

Opening Illustration:

How has your week gone? Was it free of deadlines, obligations, and challenges? Did you have an opportunity to write down your New Year's resolutions? Or did you find yourself experiencing a few extra challenges or distractions this week?

Challenges are relative. Some of you had car problems. Some had house problems. Some had grade problems. Some had kid problems. Some had relationship problems. Some had health problems. (COVID-19...). The truth is... we are a church full of hurting people.

So here we are on the first Sunday of 2021. In midst of all that has happened last year globally and internally, we've gathered together to acknowledge God's sovereignty and celebrate the power of the resurrection! Not only do we want a word of encouragement, WE DESPERATELY NEED ONE.

Take your Bible and turn with me to the book of Philippians.

Allow me to give you a brief background of the book of Philippians:

- **Paul understood ministry.**
 - He valued the church.
 - (1:1-2)
 - He shared in the work of ministry.
 - (1:3-5; 2:19-24; 25-30; 4:2-3; 14-20)
 - He embraced hardship.
 - (1:12-18; 3:2; 12-14; 4:2-3; 4:12)
 - He centered ministry around the Gospel.
 - (2:1-11)
- **Paul persevered under difficulty.**
 - He encouraged a positive outlook.
 - (1:4, 18, 25-26; 2:2, 16-18, 28-29; 3:1; 4:1, 4, 10)
 - He highlighted the importance of servant-leadership.
 - (Paul & Timothy (1:1; 12; 2:19-24); Epaphroditus (2:25-30); Syzygus "TRUE COMPANION," Euodia, Syntyche, & Clement (4:2-3); JESUS (2:1-11))
- **Paul treated others like family.**
 - Brothers, Make Christ Central. (3:1-12)
 - Brothers, Believe Change is Possible. (3:12-16)
 - Brothers, Find and Follow a Mentor. (3:17-21)
 - Brothers, Keep the Gospel Practical. (4:1-7)
 - Brothers, Keep Your Focus Simple. (4:8-9)

Apply the Text:

One of the many blessings of being a college professor in the School of Religion is the opportunity to talk with students about how to face the challenges of life. I always try to seek to understand instead of seeking to be understood. After listening for a while, I will offer some advice. The interesting thing is that when I first started teaching in 2007, I would frequently begin my comments by saying: "Let me give you some brotherly advice." In the past few years I have replaced that with "Let me give you some FATHERLY advice."

Let's take a look at the 5 statements of "brotherly advice" given by Paul in light of the resurrection...

Paul is using the word "brother" in an endearing way! You can trust him.

- Paul understood ministry.
- Paul persevered under difficulty.
- Paul treated others like family.

Brothers, Make Christ Central. (3:1-12)

Men have pursued joy in every avenue imaginable. Some have successfully found it while others have not. Perhaps it would be easier to describe where joy cannot be found:

- Not in Unbelief -- Voltaire was an infidel of the most pronounced type. He wrote: "I wish I had never been born."
- Not in Pleasure -- Lord Byron lived a life of pleasure if anyone did. He wrote: "The worm, the canker, and grief are mine alone."
- Not in Money -- Jay Gould, the American millionaire, had plenty of that. When dying, he said: "I suppose I am the most miserable man on earth."
- Not in Position and Fame -- Lord Beaconsfield enjoyed more than his share of both. He wrote: "Youth is a mistake; manhood a struggle; old age a regret."
- Not in Military Glory -- Alexander the Great conquered the known world in his day. Having done so, he wept in his tent, before he said, "There are no more worlds to conquer."

Where then is real joy found? -- the answer is simple, in Christ alone.

The Bible Friend, Turning Point, May, 1993.

- He offers you a personal relationship. (1-8)
- He offers you a perfect righteousness. (9-12)

Brothers, Believe Change is Possible. (3:12-16)

- You are a work in progress. (12-13a)
 - You are not bound by the past. (13b)
 - You can have hope for your future. (14-16)
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- Not that I have already **attained** (lambanō: verb, aorist, active)– to take hold of or grasp
 - Or am already **perfect** (teteleiōmai: verb, perfect, passive) – brought to an end, finished or accomplished
 - But I **press on** (diōkō) to pursue; strive with a purpose
 - I **forget** what is behind: to overlook, care nothing for, willfully neglect
 - I **strain** forward to what lies ahead: to exert oneself to the uttermost, stretch out

Corrie ten Boom told of not being able to forget a wrong that had been done to her. She had forgiven the person, but she kept rehashing the incident and so couldn't sleep. Finally Corrie cried out to God for help in putting the problem to rest. "His help came in the form of a kindly Lutheran pastor," Corrie wrote, "to whom I confessed my failure after two sleepless weeks." "Up in the church tower," he said, nodding out the window, "is a bell which is rung by pulling on a rope. But you know what? After the sexton lets go of the rope, the bell keeps on swinging. First ding, then dong. Slower and slower until there's a final dong and it stops. I believe the same thing is true of forgiveness. When we forgive, we take our hand off the rope. But if we've been tugging at our grievances for a long time, we mustn't be surprised if the old angry thoughts keep coming for a while. They're just the ding-dongs of the old bell slowing down." "And so it proved to be. There were a few more midnight reverberations, a couple of dings when the subject came up in my conversations, but the force -- which was my willingness in the matter -- had gone out of them. They came less and less often and at the last stopped altogether: we can trust God not only above our emotions, but also above our thoughts."

Brothers, find and follow a mentor. (3:17-21)

- Imitate one who demonstrates self-discipline. (17-19)
- Imitate one who demonstrates submission. (20-21)

What is Biblical Mentoring? By David P. Craig

Mentoring: What it is and Why it's Practice is Crucial

- More **time** spent with **fewer** people equals greater **lasting** impact for God. – Principle of Mentoring from the Life of Jesus
- Some *Biblical Examples* of Mentoring: Moses mentored **Joshua**, Naomi mentored her daughter-in-law, **Ruth**, Ezra mentored **Nehemiah**, Elijah mentored **Elisha**, Elizabeth mentored her cousin **Mary**. Barnabas mentored **Paul** and John **Mark**, Paul mentored his spiritual son **Timothy**. Paul also mentored Priscilla and **Aquila**, who in turn mentored **Apollos**.

What Mentoring is in a Nutshell? (2 Timothy 2:1-2)

Relational – The *you* in v.2 above refers to Timothy and the *me* refers to the Apostle Paul. People learn how to better love and follow Jesus in the context of a focused friendship.

Personal – The basics that Timothy learned from Paul were mediated through his unique personality, gifting, and style.

Theologically Grounded – Paul is faithfully delivering what he himself received from *many witnesses* or *marturon* (“martyrs”). In the first century a martyr denoted a public witness to the truth. The meaning of the word martyr into its present meaning is evidence that Christian truth-telling could be terminally costly. In the Greek the word *entrust* means making a secure run to the bank to deposit a treasure.

Intentional – All of us are involved in hundreds of unintentional relationships. However, in the case of Paul and Timothy we see a relationship that was established for a specific purpose.

Transformational – Mentoring involves study; reflection; action; and receptivity.

Reproducible - *who will be able to teach others.*

Brothers, Keep the Gospel Practical. (4:1-7)

- Point others to Christ. (1-3)
- Point yourself to Christ. (4-7)

STAND FIRM: to be firmly committed in conviction or belief

Brothers, Keep Your Focus Simple. (4:8-9)

- Think right. (8)
- Do right. (9)

2 Corinthians 10:5 – “Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ...”

Hebrews 3:1 – “Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus...”

Romans 12:2 – “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...”

Colossians 3:10 – “And put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

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Brothers, Know Help is Available. (3:17-21)

- Find a mentor.

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- Point others to Christ. (1-3)
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- Think right. (8)
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Apply the Text:

- **Face adversity by rejoicing in the Lord. (Phil. 3:1)**
- **Find hope in the example of those who have modeled joy in the midst of adversity.**
 - Paul & Timothy (1:1; 12; 2:19-24); Epaphroditus (2:25-30); Syzgyus “*TRUE COMPANION*,” Euodia, Syntyche, & Clement (4:2-3); JESUS (2:1-11)
- **Commit to praying over the “brotherly advice” offered by Paul in chapters 3-4. Ask God to help you make the appropriate adjustments.**
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