

Paul wrote his letter to the Philippian believers when he was a prisoner at a house in Rome. Paul had planted the church in Philippi about 10 years earlier. The letter begins with thanksgiving and joy, a remarkable response in light of Paul’s lengthy imprisonment. He was waiting to present his case to Caesar, the emperor of Rome.

People began to hear about Paul and why he was a prisoner. The whole imperial guard knew that Paul was in chains because he followed Jesus. Despite what seemed like a series of setbacks, the sufferings Paul faced actually advanced the gospel—and for this reason, Paul was joyful.

No matter what chaos or suffering surrounded Paul, these realities were constant: the gospel was being spread, Jesus was Lord, and Paul knew Him. This eternal perspective was essential to Paul’s peace and joy. God used Paul’s difficult circumstances to spread the gospel and build the church. Paul knew that because Jesus suffered to bring salvation to the world, believers doing God’s work would suffer too.

As you share this story with your kids, remind them that joy is one of the qualities seen in the fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22) Explain that joy is delight that comes from knowing and serving God. Paul’s joy was not self-generated. He didn’t muster up joy because he was super-spiritual or naively optimistic about his circumstances. Paul had joy because he was focused on Jesus.

Think about suffering in your own life. How do you typically respond to suffering? What does your reaction to suffering reveal about what you believe about God? What does it reveal about what you most treasure in life? Remind your kids that joy in suffering does not discredit grief and pain, but it gives hope in difficult times. This joy is rooted in the faithfulness of God, who ultimately does everything for His glory and our good.

Check this session’s Activity Page and Big Picture Card as well as the Gospel Project for Kids Family App for ways to interact with the Bible content this week.

FAMILY STARTING POINTS

● Babies and Toddlers

○ God is always with us.

○ Paul was happy to tell about Jesus.

○ Paul was ready to live or die for Jesus.

○ God’s plans for us are always good.

● Preschool

○ When should we tell others about Jesus? We should tell about Jesus all the time.

○ Paul told the Philippians to be joyful.

● Kids

○ When should we tell others about Jesus? We should always tell others about Jesus even when it is difficult.

○ While he was in prison, Paul told the Philippian church to be joyful.

UNIT KEY PASSAGE

● Philippians 1:20-21 (Philippians 1:21 for Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers)