

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will share from what they have learned from their quiet times. Every day during the past week we had a quiet time from a passage in the New Testament. Once a week we come together to share what we have learned. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. We will first explain how to have a quiet time. Then we will share the important truths and lessons from our quiet times and try to answer some difficult questions.

Today's topic is: A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM PHILIPPIANS 1-4.

(S) **POINT 1. HOW TO HAVE A QUIET TIME AND SHARE**

Have a time of fellowship with God or quiet time every day of the week from one of the seven assigned Bible passages. An easy quiet time method is called "The favourite truth" method. It has 5 steps.

Step 1. Pray and ask God to speak to you.

Step 2. Read one of the seven assigned passages.

Step 3. Choose your favourite truth. It is the truth, verse or passage through which God is speaking to you, stimulating your thinking or touching your heart.

Step 4. Meditate on your favourite truth. Meditate by doing the following four things. First. *Think* about the meaning of words. Second. *Ask* God what he intends to say to you. Third. *Relate* your favourite truth to your life by making a practical application. Fourth. *Write* the most important thoughts of your meditation in a notebook so that you may share them with others.

Step 5. Pray your favourite truth for yourself. Then pray your favourite truth for someone in your family. Then pray your favourite truth for someone nearby. And finally, pray your favourite truth for someone far away. When you meet together with one friend or with other Christians in a house fellowship or discipleship group, take turns to share the meditation of one of your quiet times. You may also try to answer some questions from the assigned passages.

(T) **POINT 2. SHARING FROM PHILIPPIANS 1-4**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from Philippians 1-4. Now we will use our quiet time notes to share truths and lessons from the assigned passages and discuss some questions.

Sharing quiet times from Philippians chapter 1.

I want to share from Philippians 1:12-14 about **Christian joy in the progress of the gospel.**

The difficult circumstances of Paul's life served to advance the progress of the gospel. When Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians in 61 AD, he was still imprisoned in Rome, waiting for a trial, which might sentence him to death or set him free. He had not planned or expected to be imprisoned. Five years before he had planned to go to Rome and from there to Spain, to preach the gospel. But he was arrested in Jerusalem, imprisoned in Caesarea for two years before he was sent to Rome to be tried in front of the mightiest man at that time in history, Caesar. Instead of arriving in Rome a free man, he arrived in Rome a prisoner. 2 Timothy 4:16 relates that at his first defence nobody was at his side, but all had deserted him. Thus, he also arrived in Rome lonely and without friends. But the words of God to Paul many years before in Corinth must have encouraged Paul. Then God had promised, "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10).

In Rome, Paul was allowed to live in his own home, but under house arrest. He was bound with a chain to a soldier, who guarded him (Act 28:16,20,30). The guards relieved each other and in this way many soldiers came into contact with Paul. Although we might expect that these hardened soldiers would be the last to be affected by the gospel, they were deeply moved by what they saw and heard and felt in the presence of Paul. They listened to him as he talked to friends who came to visit him, as he dictated his letters to his secretary, as he talked to his judges or even to them as soldiers. They listened as he talked to God in prayer. And the things, which these soldiers heard and saw, they believed and began to spread. The gospel spread from soldier to soldier. It spread to the families of these soldiers. It spread to the soldiers guarding the palace of Caesar and finally even to Caesar's own family (Phil 4:22). It also spread outside the military to the inhabitants of Rome (1:14). The gospel became the talk of the town.

And so after experiencing how God made so many people hear the gospel just because he was experiencing all these difficult circumstances, Paul could say, "I want you to know that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel." How did his difficult circumstances serve to advance the gospel? First, many soldiers and their families

heard the gospel and became Christians. Second, many Christians living in Rome were encouraged by what God was doing and they began to preach the gospel courageously and fearlessly.

In difficult circumstances, I have learned not to ask the question, “What is going to happen to me?” but the question, “How can my situation serve to advance the gospel?”

Sharing quiet times from Philippians chapter 21.

(S) I want to share from Philippians 2:3-4, about **Christian joy in self-sacrificial service.** In Philippians chapter 2, the apostle Paul begins with a strong plea for unity among the Christians. Perhaps there were problems of disunity among the Christians at Philippi. Disunity among Christians can be the result of several problems. Sometimes the members tend to exaggerate the weaknesses of brothers or belittle their strengths. Sometimes certain brothers have wrong motives and misuse the church for their own selfish ambitions. Sometimes the brothers are not growing spiritually and so they continue to behave like they did when they were still unbelievers. Whatever the case might be, the apostle Paul wants to teach them humility, because humility is needed for unity. *Humility* literally means *a low-lying mind*. A person who is humble has a modest self-appraisal before God and other people. He does not have too high an estimate of himself. He is realistic about what he can do. He does not advertise his own strengths nor does he hide his own weaknesses. He is not puffed up with his own importance, abilities, possessions or accomplishments. He does not arrogantly assert himself or try to dominate others. He does not belittle other people, but instead, he counts them better than himself.

Non-Christians tend to think of humility as cowardliness. But when the Holy Spirit changes a person’s heart, then *submission out of fear* is changed into *submission out of love*. Submission out of love is true humility. This humility is expressed in *unselfishness, appreciation and helpfulness*. We read, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Unity in the church is threatened by selfish ambition. When people are driven by unholy rivalry, by selfish motives, demanding power to control and craving honour and prestige for themselves, rival parties within the church may be the result. In Galatians 5:20 Paul warns that people who split the church into parties and quarrel will not inherit the kingdom of God! “Considering others better than yourselves” means appreciating one another for their strengths and special contribution to the Church. “Looking to the interests of others” is not the same as fulfilling their personal wishes. Their interests are the things which contribute to their welfare. And those things are also the interests of Jesus Christ (2:20-21). The real interests of others are first of all *their* salvation, *their* growth, *their* sanctification and *their* fruitfulness. The real interests of others are those things that will help them to become their best for God and God’s kingdom. I want to practise true humility and express it in unselfishness, appreciation and helpfulness.

Sharing quiet times from Philippians chapter 3.

(T) I want to share from Philippians 3:3-11 about **Christian joy in becoming more like Christ.** In Philippians 3:3-6, Paul enumerates his earthly treasures. In contrast to the claims of the false apostles and teachers, Paul had many advantages. First there were the things his parents had given him. They gave him nationality and culture. He was a born Israelite. Second, there were the things he attained through his own efforts. He gained the best education, joined the best party and earned his own righteousness by keeping the law. Like Paul before his conversion, many people put their confidence in outward and temporary things. They put their confidence in their education, job security, possessions, power, relationships with important people or their religion and even good works. Paul could have put his confidence in all these outward things, but in verse 3 he says, “I put no confidence in the flesh.”

What does Paul do with his earthly treasures? In verse 7 we read, “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ”. Verse 7 looks to his past. At his conversion he rejected all these earthly treasures, not because they were bad in themselves, but because they had become hindrances. His pride in his nationality, culture, religion and accomplishments had become the basis for self-satisfaction and self-glorification. His former assets had become liabilities. His former steppingstones had become stumbling blocks. All the confidence he had put in the outward things before, had started to work against him. If Paul had held on to these old treasures, then they would have deprived him the only real gain in life, namely Christ himself! In verse 8 he says, “What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” Verse 8-11 look to the future. After his conversion, Paul’s only desire was to gain Christ. He wanted to gain Christ in three important areas: he wanted to know Christ, to be found in Christ and to become like Christ.

First. In verse 8, Paul says that he wants to know Christ.

This refers to his *relationship* with Christ. His goal is to know Jesus Christ personally and intimately. This knowledge refers to knowledge of the mind and knowledge of the heart. How can I know Jesus Christ personally and intimately? By having a daily quiet time, in which I read the Bible and pray to God.

Second. In verse 9, Paul says that he wants to be found in Christ.

This refers to his *position* in Christ. Before his conversion, Paul climbed the ladder of self-effort. After his conversion, he received the completed salvation work of Jesus Christ. His position in Jesus Christ means assurance. He knows that God has called him and justified him and he knows that God will certainly sanctify and glorify him (Rom 8:29-30)!

Third. In verse 10, Paul says that he wants to become like Christ.

This refers to his *process* of growing in Christ. His process of growth in Jesus Christ means progress in his Christian life. He wants to experience the power of the Christian life, which sets him free from his sinful nature and which gives him the ability to do what Jesus Christ says. He wants to follow the example of Jesus Christ and experience the rejection and persecution it brings. He wants to be raised above sin in order to serve Jesus Christ most effectively. Paul is determined to continue to repudiate everything that would stand in his way of gaining Jesus Christ. I want to follow in Paul's footsteps, throw away earthly treasures that hinder my Christian life and endeavour to gain Jesus Christ.

Sharing quiet times from Philippians chapter 4.

(S) I want to share from Philippians 4:4-7 about **Christian joy in peace and contentment.**

All of us face difficult circumstances. We would never have chosen difficult circumstances, but they arrive on the scene anyway. Some people react negatively towards difficult circumstances. Some people become bitter, accuse, blame, rebel and fight. Others become discouraged, apathetic, or flee from the world God created into a world they created for themselves, like a world of reading books, drinking alcohol or taking drugs. How then should a Christian react to difficult circumstances?

First. Respond to difficulties with joy.

Joy is the inward response of your heart. Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always." It seems unreasonable to rejoice always in all circumstances, no matter how trying they are. Can a person rejoice when he recalls his past failures? Can he rejoice when he sees his beloved suffering? Circumstances alone do not determine the condition of a Christian's heart. A Christian can be *joyful within* even when without everything is dark, because he is united to Jesus Christ! Joy is that inner delight that God is in control; that nothing happens that does not have his permission; that everything that happens is for our good; and that finally God will fulfil his perfect plan with us.

Second. Respond to difficulties with gentleness.

Gentleness is the outward response towards the difficult circumstance. Philippians 4:5 says, "Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near." The Corinthian Christians were not gentle. When they were wronged, they took one another to court (1 Cor 6:1-8). In contrast, the Hebrew Christians were gentle. They were sometimes publicly insulted and at other times joyfully accepted the confiscation of their property, because they knew they had a better and lasting possession in heaven (Heb 10:33-34). A Christian who is gentle has decided that it is far better to suffer wrong than to inflict wrong. He willingly yields his rights and he patiently submits to provocation without reacting negatively.

Because the Lord is near to judge and settle accounts, I would like the Lord to be gentle towards my weaknesses and failures. Conclusion. When I face difficult circumstances and difficult people, then I should yield or respond in a gentle way instead of fighting back.

Third. Respond to difficulties with prayer.

Prayer is the ultimate response towards God. Philippians 4:6-7 say, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus". Who does not have anxieties or worries? Instead of lying awake at night, racking my mind to look for solutions and developing a stomach ulcer, I should pray. For example, I pray before I do things or before buy things. I pray before I travel, before I meet people or before I make decisions. God's peace can do what my mind cannot do.

Peace is the absence of feelings of guilt, fear and abandonment. It is freedom from insecurity, dissatisfaction and strife (conflict). A Christian has peace with God and with other people.

Peace with God is the freedom from *guilt*. It is the conviction that my *past* sins are forgiven.

Peace is the freedom from *fear*. It is the conviction that my *present* difficulties are overruled for good.

Peace is the freedom from the feeling of *abandonment*. It is the conviction that my *future* cannot bring about separation from God.

Peace with God replaces my restless mind with security, fills my empty heart with contentment and makes my broken life whole again.

Peace with people means the absence of feelings of guilt, fear or rejection with respect to them. Peace with other people means that strife (conflict) has been replaced by relationships of harmony and building one another up.

Conclusion. When I become anxious about my circumstances, I should pray instead of trying to solve the problem myself.

(T) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Divide Colossians 1-4 into seven passages. Every day have a quiet time from one passage. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share from your quiet times.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and build Christ’s Church” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.