



For Further Study

Read and meditate on the passage below:

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. (Philippians 4:4-5)

This passage comes from Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, which may have been penned while he was under house arrest in Rome.

Even amidst his less than ideal circumstances, Paul speaks of rejoicing. Although not in prison, the believers in Philippi are being persecuted for their faith too. Yet, Paul says that they all have reason to rejoice ALWAYS. We can all rejoice some of the time (especially when things are going how we hope), but it is really difficult to rejoice all the time (especially when things are not going how we hope).

How can we find joy even when times are difficult? Paul keeps in on this because he knows that what humans find to be the most challenging occurs in relationships. Paul suggests that there are important relational focuses in our interactions with others and with God. First, he calls us to be “gentle” with other people. Gentleness is a “fruit” of the Spirit in our lives that takes a lot of cultivating. We tend to be gentle with people who are gentle, but Paul suggests that we strive to be gentle (kind, compassionate, empathetic) with everyone; he even goes so far as to say that it should be evident to all that we are gentle. Wow!

Then, Paul says that what can help us to be gentle and to have joy is to remember that God is near. God can empower us to do what is unnatural for us to do. He can help to respond with gentleness when others come at us with harshness. We need to remember that God is near, he loves us fully, and he helps us to cultivate joy in our lives as we live like Jesus--with gentleness.

PRACTICE:

Consider who you need to be more gentle with today.

