

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS

God So Loved, Love Like You, Nothing But the Blood, Mighty to Save, Go and Follow

WELCOME

Use your favorite search engine (Google, etc.) to look for songs with the word “happy” in the title; do the same for songs with “joy” in the title. What difference do you notice between these two sets of songs --- content, songwriters, singers?

WORD

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-8 (READ THE ENTIRE CHAPTER 1 FOR CONTEXT)

1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: **2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **3** I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, **4** always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, **5** in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. **6** For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. **7** For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. **8** For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Often, single people look to marriage to bring them happiness. But even happily married couples will tell you that marriage does not guarantee happiness. God does want us to be happy --- yet often, we look for it in the wrong places. How do we find true happiness? The Bible mentions “joy”, “happiness” 430 times. God tells us to be joyful! However, we need to learn how to be joyful.

A Jewish lawyer once asked Jesus, “What is the greatest commandment?” The Jews had 613 commandments, and out of all those, Jesus said that the greatest is to love God with all your being, and the second is to love others (**Matthew 22:37-39**). You cannot separate loving God and loving others. Love Him with all your heart, mind, and soul, and don’t allow anything to take His place in your life --- relationships, money, etc.

The one who loves God loves others, too! If we can’t love people who we can see, how can we say we love God, who we cannot see (**1 John 4:19-21**)? The opposite of love is indifference. Thus, the “cancel culture” is the opposite of love. Shame on Christians when we don’t love each other!

When we love people, we will not take advantage of them (**Romans 13:10**). Love says. “I want to do what is good for you”. When you

love God, you will love others. When you love God and others, you will experience joy. Love and joy cannot be separated. They are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. That is the connection of love and joy. Love is the root; joy is the fruit!

The Book of Philippians is often misunderstood. “Joy” or “rejoice” is repeated 17 times. It’s known as the book of joy, but the foundation of the book is Paul’s relationship with God and others -- loving God and others produces joy. Chapter 1 follows this outline:

1. Prayer

Paul wrote to the saints, overseers, and deacons in the Philippian church (**vv. 1-2**). The word “saints” is often misunderstood in our culture; in the Bible, it simply means that you are set apart for God once you come to Jesus. Paul would go to major cities like Philippi to evangelize so that the gospel would spread from there. Lydia, the first European evangelized by Paul, was in this city. Paul was very close to the believers there, and he prayed for them (**vv. 3-4**). If you love someone, you will pray for them even for decades because you want God to work in their hearts and lives. We also pray for people we may not like, as we are commanded to love our enemies. Have

you ever prayed for your “enemies” to be blessed by God so that their hearts may be changed?

Paul prayed for the Philippians with the affection of Jesus and that their love would grow and abound (**vv. 8-9**). Pray for young people to pursue purity. Real love prays for people so that when they meet Jesus, they will stand blameless before Him (**v. 10**). We are to pray that they will be filled with the fruit of righteousness. Love is the fulfillment of the Law; you will obey God’s commandments and not do anything that harms others.

2. Encouragement

When you love people, you will encourage them. Paul encouraged them by letting them know they were his partners in the work of the gospel (**vv.5,7**). He shared his confidence that God will complete His good work in them (**v.6**). Look at people not as they are now but how they can become someday in Christ. Paul was an encourager--- let us not be discouragers! He also gave advice on how to encourage people --- stop having unwholesome words (**Ephesians 4:29**). Instead, encourage others everywhere you go! Remember, a bee will always find the flowers, while a fly will always seek the trash. What you focus on is what you will find. There’s no family member, church leader, or member who is perfect; look for things that will encourage them, and do not focus on the negative!

3. Perspective

Our perspective is shaped by our past experiences, education, etc. Growing up with an abusive father will affect the way you respond to human authority; it will color the way you view God as your Heavenly Father. We need to adjust, unlearn, and re-learn our perspective. Perspective affects our thinking, which affects our emotions, which affects our actions, which eventually determines our destiny.

We need to see circumstances through the lens of God’s word, promises, and character. We see this at work when Moses sent

twelve spies into the Promised Land. All twelve saw the same things but had two different conclusions because of perspective. Most saw problems they could not overcome, but two of them, Caleb and Joshua, came to a different conclusion (**Numbers 13:27-33**). Though God had promised them the land and that He would be with them, they saw their problems as bigger than God. Caleb and Joshua gave the minority report --- they saw God as bigger than their enemies (**Numbers 14:8-10**). Do you have a big problem? Is God bigger than your problem? The LORD is with us; do not be afraid! You can choose to trust God --- it depends on your perspective.

Only Joshua and Caleb entered the Promised Land --- those who did not walk by faith but by sight died in the wilderness. Paul, too, viewed his circumstances through God’s perspective (**vv.12-15**). Though imprisoned for doing God’s will, he did not feel sorry for himself nor blamed others for it. He saw his situation as an opportunity to evangelize the entire praetorian guard, one at a time, as they took turns guarding him!

God causes all things to work together for our good for His purpose (**Romans 8:28**). Paul knew other people’s actions were not in his control, but he chose joy as he depended on the Holy Spirit (**Philippians 1:14-24**). Love God and each other and choose joy!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. How is your prayer life? In what ways can you demonstrate dependence on God through prayer as you care for the people around you?
2. In what practical ways can you be an encourager? How can you be intentional about uplifting those around you?
3. How should God’s love shape your perspective?
4. Are you facing any challenges right now? How will you interpret and respond to your difficulties through God’s perspective?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for family, friends, co-workers/classmates, and even “enemies” to discover true happiness in the Lord. Share the gospel with them to demonstrate His love for them.

MEMORY VERSE

Philippians 1:9

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- For legislators to promote and support bills and laws aligned with God's Word.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented.
- For the rest of the Israeli hostages to be restored to their families safely. For Israel's war with terrorists to end according to God's purpose and for His glory.
- For the civil war in Syria to end peacefully, protection for Christians and other minorities, freedom from oppression for Syrians. Pray for the gospel to spread rapidly throughout the country.
- Pray for the Sudanese people and the persecuted Christians there; earnestly seek God's intervention to stop the bloodshed. Pray for freedom from oppression, that God's word and His people bring them comfort and hope.

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples.
- Elders, pastors, leaders, and families (holy, humble, harmonious, happy, heart-working).
- Ministries and churches expansion worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God.
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends.