



Crazy Joy | Shawn Johnson | 5.3.20
Weekly Study

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer the following question:

Where do you work most frequently from at home? Your office? Your kitchen table? The backyard? Your bed? If anyone is brave enough, give the Group a tour of your workspace!

SHARE

We are jumping into a new series called “Church At Home.” As you know, this year, we have been getting serious about equipping the church with the necessary tools to follow Jesus throughout the week. These days, we aren’t just taking our faith home, we are taking church home. God has been preparing us for this time all year. And we are ready for it!

For the past few weeks, we have been learning ways to take church home with us. This week Shawn was talking about how to have joy in the middle of this pandemic. However, before we go any further, take some time to check in with your group by having everyone answer these questions.

What is one thing you’ve learned during this pandemic that you will take with you in the future?

**What is the most difficult daily discipline for you to keep up with during this time?
What have you learned about God during this time?**

What is the first thing you are going to do once shelter-in-place orders are lifted?

G R O W

Read Philippians 1:1-11

What do you know about Philippians? Who wrote it? Why did he write it?

Philippians is a letter Paul wrote to the church in Philippi. It is short, but it packs a punch and is incredibly relevant for us today. Paul was under house arrest when he penned this letter. While, house arrest in the first century was much more intense than what we have been experiencing during this pandemic, we can all relate to the frustrating feeling of being stuck in a house. You may expect Paul to spend the letter venting and complaining about his conditions, but instead, he does the exact opposite and talks about joy the entire time!

In this short letter (only 104 verses), Paul uses the word “joy” or “rejoice” 16 times. He comes back to it over and over again. Paul may not be able to visit the Church in person, but he decided to take joy home with him, even into house arrest.

Being joyful during this season may feel impossible, but notice Paul never uses the word “happiness” in the letter. It’s comforting to remember that there is a difference between happiness and joy.

Happiness is a feeling. Joy is a decision.

Happiness often disappears when our circumstances change, but joy is our decision to celebrate life regardless of what we are going through because we know we have a Kingdom that cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28). Paul understood this, which is why he can write, “Rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS, again I will say rejoice” (Philippians 4:4).

Would you consider yourself a joyful person? Why or why not?

What is one tangible way you can practice rejoicing this week?

M O V E

Read Philippians 1:12-26

What verse stuck out to you in this passage?

What is the secret to being joyful in every situation? One of the reasons Paul had joy in the middle of his house arrest is because he still knew he had purpose. He was chained to a guard (his right hand to the soldier's left hand) at all times. Most people would see that as an obstacle, but Paul saw it as an opportunity, it meant he got to preach the Gospel around the clock. He turned a burden into a blessing and found a way to be thankful for the chains that were forcing the guards to stay and listen to him preach.

Let's reread verses 12-14:

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

In addition to preaching to the guards, Paul also used the time to write multiple letters (The Prison Epistles) that we still read today. House arrest didn't stop Paul from pursuing his purpose; it gave him a brand-new way to carry out his mission. Paul had a purpose in prison, which means he also had joy!

During this time, it can be easy to feel robbed of purpose, especially if the way you usually serve was interrupted. When that happens, it's easy to lose sight of our mission. So, we all need to learn from Paul today. When life throws us curveballs, remember obstacles can become opportunities to continue making disciples.

What is your purpose in this pandemic? Take some time to brainstorm some ideas by answering the following questions:

What obstacles have you faced during this pandemic? How did you respond to those obstacles? Can you think of a way those obstacles can become opportunities?

What do you think God is asking you to do during this time? What is your purpose in this pandemic?

Take-Home Assignment: REACH OUT

One very practical way we can have purpose during this pandemic is to reach out to one of our neighbors or friends. As Shawn reminded us this week, it doesn't take much, just four simple steps:

Step 1: How are you?

- Simply ask them how they are doing and LISTEN to what they say.

Step 2: How can I pray for you?

- Everyone needs prayer. Ask them what they need and then remember to ACTUALLY pray for them.

Step 3: Here's my story

- If the opportunity presents itself, share what God has done in your life.

Step 4: Here's my church

- Send them a link to this week's message!

P R A Y

We need prayer now more than ever. Spend some time sharing prayer requests. If you are in a coed group, consider breaking off into two separate calls to share more freely.

T O G O

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

- Romans 8:28