

Joy

A journey through Philippians

The book of Philippians is a letter that Paul wrote to the first church planted in Europe - the first in that continent to hear the Good News about the crucified and risen King Jesus. It was written by Paul while he was in prison and encourages these new Christians to continue to find the incredible joy that comes from knowing Jesus, serving Jesus and imitating Jesus in their life and service.

And we too can experience this joy! Even in times of suffering and uncertainty, we discover joy when we know Jesus, serve Jesus and imitate Him in our life and service.

The story of Easter, filled with the horror of the cross, isn't naturally thought of as a time of joy. Yet Jesus "for the joy set before Him endured the cross" (Hebrews 12:2). At Easter we discover the horror of the cross turning into the joy of the resurrection. Christ's suffering turns into our joy when we accept the opportunity to know the grace and forgiveness of God. Through the cross, Jesus won the victory over the things that condemn us to offer us life eternally with Him.

Now more than ever before we need to experience the joy of knowing Jesus. While the uncertainty and anxiety around us has the potential to overwhelm us, and as we face unprecedented challenges in our workplaces and families, God calls us to be a voice of hope and peace. We need to be connected to God, spending time in His word and with His people regularly.

There are four weekly resources for you to participate in through this series:

1. **Church Online:** Participate in your regular service every Sunday.
2. **Your Life Group:** Discussion questions for your life group as you meet online.
3. **Yourself:** Personal devotional experience - scripture writing the book of Philippians.
4. **Your family:** A JOY challenge - a list of fun activities to enjoy with those you live with. If you would like, share on social media using the hashtag #ivegotthejoy and #gatewaybap.

Church Online

We will continue to have a church service for you to join in every week in our regular service times. At 8am, 10am and 6pm every Sunday, go to <https://gatewaybaptist.online.church/> and participate in the service with your family. You can say Hi to your friends in the chat, request prayer and respond to an invitation for salvation. Pyjamas, pets and snacks are allowed!

Your Life Group

Even though we can't meet physically in the same room, it is more important than ever to stay connected to each other, to encourage and build one another up, and to pray and care of each other. There are several digital tools that can help your life group connect in a virtual life group meeting, many of them are free.

The three most popular are:

- [Zoom](#)
- [Messenger video group call](#)
- [Google Hangouts](#)

Here is some information that outlines these popular video conferencing platforms with instructions on how to get set up with each one. It also gives helpful tips for those unfamiliar with running digital meetings. Having a conversation on a video chat is different to face to face meetings, it takes a little getting used to, but when you persevere you can enjoy genuine connection and encouragement.

Here is a link to a comprehensive resource: [How to Host a Gateway Online Life Group](#)

We will provide further video tutorials and examples to help leaders. If you are struggling to get your group set up, please do not hesitate to ask for help. You can contact your Life Group Coordinator or Campus Pastor and we will direct you to expert help to get you up and running.

Prayer

Group prayer in an online chat can be difficult. We suggest you nominate one person to close the group time in prayer, then close the group chat. Set up prayer partners for each person and pray for each other using a Messenger chat or phone call. At the end of your group meeting, have everyone connect with their prayer partner and pray for each other.

Yourself

About Scripture Writing

Scripture writing is doing exactly what it sounds like, copying scripture out long-hand, a few verses at a time. When you write down the words of scripture rather than just reading or listening:

- It forces you to slow down, giving you more time to think about what the verses are saying
- It combines motor memory with mind memory which is a powerful tool for learning and retaining information
- We notice patterns, repeated words and themes
- We put ourselves in the shoes of the original writers of scripture, giving us an understanding of the heart of the writer

What you need:

1. A Bible in a translation that you enjoy. The NIV or NLT are good options.
2. A notebook and pen. You may want to purchase a notebook just for Scripture Writing, or you may want to incorporate it into a journal you already use.

Over the next four weeks we will be looking at the book of Philippians. This is a wonderful book of the Bible to try the spiritual practice of scripture writing. Follow the plan each week to write out the book of Philippians over the next four weeks.

Your Family

In these uncertain times it is important for our homes to be a supportive, loving and fun environment for our children. One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is our undivided time and attention.

We have included a list of six family challenges each week. These are simple, fun things that you can do together to strengthen your relationships and engage with your children.

If you would like, you can post a photo or video of your Joy Challenge and post it on Instagram using the hashtags #ivegotthejoy and #gatewaybap or on Facebook and tag your local campus. Be sure to follow the hashtags so that you can see what other families have been up to.

Week 1: JOY in Sharing Jesus' Story

Your Life Group

Fifteen minutes before your life group begins, **read Philippians chapter 1**, grab a snack and make a cuppa. Then, once you're online:

1. **Check in.** Share how you are going. Where are you finding joy in your life right now?
2. **Read Philippians 1:3-10.** Paul says, "I thank God every time I remember you." What are you thanking God for? What memories of God's faithfulness are encouraging you at this time?
3. Even from prison, Paul recognised that God was doing a good work (verse 6). In what way can you see God doing something good in your life and among the people you know and love?
4. **Pray.** Share your prayer requests and invite someone to close the meeting in prayer. Pray the prayer Paul prayed in verse 9-10 together. Then, straight after you have closed the group meeting, break up into prayer partners and pray for one another.

Find a way to check in and continue to pray for each other regularly until your next meeting time.

Yourself

Scripture Writing: **Philippians 1**

1. Verses 1-6
2. Verses 7-11
3. Verses 12-18
4. Verses 19-26
5. Verses 27-30

Kids: write out Philippians 1:3-6

Your Family

Joy Challenge: Do the following activities with your family. If you would like to, post a photo or video on Instagram and include the hashtags #ivegotthejoy and #gatewaybap or on Facebook and tag your local campus.

1. Do your best Kookaburra laugh
2. Tell your family about the funniest thing that's happened to you
3. Share your best (& worst) dad jokes
4. Play Charades. Who is the best actor in your family?
5. Take a photo of your pet. Feel free to dress them up if they would like
6. Draw or paint a picture of a place in your house that you love. It could be your bedroom, your favourite lounge chair or your trampoline

Week 2: JOY in Serving others

Your Life Group

Fifteen minutes before your life group begins, **read Philippians chapter 2**, grab a snack and make a cuppa. Then, once you're online:

1. **Check in.** Share how you are going. Where are you finding joy in your life right now?
2. **Read Philippians 2:1-6.** What are the things that make Paul's joy complete (verse 2)? Describe what that looks like in your current context.
3. What does it mean to 'do nothing out of selfish ambition...rather, value others above yourselves' (verse 3)? What are the dangers of self-interests? How can we value others above ourselves without compromising our health and well-being?
4. **Pray.** Share your prayer requests and invite someone to close in prayer. Then, straight after you have closed the group meeting, break up into prayer partners and pray for one another.

Arrange to check in and continue to pray for each other regularly until your next meeting time.

Yourself

Scripture Writing: **Philippians 2**

1. Verses 1-4
2. Verses 5-11
3. Verses 12-18
4. Verses 19-24
5. Verses 25-30

Kids: write out Philippians 2:1-6

Your Family

Joy Challenge: Do the following activities with your family. If you would like to, post a photo or video on Instagram and include the hashtags #ivegotthejoy and #gatewaybap or on Facebook and tag your local campus.

1. Perform your best cartwheel or summersault
2. Play Pictionary. Who is the best drawer in your family?
3. Make up a round-robin story. Each person in the family take turns to add one more sentence to the story
4. Make mum happy challenge - see who can clean their room the fastest
5. Dress up as a character from a book or movie that makes you happy
6. Prank Dad challenge. Pull a prank on dad (or someone else in the family who enjoys jokes)

Week 3: JOY in Knowing Jesus' Resurrection

Your Life Group

Fifteen minutes before your life group begins, **read Philippians chapter 3**, grab a snack and make a cuppa. Then, once you're online:

1. **Check in.** Share how you are going. Where are you finding joy in your life right now?
2. **Read Philippians 3:7-11.** How does your faith in Jesus impact the things you value in life? How has the current crisis effected the things you value most? Has your perspective changed?
3. How is the power of Jesus' resurrection evident in your life? Is there an aspect of your life (behaviour, thoughts, attitudes) that you need more of God's power? What will you do this week to live in the power of the resurrection?
4. **Pray.** Share your prayer requests and invite someone to close in prayer. Then, straight after you have closed the group meeting, break up into prayer partners and pray for one another.

Arrange to check in and continue to pray for each other regularly until your next meeting time.

Yourself

Scripture Writing: **Philippians 3**

1. Verses 1-4
2. Verses 5-6
3. Verses 7-11
4. Verses 12-16
5. Verses 17-21

Kids: write out Philippians 3:7-11

Your Family

Joy Challenge: Do the following activities with your family. If you would like to, post a photo or video on Instagram and include the hashtags #ivegotthejoy and #gatewaybap or on Facebook and tag your local campus.

1. Share a video that makes you laugh
2. Tell your favourite Chuck Norris joke
3. Crazy socks day! Put on your craziest socks and post a photo.
4. Build a fort in your lounge or family room
5. Sing along - dust off your musical instruments, pots & pans drum kit and hairbrush microphone and join the worship band.
6. Skipping challenge - How many times can you skip without tripping on the rope?

Week 4: JOY in Jesus' Presence

Your Life Group

Fifteen minutes before your life group begins, **read Philippians chapter 4**, grab a snack and make a cuppa. Then, once you're online:

1. **Check in.** Share how you are going. Where are you finding joy in your life right now?
2. **Read Philippians 4:4-9.** Paul tells us to rejoice always. He wrote these words while he was in prison. How can you be filled with joy regardless of your circumstances? Use verse 5-7 to guide your answers.
3. How do your thoughts impact your life? What are some practical ways you can control what you think about? How do you guard against being discouraged by worrying and anxious thoughts?
4. **Pray.** Where in your life do you need to experience the joy of Jesus presence and His peace which transcends all understanding? Share your prayer requests and invite someone to close in prayer. Then, straight after you have closed the group meeting, break up into prayer partners and pray for one another.

Arrange to check in and continue to pray for each other regularly until your next meeting time.

Yourself

Scripture Writing: **Philippians 4**

1. Verses 1-3
2. Verses 4-9
3. Verses 10-13
4. Verses 14-19
5. Verses 20-23

Kids: write out Philippians 4:4-9

Your Family

Joy Challenge: Do the following activities with your family. If you would like to, post a photo or video on Instagram and include the hashtags #ivegotthejoy and #gatewaybap or on Facebook and tag your local campus.

1. Share your most embarrassing moment
2. Watch a funny movie and laugh out loud
3. Cook a meal or treat that you love to eat
4. Facetime a friend and have afternoon tea together
5. Crazy hair day! Do your hair or wear your best silly hat
6. Share your favourite Joy Challenge