

Knowing Christ is where faith begins. From there we grow through the essentials of discipleship: Bible study, prayer, Christian community and much more. We learn to set godly priorities, grow in Christian character and witness to others. We persevere through doubts and grow in wisdom.

## **Making Your Heart Christ's Home**

### **COMMITMENT**

Without question, one of the most remarkable Christian doctrines is that Jesus Christ himself through the Holy Spirit will actually enter a heart, settle down and be at home there.

He said to his disciples, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (John 14:23)

This began at Pentecost. The Spirit of the Living Christ was given to the church, and they experienced what he had foretold. The body of the believer had become the temple of the living God and the human heart the home of Jesus Christ.

This bible study series is based on a text entitled "My Heart—Christ's Home" by Robert Boyd Munger. Munger describes in the essay, his journey of inviting Christ into his heart, and the process he went through in making the necessary adjustments for Christ to live and dwell in his heart.

The journey begins with the Study (the room of the mind)

### **Excerpt from the text**

#### **The Study**

**The first room we looked at together was the study—my library. Now in my home this room of the mind is a small room with thick walls. In a sense, it is the control room of the house.**

**Jesus entered with me and looked around at the books in the bookcase, the magazines on the table and the pictures on the walls. As I followed his gaze, I became uncomfortable. Strangely enough, I had not felt badly about this room before, but now I was embarrassed.**

**There were some books on the shelves his eyes were too pure to look at. On the table were a few magazines a Christian has no business reading. As for the pictures on the walls—images from my mind—some of these were shameful.**

**Red-faced, I turned to him and said, "Master, I know this room really needs to be cleaned up and made over. Will you help me?"**

**"Certainly," he replied. "First, take all the material which is not pure and helpful and throw it out! Then, put the books of the Bible on**

the empty shelves. Fill the library with the Scriptures and meditate on them day and night. Finally, replace the images which lead you into temptation with a picture of me.”

Qi did these things. And although the struggle continues, I have discovered through the years that when my thoughts are centered on Christ, the awareness of his presence and power causes impure thoughts to back away.

### **The Room of the Mind – The Study (the Library)   Philippians 4:4-9**

#### **Opening Spiritual Direction Questions**

1. How does the library of your mind compare and contrast to the author’s mind described?
  
2. What do you think Christ would say to you if you invited him into your library (the room of your mind)?

#### **The Secret of Peace – The Peace of God Himself**

The point of this passage (Philippians 4:4-9) is the peace of God and the presence of the God of peace.

There are four (4:4-9) steps that a believer must take to maintain the peace of God within one’s heart and life.   **When a believer loses one’s peace with God, several things happen:**

- **One becomes self-conscious, and sheepishly shy and guilty and perhaps discouraged and defeated.**
- **One becomes cantankerous, critical, murmuring, grumbling, and divisive.**
- **One begins to slip back into sin.**

**The issue is:** Once we have the peace of God flooding our lives, how do we maintain that peace? How do we keep the peace of God ruling and reigning within our souls? How do we stay aware that God’s very own presence is within us—stay aware that the God of peace lives within our very being?

**Context and setting of the passage:** Paul is in prison and the church at Philippi is having a problem with false teaching and two distinguished ladies quarreling and causing dissension and divisiveness in the church.

#### **Step 1 – Rejoicing (4:4) Rejoicing in the Lord/Giving thanks**

A person is to rejoice always, that is continually; rejoice repeatedly.  
(See Phil: 3:1)

**What is rejoicing?** Guard your mind by rejoicing in the Lord. A person who is always rejoicing in the Lord will not go astray. As the believer walks through life, two things are always confronting us: circumstances and false teaching. No matter where we go, the trials of life, both minor and major confront us. We have to stand

face to face with such trials: enticing temptations; lust of the eyes; lust of the flesh; greed; selfishness; arguments; divisions; inhuman behavior; criminal acts; death; accidents; disease.

No matter which way the believer turns, we are confronted with different ideas about how to handle life and its trials:

- There is teaching that says, "eat, drink, and be merry, tomorrow we die. Ignore the trials and problems. Life is to be enjoyed by those who have the health and money to enjoy it, so get all the gusto out of life possible. Do your own thing.
- There is teaching that says, "Discipline and control yourself. Take care of your body and mind. Don't give in to the lusts and passions of this life. The abuser of a mind and body is a waste. Live long and contribute as much as you can by walking a disciplined and controlled life."
- There is teaching that says, "Don't go overboard. Enjoy life—join in—do what you want but do it within reason. Don't overly abuse your mind and body. It's alright to join and indulge occasionally; just don't do it too often and hurt yourself."
- There is the teaching that says religion is the answer to both life and death, "Join a religious body, undergo its rituals, adopt its beliefs, and live the best you can. This will give you a strong self-image and confidence that God will accept you. Just be as good as you can and God will accept what goodness you are able to build up."

The point is we need to walk throughout each day rejoicing in the Lord, and give thanks for what Christ has done for us: He justified us; adopted us; reconciled us; saved us; loves us; delivered us; guides and directs us; died for us; gave us a fresh start; gave us the privilege of knowing Him; gave us eternal hope and confidence of eternal life.

**The great thing that rejoicing does is:** it places and keeps a person in the presence of Christ. No matter what confronts the believer—no matter how terrible the trial—one knows that one is being looked after by Christ Jesus his Lord. We are reminded that nothing can separate us from His love. We have confidence that Jesus will give us supernatural power and strength to overcome it. We are secure in the 'keeping' power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we rejoice in the Lord, your mind is focused on the Lord, on what the Lord has done for you. The mind can't be in two places at once.

### **Step 2: (4:5) Gentleness – Moderation**

The word '**gentleness**' (epieikes) is a difficult word to translate into English. It is translated as moderation, forbearance, reasonableness, consideration, agreeableness, courtesy, patience, and softness.

We are called to be gentle and forbearing (patient, longsuffering, forgiving, lenient, merciful) not only in dealing with other believers but particularly with unbelievers.

Bible Scholar, Barclay says, "Paul lays it down that the mark of a Christian in his personal relationships with his fellow-men must be that he knows when, and when not, to insist on justice, and that he always remembers that there is something which is beyond justice, and which makes a man like God." (e.g. woman caught in adultery)

### Step 3: (4:6-7) Peace comes through prayer

1. **There is the charge: Do not be anxious about anything.** The idea is that the believer is not to worry or fret about a single thing. The word 'anything' means all things. The Philippians had every reason to worry and be anxious:
  - they were suffering persecution
  - they were facing disturbance in the church, some disunity and quarreling
  - they had some carnal members within their fellowship, some members who were prideful, super-spiritual, and self-centered
  - they were facing some false teachers who joined their fellowship
  - some of the believers were having to struggle for the necessities of life: food, clothing, shelter.

The only way we can keep from worrying is to receive an injection of supernatural power. This is the very point of Scripture. There is an answer to worry and anxiety, a supernatural answer: the peace of God will enable the believer to conquer worry and anxiety. God will overcome the trials of life for the believer, no matter how terrible and pressuring they may be. God will infuse the believer with peace. Now this doesn't mean the believer is not to be concerned about the problems of life. The believer is, but there's a difference between concern, anxiety and worry.

- **Concern** drives us to arise and tackle the problems of life with courage and dependence on God and diligence.
- **Concern** drives us to tackle and conquer all that we can handle. Anxiety and worry cause all kinds of problems:
- fear to act; withdrawal; hesitation; cowardice; depression; discouragement; a defeatist attitude; quick, unplanned action; unwise and harmful decisions; physical sickness and infirmities; emotional problems; spiritual backsliding; distrust and unbelief.

(See Matt. 6:31-33)

2. **The remedy for anxiety and worry: prayer.** The four words used for prayer is the answer to anxiety and worry:
  - a. **prayer** – refers to the special times of prayer that we share during periods of devotion and worship. We should have set times for prayer.
  - b. **Petition** – refers to the prayers that focus upon special needs. We feel a deep, intense need, therefore, we go before God and petition Him, that is, pour out our soul to God.
  - c. **Thanksgiving (eucharistia)** – means that we thank and praise God for all that He is and for all that He has done for us.
  - d. **Requests** – means specific and definite requests. Our praying is not to be general, but specific. We are to lay before God exactly what is needed and we are not to fear that we are being too detailed with God or bothering God.

**Note that the text says: 'in everything' pray like this**—use all four ways of praying and use them in praying for everything. This means

- We are to walk in God – live, move, and have our being in Him—and we do this by prayer. We pray 'in everything.'
  1. **pray** in times that are specifically set aside for devotion and worship
  2. **petition** – struggle in prayer—when facing times of deep and intense need.
  3. **thanksgiving** (and praise) all day long as we walk and move about.
  4. **requests-** offer specific requests to God. Ask Him to do definite things as we walk throughout the day.
- **pray about every matter regardless of how small and insignificant.**
- 3. **The promise: Peace** – means to be bound, joined, and woven together. It means to be assured, confident, and secure in the love and care of God. It means to have a sense, a consciousness, a knowledge that God will provide; guide; strengthen; sustain; deliver; encourage; save; give real life.

A person can experience the peace of God only as he walks and moves about in prayer. Why? Because only God can deliver us through the most severe circumstances and tragedies of life; only God can infuse assurance and security within the human soul.

**The promise is two-fold:**

**a.** First, the peace of God transcends all understanding. It is beyond anything we can ask or think. It transcends all imaginations.

**b.** the peace of God guards our hearts and minds. The words 'will guard' is a military term meaning to garrison, to keep guard and protect. The peace of God is like a most elite soldier who guards and protects the most precious possession of God: the believer's heart and mind.

#### **Step Four: (4:8-9) – Thinking Positive**

**Peace comes through positive thinking.** The word 'think' means to consider, reflect, reason, meditate and ponder. The idea is that of focusing our thoughts until they shape our behavior:

- what we think is what we become
- where we have kept our minds is where we are
- our thoughts shape our behavior
- what we do is what we think

A person who centers his thoughts upon the world and its things will live for the world and its things: money, wealth, land, property, possessions, position, power, recognition, honor, social standing, fame, etc.

When a person accepts Christ, his mind is made new by the Spirit of God (see Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10)

It is sinful thoughts and negative thoughts that disrupt and destroy peace. We are to exert every cell of energy possible to captivate and control every thought.

#### **The Charge**

- a. **whatever is 'true'** – real and genuine (many things seem to be true, but they are not; they are false and deceptive, illusion, counterfeit. They seem to offer peace, but is merely escapism.
- b. **Whatever is 'noble'** – honorable, worthy, highly respected (Barclay, "the word really describes that which has the dignity of holiness upon it.") There are things in this world which are flippant and cheap, things which are attractive to the light-minded; but it is on the things which are grave and serious and deep that the Christian should set his/her mind.
- c. **Whatever is 'right'** – right and righteous behavior. It has to do with right behavior toward God and others.
- d. **Whatever is 'pure'** – morally clean, chaste, undefiled, free from moral pollution.
- e. **Whatever is 'lovely'** – pleasing, kind, gracious; things that excite love and kindness (the believer's thoughts are not to be thoughts of unkindness and meanness, grumbling and murmuring, criticism and reaction.
- f. **Whatever is 'admirable'** – reputable, worthy things. The believer is not to fill his mind with junk; he is not to listen to bad reports, no matter how juicy they may seem.
- g. **If anything is excellent or praiseworthy** – positive thinking is the answer to peace

**The source or power for positive thinking is – the Word of God – review the following Scripture verses for further edification :**  
 (Col. 3:16; 2Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:12; Psa. 19:8; Psa 119:9; Psa. 119:11; Psa. 119:105)

**Spiritual Direction work for the week**

**The Commitment**

1. **What actions do you need to take in order to make your study a place where Christ can guard your heart and mind?**
2. **Jesus wants you to do more than guard your mind. How can you make your study a place where you can grow in him? (review verse 8)**

**Charge: Bring Christ to your study. Pack it full of the Word of God. Study it. Meditate on it. Keep the presence of the Lord Jesus before you.**