



Small Group Notes for The Joy Manual: Suffering

Discovering Together

If you imagine a box that can hold only one thing, value, or person that represents the primary driving motivation of your life, what would be in your box?

If you could change it today, what would you want to have in your box?

How does what we have in the box influence one of the following aspects of our lives:

- Our motives
- How we invest our time
- How we treat others
- How we use our finances
- The space we give God

Learning Together

Philippians 1:12-30

Historians tell us that Paul was most likely chained to a soldier twenty-four hours a day. He saw this as a chance to tell each guard about Jesus. They thought they held Paul captive, but he saw them as a captive audience for the gospel. He realised they could not get away! He was ready to pray with them, tell them about Jesus, sing songs of praise, and write to his friends and let them read his letters. He was ready to lead each of the guards to Christ one by one. Paul was glad that the cause of Christ was marching on. It's as if Paul is saying, "Don't you love it! They're chaining people to me. What better opportunity to tell others about Jesus!"

Paul realised he could accomplish his life goal anywhere, at any time. Set him free, he would preach Jesus. Put him in jail, he would talk to prisoners and guards and write letters to encourage the church. In good times and in turbulent times, there were always opportunities to work toward meeting his life objective.

1. In light of what Paul writes in Philippians 1:12-20, what would you say Paul has in the box of his life? What was the driving passion or highest value in Paul's life?
2. Paul was persecuted and imprisoned because of his commitment to be a follower of Christ. What was Paul's attitude toward his imprisonment and suffering? What were Paul's feelings toward those who were guarding him in the jail?
3. How can Paul's example of facing painful and turbulent times influence you in a tough situation you are facing right now?
4. How can your small group members pray for you and support you through this difficult time?

5. What were Paul's feelings toward the ones who were out preaching Jesus Christ just to spite him (1:15-18)?

6. Paul rejoiced that the message of Jesus was being communicated, even by those whose motives were questionable (v. 18). What can you do to support churches or ministries that are bringing the message of Christ to your community?

7. In light of Paul's words in Philippians 1:21—26, how do you think Paul would finish these two statements:

My life is about . . .

I don't fear death, because ...

8. Paul called the first-century Christians to contend for the gospel and not be frightened by those who were opposing them. What are some of the battles raging against the truth of the gospel in our world today?

9. What can you do to stand up and fearlessly contend for the gospel?

10. Paul wrote about "struggles" and "suffering" for the gospel (1:29-30). Why did Paul speak of suffering as part of the experience of all who seek to live as fully devoted followers of Christ?

Serving Together

Identify one local ministry and consider one of the following goals:

- Pray for their leadership once a week for the coming month (you might even want to give them a call and get specific needs).
- Give a financial gift toward this ministry and pray for it to help in their work of building fully devoted followers of Christ.
- Write a note to the leadership team of this ministry to let them know you rejoice in the work they are doing in the name of Jesus. This will encourage them and uplift them more than you might ever know.

Take time as a group to help relieve the burden of an individual or family you know.