

Applying It In My LifeGroup time - 20 minutes

1. From the standpoint of our witness to others, why are we much more credible when we have undergone personal struggles, stress, and problems. What personal struggles are you going through that could enhance your testimony if you handle them in a godly way?
2. How can other people see the love of Christ even in the hardships we go through? What does Paul model for us regarding how we can have a godly perspective in the midst of hardship? In what ways does godly joy differ from happiness?
3. List some factors and issues that keep Christians from standing together as one. How could unity be improved among those in the Body of Christ, and in our church family in particular? How can we learn to rejoice with others who are reaching people for Christ instead of being jealous of their success?

Prayer TimeGroup time - 15 minutes

Praise God for His sustaining power in the midst of hardship. Ask God to help you display a God-focused perspective in the midst of hardship. Ask God to take away the temptation to compare ourselves with others and replace it with a deep love for all who are a part of the Body of Christ.

Finish your prayer time by praying for the needs of those in your *Growth Group*. Take a few minutes to share prayer requests. Ask someone in the group to record your prayers so that in future weeks you can see where God is answering your prayers.

THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING *Adversity Advances the Gospel*

Unpleasant Circumstances

- Paul had a God-focused PERSPECTIVE.
- Paul's joy was not because of his CIRCUMSTANCES.
- Following Jesus is a walk of FAITH.
- Paul's dedication to follow Jesus EMBOLDENED other Christians.

Unreasonable People

- We don't need to COMPARE ourselves to others in ministry.
- People are watching us and wanting to know how we RESPOND to difficulties.

Uncertain Future

- Our difficulties will advance the gospel if we are TRULY living for Jesus Christ.

GROWTH GROUP HOMEWORK

Week of September 22-27, 2014

Getting Started.....Group time - 20 minutes

1. Many of us utilize daily "to do" lists and weekly agendas to keep ourselves on track with all we have to do. Then the unexpected happens. How do you typically respond when life doesn't cooperate with your plans? What lessons have you learned from those moments when your plans were derailed?

FOR GROWTH GROUP TIME

Getting Into God's Word.....Group time - 40 minutes

Read Philippians 1:12-18 (In preparation to answer questions)

1. What has happened to Paul? For what purpose was Paul in prison? How did Paul feel about his situation in prison? What was the reaction of the church in Philippi to Paul's present circumstances?

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-11 & 2 Corinthians 11:24-28.

2. Paul had a God-focused perspective. What evidence do we see of this in these accounts of the hardships and trials he faced in ministry? What was Paul's view towards hardship? What do we learn about walking in faith from Paul's life?
3. Paul suggested that his imprisonment had served to advance the gospel. What two examples did he cite for the Philippian? How did Paul's incarceration affect the testimony of others? Despite his circumstances, how did Paul's continued ministry encourage others in Rome to share the gospel?

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4. In what two ways was the gospel being spread? What possible selfish motives could induce a person's sharing the gospel? What are Paul's thoughts about this? What reward did each group have in store?
5. Why did some people preach Christ out of envy and rivalry? Why do you think Paul didn't condemn the people who preached out of envy? What is Paul saying here about the impact of envy and rivalry on the testimony of the church?