

global youth ministry network asia

YOUTH CONNECTION

a bi-monthly publication that Global Youth Ministry Network Asia sends to those who have taken the youth leadership training. Youth Connection assists them in the implementation of what they have learned and planned for, encourages them during challenging times, and provides them resources to pull out when they need them.

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Foy
IN LEADERSHIP

Leadership and joy are words that many times do not go together. If you have been in ministry leadership for any length of time you may have found that joy is not always easy to come by. Sure, you can have fun in leadership, but fun is fleeting – it comes and it goes. **Joy in comparison is a deep rooted Holy contentment.** This holy foundation can only be found in the deep rooted truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It cannot be found in personal acceptance, in church and group numbers, in the amount of your budget or any other peripheral items of ministry. The core is the Good News, the Gospel. The core can only remain unshaken and full of joy when we prescribe to the joy seen in one of the most successful leaders of the New Testament, the Apostle Paul.

We could scour the pages of the New Testament for all of the attributes of Paul but for the sake of this article we will look only at a portion of the first chapter of the book of Philippians. Written from prison with a limited numerical direct impact/ministry, Paul continually counts the joys of ministry and His life. Imagine being chained to a guard constantly. You have a passion to proclaim the gospel around the globe, but you are restricted to a jail, and not just a jail, but you have to be chained to a guard day and night. What kind of joy can be found here?

Paul tells of that joy in Philippians 1:12-14. He does not ignore the circumstances and difficulties he finds himself in, but at the core, in the very depth of Paul's being, is the calling and conclusion of the cause of Christ. Verse 13 states, "*my imprisonment in the cause of Christ*". **He saw his imprisonment as working out for the cause of Christ.** A guard chained to him was a blessing for the gospel even though it may have been a personal inconvenience. In addition, Paul states that the brethren, "*have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear*" - all due to Paul's joyful example.

Can you count all of the "circumstances" you are in? Are most of them unpleasant? It is our personal human nature to count bad things first. However, Paul, along with you and I, have the great opportunity, should we choose, to see the joy. **To truly see the joy, we must realize that our joy is anchored to only one possible place: the Gospel truth—our salvation.** No other place, possession or person is able to provide a protected core of joy.

Where is your joy being found? Where are you looking for joy and finding it fleeting? Have you checked the core of the Gospel? Have you forgotten the deep fresh joy of your conversion? Maybe it is time to take a journey to that place and then bring it forward into your ministry as you remember that only the Gospel proclamation can provide deep, everlasting joy for you and those in your ministry as well.

Paul also had to battle not just with circumstances, but also with people. People who would seek to rob his joy in leadership.

Philippians 1:15-18 speaks of how partners in the gospel proclamation sought to, "*cause distress in my imprisonment*". **Rarely do we find our distress in ministry to be from those outside of the faith** (though some reading this in persecuted countries may have this as well). Most of our battles or at least a portion that needs to be recognized, come not from outside the walls but from within. Those who were causing

Paul's distress came from preachers and fellow believers. They were not the persecutors of the faith; they were proclaiming the faith. Externally they were proclaiming, but they were operating out of impure, selfish motives. My pastor preached on these truths in a series on joy and reminded us that most people that we have problems with act out in harm to others because of insecurity and jealousy. Think about the battles you have had with people and you find that most of the time this is true. **Hurting people hurt people.** Paul could have ventured into a discourse on the emotional needs of people here, but he chose to focus on the gospel alone.

Even though he was hurt, probably deeply, by those of the brotherhood, he focused on the gospel proclamation and found joy there. *"Whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; in this I rejoice, yes and I will rejoice."* Whether in distress or comfort, or "in life or death" (Phil. 1:20), Paul found joy.



Have you allowed people to take away the joy that Christ offers? Is there some forgiveness that you need to offer to others? Maybe you were not the recipient of the pain, but is it possible that you were a cause of affliction or pain to another Christian leader? If so, take this before the Lord now (do not wait to finish the article). Allow the Lord to lead you in what steps to take for personal healing for you and those around you.

Paul also could have lost his joy in another way as well. Paul, though a phenomenal man of God, was also a person like you and me. Do not put him up on an unapproachable pedestal of faith. Paul had weaknesses just like you and I. These

weaknesses could have robbed Paul's joy. I have seen this happen in many people who walk in shame, and though they are in ministry, they continue to hand out a joyless, "woe is me" faith to others. Do we all have struggles? Yes. Do we all have deep personal problems and even struggles with sin? Yes. Even Paul did as well. But how did he approach this area so as to not lose joy?

In Romans 7:19-24, Paul takes a personal visit to his sinful nature that plagues him, "*For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish.*" He also mentions being a prisoner of the law of sin in his body. Then in a cry out to God, he states, "*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?*". Have you ever felt your joy being stolen by your own sinfulness? Nothing takes our joy away faster and takes us deeper into despair than our very own sin.

I am so glad that Paul does not leave us there seeing his naked confession of pain and anguish of personal sin. Paul states that, "*Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!*" Then in Romans 8:1, he boldly proclaims the deep, core of the Gospel, "*There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*" His joy could not be crushed. Condemnation cannot win. At least it cannot win when the truth of the Gospel is alive in us and remembered deeply.

How is your leadership joy? How is your self-leadership joy? I believe that although we addressed the three joy stealers in the order of persecution (troubles), then people, then personal sin, the best way to work through these is in the opposite order. First, look at your personal sin nature and be reminded of the grace and victory of Christ over ALL condemnation. Paul proudly proclaims, there is NO condemnation for those in Christ. Joy replaces condemnation as we see Christ and what we are forgiven of and freed from. Secondly, I believe the deepest wounds that may need healing are wounds in dealing with others. It is not usually those outside the faith, but often those close to us that we trusted that may have somehow wounded us and robbed our joy. Lastly, take a look at circumstances and see the joy that comes out of persecution or negative circumstances. **Is it possible that the Good News that God wants to proclaim through you is not just the preaching but the attitude and view you have of Christ's joy in the midst of hard times?** People are watching to see if the truth you proclaim is a truth that makes a real difference – a difference in the hard times as well as the good.

Joy that is unshakeable and unchangeable can only be found in the unmovable Christ and His unaltered Gospel. May you be reminded of His grace and forgiveness and find ways to show, in word and deed, the joy you have in Him to a joyless world around you.

Rejoicing in Christ,

Chris Davis

Global Youth Ministry Network

Reflection and Action Items

1. When you think of joy what comes to mind?
2. What is the difference in joy and happiness?
3. How would you rate your personal joy? (1 being low, 10 being the high)
4. How would you rate the depth of joy in your ministry team?
5. How would you rate the depth of joy in your youth group as a whole?
6. Consider the following questions as you contemplate your joy:
 - a. Where is your joy being found?
 - b. Where are you looking for joy and finding it fleeting?
 - c. Have you checked the core of the Gospel?
 - d. Have you forgotten the deep fresh joy of your conversion?
7. What is God leading you to do to secure your joy in Him?
 - a. Are there sins you need to deal with?
 - b. Are there people you need to forgive and/or confess to?
 - c. Have you allowed people to take away the joy that Christ offers?
 - d. Is there some forgiveness that you need to offer to others? Maybe you were not the recipient of the pain, but is it possible that you were a cause of affliction or pain to another Christian leader?
 - e. Are there circumstances you need to look at differently?
8. Take time to study the whole book of Philippians. What do you see about joy in this letter from Paul?
9. How can you impact the joy level in your ministry team?
10. How can your ministry team impact the joy level of the youth ministry?
11. How can you impact the joy level of your whole church?
12. For more resources on youth ministry leadership, contact us on our website www.global-youth.com and blog at www.gymn-asia.net

Photos taken: www.dreamstime.com; www.inspiks.com

Ang isa po sa natutunan ko ay kailangan palang alamin natin kung ano ang mga need ng mga youth sa loob at labas ng church at doon po ako magsisimulang mag-ministry at maglingkod sa kanila. (*I learned that I should know first the needs of the the youth that are outside and inside the church, then I can start to minister and serve them*) ~Randy, Brooke's Point, Palawan, Philippines, GYMN Level 1

Muli akong na-inspire, na-encourage, nabago ang pag-iisip at nabuksan ang aking pananaw at muli akong na-excite na mamunga sa pananampalataya. (*Once again I was inspired, encouraged, had a renewed mind and I am excited again to be a fruitful Christian*). ~Jepoy, Puerto Princesa, Palawan, Philippines GYMN Level 1

I will impart this to all our youth and I will never give up until I reach my goal to train all the youth leaders in our church. ~Geraldine, Narra, Palawan, Philippines, GYMN Level 1