



Seven Secrets to Joyful Living

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Phil 3:13-4:13

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❖ Secret #1: Keep Your Eye On the Prize (3:13-21)

- *Maturity* (15) doesn't mean we have arrived. The journey of following Jesus has only begun.
- We must *forget* (13) the past, frustrations, temptations & distractions.
- We *strain for* or *press on* (14) for our future with Christ and his kingdom.
- Don't be deceived by false or partial prizes. The longing inside us is longing for Christ—he is the prize!
- Churches are colonies of Christians on a journey in a foreign land.

❖ Secret #2: Find a Living Example and Then Be One (3:17-19; 4:9)

- Examples or mentors are mentioned in Scripture (2 Tim 2:2; 1 Pet 5:3; Tit 2:7; 1 Tim 4:12;). We are to *mimic* them (1 Cor 4:16; Heb 6:12; 13:7; 2 Thes 3:9).
- Find examples & follow their pattern. Reach out & be an example.
- Avoid bad examples (18-19; 3 Jn 11).

❖ Secret #3: Get It Together—Learn to Love (4:1-3)

- Stressors come in all shapes and sizes for everyone (Mat 5:45)
- Jesus warned us that we would have trouble in this world (John 16:33).
 - The Philippians had stressors: Paul's situation, opposition, disunity, performance religion, pride, anxiety, discouragement and provision.
- The uniqueness of the believer is not the lack of problems but the love and presence of God in the midst of them
- We live in the school of love, where life experiences happen and we have to find the loving wise response in each situation.
- The mark of a Christian is love & unity (Jn 13:35; 17:20; Phil 2:1-4; Eph 4:3).

❖ Secret #4: Keep Dancing but Dance To a Better Song (4)

- "Again"---Paul speaks of *joy* many times: (Phil 1:12ff, 19,21; 3:1; 4:4,12). Regain your focus and find your joy in Christ.
- "Rejoice" is the OT equivalent to: "HALLELUJAH."
- Happiness based on others or circumstances can rob us of our peace.
- "In the Lord!" comes from Hab. 3:17:
- It is a life-style focused on finding ultimate happiness in Christ, not circumstances or people.

❖ Secret #5: Kindness Is Always Appropriate (5)

- *Yielding, gentle, kind, reasonable* (mostly applied to speech).
- Jesus modeled for us love: the God-life (humbly serving us, Phil 2).
- *Gentleness*—is very close to the idea of humility and serving.
- Our need to be right in a world of obstructions and obstinate people can be our downfall. Yield on the minors and be speak kindly on the majors.
- “*The Lord is near*” can mean 2 things: the 2nd coming or watching.
- Jesus, who Himself was forbearing, calls us to give our lives away. When we are loved by God we are free to extend His same mercy (Mt 12:19; Phi 2:5).

❖ Secret #6: Take Control Of Our Internal Life, Including Anxiety (6-7)

- When emotions move from being our servants to bullies in our minds they dominate. We lose our freedom as to what we want to think about.
- How do we respond to anxiety? The command is clear & global: *Do not be anxious about anything.*
- If anxiety and worry are nourished they function as expressions of distrust and therefore are counter to faith or trust in Jesus (Mat 6:24-34).
- Defensively we respond to natural anxiety with trust and prayer.
- “Peace of God”: Divine peace replaces anxiety (John 14:24).
- Offensively we are to respond to emotions and thoughts by pre-occupying our bully emotions and minds with goodness (8). It’s a choice.
- I can actually choose and enjoy what movie I want to watch on my inner screen. I can love God with my mind.

❖ Secret #7: Enjoy the Fruit of Contentment (10-13)

- Financial & other types of contentment is possible (10-11a).
- Contentment must be learned (11b-12).
- Contentment is free from circumstances (11b-12).
- Contentment is a place of power (13).
- Contentment is found in Christ (13).

❖ Study Questions

- Which secret(s) especially apply to you?
- Is there a Euodia or a Syntyche in your life? What efforts have you made to bring peace, without changing them or needing to be right?
- What does forbearance or gentleness mean? How can you serve?
- What does joy in Christ mean? How does joy in Christ protect me from the roller coaster of relationships?
- Pray it through and pray about it regularly believing that He has it.