

# Connect360: The Joy of Community

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- *Lesson 1 in the BaptistWay Press Connect360 unit “Pure Joy” focuses on Philippians 1:1-11.*

During his imprisonment, the Philippians sent the Apostle Paul regular gifts to keep up his spirits. The significance of this cannot be understated. In Roman times, associating with a prisoner was much the same as it is now—there was a social stigma attached to it. The Philippians, however, knew about Paul and his plight and did not care about the social implications: just the spiritual ones. This enriched and enlivened Paul, and he crafted this letter in response.

You will notice Paul’s tone is much different compared to other letters, and it starts with the first line. Paul included Timothy, his ward and confidant, in his travels. Timothy’s inclusion in this greeting was intentional: when Paul recruited him, Timothy was the product of a Jewish mother and a Greek father (Acts 16). Timothy’s dual heritage meant he likely was not able to truly bond with either community. That lack of support and lack of belonging can cause problems for any person, especially one so young. By Paul’s recruitment, Paul pointed him to his purpose in Christ and gave him a new community where he would always belong—in this, Timothy had a certain joy.

## A humble position

On that same line, the two are called “servants” in Jesus, a term usually reserved for those who were seen as lowly or at the bottom of the barrel in

society. Anybody wearing this title would not have been as pleased to have it as Paul. Paul wore it on his sleeve like a badge, showcasing that he was a servant in Christ. To Paul, taking a lowly position humbled his spirit for a greater elevation and an even richer joy—because when you have no one else to thank, you can thank God because you served him.

As believers, we are expected to be humble and to lower ourselves so God may shine through our actions, not us (1 Corinthians 1:26-31). When we do this, we can feel joy and peace that God has us covered and we are very much in his hands. Paul centered on the fact he was a servant for Christ serving others and expected others to do the same. When this happens, believers in a community are together in one accord and connect on a much deeper level.

Paul recognized true joyful community was built on a sense of belonging: not to just one or two people groups like Timothy, but in a shared sense of humility in Christ. No one is above the other and all are connected to the Father. Paul's external joy reflected Christ's joy when this type of community comes together.

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