describe Christ as a “servant” (doulos)?

2. Phil 2.19-23 What sticks out to you in Paul’s description of Timothy in terms of his “doulos-ness”? What parts line up with verses 4-7?

3. As we briefly traced a theme of “servant” through this letter, why might it make sense for Paul to “co-sign” this book with Timothy?

4. What is the relationship between servanthood and sainthood?

5. Phil 1.3-5 Why is Paul thanking God on their behalf? What does he mean by “from the first day”?

DAY 1 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

6. In verse 5 Paul references their partnership. What does their partnership involve?

7. How might you respond to some who say, "Paul, can't you just love us because of who we are, not what we do? Why do you have to base your affection for us based on our partnership in the gospel? Can't you just look at us as persons, created in God's image and enjoy us?"

8. What makes a person someone you would enjoy? For whom do you make joyful prayers for? Is it not for those whom you are knit together with, that love the same thing as you?

DAY 1 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

9. One could argue Paul's thankfulness and joy for the Philippians is not separate from their personhood, but rather, their partnership in the gospel is who they are. They have been deeply and profoundly changed as persons so that their highest priority in life now is to exalt Jesus Christ in the gospel. Discuss your thoughts...

10. Phil 1.6 Who began the work in us? Who will complete it? What does this "good work" include? What are the two gifts given by God in verse 29? What has God worked in us in verse 2:13?

11. What will it mean for God to complete the good work in us?

DAY 1 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

12. 1.6-8 What are the grounds for why having them in his heart makes it right for him to have this confidence about their perseverance? Put another way, why is Paul's longing for them evidence that God will be faithful to them, and they will persevere?

13. 1.9-11 If God is just going to complete the work anyway, do we need to do anything about it?

14. Let's take some time to reflect on what Paul means when he prays "be pure and blameless." Are these states describing the position of the Christian after they have received the Justification imputed to them from Christ? Or are these goals for the Christian that Paul is setting before us?

DAY 1 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

15. What is the relationship between fruit and Jesus Christ? Where do we fit in? (See what Paul says in Titus 2:14) What is fruit of righteousness?

16. Let's look at the words 'glory' and 'praise'. Glory can mean God's beauty, and greatness, and excellence. Praise can mean our enthusiastic approval, our exaltation of God, joyous overflow toward God. What is the relationship between these words? (See also Ephesians 1.12-14)

17. Can you enthusiastically approve, or exalt, something you are not happy about? Why, or why not?

**18. Phil 4.16-17 The fruit increases to their account. To their credit. It could easily be interpreted as their fruit is recorded in their 'ledger' as the Greek word is very similar (logon), and could mean 'book' (similar to logos: word).
*continued...***

DAY 1 QUESTIONS CONT.

It could be referring to a reward they will receive at the day of Jesus Christ. This is significant because the fruit we bear through Christ, is not only for His glory, but *for our joy* in him as we see him glorified by the fruit God has brought through us by his son.

What does this mean for the fruit we bear?

19. Paul, writing to the Philippians, could qualify as the worst salesman of the Gospel message, but that's because he isn't selling anything. From verses 12-14, what are some of the ways Paul's imprisonment serves to advance the Gospel? Cite examples from the text, and through thinking about the implications of this event.

20. What is going on here that causes the believers to respond to Paul's imprisonment in an uncharacteristic way? Where does their confidence come from? What does this say about God?

DAY 1 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

21. What, at root, gets rid of fear in our lives? i.e. Fear of people, fear of death, fear of persecution

22. Phil 1.15-18 Notice that Paul says, “the latter do it out of love, knowing...” Look back at verse 9. What is the relationship between love and knowledge in these verses?

23. Think of a time where you had an experience with jealousy or rivalry or selfish ambition. What was that like? What were some alternative ways you could have thought about the situation? What do you wish you would have done differently? How does your experience relate to these verses?

DAY 1 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

24. Paul was not surprised by his imprisonment. Jesus taught us it would come (Mark 13.9 and Luke 21.12-13), and Paul knows he was put here by God to defend the gospel and be a witness. What if he wasn't willing to suffer in this way? Ponder Paul's sacrifice. What if he fled out of fear? What would that mean for us?

25. What did Paul understand about Jesus that made him stay? What does that mean for you today? What does your understanding about the worth of Christ mean for those who will come after you?

26. Why are you a Christian?

DAY 1 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

27. Read 1.20-21. Paul is essentially giving two examples that point to the same purpose. If we split up the two examples and read them individually, it may help us understand more clearly what Paul is teaching.

"It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, by my death. 21 For to me to die is gain." and...

"It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, by my life. 21 For to me to live is Christ.

What does it mean for someone to glorify Christ in their death? What does that look like? What does a death or a life like this suggest about who Christ is?

28. See 1.25 What is 'joy of faith'? And why was this worth it for Paul to stay with them?

DAY 2: PHIL 1.27-2.13

1. 1.27-30 All believers have had a change of citizenship from their homeland on earth, to their true homeland in eternal life. What then does Paul mean by 'manner of life'?

2. What are the three examples Paul gives as marking a manner of life worthy of the gospel?

3. In what way is that gospel-life lived?

4. A life lived in this manner is a clear sign and a warning to people of their destruction. What is meant by destruction?

DAY 2 QUESTIONS

CONT.

5. How is the Christians manner of life a sign to opponents of their destruction? How might Christian opponents recognize this sign?

6. How is this manner of life evidence of our salvation?

7. What does it mean to be *worthy* of Jesus? (Mt. 3.8, 10.27; Acts 26.20)

8. What is the 'gospel'? (Isaiah 52.7; Mark 1.14-15; 1 Cor 15.1-4; 1 Peter 3.18)

DAY 2 QUESTIONS

CONT.

9. In verse 30, what did they see? (Acts 16.19-24)

10. What is the purpose of verse 1? Why doesn't he just jump into verse 2 and say, "so, be of the same mind, have the same love, be of one accord...." Why include verse one?

11. What does he mean by "complete my joy," and why is that important?

12. In this verse there is a negative, a positive, and a bridge between the two. Something not to do, something to do, and the way it is done. What are they?

DAY 2 QUESTIONS

CONT.

13. What does it mean to count others as more significant than yourself? What does it mean to look to the interest of others?

14. Verses 5-7 Paul says Jesus was “in the form of God.” Does this mean he was like God, or that he was God?

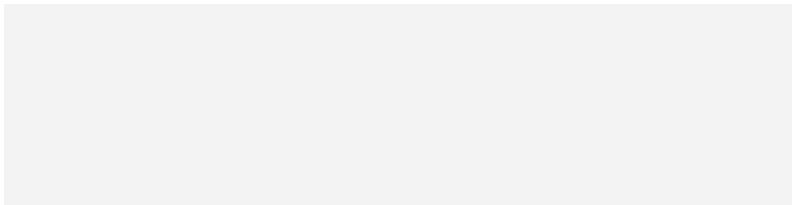
15. What was inside Christ that caused him to live like this [taking the form of a servant]? He chose to do it. But how?

16. How does Paul’s description of Christ in verses 5-8 exemplify what he is calling us to do in verses 3-4?

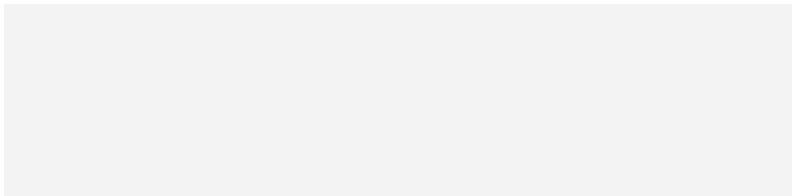
DAY 2 QUESTIONS CONT.

17. The best way to learn about a word in the Bible is not to go to an English dictionary. The best way is to find the word you are looking at and first find all the times that same author uses the word. After you understand how a specific author uses a certain word in multiple texts, you can then begin to expand outward to other authors in the same Testament, and even more broadly across the Bible. Let's look at how Paul uses the word "work." Romans 2.9 (who "does" evil), Romans 7.20 (no longer I who "do" it), Romans 4.15 (the law "brings" wrath), Romans 5.3 (suffering "produces" endurance), Romans 7.8 (sin "produced" in me), Romans 7.13 (it was sin "producing" death in me), 2 Corinthians 4.17 (affliction is "preparing"), 2 Cor 7.10 (worldly grief "produces" death), 2 Cor 9.11 (through us will "produce" thanksgiving).

What does the word "work" mean?

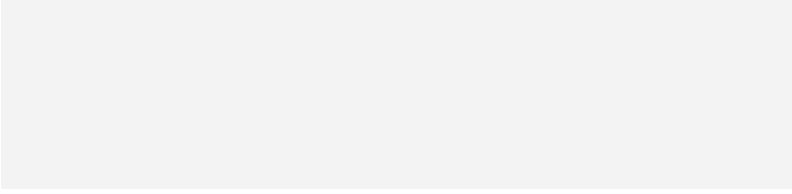


18. What does it mean to work out one's own salvation with fear and trembling?

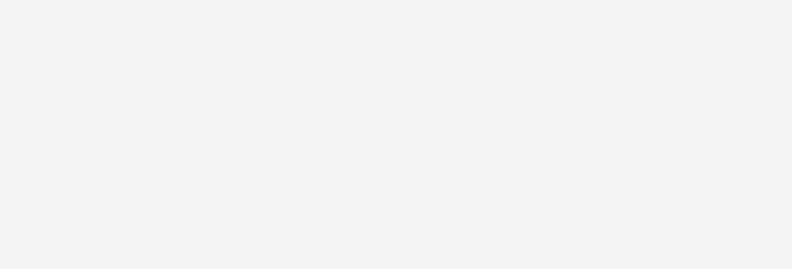


DAY 2 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

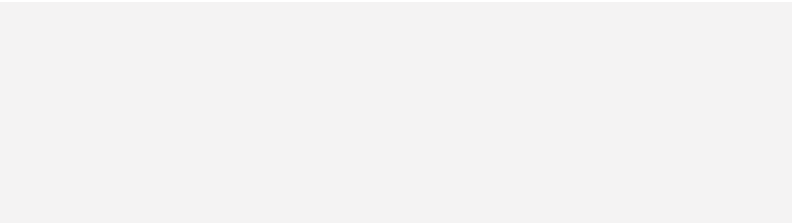
19. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling not because God is “out for us” or he is “gonna get us” if we don’t. It is not a threat! We work because he is at work in us! How do you feel when you think about this?



20. How does God work *a will* and *a work* in us for his pleasure? (Hebrews 13.21; Colossians 1.29; 2 Corinthians 8.16-17)



21. If He creates the will and the work in us, does that mean we can just lay in bed and see what happens? Why or why not?



DAY 3: PHIL 2.14-3.16

1. Do all things without grumbling or disputing. This is not a marginal suggestion by Paul as a product of the other teachings in this letter. In one sense, the whole letter to the Philippians is about conquering grumbling! This idea is an extension of verses 12 and 13; *it is a way to work out one's salvation!* He is especially connecting this idea of not grumbling or complaining to the mind of Christ in verses 2.3-8 and the way Christ lived his life. Be people of lowly, humble, others-oriented service in ministry, and do all of it without grumbling. But how? And just how central is this idea of not grumbling? And where does joy fit in?

2. What is grumbling? What is the opposite of grumbling?

3. Read Matthew 5.11-12 and 14-16. What similarities do you see in how Jesus describes His children as lights in the world and how Paul describes how to shine as lights in the world? What makes a person “bright” in a world full of reviling, persecution, slander, and darkness?

DAY 3 QUESTIONS CONT.

4. Look back at 1.25-28 How does our fearless joy of faith and absence of grumbling serve as a sign to outsiders of their impending destruction? And a sign of your salvation! What types of thoughts and emotions come up for you as you consider this aspect of the role of joy in your life? What does this mean for you?

5. 2.17-18 How can Paul possibly be glad and rejoice about dying? How are they supposed to rejoice with him?

6. 2.19-30 Upon reading these verses it may seem like Paul is launching into a description of some travel plans for Timothy, for himself, and for Epaphroditus. What is Paul doing here? Why does he mention that he wants to send Timothy and Epaphroditus to them?

DAY 3 QUESTIONS CONT.

7. Think of some people in your life who exude these qualities: others-oriented, humble, unified in the body of Christ, striving side-by-side with the brethren, standing firm, fearless, joyful, shining, looking to the interest of others, not grumbling or complaining.

8. Which of these qualities has the Lord put on your heart?

9. 3.1 How might we define what it means to “rejoice in the Lord?”

10. Who are these dogs? What are they like? (Psalm 22.16-18; Matthew 7.6, 15.26; Luke 16.21; 2 Peter 2.22)

DAY 3 QUESTIONS

CONT.

11. What is the difference between the dogs and the circumcision?

12. Look at verses 3:18-19. What parallels do you see with his description of the 'dogs'? What differences?

13. In verse 6 Paul says he puts no "confidence in the flesh." Confidence for what?

14. Notice in verses 3:7-8 that Paul basically says the same thing three times! What types of things do you notice? What similarities do you see? What differences?

DAY 3 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

15. What might it cost you to gain Christ?

16. In verses 3:9-10 it states “that I may know Him.” What is that connected to? What is Paul doing so that he may know Christ? See 3.7-9

17. What are the four things in verse 10, Paul has in mind as the goal, valued at surpassing worth, of his counting all things as loss?

18. Let us get out of our heads the idea that “the power that raised Jesus from the dead and now lives in us” (Ephesians 3.20; Colossians 1.11 and 29) is a power that removes suffering from our life. That is not the gospel. That is not the cruciform way of Christ. And it is certainly not what Paul is teaching here.

DAY 3 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

Paul does not want to take a different path to heaven than Jesus did. He wants to know Jesus! He wants to become like him, and becoming like Jesus means a life of suffering and joy! The power of Christ's resurrection is the power to suffer. It is not possible for this power to come from the flesh. This is why Paul counts all things of his earthly pursuits as loss, because they cannot get him to Christ.

Ephesians 1.16-2.6 "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers... that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead... 2.4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

How do these verses teach us how God's power works in our lives? This power enables us to live in this life, not just in the next. How does it help us to share in Christ's sufferings?

DAY 3 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

19. What parallels do you see with Philippians 3:11-14 and 1 Corinthians 13:12? How does this affect your reading of the meaning of verse 12?

20. In 3.13 many of our translations may say, “but one thing I do,” and it is peculiar because Paul then lists two things, or even three if you include v. 14. Why does he do that? The “I do” in that phrase was inserted by our translators. The text literally states, “one thing, forgetting what lies behind, and straining... I press on.”

How would you summarize the main idea of what Paul is trying to communicate in verse 13? What is the "one thing"? How is this teaching guarding against a Christian who might say, “I know I’m saved. I can just coast into heaven now.” What is that person missing?

DAY 3 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

21. 3.15 What does it mean to be mature?

(Mt. 5.48; 1 Cor 13.9-11, 14.20; Hebrews 5.13-14)

22. What do mature people think about? “Think this way” is also in 1.7, do you see it? It’s also in 2.5! What is the description of this mindset?

23. There are those among us, perhaps even ourselves, who do not yet think with this mindset, but Paul is confident that the Lord will reveal to them, or to us, what we need to know (also recall his prayer from 1.9-11). Based on this mindset, what would it look like to respond to a fellow believer who “thinks otherwise” --namely that they do not think of the Christian life as a life of suffering, and becoming like Christ in his death?

DAY 4: PHIL 3.17-4.9

1. Phil 3.18 Paul is recounting the many who now walk as enemies of the cross, and he does so in tears, and in the same breath he states the harsh realities of verse 19. Wouldn't it seem that verse 19 is one that would be written with a type of derision or harshness? Yet this is not how Paul does it. We should not hear these words with a hard tone, because Paul didn't write them that way. It is important for us to feel the brokenness of Paul's heart behind this idea. The truth is not easy, and it is certainly not made easier by tears. This truth here is hard and ugly, and this ugliness brings the Christ-like heart and mind to tears, with gentle, rooted, humility. This is precisely why Paul is crying! Where are you at with this idea? Is your mercy dependent on the way you are treated by others? Does the joy you have with Christ bring tears when you see others walk as enemies of the cross? Or maybe you are experiencing a hardness and a satisfaction in the destruction of your enemies?

2. What will our new body be like? (1 Cor 15.42-44 & 15.51-57; Matthew 13.41-43)

DAY 4 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

3. He calls them his joy. They themselves are his joy! Is this in tension at all with 3.7- 8? Paul said he counts everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. Doesn't everything include the Philippians, since his ultimate satisfaction is in Christ alone? What does Paul mean when he calls the believers his crown? (1 Thess 2.19-20; 1 Cor 9.24-25; 2 Tim 4.7-8; James 1.12)

4. What is the "thus" referring to when Paul commands "stand firm thus"? (Hint see the imperative verbs in 3.15-17)

5. What is the "therefore" in verse 4:1 referring to? What are the reasons for the believer to stand?

6. How pervasive is Paul's concern with conflict in the church? Though this 'entreatment' from Paul for these women may come as a surprise, he has been addressing their conflict, and providing solutions throughout the letter. (1.27- 28; 2.1-5; 3.14-15)

DAY 4 QUESTIONS **CONT.**

7. Let's look at the word "always". How is it necessarily grounded in the phrase "in the Lord"? How does this command make sense even in the midst of conflict within the church (4:2-3), outside the church (1:28), through Paul's imprisonment (1:12-13), and suffering weakness in our lowly bodies (3.21)?

8. How does Jesus say to rejoice? (Luke 10.19-20)

9. Can anyone really rejoice 'always'?

10. How does the phrase "the Lord is at hand" fit in with what Paul is teaching here about gentleness and letting go of anxiety and giving thanks? Then, how does the peace of God flow from this?

DAY 4 QUESTIONS CONT.

11. In v. 7 another possible translation for the word “understanding” can be “thought” or even the idea of “human intellectual capacity.” Rendering “the peace of God which surpasses all ability of thought will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” How does this equal alternative translation affect the way you understand this verse? (Hint: when all the tips from the world on how to cure anxiety fall short...)

12. How does God look when we worry all the time?

13. There is a peace which goes beyond what we can compute in our thoughts. A peace that cannot be achieved by thinking through our anxieties. How does this peace guard our hearts and minds?

DAY 4 QUESTIONS CONT.

14. How does this familiar text (4.6-7) connect to the bigger ideas we have been looking at in Philippians?

15. The peace of God given to us, which guards our hearts and minds, does not produce passivity in the believer. What is the use of the mind and the body in 4:8-9 as a result of this God-given peace?

16. Which of these options Paul gives to think about stick out to you? What has been helpful for you?

17. 4.9 How can we experience the presence of God?

DAY 5: PHIL 4.10-23

1. Note the three pairs of circumstances Paul mentions in verses 11-13. What are they?

2. 4.10-13 Paul is stating that no circumstance is essentially the foundation of his joy. So when he says in verse 13, "I can do all things," it is because he has "learned" something. He has "learned the secret." Hint: the secret is not to say, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" *as if "all things" means you abound all the time* through him who strengthens you. What does "all things" truly mean here?

3. "I can hunger through him who strengthens me. I can be in need through him who strengthens me. I can be brought low through him who strengthens me." This is so utterly crucial to see, lest we think that Paul's happiness and joy and perseverance in the ministry hangs on Christ strengthening him always to abound. The strength doesn't always produce abundance, but gives strength for need. It doesn't always produce plenty, but gives strength for hungering. So wherein does Paul's strength consist? How is this strengthening mediated to Paul such that he calls it the "learning of a secret"? Or the "knowing how to be brought low and knowing how to abound"? Here are some clues below...

DAY 5 QUESTIONS

CONT.

The first clue is “through him.” It is through Christ. And this is not an isolated statement, he writes this way in his other letters as well. (Eph 6.10; 1 Tim 1.12; 2 Tim 2.1, 4.17)

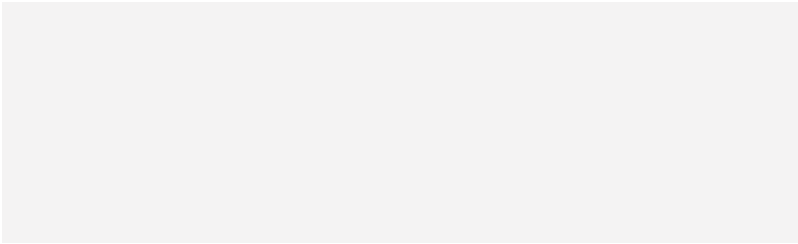
The second clue is in the word “content.” It literally means “self-rule,” which may sound to some of you like Greek philosophy, very stoic and un-Christian. It may sound like a worldly approach to contentment saying, “just learn to rule yourself so that when you are brought low you just command yourself to think positively and the power of positive thinking will give you contentment.” So why would Paul choose to use this word taken directly out of Greek philosophy? It is likely he does so to turn the idea on its head, precisely in the idea that *the strength comes from Christ*, not from self. It is we who experience and act out this contentment, yet it is God who produces the miraculous strengthening in us (Philippians 2.12-13; 1 Cor 15.10; 1 Peter 4.11).

The third clue is in the word “learned” in verse 11 (different than verse 12) which is the same word he just used in 4.8-9.

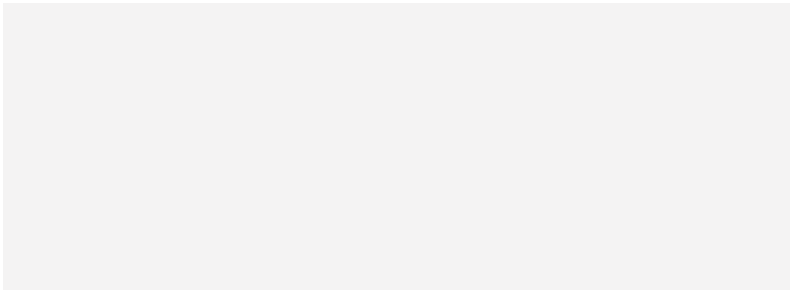
DAY 5 QUESTIONS

CONT.

The fourth clue is, this is called a secret because the Devil knows these truths and they do not give him Christian contentment. *Truth alone does not produce this miracle of Christ-exalting contentment. It must be believed.* The secret is going further than awareness. Further than intellect. It is seeing these truths *with the eyes that regard them as precious*. More precious than anything in the world.



The fifth clue revolves around the question, how do you rejoice in the Lord when the Lord has blessed you with abundance and plenty? How do you rejoice in the Lord and not the abundance? How are you content in the Lord and not in the plenty and the abounding? (3.7-8; 1.20-23)



DAY 5 QUESTIONS

CONT.

4. What have you learned that if you believe them would yield this contentment discussed in 4.11?

5. How do we practically live out contentment in abundance and plenty?

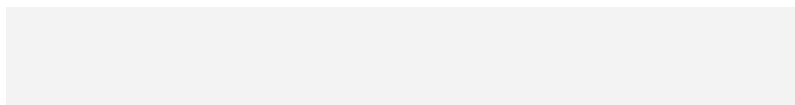
6. How do we practically live out contentment in misery and need?

7. Paul's celebration of their generosity to him does not mean he is seeking a gift from them or even that his celebrating is in the gift. He is seeking fruit. What does this mean?

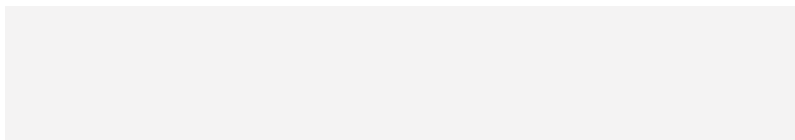
DAY 5 QUESTIONS

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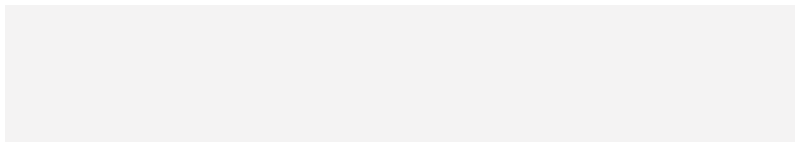
8. What is the function of this fruit in our lives at the final judgement?



9. How is the fruit then working in relationship to faith and sanctification?



10. How do our deeds become pleasing to God?



11. How do we reflect God's great glory back to him and to the world?

