



Building Wholehearted Disciples of Jesus

Teacher: Steve Holt

The Leverage of Joy: A Study of Philippians
January 21, 2018

The Leverage of Joy: a study of Philippians

People today are on an endless pursuit for success: self-help books and self-help videos abound.

- At Barnes and Noble, self-help business books abound.
- Youtube is full of every kind of speaker imaginable to show us the keys to being successful.
- We have grown to believe that it is through outward success that we find inner happiness.
- We are the most successful nation in the history of the world—financially, educationally and recreationally, and yet we are one of the most depressed, drug addicted cultures of all time!
- As a matter of recent fact, the onset of depression 50 years ago was 29.5 years old. Today it is almost half that at 14.5 years old.
- Even in our own city, just down the road from this church, we have been shocked by the number of student suicides.
- It is obvious that something's missing in our secular and our Christian culture!

Recent Research

- We have been taught that if you work hard enough, sacrifice enough, you can find success—and only then, once you are successful, will you be happy.
- We have heard from our pulpits that if we accept Christ into our heart then our sins will be forgiven and our life will be abundant.
- Yet just as many Christians struggle with depression as those who are not Christians.

- We have been taught that happiness is the reward you get when you find success in your job, in your marriage, in your accumulation of money.
- But the new research in Positive Psychology and neuroscience shows that it works the other way around. We are more likely to be outwardly successful when we are joyful and positive in our heart and mind.
- For example, doctors in a positive mood before making a diagnosis show almost 3 times more intelligence and creativity than doctors in a neutral state, and they make accurate diagnoses 19% faster. Optimistic salespeople outsell their pessimistic counterparts by 56%.

It turns out that our brains are literally hardwired to perform at their best when they are positive and joyful.

- Over 200 studies on 275,000 people worldwide has found that happiness and joy leads to success in nearly every domain, including work, health, friendship, sociability, creativity and energy.
- Studies have shown that the quickest way to success is not a single-minded concentration on work and that the best way to motivate workers is not barking out orders and fostering a stressful fearful workforce.

I want to focus on joy and happiness. How do scientist define happiness?

- Essentially, as the experience of positive emotions. Pleasure combined with deeper feelings of meaning and purpose.
- Happiness implies a positive mood in the present and a positive outlook for the future.
- Martin Seligman has broken it down into three measurable components: pleasure, engagement and meaning.

- Aristotle used the term Eudaimonia, which translates to “human flourishing.”
- I like the definition of Shawn Achor in The Happiness Advantage, “happiness is the joy we feel striving after our potential.”

Philippians is a Manifesto on The Secret to Joy

- Paul had discovered the secret to joy. How do we know this? Let’s look at his outward circumstances.
- By any human circumstantial measurement, Paul should not be happy and should not be joyful.
- Yet Paul’s mind and heart are filled with peace!
 - Paul is writing the most joyful letter in the Bible while in a Roman prison.
 - Paul is facing imminent execution.
 - Except for Timothy, Epaphroditus and a few other friends, Paul is all alone.
 - Paul has not been received well in Rome. Luke tells us that when Paul arrived in Rome as a prisoner, many of the believers went out to see him, but then he went to prison. Two years passed, perhaps more. The other pastors were jealous of Paul’s fame. They neglected him. In time Paul was forgotten. The proof of this lies in the fact that Onesiphorus, a visitor to Rome, tried to find Paul and couldn’t.
 - But Paul is full of joy!

Philippians is a Manifesto on The Secret to Joy

Theme: Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord Always. Again I will say, rejoice!

- If ever there was an ancient teaching from an ancient book that has already confirmed what modern psychologists and neuroscientists are discovering, it is the Bible and specifically the book of Philippians.
- The book of Philippians is a personal and professional Manifesto on how to live a life of Joy.
- Paul had discovered the secret—the secret to a joyful life!
- The entire book of Philippians is only 104 verses, but in this very short letter:
 - Paul mentions joy, rejoicing or gladness 19 times.
 - Paul literally gushes with a joyfulness and happiness in every chapter.
 - There is a difference between joy and happiness. As I see it, in my study of Scripture and walking with Christ for the past 40 years, joy is the inner peace we experience and happiness is the outward presence of inner joy.
 - Happiness will have ebbs and flows based on our outward circumstances, but joy is the fire within that fuels our heart and mind no matter how hard life is.

The Joyful Mind of Paul

- Paul mentions the mind 16 times. Paul is going to show us that joy comes not from circumstances and success, but rather it is a mind-set. It is an attitude of our mind.
- One commentator, Warren Wiersbe, says that “Philippians is a Christian psychology book, based solidly on Bible doctrine.”

- Positive emotions follow inner joy and inner joy is about a mind-set and attitude! And Paul gets it better than anyone.
- Proverbs 23:7 “As we think, so we are.”
- The secret to joy is how we think. This book is about how we think, how we think differently and live with joy.
- This is not some shallow self-help book about just having a Positive Mental Attitude, putting happy face stickers on our problems, but rather, the mind-set the wholehearted Jesus follower must have if he/she is going to experience joy in a world filled with trouble.
- Philippians is about being wholehearted! It is about wholehearted joy!

The Leverage of Joy

- Having a mind-set of joy and learning the secret to joy will impact everything you do—at work, at home, in your singleness, in your marriage.
- This is not just some inspirational hokum or smiley face PMA but is based on solid research.
- For example, one study of 112 entry-level accountants found that those who had a mind-set of believing they could accomplish what they set out to do were the ones who, ten months later, scored the best performance ratings from their supervisors.
- Mind-set matters! A joyful mind-set is like a fulcrum and lever in your life.
- Our minds are like single processors capable of devoting only a finite amount of resources to experiencing the world. Because our brain’s resources are limited, we are left with a choice: to use those finite resources to see only pain, negativity, stress,

and uncertainty, or to use those resources to look at things through a lens of gratitude, hope, resilience, optimism and faith.

- Archimedes, the greatest scientist and mathematician of ancient Greece, famously posited, “Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on which to place it, and I shall move the world.”
- Our brains operate according to the Archimedean Formula.

Look at the Lever and Fulcrum on the stage and explain

- Take for example two boys on a seesaw where the fulcrum is set at the exact center between the two seats. If two boys, each weighing 100 pounds, sit the same distance from the fulcrum on opposing seats will balance each other. But if one boy weighs 150 pounds, in the same situation, the smaller boy will have to push off with his feet from the ground, or as I did many times in elementary school, suddenly jump off and let your companion come crashing to the ground!
 - But what if we move the fulcrum? The closer we move the fulcrum or center point, toward the heavier boy, the easier he is to lift. If we keep moving the fulcrum closer to the greater weight, eventually the lighter boy can climb off his seat and hold up the heavier lad with just one finger.
 - In other words, by shifting this point around which energy is applied, we can effectively turn the seesaw from a balancing scale into a powerful lever.
 - That was exactly Archimedes point. If we have a long enough lever and a good place to stand—a fulcrum point—we can move the entire world.
- Our brains work in precisely the same way. Our power to maximize our potential is based on two important things:

1) The length of our lever—how much potential power and possibility we believe we have.

2) The position of our fulcrum—the mind-set which generates the power to change.

- What this means practically is whether you are a student striving for better grades, an athlete focusing on a championship, a worker striving for better pay or a husband/ wife working toward a happier marriage, you don't need to try so hard to generate power and produce results. Your potential is not fixed. Rather, the more we move our fulcrum to a joyful mind-set, the lever's point is magnified—ready to move everything up.
- Simply put, by changing the fulcrum of our mind-set and lengthening our lever of possibility, we change what is possible. It's not the weight of the world that determines what we can accomplish. It is our fulcrum and lever!

Starting next week we will look *Philippians*, at the Leverage Points of Joy

- Get ready to be blessed with a new mind-set.
- Get ready to be equipped in how to live a joyful life.
- It all begins with Christ!