

“More than Church”

Upside Down Joy - 1

March 8, 2026

Pastor Dan explores the opening of Paul's letter to the Philippians, emphasizing the 'upside down joy' that isn't dependent on circumstances but rather flows from participating in God's life and mission together. Paul calls the Philippians to *koinonia* - a deep, sacrificial fellowship that goes beyond casual friendship. Rooted in Christ's work, this partnership means locking arms with fellow believers, sharing in both struggles and victories, and finding joy in serving others rather than being served. When we truly partner with others in gospel work, we discover that laying down our lives for others doesn't diminish us - it fulfills us. It's the joy of knowing that our lives count for something eternal, something bigger than ourselves.

Ice Breaker

What's one handwritten letter or note you've received that meant a lot to you? What made it special?

Discussion Questions

1. **Read Philippians 1:3-11.** Like the apostle Paul, can you describe a time in your life when you shared a strong sense of 'partnership' in the Lord's work with other Christians? If so, what contributed toward that spirit of camaraderie?
2. Given the circumstances, what strikes you about Paul's attitude toward the church in Philippi (verses 3-8)? What enabled Paul to think and feel about them as he did?
 - Rather than allowing circumstances to dictate how he felt about the Christians in Philippi, Paul **CHOSE** to be grateful, prayerful, and hopeful. He **CHOSE** to focus on the good he saw in them, to focus on their needs, and to focus on the progress they'd made in their spiritual lives. Paul's attitude is instructive. *“Many problems in the church would disappear if we genuinely prayed for one another.”* – Francis Chan
 - Paul was motivated by the supernatural love of God at work in his life (verse 8). Love isn't something we “work up,” but rather the result of allowing the Holy Spirit to animate our daily lives (notice Romans 5:5).
3. After expressing his affection for the Philippians, Paul encourages them to pray similarly for each other (verses 9-11). What specific needs does he mention?
 - Paul prayed that they would grow in genuine love for each other, that they would make wise choices and right decisions, and live for the greater glory of God.

4. Which of these 'prayer requests' would you place at the top of your own list right now, and why?

- Where do you feel the greatest need now? Wisdom to love well—not just warmly, but wisely and truthfully? Change in the way you feel toward the people in your life—especially those who are difficult to love? Clarity in how you can glorify God in your everyday life?

5. Our daily aim ought to be living 'to the glory and praise of God' (verse 11). How might you be more intentional about honoring God in the way you approach work, relationships, or daily activities this week?

Prayer

In the spirit of Philippians 1:9-11, spend time praying for one another as reflected in your group time together.