

CHOOSING JOY

Part 2

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Vaughn Forest Church
Montgomery, AL

**“Rejoice in the
Lord always.**

**I will say it again:
Rejoice!”**

Philippians 4:4

CHOOSING JOY

God wants us to align with Him. God wants us to choose Joy...the Joy of the Lord. The Joy of the Lord is a gladness in your heart that overflows with peace and thankfulness for what He has done for us. God wants us to reflect the Joy of the Lord, so that people who do not know Jesus will be drawn to Him.

If we do not choose and reflect joy, those around us are never going to want the life we have in Christ!

Jesus is the ultimate Joy Giver – He and His followers...us...are to point others to Him. In our suffering, in our relationships, in our giving, in our connecting with one another, we are to choose and reflect the Joy of the Lord!

LEADER LIFTER

In your Life Group, challenge people to build a relationship with Christ and to build relationships with each other. Additionally, encourage one another to Grow in Him, to Serve Him and to Serve each other, and to Live Sent!

LIFE GROUP ESSENTIALS

- I will pray for my own family and the families of those in my group.
- I will faithfully prepare before each life group session.
- I will serve those in my group to the best of my ability and encourage loving relationships between all members of the group.
- We will covenant to be available to each other in times of stress or need, to encourage each other, and to meet each other's specific needs.
- I will view myself as a facilitator/guide rather than a controller of my group.
- I will be loyal and supportive of my Pastor and church staff and encourage prayer for them.
- I will endeavor to keep the spirit of the group positive by squelching gossip with truth and avoiding a negative critical spirit.
- I will promote relational, theological, and value based unity in the church as well as a spirit of harmony.
- I will share openly and personally with the group in order to build up the group's closeness and intimacy.
- I will endeavor to handle conflict in the group with love and patience.
- I am committed to keeping things shared in the group confidential.
- I will support an apprentice so they can develop the skills to facilitate a group.
- I will encourage times of fellowship on a regular basis.
- I will lead an exemplary Christian lifestyle and will be a positive influence on the members of my group.
- I will not communicate or practice anything which is contrary to the core beliefs of VFC as expressed in the VFC Bylaws.
- I will notify our group facilitator or coach or pastor of acute conditions within the group requiring pastoral care or counseling.
- I have completed or will complete *Next Steps*; I have signed the VFC membership covenant, and I will encourage others to do the same.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This study guide is designed to engage your group in deep and meaningful conversation. For the Life Group Facilitator you most likely will spend more time listening than talking! At the end of each session, take notes and write down the prayer requests of your group.

Connect is designed to break the ice and allow for group members to engage in opening conversation. The questions are usually fairly simple so anyone can participate.

Grow is designed to take the group through the text and engage the group in a more robust conversation. The questions in this section will hopefully engage group members from all walks of life. You don't have to work through all the questions; just pick the ones that you think would best suit your group needs.

Share finishes the session with opportunities on how you are living your faith, applying the Word, and sharing Jesus. Live Sent!

Serve encourages group members to go out into the community to do the good that needs doing and love the ones that need loving.

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Session 5 // Joy in Like-Mindedness J – Jesus; O – Others; Y – Yourself

Connect

- In what areas of your life do you have disunity? What are some causes of this disunity?
- In what areas of your life do you have unity? How do you maintain unity?
- How do you overcome disunity? How might like-mindedness help you to overcome disunity?

Watch Corresponding Video; Read *Philippians 2:1-11*

Grow

How to Share the Jesus Joy

1. Unity of Belief

Be Like-minded -- I Corinthians 1:10 - I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.

2. Unity of Love

Same Love Focused on Jesus -- Colossians 2:2-3 - My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

3. Unity of Vision

One Spirit and One Mind -- I Corinthians 1:10 - I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.

4. Unity of Sacrifice

Be Selfless and Value Others Above Self -- Mark 10:45 - For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Romans 12:10 - Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

5. Unity of Mission

Same Mindset as Jesus -- Romans 15: 5-6 - May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are called to live a life of purpose and sacrifice for something bigger than our self! It is about us living out the love that God has shown to us, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Our representation of

Jesus has huge consequences because peoples' lives are at stake. Live Sent!

Share

1. Are you in agreement with those who know Jesus as their Savior, your fellow believers? Do you have a unity of belief with believers at VFC? Why or why not?
2. Are you willing to share God's love so that others may know all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge in Christ?
3. Are you united in the vision at VFC to Build Lives that Honor God?
4. Are you willing to join with fellow believers at VFC to serve others in His love?
5. What was Christ's final command to believers? Are you willing to make disciples?
6. Are you living a Life Sent? What is stopping you from living out Christ's purpose for you?

Serve

Is there someone in your Life Group that needs to be encouraged to become more "like-minded" in Christ? What can you do to help them?

Session 6 // Joy in Unity
J – Jesus; O – Others; Y – Yourself

Connect

- **Do you have unity in your family? Do you want unity in your family?**
- **Do you have unity in your job? Do you want unity in your job?**
- **Do you have unity in your marriage? Do you want unity in your marriage?**
- **Do you have unity in your church? Do you want unity in the church?**

Watch Corresponding Video; Read *Philippians 2:14-18*

Grow

Unity Brings Joy to Life

Where Unity is Present, JOY is experienced! When Unity is absent, JOY is missed! Unity Brings JOY to Life!

- **Grumbling and Complaining** (v. 14) This is exactly what Satan wants us to do. He wants us to live in the negative because in this broken world, if he can keep us wallowing in the mud of the world, then we lose focus on God!
- **Blameless and Pure!** (v. 15) God desires for us to reflect Him in this really messed up world! Be a uniter, encourager, and builder!
- **Shine like Stars** (v. 16) In a world desperate for God, don't be a distraction, be an attraction! Represent Him to reach others.
- **Be Glad and Rejoice** (v. 16-18) Paul's situation was terrible, and he could have wined, complained, and been divisive, but instead he **choose joy** and encouragement!
- **Chose Gladness and Rejoice** (v. 17-18) When we chose Christ, we live a life with gladness and joy! What will you choose? It is a choice! Paul chose honoring God and God used his life in a huge way!

Share

1. **Why should my life be about unity?**
2. **Am I am I part of the church for what I can get for "ME" or for "WE"?**
3. **Am I grumbling and arguing or am I building and encouraging?**
4. **Am I supporting the vision of the church through my generosity, my time, and gifts? OR am I just looking for ways for others to serve me?**
5. **Am I using my conversations to build others up or tear others down?**
6. **Are you a Uniter, not a Divider? Is God telling you there is something you need to change?**

Serve

Are you willing to help others in your Life Group to draw together? What can you do to unify as a Life Group?

Session 7 // Joy in God's Favor
J – Jesus; O – Others; Y – Yourself

Connect

- **Do you struggle with being a religious person? How?**
- **Do you feel pressure from religious people who keep wanting to place add-ons to Jesus? How do you overcome this legalism?**
- **Do you focus on a relationship with Jesus or religion about Jesus?**

Watch Corresponding Video; Read *Philippians 3:1-11*

Grow

Relationship vs Religion

Relationship: Focuses more on helping others know God personally.

Religion: Focuses more on the “dos and don’ts.”

Relationship: Centers on knowing Jesus more!

Religion: Centers on adding burdens to achieve God’s favor!

Relationship: Celebrates favor before God because of Jesus.

Religion: Celebrates earning God’s favor because of ourselves.

- People with relationship are Joyful; people with religion end up bitter and frustrated.
- Religion and Rules are Satan’s greatest tool of deception because if he can keep you on the road of trying to be better, you will miss Jesus in the pursuit of self-righteousness. It is not about trying harder, but rather pursuing Him more!
- Jesus is Joy: The more we seek Him, the more joy we discover; the more we worship Him, the more joy we experience; the more we serve Him, the more joy we spread!

Jesus plus nothing = everything!

Share

1. **How does one live in a relationship with Jesus?**
2. **How does one express religion in Jesus? Where are you in terms of Jesus?**
3. **Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus? If you do not, how can you start one?**
4. **Is your relationship with Jesus full or empty? How can you grow your relationship with Jesus?**
5. **What burdens are you “adding” to your relationship with Jesus? Why do you think these are necessary?**

6. How do you live a life pursuing Jesus? Is there something you need to change or remove that keeps making you “stumble” in your pursuit of Jesus?
7. How has God’s favor been revealed in your life?

Serve

Is God’s favor seen in your Life Group? How can you share God’s favor with others?

Session 8 // Joy in Growth
J – Jesus; O – Others; Y – Yourself

Connect

- **Do you like change or do you like the status quo? Why or why not?**
- **Do you chose growth or decay? Why or why not?**
- **Do you want to be the person God desires you to be, to fulfill His purpose for you on this earth?**

Watch Corresponding Video; Read *Philippians 3:10-21*

Grow

Four Next Steps for Growth (The How)

1. Baptism

The first command as followers of Jesus is to do and help others do. Matthew 28:19-20 - Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

2. Regular Church Involvement

Only Satan and people who don't have the things of God in mind want the church to stay small. Hebrews 10:25 - And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of His return is drawing near.

3. Confession and Repentance

Jesus is after our hearts. Release the guilt and shame! James 5:16 - Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. Things that are in our lives that get our best attention and focus are the things that we really worship and that take the place of God in our lives. God wants us to turn from that and be refreshed in Him! Acts 3:19 - Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

4. Invest and Invite

God's desire for His people is to be about investing themselves into the lives of the people that are in their sphere of influence for His good and then invite them into His family. Philemon 1:6 - I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.

Share

- 1. Are you willing to die to self? To forget the past? To change and be intentional about growing in Jesus?**
- 2. Have you experienced believer's baptism? If not, why haven't you chosen to be baptized?**
- 3. Do you regularly experience a corporate gathering with other Christ followers? Why do you do this? Why don't you?**

4. Are there individuals that you know who you can invite to VFC's Sunday morning Gatherings? Have you invited them?
5. Are you investing in the lives of others and pointing them to Jesus?
6. Are your talents, resources, and time being used to invest in making disciples for Jesus?
7. Is there anything in your life that is blocking your relationship with Jesus? Is there a sin that you need to confess and turn away from?
8. Are you willing to "go outside of your comfort zone" in order to Pursue His Purpose? What might this look like for you?
9. Are you willing to change in order to grow closer to God? Or do you want to stay in the same "old religion" because it's comfortable?

Serve

As a Life Group, are you experiencing joy as you grow together? What are you doing to cultivate His joy?

Session 9 // Joy in His Presence
J – Jesus; O – Others; Y – Yourself

Connect

- How often do you experience being anxious?
- How often do you rest in His peace?
- What do you do to remove anxiety? What do you do to find peace?

Watch Corresponding Video; Read *Philippians 4:4-9*

Grow

How to Deal with Anxiety and Experience JOY!

1. Prayer

Talk to God about anything; He will listen and be with you!

Verse 6-7 - Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, 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.

2. Focus on God

When we set our focus on God and all that He has done, not all that is wrong, failing, or what we think isn't working, then we will combat the anxiety that so quickly consumes and destroys us because of God's peace with us! When life seems hopeless and pointless, God can reignite your heart and passion for Him. Verse 8-9 - Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

3. Cast Your Anxiety on Him

Anxiety is something we have all dealt with and it is the hidden crippler that can keep us from doing what God desires for us to do in and through our lives!

I Peter 5:6-7 – Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you. God provides a sense of peace and JOY through our hardest times in life!

Joy is found in His presence, not your situation.

Share

1. How do you deal with life's challenges?
2. Are you in a season of anxiety? Has the anxiety consumed you?
3. Are you experiencing depression in your life? How does God help us in these times?
4. How many times can you look back and know that being anxious and fearful kept you from truly following God?
5. Are you willing to pray through your anxiety? What specific scripture can you use to pray through this anxiety?

6. Are you willing to focus on God through your anxiety? What does focusing on God look like?
7. Are you willing to cast your anxiety on Him? How are you willing to do this? Prayer? Scripture?

Serve

Is anyone in your Life Group experiencing anxiety? Pray for those in your LG that they may be released from Satan's grip and rest in Jesus' presence and peace.

Session 10 // Joy in Contentment
J – Jesus; O – Others; Y – Yourself

Connect

- **Do you struggle with wanting more? Do you struggle with not being satisfied? Why?**
- **What areas in your life are you discontent with? Why?**
- **What areas in your life are you content with? Why?**

Watch Corresponding Video; Read *Philippians* 4:10-23

Grow

Godly Contentment Produces Joy

1. Being content focuses us on Jesus (v.11-12)
2. Christ gives us the strength in all things (v.13)
3. God uses others to provide us in our need (v.15-18)
4. God will meet your needs in accordance with God's will (v.19)

Share

1. **Which do you pursue more: eternal or earthly contentment? Why?**
2. **Is there a hook that the enemy has driven into your soul that has you on the brink of some really foolish decisions?**
3. **Are you spending your emotional energy always wishing what could be?**
4. **Do you suffer from selfish discontentment? How can this be remedied?**
5. **Have you made financial decisions that left you discontent? Can you share this life lesson? What was the outcome? How did you overcome this situation?**
6. **Have you made relational decisions that left you discontent? Can you share this life lesson? What was the outcome? How did you overcome this situation?**
7. **Have you made marital decisions that left you discontent? Can you share this life lesson? What was the outcome? How did you overcome this situation?**
8. **Do you wish to experience Godly contentment? What do you need to do to do so?**
9. **Do you believe God will meet all your needs? Are you living this truth? Are you willing to help others whom God has asked you to help?**

Serve

Is there some need that your Life Group can meet? Someone in your Life Group? Someone in your circle of influence?