

# Family Bible Series for July 17: Christ can enable joy even during hard times\_71105

July 6, 2005

Posted: 7/06/05

## Family Bible Series for July 17

### Christ can enable joy even during hard times

- Philippians 4:4-13, 19

**By Mitch Randall**

*First Baptist Church, Bedford*

My cousin is an inspiration to anyone who has the privilege of knowing him. Even in the midst of his recent struggle and heartache, his ability to bring joy to others is an amazing sight to behold. His wife of 10 years left him to pursue a younger and hipper lifestyle. He is raising his two young girls on his own.

Anyone who has gone through pain like what my cousin has endured the last year has the right to wear a stern look on his face, but there is no such look on his face. His smile and laughter fill a room with joy and inspiration. My cousin's ability to find joy out of his pain reminds me of the Apostle Paul's gift of spreading joy even in the midst of difficult times.

---



[For a printer-friendly version, click on the printer icon at bottom of page.](#)

### **Philippians 4:4-7**

As the apostle closes his letter to the church in Philippi, Paul wishes blessings in the Lord upon the congregations. These remarks immediately follow Paul's recognition of his cohorts' struggle within the gospel's work. Even in struggle, Paul encourages his readers with hopeful words. He repeats his message with multiple references to rejoicing and blessings.

In this joy, he exhorts his readers to express their gentleness, moderation or forbearance to everyone. The New Revised Standard translates this word as "gentleness," the New King James writes "moderation" and the New American Standard interprets it as "forbearance." In the context of the lesson Paul is writing, it seems the best English word would be "forbearance." Being able to joyfully forebear through difficult circumstances is extremely admirable.

Paul then gives reason for the ability to rejoice. He writes, "The Lord is near."

Each and every night for the past week, my 4-year-old son has had bad dreams. He saunters down to our room and climbs into bed with us. His mother never knows he is there, because he has decided the best place to sleep is right next to me with his little hand pressed against my nose. I'll try to push him away —next to his mother—but he always finds his way back. I

asked him the other day why he has to sleep right beside me. He simply said, "You make me feel safe."

With the Lord near by, no matter the circumstance, believers can rejoice. Since the Lord is near, Paul instructs his readers to worry less about the rising tide of difficulties and spend time in prayer asking God's guidance. Surpassing all understanding, God will work in our lives to bring about a great peace.

### **Philippians 4:8-9**

In the conclusion of his letter, Paul reminds his readers about the importance of dwelling on good things in the midst of hard times. The virtues he mentions all give hope to those searching for answers during complicated days. Truth, honor, justice, purity, pleasing, commendable, excellent and worthy of praise all are characteristics for which believers can gain strength and fortitude to move forward.

Dwelling upon the things of the Lord and the situations for which the Lord has brought blessings into our lives provides hope for us to endure. It reminds us the Lord is good, for he has blessed us before. It reminds us the Lord is faithful, for we have endured other pains. Concentrating upon the things of God gives us clearer vision for the future.

### **Philippians 4:10-13**

In these verses, Paul continues to build upon his encouragement. While writing about his enthusiasm for the Philippian church, he reiterates the importance of being real about a situation but enduring with the help of Christ. While facing many grievous situations, Paul insists his ability to

endure was not his own but the presence of Christ within him. The verse which summarizes this entire section is this, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

### **Discussion questions**

- What hard times have you been through? How did you feel?
- What helped you through the difficult times?
- How did you feel the presence of Christ within the situation?

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Texas Baptist churches, in the BGCT, the Southern Baptist Convention ( SBC ) and around the world.