



# The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V23 N50 December 12, 2021

## WONDER

### “The Wonder of Joy”

Philippians 4:4-7

#### THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

##### Joy

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

*“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”*

John 15:11



What is God's  
antidote for  
anxiety?

Paul commands the Philippians to “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice” (4:4). Since he is addressing his readers as Christians – not as residents of Philippi – his command applies to Christians everywhere at all times. But how is it possible to rejoice in today's world turned upside down by COVID-19?

*The virus has devastated families.* Nearly 50 million people have contracted the disease in the US, and over 8 million have died to date. Many of the 39 million who have recovered face a lengthy rehabilitation process, not to mention mind-boggling medical bills. The emotional grief and financial hardships faced by the families of COVID victims is staggering. And now there's a new variant, Omicron.

*The virus has left health care workers exhausted.* Physicians have been working longer hours and in different capacities than they are used to, forcing them to spend more time away from their families; nurses have faced extended shifts – some working 24 hours a day in uncomfortable personal protective equipment and worrying about being exposed to COVID-19 themselves. Since the start of the pandemic, some 60% to 75% of doctors report showing symptoms of exhaustion, depression, sleep disorders and PTSD; nurses are equally if not more stressed. About 20% of health care workers have quit during this period, and 4 out of 5 of those who remain say that staff shortages have affected their ability to work safely and to satisfy patient needs.

*The virus has cost jobs, leaving many unemployed unable to afford the necessities of life, namely, housing and food.* Certain occupations have been especially hard hit. In December 2020, there were 1.3 million fewer workers in *leisure and hospitality* than there were one year earlier and nearly 116,500 fewer jobs in *air transportation* than there were one year earlier. *Construction and manufacturing* jobs have also been hard hit. And with the nationwide moratorium on evictions coming to an end, more than 100,000 Dallas-Fort Worth

residents locally *face the threat of eviction* before the end of 2021. *Food insecurity*, lack of access to sufficient food due to limited financial resources, is also on the rise. In 2021 42 million people, including 13 million children, are likely to experience food insecurity – up from 35 million people, including 11 million children in 2019.

*The virus has disrupted in-person learning and negatively impacted education.* One think tank reports: “Our analysis shows that the impact of the pandemic on K-12 student learning is significant, leaving students on average five months behind in mathematics and four months behind in reading at the end of the school year . . . In math, students in majority Black schools ended the year with six months of unfinished learning, students in low-income schools with seven. High schoolers have become more likely to drop out of school, and high school seniors, especially those from low-income families, are less likely to go on to postsecondary education. And the crisis has had an impact on not just academics but also the broader health and well-being of students, with more than 35 percent of parents very or extremely concerned about their children's mental health” ([mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning](https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-the-lingering-effects-of-unfinished-learning)). Of course, teachers are hurting, too.

Is it possible to have joy in today's world? It is, because Paul commands us to rejoice *not in our circumstances*, but “in the Lord” (Php 4:4), that is, neither in the virus nor any of its negative effects, but in our relationship to the Lord and his benefits. Christians can rejoice *always*, namely, under any and all circumstances. “Christian joy is not the temporal kind, which comes and goes with one's circumstances; rather, it is predicated altogether on one's relationship with the Lord, and is thus an abiding, deeply spiritual quality of life. It finds expression in ‘rejoicing,’ which is not a Christian option, but an imperative” (Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT, 404).

# 1

## EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

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### Philippians 4:4-7

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

### Read in another Translation

4 Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again – rejoice! 5 Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.

6 Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. 7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.  
(NLT)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "Rejoice" in v. 4.
- Bracket "in the Lord" in v. 4 and "in Christ Jesus" in v. 7.
- Circle "always" in v. 4.
- Circle "gentleness" in v. 5.
- Circle "near" in v. 5.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 6.
- Circle "anxious" in v. 6.
- Underline "prayer," "petition," and "requests" in v. 6.
- Bracket "with thanksgiving" in v. 6.
- Box "And" indicating *result* in v. 7.
- Circle "transcends" in v. 7.
- Circle "guard" in v. 7.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about \_\_\_\_\_."



## DIG DEEPER

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Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Paul commands the Philippians to “Rejoice in the Lord always.” What do you infer from the fact that he repeats his command?
  2. Put what “in the Lord” means in your own words.
  3. Put what “always” connotes.
  4. He also commands them, “Let your *gentleness* be evident to all.” State the *creed* for the Central Virtue of Gentleness (see pg. 8).
  5. “The Lord is *near*,” Paul says. *What* does he mean by that and *what* difference does it make?
  6. Explain the *contrast* in verse 6.
  7. So what’s the difference between *prayer*, *petition*, and *requests*?
  8. Explain the relationship of *thanksgiving* to *prayer*.
  9. The “*peace of God*.” What is that?
  10. **Discussion:** The peace of God will *guard* our hearts and minds. From *what*? Talk about it.
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### Commentary On The Text

In Paul's letter to the Philippians is a lengthy thank-you note of sorts for their generosity to him. Let me explain. When the believers in Philippi heard about Paul's first imprisonment in Rome (for an account of his arrest, trials, and incarceration see Ac 21:27-28:30; esp. 28:30), they sent a messenger named Epaphroditus to minister to him (Php 2:25). Along with the emotional and physical support he provided, Epaphroditus also brought financial support to meet the apostle's needs (4:18). Three times before—twice when Paul was in Thessalonica, and once when he was in Corinth (vv. 15-16; cf. 2Co 11:9)—the Philippian saints ministered to his needs. Unfortunately, while Epaphroditus was in Rome, he became so ill he almost died (2:27). But fortunately, he recovered, and after he did, he returned to Philippi with Paul's letter.

Philippians 4:4-7 is found near the end of the letter's body just before Paul thanks his readers for their generous gifts (vv. 10-20) and closes the letter with final greetings (vv. 21-23). The paragraph contains five commands delivered in *staccato* fashion—“rejoice” repeated twice, “let your gentleness be known,” “do not be anxious,” and “present your requests to God.”

Paul's command, “Rejoice,” first issued in 3:1, is repeated twice for emphasis in 4:4. Clearly, rejoicing is not optional; it's imperative. The accompanying term “always” implies Christians are to rejoice in any and all circumstances and at any and all times. It implies that Christian joy is not the *temporal* kind that comes and goes, but the *permanent* kind that is rooted in one's relationship to the Lord. Many circumstances fill the heart with sadness and despair—fatal accidents, terminal illnesses, natural disasters, human suffering in general and injustices in particular. But Paul is not commanding Christians to rejoice *in these*. He is commanding them to rejoice “in the Lord,” that is, to rejoice in *who* the Lord is and *what* he has done and will do for them *regardless of these*. As one commentator says: “Paul was not urging us to be unrealistic. He was not saying that we should never feel sad. Even Jesus wept (John 11:35). However, he was advocating focusing on the blessings we have in Christ, and being grateful for these regardless of how sad we may feel at any particular time” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Philippians,” 2021 ed., 108, [planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/philippians.pdf](http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/philippians.pdf)).

Paul's *third* command, “Let your gentleness be

evident to all”—where “gentleness” connotes forbearance, graciousness, and a non-retaliatory spirit—is especially applicable to Christians whose lives are being made miserable by others, either inside or outside of the church. According to one commentator, “This is the Pauline version of 1 Pet 2:23, spoken of Christ but urged of Christian slaves, ‘when they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly’” (Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, NICNT, 407). A gentle person does not insist on his rights. “The Lord is near,” a reference to Jesus' imminent return, serves as an incentive to encourage obedience to the apostle's command.

Paul's *fourth* command, “Do not be anxious about anything,” would make no sense apart from his *fifth* command, “present your requests to God,” since the second is anxiety's antidote. He makes this clear in verse 6, using a *contrast* introduced by “but.” In a nutshell, Paul commands his readers to *pray* rather than *worry*, because when they “by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving” tell God what they need, he in turn gives them “peace” beyond anything humanly imaginable. This peace, which comes from God, then quells their anxiety. One commentator puts it this way: “‘Guard’ is a military term, implying that peace stands on duty to keep out anything that brings care and anxiety. For these reasons prayerful people are peaceful people” (Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, NAC, 150).

Bunyan's use of this picture in the appointment and patrol of Mr. God's-Peace in the town of Mansoul should be read in conjunction with this verse (see *The Holy War*). Nothing was to be found but harmony, happiness, joy and health so long as Mr. God's-Peace maintained his office. But when Prince Emmanuel was grieved away from the town, he laid down his commission and departed also. We enjoy anxiety-free living only in our relationship to the Lord through prayer (Mt 1:24).

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## Word Studies/Notes

v. 4 *Rejoice* "Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord!" (3:1). "Rejoicing in Christ is something the apostle had commanded earlier (3:1), and had illustrated abundantly for his readers throughout this epistle. He must have felt that there was a great need for this attitude in Philippi. There were many reasons why the Philippian saints could have felt discouraged. Paul's imprisonment and the possibility of his death, Epaphroditus' illness, and the antagonism of unbelievers were a few. The attacks from legalists, on the one hand, and libertines on the other, plus friction among certain members of the church, contributed to this spirit. To counteract this attitude, Paul prescribed rejoicing in the Lord: 'Rejoice in the Lord always.' He repeated this charge in this verse for even greater emphasis: 'Again I will say, rejoice'" (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Philippians," 2021 ed., 107-108, [planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/philippians.pdf](http://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/philippians.pdf)).

v. 4 *in the Lord always* "Christ is the One in whom the sphere of rejoicing was to take place" (Robert P. Lightner, "Philippians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 663). "In the Lord may signify 'because you are the Lord's', or 'because of what he has done', or the entire phrase may be the Christian equivalent of the Old Testament exclamation, *Hallelujah*, 'Praise the Lord', which is familiar to us in the Psalter" (Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians*, TNTC, 138).

v. 5 *gentleness* "The term 'gentleness' (*epieikes*) was often used of an attitude of kindness where the normal or expected response was retaliation" (Frank Thielman, *The NIV Application Commentary: Philippians*, 218). "The Greek word contains connotations of gentleness, yielding, kindness, patience, forbearance, leniency, and magnanimity. It recalls Jesus Christ's humility in 2:5-11. The forbearing person does not insist on his or her own rights or privileges. He or she is considerate and gentle toward others. Of course, there is a time to stand for what is right. *The forbearing person is not spineless but selfless*" (Constable, 108, italics added). "Perhaps 'graciousness' is the best English equivalent" (Martin, 170).

v. 5 *near* "Paul reminded his readers of the imminence of the Lord's return at the Rapture ('The Lord is near.') When He comes, He will right wrongs – and vindicate those who have given up their rights for the glory of God and the welfare of others (cf. 3:20-21; James 5:8). 'The Apostle is not speaking of the nearness of the Lord in his abiding presence with us, but of the imminence of his coming'" (Constable,

109). Or is it an example double entendre? "Since their present suffering is at the hands of those who proclaim Caesar as Lord, they are reminded that the true 'Lord' is 'near.' Their eschatological vindication is close at hand. At the same time, by using the language of the Psalter, Paul is encouraging them to prayer in the midst of their present distress, because the 'Lord is near' in a very real way to those who call on him now" (Fee, 408).

v. 6 *anxious* "Do not be anxious is a negative command based on the idea that anxiety (*merimna*) betrays a lack of trust in God's care and is a species of 'unconscious blasphemy' against him (so Oswald Chambers); see Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:22 where the same verb is used" (Martin, 171). "To care and be genuinely concerned is one thing. To worry is another. Paul and Timothy cared for the people they ministered to (2 Cor. 11:28; Phil. 2:20), yet they retained trust in God. Jesus warned against worry which obviously eliminates trust in God (Matt. 6:25-33)" (Lightner, 663).

v. 6 *prayer, petition, requests* "Prayer, *proseuchē*, and petition, *deēsis*, are frequently found together in the apostle's writing and are distinguishable in two ways, according to G. Abbott-Smith's *Lexicon*. He says that *proseuchē* is used of prayer in general, while *deēsis*, gives prominence to the sense of need. On the other hand, *deēsis*, is used as well of requests from man to man, while *proseuchē* is limited to prayer to God. Requests, *aitēmata*, is a word which specifies the content of prayer as the formulating of definite and precise petitions (cf. Lk. 23:24; 1 Jn. 5:15)" (Martin, 172).

v. 6 *with thanksgiving* "Prayer is to be offered 'with thanksgiving.' The attitude of gratitude accompanies all true approaches to the Father" (Richard R. Melick, Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, NAC, 149).

v. 7 *peace of God* I.e., peace from God, that is, the peace he gives. "Since the peace mentioned stands in contrast to the anxiety mentioned in verse 6, it is probably an inner sense of contentment supplied by God" (Thielman, 220).

v. 7 *transcends all* "It is beyond man's ability to comprehend" (Lightner, 664).

v. 7 *guard* "We may be freed from all fretful care and feverish anxiety because we may refer all our distresses and problems to God in prayer. Thus Bengel's comment is so apt and true: anxiety and prayer (*curare et orare*) are more opposed to each other than fire and water" (Martin, 171).

# 4

## APPLY THE TEXT

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### CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Rejoice in the Lord under all circumstances, for through prayer  
God will replace your anxiety with inner contentment.

### CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



### 3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



## FAMILY TALK

Does the busyness of Christmas make you want to hide your head under a pillow? Are you wondering how to purchase the tiniest gift and still afford to pay this month's bills? Would you rather get a root canal than spend Christmas with extended family? What should be a season of reflection and joy over our Savior's birth becomes a season of anxiety swirling in the pit of your stomach and keeping you awake all night. How do we flip the switch, turning off the dread and replacing those negative emotions with wonder and delight? It's all a matter of perspective. When we focus on ourselves, we begin to implode. Our circumstances play havoc on our thoughts, and we even create terrible situations that were never there to begin with. But when we turn our eyes toward Jesus and truly give ourselves to him, we're consumed with his goodness, ready to exalt him as we should. I think of Peter who was fully focused on the Lord as he walked on water. The moment he allowed wind to distract him, he took his eyes off the Lord and sunk (Matthew 14:22-33). The wind didn't take him down, though; it was his fear. When we fear our circumstances, we take our eyes off the one who orchestrated that very situation. Take those things that bring anxiety, dread, or fear and prayerfully give them to the Lord. Ask him to fill you up with joy, wonder and exaltation instead. Sometimes this is a daily or even moment-by-moment cry. God hears you and loves you so much he sent his Son for you. We're praying for you!

### What Does The Bible Say?

Read Luke 1:39-45 and Philippians 4:4-7.

1. What did Elizabeth's baby do when Mary spoke? Why?
2. When should we rejoice?
3. What will God's peace guard?

### What Do You Think?

Read Luke 2:10. How does the good news of Jesus fill us with joy?

### What Do You Do?

Each day this week, make a list of all the things that make you feel anxious. Pray about these things and throw the list away. How do you feel at the end of the week?

### CORE COMPETENCY: Joy

I am happy on the inside no matter what's happening on the outside.

### MEMORY VERSE: Isaiah 9:6

*"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders."*

## KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: [kids@wearecentral.org](mailto:kids@wearecentral.org)

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week's verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

# OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

## CENTRAL BELIEFS

**Authority of the Bible** (2 Timothy 3:16-17)  
*I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.*

**Church** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

*I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.*

**Eternity** (John 14:1-4)

*I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.*

**The Holy Spirit** (Romans 8:9)

*I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.*

**Humanity** (John 3:16)

*I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.*

**Identity in Christ** (John 1:12)

*I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.*

**Jesus Christ** (Hebrews 1:1-4)

*I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.*

**Life Purpose** (Acts 20:24)

*I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.*

**Personal God** (Psalm 121:1-2)

*I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.*

**Salvation by Grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9)

*I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*



## CENTRAL VIRTUES

**Love** (1 John 4:10-12)

*I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.*

**Joy** (John 15:11)

*I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.*

**Peace** (Philippians 4:6-7)

*I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.*

**Patience** (Proverbs 14:29)

*I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.*

**Kindness/Goodness** (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

*I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others*

**Faithfulness** (Proverbs 3:3-4)

*I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.*

**Gentleness** (Philippians 4:5)

*I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.*

**Self-Control** (Titus 2:11-13)

*I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.*

**Grace** (Colossians 3:13)

*I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.*

**Hope** (1 Peter 1:3-5)

*I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.*

**Humility** (Philippians 2:3-4)

*I choose to esteem others above myself.*



## CENTRAL PRACTICES

**Bible Study** (Hebrews 4:12)

*I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Biblical Community** (Acts 2:44-47)

*I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.*

**Compassion** (Psalm 82:3-4)

*I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.*

**Disciple-Making** (2 Timothy 2:2)

*I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.*

**Evangelism** (Acts 1:8)

*I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.*

**Generosity** (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

*I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.*

**Prayer** (Psalm 66:16-20)

*I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.*

**Single-Mindedness** (Matthew 6:33)

*I focus on God and His priorities for my life.*

**Spiritual Gifts** (Romans 12:4-6)

*I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.*

**Worship** (Psalm 95:1-7)

*I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.*

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The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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